A literature-based analysis and comparative assessment of key success factors for managing Russian-Foreign IJVs

Katja Schneider a, Michael Nippa b

a Research Associate, Chair of Leadership, Management and Human Resources, TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Germany, katja.schneider@bwl.tu-freiberg.de
b Chair of Leadership, Management and Human Resources, TU Bergakademie Freiberg, Germany, nippa@bwl.tu-freiberg.de

Abstract

The economic significance of International Joint Ventures (IJVs) has attracted a lot of academic research, resulting in a broad variety of studies of which many focus on key success factors of IJVs in emerging countries. Whereas success determinants of IJVs in China have continuously been in the very forefront of scholarly interest, empirical research on success factors of IJVs in other transitional market economies such as e.g., the Russian Federation (Russia) is rather neglected. Thus, this paper aims at filling the research gap by rigorously selecting and categorizing relevant publications on success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs. Based on a comparative assessment with prior research on success determinants of Sino-Foreign IJVs propositions are deduced for further research on Russian-Foreign IJVs. In doing so, our synopsis draws upon both, fundamental criticism regarding IJV research in general and recent appraising looks on key success factor research of Sino-Foreign IJVs in specific.

Keywords: China; International Joint Ventures; Key Success Factors; Literature Review; Performance; Russia; Soviet Union

1. Introduction

Generally, International Joint Ventures (IJVs) constitute a specific type of strategic alliances and play a major role in today’s global economy since their number around the world has considerably increased (e.g., Luo & Park, 2004). Their distinctive nature as legally and economically separate organizations partially held by parent organizations from different countries allows for shared ownership, control and assets as well as resource contribution (Geringer & Hebert, 1989; Pfeffer & Nowak, 1976; Shama, 1997; Hitt, Dacin, Levitas, Arregle, & Borza, 2000; Makino, Chan, Isobe, & Beamish, 2007; Sooreea, Sharma, & Luong, 2012). IJVs offer economic advantages for instance with regard to market entry and international expansion strategies. As they are established by mutual agreement between independent companies with varying backgrounds, IJVs may be of strategic advantage when combining localized knowledge, skills and systems with foreign financial and technological resources (e.g., Shama, 1997; Sooreea et al., 2012).

At the same time, however, IJVs also invoke strategic disadvantages resulting from the joint management or cultural dissimilarity among the parental organizations. Thus, poor economic performance as well as a rather high failure and termination rate of IJVs are recorded in the literature frequently leading to the dissatisfaction of all parties involved (e.g., Li, Xin, Tsui, & Hambrick, 1999; Hennart & Zeng, 2002). Subsequently, research on success factors for managing IJVs is an important research stream of International Management (IM) and International Business (IB) (e.g., Parkhe, 1993; Nippa & Beechler, 2013; Park & Ungson, 1997; Reus & Rottig, 2009). Yet, whereas success determinants of IJVs in markets such as China and partly India have continuously been in the very forefront of scholarly interest (e.g., Luo, 1997), empirical research on success factors of IJVs in other transitional and emerging market economies rather has been kept to the sidelines. This particularly proves true for Russia.

Since the late 1980s a significant number of IJVs in Russia has been established. However, the relevant literature highlights the comparatively high percentage of non-operational IJVs and the potential risk of IJV failure in Russia (e.g., Fey, 1995a; Cattaneo, 1992; Barnes, Crook, Koybaeva, & Stafford, 1997). Indeed, examples in the Russian energy sector pinpoint managerial challenges relating to the operation of IJVs. Whereas
the German oil and gas company *Wintershall* has successfully set up three joint ventures in Russia since 1990, the Russian-British joint venture *TNK-BP* was confronted with many conflicts prior to its acquisition by the state-controlled oil company *Rosneft* in March 2013 (Wintershall, 2013; Webb, 2008).

Against this background our paper attempts to answer the following three research questions: (a) what is the state-of-the-art of key success factor research on Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs; (b) which key impacts and determinants are attributed in academic research to successful Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs?; and (c) which differences and similarities in research on key success factors between Russian-, Soviet- and Sino-Foreign IJVs can be identified?

The paper is organized as follows: After explaining the methodological two-steps-approach applied in order to select and categorize all relevant articles, the next section provides a comprehensive investigation and evaluation of profile, rigor and content of existent research on key success factors of IJVs in Russia. Thereby, we compare our findings on Russian- and Soviet Foreign IJVs with prior research on key success factors for Sino-Foreign IJVs (Robson, Leonidou, & Katsikeas, 2002; Nippa, Beechler, & Klossek, 2007) in order to detect similarities and differences. Finally, the discussion part of the paper leads to several propositions and implications for further research, while limitations relating to our study are summarized, too.

2. Methods

In order to create a solid basis for deducting hypotheses and propositions for further developing theory and for discussing implications, relevant research articles have been selected and categorized carefully. Our methodological approach encompasses two basic parts, namely the selection of research articles with high relevance as well as the categorization and evaluation of a specified number of research articles. While basically referring to acknowledged methods such as content and text analysis (e.g., Jormanainen & Koveshnikov, 2012; Berning & Holtbrügge, 2012) we are also adjusting them to the benefit of our research questions mentioned above.

With regard to the identification and selection of highly relevant research articles the two databases *Business Source Complete* and *Academic Search Premier* offered by *EBSCOhost* were used. Research articles on IJVs and strategic alliances in Russia and the Soviet Union, respectively, have been looked for by applying several, subject-related as well as generally conceivable keywords. This initial search focused on the following eight internationally recognized, peer-reviewed and empirically-oriented top journals: *Academy of Management Journal*, *Academy of Management Review*, *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *Management International Review*, *Journal of International Business Studies*, *(The Columbia) Journal of World Business* as well as *Organization Science* and *Strategic Management Journal*. We abstained from defining any publication period and finally expanded our search also to lower-ranked and non-peer-reviewed journals as the initial list of relevant publications identified in the aforementioned highly reputed journals was comparatively low. By excluding dissertation abstracts, working papers, book chapters, periodicals and book reviews a total of 82 research articles has been identified of which 73 research articles relate to a certain extent to IJVs in Russia and the former Soviet Union, respectively, as well as nine research articles to strategic alliances in Russia.

At the next step of the selection process we screened the title, abstracts (if available) as well as the introductory and concluding remarks. In cases of uncertainty regarding the topical fit the entire research article was proof-read. As a result 36 articles of formerly 82 articles were identified as appropriate for further analysis.

Subsequently, those research articles were selected that are both, empirically-oriented while at the same time elaborating on key success factors for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs. By differentiating between qualitative and quantitative research further fine-graining of the sample size helped to ensure the comparability with both research on key success factors in general and critical success determinants for Sino-Foreign IJVs in specific. As only two research articles on Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs explicitly refer to theoretical notions of key success factors (Rosten, 1991; Fey, 1996) the analysis of our sample involved some peculiarities. The majority of publications had to be interpreted through deriving connotations relating to key success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs on a suggestive level as the majority of both empirical-qualitative and empirical-quantitative research articles reveal primarily indirect, thus implicit expressions and allusions to key success factors. In order to avoid false negatives, we applied a wide range of words, literal variations and combinations of the main technical terms *performance*, *profitability*, *success*, *competitiveness*, *survival*, *efficiency*, *effectiveness* and *termination* or *exit*. As a result, the sample size of empirical publications on key success factors for an in-depth analysis included 19 research articles.
The second step of our methodological approach encompassed the categorization and evaluation of the finally selected 19 research articles. Hence, we applied the widely recognized method of content analysis which was already used by prior research (Jormanainen & Koveshnikov, 2012). According to Duriaux, Reger, & Pfarrer (2007) we base our categorization and subsequent investigation of key success factors for IJVs in Russia and the former Soviet Union on two major levels of content: First, the level of manifest content and, second, the level of latent content. Whereas the former primarily focuses on text statistics the latter aims at revealing enclosed information, underlying assumptions and deeper meanings (Duriaux et al., 2007). Furthermore, both levels of analysis were differentiated into several categories/groups and sub-categories based on a recent critique regarding key success factor research for Sino-Foreign IJVs (Nippa et al., 2007), helping to align the respective findings and to foster a comparative assessment between Russian- and Sino-Foreign IJVs. The further are in line with the pattern of methodologies applied in other recent reviews in the field of IB/IM (e.g., Berning & Holtbrügge, 2012).

At the level of manifest content the following eight categories which consist of 49 sub-categories are differentiated: (1) focus, (2) formalities, (3) success-related area of research interest, (4) theoretical lens, (5) methodology, (6) operationalization, (7) data, and (8) targeted industry sector. As regards the analysis of the latent content we summarized 12 sub-categories into three overarching categories/groups: (1) contributions, (2) level of analyses, and (3) implications suggested by the respective author(s). Based on these categories/groups each of the 19 research articles has been analyzed thoroughly in order to explore theoretical/conceptual, methodological and practical contributions as well as a general rigor of research on key success factors for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs.

The comparative assessment of key success factors identified for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs with those of Sino-Foreign IJVs applies findings from previous studies (Nippa et al., 2007). More specifically, we update this earlier research by identifying all research articles that were published between 1st January, 2006 and 31st May, 2013 on critical success factors for Sino-Foreign IJVs. In doing so, the top management journals enumerated above – except for ‘Academy of Management Review’ as this journal had not been included in the research methodology applied by Nippa et al. (2007) – were screened in order to establish a common and comparable basis. We identified further 19 research articles on Sino-Foreign IJVs within the seven top-ranked journals of which nine research articles proved to be relevant to the paper’s topic and which met the methodological selection criteria set up by Nippa et al. (2007). Likewise to the categorization of research on key success factors for Russian-Foreign IJVs those research articles on Sino-Foreign IJVs published between 2006 and 2013 were then analyzed and integrated into the existing pattern of key success factor research.

3. Results

Table 1 provides a brief summary of empirical research articles on key success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs identified and analyzed, thereby including findings of both, the manifest and the latent research content.
Table 1
Summary of analytical empirical research articles (N = 10).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Study (Date)</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Theoretical/Conceptual basis</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Season of data</th>
<th>Period of observation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Foreign partner’s country of origin</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Major contributions</th>
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</table>
| 1   | Arul et al. (1997) Russian Foreign IJVs | Partner selection criteria, explaining IJV success (1993) | Empirical qualitative | Semi-structured interviews (open-ended questions); Archival data (news clippings, annual reports, operation reports) | January – March 1996 | 9 companies | France, Italy, Spain | Consumer goods (consumer products, food processing), Industrial products (consumer and engineering services), Services (banking) | Analysis of individual and company motivations and needs, adoptive strategy of Russian partners | Analysis of obstacles and difficulties for Russian IJVs; Identification of critical determinants of successful IJV formation in Russia-foreign IJVs & Beamish |}

| 2 | Ayele et al. (2000) Russian Foreign IJVs | Negotiationrelated, interorganizational trust | Empirical qualitative | Semi-structured interviews (open-ended questions); Archival data (news clippings, annual reports, operation reports) | 1996 – 1997 | 17 Western organizations with Investments in Russian Joint Ventures | UK; I.S. (sample size: 18) | Pharmaceutical, Consumer products, Food, Mining | Analysis of behavioral, performance and social outcomes of IJV for Russian partners; Identification of critical determinants of successful IJV in Russia-foreign IJV |}


| 4 | Bihlmayer (1997) Russian Foreign IJVs | | Empirical qualitative | | | | Russia, Germany, Canada | Space launch industry | Analysis of barriers for IJV formation in Russia; Identification of national and external management of difficulties for Russian IJV partners |}

| 5 | Camino (1992) Russian Foreign IJVs | Acceleration process | Empirical qualitative | Interviews | | | Germany, Switzerland (sample size: 15) | Hotel, Retail, Manufacturing services, Services, Manufacturer manufacturing services; UK | Analysis and evaluation of a different framework of the IJV acceleration process in Russia-foreign IJV |}

| 6 | Dentsch & Pans (2007) Russian Foreign IJVs | External environment concept according to Acemoglu (1991); Conceptualization according to Denison (1992); International theory (1992); Organizational theory (1992); Marxist analysis; Five forces model of H. (1991); Behavioral theory (1992) | Empirical qualitative | Author’s information, Document analysis, Archival data (news clippings, telecommunications, External reports) | | 2 case studies (SLE, AD, AEROSPACE) | USA Aerospace industry | Analysis of external influences (environmental, political and economic changes) in the Russian foreign IJV industry |}

| 7 | Foy (1999a) Russian Foreign IJVs | | Empirical qualitative | Questionnaires, Interviews | July 1999 | 20 firms | Russia; UK; U.S.; Finland; Italy; Germany (sample size: 20) | Tourism, Retail | Analysis of Russian IJVs: Internal strategies (innovation and technology), marketing performance and reputation effects; The impact of external environment on the IJV success in Russia-foreign IJV |}

| 8 | Foy (1999b) Russian Foreign IJVs | | Empirical qualitative | Interviews | | | North America (36); Canada, Italy | Restaurants, Consulting and marketing services, Real estate, Equipment and electronics components production (sample size: 36) | Determination of factors for the design and management of IJV success in Russia-foreign IJV |}


| 10 | Foy & Bowtrak (1999) Russian Foreign IJVs | Inter-IJV conflict | Empirical qualitative | Semi-structured interviews (open-ended questions); Questionnaires | December 1993 – February 1996 | 40 firms | GB; US; Finland, Canada | Service sector | Analysis of inter-IJV conflict, Determinants of IJV success; The effect of IJV conflict on the performance of Russian IJV |}


3.1. Classification of findings regarding the manifest content

Timing and placement of publications

Relevant research on Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs spans the period from 1989 to 2013. The overall amount of research articles is comparatively low. Table 1 shows that the majority of research articles focuses on Russian-Foreign IJVs while three publications (16%) refer to IJVs in the former Soviet Union (Nigh & Smith, 1989; Nigh, Walters, & Kuhlman, 1990; Rostow, 1991). Whereas 13 research articles were published between 1st January, 1989 and 31st December, 1999, this number dropped significantly after the turn of the millennium. In fact, between 1st January, 2000 and 31st May, 2013 only six publications on key success factors for Russian IJVs were to be found in academic journals. This represents a decrease of almost 50% within the last 13 years compared to the 10-year-period between 1989 and 1999.

As regards the coverage among highly reputed, top-ranked management journals findings show striking differences between research on Russian-, Soviet- and Sino-Foreign IJVs. In accordance with Figure 1 only two research articles on key success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs were published in one of the screened journals, namely ‘(The Columbia) Journal of World Business’ (Nigh and Smith, 1989; Nigh et al., 1990) in the years between 1989 and 2013. At the same time, however, the number of research articles on key success factors of Sino-Foreign IJVs already yielded to 25 in those top management journals between 1991 and 2013. Assuming a far higher number of research articles on Sino-Foreign IJVs also in less-ranked and even non-empirically journals our sample of 19 publications identified in both top- and less-ranked management journals reinforces the generally low quantity of existing research on IJVs in Russia.

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### Table 1

Summary of analytical research articles (N = 19) (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Study (Date)</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Theoretical/conceptual frame</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Sources of data</th>
<th>Period of observation</th>
<th>Sample size</th>
<th>Foreign partner's country of origin</th>
<th>Industry</th>
<th>Major contribution(s)</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nigh &amp; Smith 1999</td>
<td>Foreign IJVs</td>
<td>Empirical/quantitative</td>
<td>Questionnaires</td>
<td>19 firms</td>
<td>N. America; Asia (sample of: 34 firms)</td>
<td>Technology sector; Manufacturing; Services; Retail; Distribution; Finance; Restaurant; Travel; Leisure; Tourism</td>
<td>Evaluation of IJVs and interfirm cooperation in Russian Foreign IJVs in the energy sector; Assessment regarding the impact of economic sanctions and political tensions on Russian and foreign partners</td>
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<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Nigh et al. 1990</td>
<td>Foreign IJVs</td>
<td>Empirical/quantitative</td>
<td>Interviews</td>
<td>May 1997 – October 1999</td>
<td>US; Canada; Europe; Asia</td>
<td>Service sector; Manufacturing; Retail; Distribution; Finance; Restaurant; Travel; Leisure; Tourism</td>
<td>Analysis of the first US-Foreign IJV in the textile industry and the impact of US sanctions on IJV performance and partner reputation</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Nigh et al. 1991</td>
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### Table 2

Summary of analytical empirical research articles (N = 19) (cont.)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Study (Date)</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Theoretical/conceptual frame</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
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**Notes:**
- **Table 1:** Summary of analytical empirical research articles (N = 19) (cont.)
- **Table 2:** Summary of analytical empirical research articles (N = 19) (cont.)
- **Table**: Summary of analytical empirical research articles (N = 19) (cont.)
- **Notes:** Table 1: Summary of analytical empirical research articles (N = 19) (cont.)
General profile of research articles

Findings reflect an inadequate profile of the studies regarding their formal structure and design, thereby obstructing a general evaluation of research on key success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs. As can be deduced from Table 1, more than 30% (six of 19 research articles) do not encompass an abstract. In addition, another 37% (seven) do not provide keywords, which results in difficulties and drawbacks regarding the classification of the main content. The majority of research articles do not stipulate any research gap despite the fact that all except for one research article (Teslenko, 1999) do explicate briefly on a single or several research question(s) and the primary objectives of the study. Eleven research articles (at least partially) involve a literature review and the description as well as discussion of relevant concepts and constructs, representing a share of 58%. Thus, we find that almost 80% (15 of 19) have to be characterized as containing more or less substantial deficits regarding formal scientific rigor compared to international standards.

Similarly, the majority of research articles (13 of 19; 68%) does not entail the definition of neither an IJV nor an IJV critical factor-related terminology and construct such as e.g., ‘success’ or ‘performance’. Only Banai, Chanin, & Teng (1999) refer to a basic definition of an IJV. Fey (1996) bases subsequent findings on critical determinants for Russian-Foreign IJVs on an explicit discussion of the term ‘key success factor’ whereas at Katsioloudes & Isichenko (2007) refer to the meaning of the term ‘success’, thereby accentuating certain difficulties in defining this construct arising from its subjective multidimensional nature. Three research articles explain briefly the scope of the term ‘IJV’ with regard to its application in the respective study. However, they prior fail to give a basic definition of the terminology itself (Fey & Beamish, 1999, 2000, 2001).

Rigor of investigations into key success factors

As mentioned earlier only two of 19 research articles (Fey, 1996; Rosten, 1991) explicitly refer to theoretical notions of key success factors. Furthermore, only three studies comprise the operationalization of the relationship between a specific success factor and IJV performance (Fey, 1996; Fey & Beamish, 2000, 2001). However, due to the interpretative-exploratory character of our analysis as described in the methods section, we find all 19 research articles to more or less evidently refer to critical factors of (un-)successful performance of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs. Factors and aspects that may be assigned to the sub-categories ‘IJV characteristics’, ‘relationship characteristics’, ‘strategic management’ and ‘risks and obstacles’ were found in all texts, though the scope of treatment among the relevant articles differs considerably. Critical determinants that relate to the sub-categories ‘motives’ and ‘control’ are seen to be important given their statistical coverage among the publications. On the contrary, aspects indicating ‘efficiency and effectiveness’ or ‘competitiveness’ of Soviet- and Russian-Foreign IJVs do not play an eminent role within the majority of analyzed research articles.
(63 % and 68 %, respectively). Quite interestingly, references relating to the ‘*failure and termination*’ of an IJV in Russia may even be found in 13 of 19 research articles (68 %). Yet, the way and scope of dealing with poor IJV performance again varies remarkably in the publications. Among our research articles, five research articles unconcealed reflect upon less successful Russian-foreign IJVs (Fey 1995b, 1996; Szymanski, 1998; Cattaneo, 1992; Teslenko, 1999). However, in this regard aspects relating to ‘*longevity and survival*’; thus persistence of a Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJV in a market are largely neglected in almost all research articles (16 of 19; 84 %).

**Empiricism**

Table 1 shows that our sample of 19 research articles encompasses seven empirical-quantitative publications (Banai et al., 1999; Fey, 1996; Fey & Beamish, 2000, 2001; Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007; Nigh et al., 1990; Szymanski, 1998) as well as twelve empirical-qualitative publications (Ariño, Abramov, Skorobogatykh, Rykounina, & Vila, 1997; Ayios, 2003; Bzhilianskaya, 1997; Cattaneo, 1992; Daniels & Perez, 2007; Fey, 1995a, 1995b; Fey & Beamish, 1999; Kobernyuk, Stiles, & Ellson, 2013; Nigh & Smith, 1989; Rosten, 1991; Teslenko, 1999). Rather surprising, not more than four publications (21 %) unfold information regarding the application and operationalization of independent, dependent and control variables (Fey, 1996; Fey & Beamish, 2000, 2001; Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007). The small amount of empirical-quantitative studies and the little number of studies focusing on the investigation of a clear key success factor-IJV performance-relationship pose significant challenges to the generalizability of research outcomes.

**Theoretical and conceptual foundation**

The majority of research articles focus briefly on a single rather than on several theories and constructs. At the same time, the profound application of a theoretical basis in the relevant research articles is meager. Six research articles (32 %) do not apply any theory (Bzhilianskaya, 1997; Fey, 1995a, 1995b; Nigh et al., 1990; Szymanski, 1998; Teslenko, 1999). The sample embraces one conceptual research article (Fey & Beamish, 2001). The very short description or even neglect of theories leads to an allegedly rather shallow character of the arguments of the theoretical framework regarding the remainder and findings in many cases. It is thus no surprise that the majority of scholars abstains from conceptually underpinning and mirroring their research or to tailor theory-based peculiarities of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs that go beyond repeatedly acknowledging the importance of single success factors such as e.g., trust or commitment. Furthermore, even among those authors who do apply theories and constructs only a few appraise the suitability and appropriateness of the theory and constructs applied on their particular research question(s). References to other concepts or even proposals and suggestions for theory building or further theory development regarding key success factor research and performance evaluation of Soviet- and Russian-Foreign IJVs by and large are lacking in our sample. In contrast to these critiques, however, several publications prove to be pleasant counter-examples (Ariño et al., 1997; Fey & Beamish, 2000, 2001).

**Data and consistency of methods applied**

The majority of research articles (16 of 19; 84 %) refer to primary data, namely semi-structured interviews with open-ended questions as well as questionnaires. Only two involve a combination of both primary and secondary data (Ariño et al., 1997; Daniels & Perez, 2007). Another three research articles do not specify source and type of the data used (Bzhilianskaya, 1997; Nigh et al., 1990; Teslenko, 1999). Many research articles also lack rigorous methodological clarifications as regards data investigation and conceptualizations. Exemplarily, the publications do not specify whether the IJV itself and/or the local and/or the foreign parent company are in the limelight of research. Thus, outcomes of e.g., interviews can sometimes not be attributed and differentiated clearly between all partners involved in a particular IJV. At the same time, many publications refer to the scientific rigor of the methods used including issues such as e.g., the description of evaluations of interviews and questionnaires, statistical analyses, likely sample biases due to e.g. overrepresentation of large or small firms as well as causalities between key success factors and performance or details regarding observation periods.

The sample of research articles analyzed also entails several longitudinal and case studies. It is noteworthy that Fey (1996) draws upon Parkhe’s (1993) fundamental criticism regarding prior IJV (performance) research. In doing so, he enriches research on Russian-Foreign IJVs by using the case study methodology as qualitative research method to identify four key success factors for Russian-Foreign IJVs on the basis of two successful and two less successful Russian-Foreign IJVs which were subsequently tested among 30 other Russian-Foreign IJVs for generalization purposes.
Samples

The sample sizes among all 19 research articles are comparatively low and range from two to 105 firms. Yet, there is one study elaborating in Russian perceptions of prospective IJVs based on a sample of 226 Russian managers (Banai et al., 1999). Furthermore, a large proportion of our sample relies on IJV parent firms originating from the United States of America. Despite this general dominance of North America and Western Europe in terms of the foreign partner’s country of origin there are also several studies that include IJV parent firms from Eastern European countries such as Bulgaria, Hungary, Ukraine and Croatia (Bzhilianskaya, 1997; Fey, 1995a; Szymanski, 1998) as well as from countries located in the Near East (Fey, 1995a) and Asia (Kobernyuk et al., 2013).

Findings clearly reflect the majority of research articles on key success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs to focus on several industry sectors (10 of 19; 53%) compared to eight publications with a single-industry perspective (42%). Among the latter three research articles focus on the service sector (Fey, 1999; Fey & Beamish, 2000, 2001). The Russian natural resource sector and space sector are addressed by two articles each (Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007; Teslenko, 1999; Bzhilianskaya, 1997; Daniels & Perez, 2007). In contrast, the manufacturing sector was chosen by only one research article (Szymanski, 1998). Regarding those research articles with a cross-industry perspective we can ascertain a large heterogeneity of sectors. Several areas such as e.g., consumer goods, automotive, IT and electronics production, financial services and restaurants, however, are often to be detected among the respective samples. If the manufacturing sector was chosen at all, then scholars seem to primarily lay emphasis on light manufacturing.

3.2. Classification of findings regarding the latent content

Similar to the analysis of the manifest content also the latent content of each research article was classified by means of certain categories as specified in Section 2 of the paper.

Contributions

All research articles analyzed refer to recognized and stimulating areas of IJV research, or in a more general sense, IB/IM research. The comprehensive analysis of each article revealed the following clusters of research foci on key success factors for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs: (1) ‘IJV attributes’; (2) ‘Local IJV parent attributes’; (3) ‘Foreign IJV parent attributes’; (4) ‘Relationship management between the IJV parents’; (5) ‘Relationship management between the IJV and the IJV parents (n.s. if local/foreign)’; (6) ‘Relationship management between the IJV and the local IJV parent’; (7) ‘Relationship management between the IJV and the foreign IJV parent’; (8) ‘Fit categories between the IJV parents’; (9) ‘Fit categories between the IJV and all IJV parents’; (10) ‘Fit categories between the IJV and the foreign IJV parent’; (11) ‘Fit categories between the IJV and the local IJV parent’; (12) ‘IJV governance’; and (13) ‘Environmental context in Russia and the Soviet Union’, comprising the sub-fields regulatory/political regime, industry/competition and culture.

Interest among scholars regarding these sources of possible key success factors for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs can be considered as fairly varying, also reflected in scope of treatment and depth of analysis within each single research article. Furthermore, on a meta-level, the analysis of these clusters is highly dependent on the specific perspective, revealing overlaps and similarities in terms of single success factors such as e.g., trust. Based on the framework developed by Nippa et al. (2007), Figure 2 illustrates the quantitative amount of studies per key success factor cluster for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs.
Level of analysis

All research articles contribute factors and issues relevant to the micro-, thus IJV firm-level. Furthermore, the investigation of the particular Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJV and/or its relations with its parent companies is often linked to the macro-, thus environmental and contextual level in Russia and the Soviet Union, respectively. This includes issues such as e.g., the perceived riskiness of foreign investment in Russia and the former Soviet Union, Russia’s peculiarities as a transitional economy with a different business culture or little sound institutional development as well as a generally high inoperativity or failure rate of IJVs (Bzhilianskaya, 1997; Daniels & Perez, 2007; Fey, 1995a; Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007; Kobernyuk et al., 2013; Nigh & Smith, 1989; Nigh et al., 1990; Rosten, 1991; Teslenko, 1999). The research articles also involve very different perspectives, such as an evaluation of IJV performance solely from the Russian partner’s viewpoint or from the perspective of US parent companies (e.g., Banai et al., 1999; Szymanski, 1998; Nigh & Smith, 1989).

Implications suggested by respective author(s)

Many studies are of descriptive-explanatory character due to only little hypotheses development and operationalization. Thus, they resemble guidelines resulting in a remarkable number of managerial and practical implications of the respective author(s) intended to provide practical advises and insights into (successfully) designing and managing an IJV in Russia. Given the rather low number of claims laid to generalizable findings, yet, the scope of actual usefulness and efficacy of these advise should likely be considered unexplored so far.

Only four research articles suggest further research avenues (Ariño et al., 1997; Fey & Beamish, 2000, 2001; Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007), which is rather surprising given that the research field of IJVs in Russia is
premature. One article even does not derive any suggestions at all, neither practical/managerial nor scholarly implications (Teslenko, 1999), thus hardly qualifying for scientifically serious in-depth analysis.

Based on these findings regarding the manifest and latent content of key success factor research on Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs a detailed investigation of critical success determinants was exercised. This will be in the foreground of the paper’s subsequent section. As the paper also attempts at providing a short comparative assessment of findings on key success factors for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs with earlier research on Sino-Foreign IJVs the number of highly relevant research articles identified yielded to 44 publications. A chronological overview of the research articles including the respective places of publication can be obtained from the Appendix.

3.3. A literature-based probe into key success factors of Soviet- and Russian-Foreign IJVs

Following from the development of the 13 different overarching clusters outlined in the previous section, a variety of possible success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs has been identified. While briefly referring to each of these clusters we explicate on certain particular success determinants of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs. At the same time the derived suppositions are by no means considered either to be exclusive or to be exhaustive, thus might be subject to change and amendments.

3.3.1. IJV attributes

Work on key success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs that addresses certain industries, the location of the IJV, the number of parents as well as the internal and external management of the IJV may be assigned to the cluster ‘IJV attributes’.

Sphere of investment/activity and industry

Nigh et al. (1990) underline a relatively higher number of IJVs in the service sector of the then-USSR which likely might take advantage of the country’s cultural, historical and natural peculiarities in their business plans.

Location

Bzhilianskaya (1997) links the location of the IJVs to their mindsets, thereby stipulating that especially IJVs located outside Russia’s main centers are of a more conservative mentality with primarily rational attitudes towards a possible Western business partner. Contrary, Szymanski (1998) emphasizes that IJVs outside Moscow simply seem to lack opportunities and good conditions (e.g., infrastructure) to meet, maintain and cultivate business partnerships at an economically feasible level. The analysis also revealed that a close geographic location of the IJV and its Russian parent company was considered beneficial for resource transfer and the diminution of political interferences.

Number of partners

Nigh et al. (1990) set up the relation between an increase of know-how on the part of the foreign (US) company regarding ways of forming an IJV in the then-USSR and the decrease of frequent multiple local (then-Soviet) partners. However, based on congruous assessments on the part of both Russian and foreign companies involved in IJVs in the Russian oil and gas sector, a recent study explores the number of parents to be of less importance for IJV success (Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007).

IJV internal management and design

Scholars pay largely attention to the internal management and design of the IJV, thereby focusing on corporate, organizational and business culture issues. Rosten (1991) highlights the necessity of sensitivity and an active management of cultural differences during the entire project, thereby suggesting the incorporation of different values of the then-USSR into the IJV’s strategy in order to be successful. Similarly, Cattaneo (1992) proposes the need to integrate at least two not only corporate and national cultures but also economic cultures. As the latter might be very different in case of a Russian-Foreign IJV she regards this to be a specific characteristic of an IJV in Russia. In addition, for the acculturation process to be successful within the Russian-Foreign IJV, it requires a unanimous agreement on the approach chosen between both partners (Cattaneo, 1992). It might be seen somewhat alarming, however, that Russian companies involved especially in IJVs in the Russian oil and gas sector are seen to assess corporate culture less important for IJVs to succeed (Katsioloudes &
Furthermore, the sensitivity to and understanding of differences relating to an optimal, effective management of an IJV in Russia compared to companies in other (namely Western) parts of the world is also acknowledged to be decisive for a successful endeavor (Fey, 1995b). Equally to Rosten (1991) also Fey (1995a, b) proves the significance of strategic planning, namely contingent planning, and of strategic business plans with clearly defined performance objectives for a Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJV. At the same time, Fey (1995a) states that the Russian managers he interviewed seem to be mainly ignorant of this approach. Rather, the managers were assessed to act short-term simply focusing on the survival of the particular IJV. Fey (1995a) further found a lack of knowledge regarding elements of corporate planning (e.g., mission statement) and culture and the necessity of communicating the management goals to employees. Hence, he concludes that pro-active training of Russian managers, abolition of hierarchical and directive management structures predominant in the Soviet system, empowerment of employees, and the furthermore of horizontal information exchanges are important preconditions for successful Russian-Foreign IJV (Fey, 1995a, 1996). In addition, he highlights the importance of placing permanent expatriates within the Russian-Foreign IJV as this will lead to improved learning and, subsequently, a better understanding of the country’s peculiarities by the foreign parent firm (Fey, 1995b). Furthermore, repeatedly stated deficits in mutual understanding resulting from poor language and communication skills (e.g., Bzhilianskaya, 1997) indicate underlying cultural aspects to be of major importance for a successful Russian-Foreign IJV. The study of Fey & Beamish (2001) claims that the organizational climate of a Russian-Foreign IJV should be similar to that of its foreign parent company. Otherwise, higher monitoring costs on the part of the foreign parent company due to the relative geographic distance might occur, which have a negative impact on the overall performance of the Russian-Foreign IJV. An earlier publication of both authors re-confirms this finding by ascertaining that organizational climate similarities between the IJV and its foreign parent firm likely reduce the emergence of inter-party conflicts (Fey & Beamish, 2000). A few research articles (e.g., Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007; Fey, 1995a; b; Cattaneo, 1992) refer to underlying management philosophies (e.g., perceived importance of profit-making; awareness of competition and quality; decentralization regarding decision-making; individualistic vs. collectivistic management approaches) and the implementation of core strategies (e.g., backward integration; profit-sharing programs), which are assumed to influence the IJV’s performance. Exemplarily, the study of Katsioloudes & Isichenko (2007) finds decentralization of decision-making systems to be a determinant of only very little relevance to both Russian companies’ and foreign partners’ evaluation of IJV key success factors. It identifies the factor to be a specific cultural artifact of the country, linking it to the country’s still ongoing transformation processes (Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007). In addition, trust building within the IJV itself is considered to be decisively important. According to the study of Ayios (2003), a high level of trust is likely to be detected in cases of functional competence transfer on Russian IJV managers and the furthermore of interpersonal, skills-related management. At the same time, the study indicates that managers especially of technological IJVs should be aware and mitigate the possible occurrence of imbalances between managerial and technical competences among foreign and Russian IJV managers as they may likely decrease mutual respect and, thus, the quality of cooperation between partners. It seems crucial for an IJV to succeed when each of the partners proactively adjusts common management practices (e.g., interpersonal and monitoring approach), thereby avoiding any unilateral adaptations or impositions (Ayios, 2003). Though trust is also ranked among the top five IJV success factors in the study of Katsioloudes & Isichenko (2007) findings show that especially Russian companies involved in an IJV seem to pay less attention to this factor than their foreign counterparts.

**IJV external management**

Bzhilianskaya (1997) points to the relevance of international standards or national policies for the successful external management of an IJV. Especially maintaining and fostering operational capabilities of IJVs in the Russian space sector may be hampered by barriers arousing from regulations implemented in the foreign parents’ country of origin.

### 3.3.2. IJV parent attributes

Success factors such as each parent’s primary objectives and resource contributions, thereby implicitly alluding to the importance of goal congruence and complementarity of parent firms’ assets can be assigned to the foci ‘Local IJV parent attributes’ and ‘Foreign IJV parent attributes’.
Motivations and expected benefits

Contributions which specify attributes of local (Russian) parent firms show striking similarities regarding the enumeration of motivations to establish a likely successful IJV, thereby encompassing issues such as e.g. expected access to foreign (Western) capital, technology and products as well as acquiring management skills and knowledge (Fey, 1995a, b; Szymanski, 1998; Daniels & Perez, 2007). Likewise, intentions of foreign parents show strong resemblance among relevant literature, comprising e.g. access to the country’s large market and low operational costs. In addition, making use of the local knowledge of the Russian partner is seen to be a major driver for IJV formation. By referring to IJVs in the Russian aerospace sector Bzhilianskaya (1997) and Daniels & Perez (2007) point to the foreign parents’ interest in gaining access to Russian high technology components. At the same time, IJVs in this particular industry seem to serve strategic and political purposes of foreign investors, namely obtaining special know-how and monitoring Russia’s ambitions regarding respective –global– industry programs (Bzhilianskaya, 1997).

Experience

Research articles ascertain a lack of general interest and understanding among Russian companies in coping with foreign businesses to be detrimental for forming an IJV (Nigh et al., 1990; Szymanski, 1998). As regards foreign companies, the literature highlights the relevance of prior experience of doing business in Russia and the Soviet Union on the –objective– assessment of political risks (Nigh & Smith, 1989).

Size

According to Nigh et al. (1990) predominantly small firms from both, Russia and foreign countries are prone to form IJVs due to systemic circumstances in Russia and advantageous firm capabilities of SMEs contrasting those of MNEs.

Resource contributions and commitment

Each parent’s resource contribution is seen to stipulate critical success determinants for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs, though the assessment highly depends on the respective industry sector chosen (Arino et al., 1997). As regards technological and financial contributions, findings revealed somewhat contradictory assessments of critical resources depending also on the perspective applied (e.g., Bzhilianskaya, 1997 vs. Szymanski, 1998). Furthermore, the significance of mutual understanding of each partner’s concise role as well as dissimilar resource contribution is highlighted, thereby allegedly stipulating overarching success factors for both local (Russian) and foreign parent firms (Fey, 1996; Fey & Beamish, 2001).

Perceived challenges and obstacles

Some research articles provide fairly comprehensive descriptions of factors perceived by each of the parent companies to likely impact negatively on the IJV success (e.g., Nigh et al., 1990; Rosten, 1991; Fey, 1996; Szymanski, 1998). Critical aspects relate to e.g., convertibility of the ruble, investment delays, little enthusiasm and –cultural– sensitivity as well as competitive disadvantages due to the loss of managerial, technological and financial resources. At the same time, against the background of the country’s dynamic environment, it seems somehow astonishing that the investigation of risk assessment and management systems installed by Russian companies has been neglected among scholars so far.

Performance expectations and evaluations

Findings reveal fundamentally deviating management philosophies and strategies regarding the performance evaluation on the part of local (Russian) and foreign parent companies. Whereas Russian companies consider financial profit to be most important, their foreign counter-parts value sales and market share highest (Nigh & Smith, 1989; Fey, 1995a). Likely differences in short- and long-term orientation between Russian and foreign companies also may impact on the success of the IJV (Szymanski, 1998; Fey, 1995a).

3.3.3. Relationship management between the IJV parents

Dissatisfaction and conflicts

Several research articles focus on factors relating to the dissatisfaction and conflict between both the foreign and the local IJV parent company. For instance, Cattaneo (1992) explicates on three central reasons for conflicts between IJV parent companies likely to impact negatively on IJV performance. Whereas the first cause relates to
a strong business, rather than company, market and competition orientation among Russian managers, the second reason for conflict encompasses differences in management practices on the part of both sides (e.g., management decentralization; context-specific adaptation of managerial attitudes and organizational structures). In addition, different perspectives on the IJV approach, expectations and contributions stipulate the third major source of conflict between the IJV parent firms (Cattaneo, 1992). Research conducted by Fey (1995a) finds that the country’s environmental dynamism and framing conditions (e.g., bureaucracy), differing objectives, under-investment of the project and little attention paid by especially the foreign partner to be further significant sources of dissatisfaction likely leading to the failure of the Russian-Foreign IJV, too. Moreover, Ariño et al. (1997) highlight the likely causality between cultural and operational differences. Regarding the importance of effective conflict resolution strategies two research articles (Szymanski, 1998; Teslenko, 1999) briefly refer to the –practical– relevance of the Arbitration Institute of the Stockholm Chamber of Commerce (SCC).

Partner selection

Factors relating to the selection of an appropriate partner firm are seen to be crucially important for the IJV success (Fey, 1995b; Cattaneo, 1992). However, the evaluation of the partner’s abilities and motives seem to pose serious challenges to foreign companies (Rosten, 1991). At the same time, Rosten (1991) emphasizes the significance of the then-Soviet partner to meet the foreign company’s high expectations relating to operational capabilities, handling of both foreign management/expatriates and local staff while promoting local activities. These expectations can be amended by the research of Ariño et al. (1997) who identified the Russian partner’s business reputation, spheres of political influence, long-term orientation, stability and strong industry position as additional selection criteria of major importance for foreign companies. However, by reflecting on a merely Russian perspective, Szymanski (1998) found that the partner selection is aggravated by disadvantageous locations, a lack of prior experience in international alliances and deficits regarding mutual understanding. Despite the recommended selection of a partner with similar organizational climate, emphasis is also laid on the willingness of intense, regular communication between the partners especially in the beginning of the partnership and commitment in order to promote a successful IJV (Fey & Beamish, 2001; Fey, 1995b; Ariño et al., 1997). Especially the latter is of relevance as only an understanding of the sometimes rather different goals and objectives between the partners, a clear arrangement about their actual achievement and each partner’s role in the collaboration are seen to likely lead to a successful Russian-Foreign IJV (Fey, 1995b).

Trust, trustworthiness and commitment

Identifying the partner’s trustworthiness is seen to be decisively important, yet hard to assess. Interestingly, Ariño et al. (1997) examined a generally low level of trustworthiness on the part of both sides based on different grounds (e.g., negative impressions of foreign companies during early transition years; scepticism and reservations araising from Russia’s history). Nevertheless, particularly the attitude of the Russian partner to comply with a given word seemed to raise some concern. At the same time, the Russian partners lacked an understanding of the foreign (Western) mentality regarding the relation between ownership rights and qualitative vote on decision-making power (Ariño et al., 1997). Not surprisingly, trust, enthusiasm and long-term commitment on the part of both partners to the joint project between the parent firms are seen to be highly significant in the context of successful Russian-Foreign IJVs. Thereby, scholars do not refer only to the significance of direct, personal contacts with Russian managers and certain organizational issues (e.g., openness towards consent-based decision-making processes; alternative ways of conflict resolution) but also to an increased mutual forbearance as positive outcome of trust and long-term involvement (Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007; Cattaneo, 1992; Ariño et al., 1997; Fey, 1996). Trust-building processes between the IJV parent companies, however, might be hampered by considerable communication problems (Ariño et al., 1997).

Impacting external factors

Quite remarkably, one research article (Bzhilianskaya, 1997) also highlights a particular external influence on the relationship between the IJV parents firms. By drawing on IJVs in the Russian space-launch industry the moderating role of the Russian Space Agency is referred to as the Agency is seen to have a better comprehension of the foreign (Western) partner’s mindset (Bzhilianskaya, 1997).
3.3.4. Important success factors of the remaining clusters on relationship management

While trust is also considered to be a key success factors arousing within the cluster ‘Relationship management between the IJV and the IJV parent firms (n.s. if local/foreign)’ (Rosten, 1991; Fey, 1995b, 1996; Kobernyuk et al., 2013; Ariño et al., 1997; Daniels & Perez, 2007), other success factors address features and characteristics regarding the relationship itself such as organizational climate dissimilarities (Fey & Beamish, 2001). In addition, critical success determinants can be derived from the dissatisfaction and conflicts between all parties involved in an IJV (Fey & Beamish, 1999, 2000, 2001). With particular reference to the latter, single indications for specific conflict resolution mechanisms were to be found (Szymanski, 1998; Teslenko, 1999). When differentiating the cluster on relationship management further into the clusters ‘Relationship management between the IJV and the local IJV parent’ and ‘Relationship management between the IJV and the foreign IJV parent’, trust is unveiled to be the only overarching key success factor for all relationship management-based clusters so far (Fey, 1996).

3.3.5. Fit categories

‘Fit categories between the IJV parents’ – only – encompass the general concern for the compatibility of cultural aspects, management philosophies and partner perception (Banai et al., 1999). Besides, Ariño et al. (1997) find a similar size of the Russian partner and its product complementarity to enhance the (probability of successful) business collaboration. At the same time, it should be noted that the assessment of these success determinants fairly varied among particular industries (Ariño et al., 1997).

Constitutional and managerial factors determining the – successful – performance of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs resulting from ‘Fit categories between the IJV and all IJV parents’, ‘Fit categories between the IJV and the local IJV parent’ and ‘Fit categories between the IJV and the foreign IJV parent’ are largely neglected. As regards the focus of ‘Fit categories between the IJV and all IJV parents’ the study of Fey and Beamish (2001) concludes that the similarity of influence and control systems among all three parties involved in an IJV does not have substantial effects on IJV performance. By referring to the ‘Fit categories between the IJV and the local IJV parent’ we find one study (Fey & Beamish, 2000) to explore the effects of organizational climate dissimilarities between the IJV and its Russian parent company, namely the emergence of inter-party conflict. Surprisingly, the probability for conflicts is lower, if the IJV and the Russian parent firm have dissimilar organizational cultures. This is reasoned primarily with the geographical proximity between the Russian-Foreign IJV and its Russian parent company helping to foster mutual understanding as well as the historically-grown capability of Russians to cope with differing and continuously changing circumstances (Fey & Beamish, 2000). In terms of the cluster ‘Fit categories between the IJV and the foreign IJV parent’, two studies (Fey & Beamish, 2001; Kobernyuk et al., 2013) point to the significance of a similar organizational climate/culture between the IJV and its foreign parent firms as elaborated above. Kobernyuk et al. (2013) highlight the importance of further qualifying the IJV management and its employees in adapting a market-oriented perspective and primarily Western management and organizational philosophies for each of the IJV’s departments. Moreover, the awareness and necessity of trust-building efforts in order to establish a fit between the Russian-Foreign IJV and its foreign parent company is again underlined (Kobernyuk et al., 2013). Furthermore, both the Russian-Foreign IJVs and their foreign parent companies seem to value financial profit as most important determinant for IJV performance assessment followed by market share (Fey, 1995b).

3.3.6. IJV governance

As regards the analysis of critical success determinants evolving from the ‘IJV governance’ one study points to a higher relative bargaining power of foreign (US) companies in case the IJV is – considered to be – located outside of the country’s major centers such as Moscow. Consequently, it seems to be more likely that foreign companies try to acquire the majority ownership (Nigh et al., 1990). By focusing on the significance of an actual influence rather than ownership issues, Rosten (1991) determines an active role of the foreign company to be decisive for overall IJV success. Additionally, another publication (Kobernyuk et al., 2013) highlights the relationship between an IJV’s governance, its organizational culture and the company’s overall success. Similarly to the findings of Fey & Beamish (2001) mentioned above, the beneficial impact is reasoned by the takeover of the foreign parent’s organizational culture in the Russian-Foreign IJV. In addition, the study connects this transfer with the foreign company’s majority stake in the IJV. Contrary, in case of a Russian majority ownership, Kobernyuk et al. (2013) identify the takeover of the Russian parent’s organizational culture to affect the perceived IJV performance negatively. However, the research conducted by Szymanski (1998)
reveals rather opposite assessments: Russians perceive IJV performance to be good (low) in case the Russian company (foreign company) owns the majority stake. The author further found that the foreign partner’s majority control of management responsibility is subsequently followed by a deterioration of perceived managerial competence among their Russian partners (ibid., 1998).

3.3.7. Environmental context in Russia and the Soviet Union

Scholars emphasized critical determinants relating to both, the country’s internal conditions as well as foreign relationships. Nigh et al. (1990) point to the necessity of prospectively stable commercial and financial relations between the US and the then-Soviet Union, ascertaining a relation between political risks and the amount and type of IJVs established. With particular reference to IJVs in the high-technology sector changes in US trade policy are identified to pose major risks for IJVs in the then-Soviet Union (Nigh and Smith, 1989). Related to this, Daniels & Perez (2007) find congruent objectives of both the Russian and the US government to have beneficial impact on the formation of IJVs. At the same time, unexpected consequences following from only slowly proceeding economic and institutional transformation processes as well as generally unfavorable circumstances (e.g., unavailability of supporting infrastructure; lack of suppliers; less skilled workforce; bureaucratic and inextiricable decision-making processes; unprofitable currency convertibility) may contribute negatively (Nigh & Smith, 1989; Nigh et al., 1990; Bzhiianskaya, 1997). The same proves true for the country’s historically-grown economic and political systems and ethnic conflicts in several of the country’s regions constituting major obstacles as regards the foreign investment climate, the emergence and understanding of primarily Western business concepts (Nigh et al., 1990). Drawing on the country’s national and business culture as critical determinants, the recent study of Kobernyuk et al. (2013) exemplarily concludes with ascertaining a parallelism between persisting traditional values (e.g., rule culture) and the openness to change them towards more individualistic values among Russia’s transitional society. While considering this to be a specific feature of the country’s national –business– culture, the overall development seems to reflect imitation, learning and adaptation processes triggered from and shaped by foreign values. Consequently, providing respective training and operational management are seen to likely have a positive impact on the success of Russian-Foreign IJVs (Kobernyuk et al., 2013). Quite interestingly, the study conducted by Fey & Beamish (2001) does not evidence a relationship between dissimilarities in national culture to have effects on the performance of a Russian-Foreign IJV. At the same time, there might be some reason for concern as especially Russian companies assess national cultures to be of least significance for being key success factors of Russian-Foreign IJVs (Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007). Moreover, other research findings reveal fundamentally differing views on business and management concepts (e.g., company orientation; competition) between Russian and foreign companies likely to affect each partner’s exertion of joint responsibilities, the perception of key success factors and, hence, the overall IJV performance (Cattaneo, 1992; Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007). Main issues connected to the country’s internal legal conditions refer to a rather dynamic, unforeseen development of legislation and jurisdiction accounting for the poor performance of Russian-Foreign IJVs (Fey, 1995a). Two more studies focus on certain industry sector peculiarities likely to impact on the IJV performance. Exemplarily, by referring to complex and expensive product developments as it is the case for IJVs in the Russian aerospace industry, the study of Daniels & Perez (2007) outlines each company’s necessity of inter-firm collaboration with strong, reliable partners in order to maintain vertical and horizontal relations within this sector for sustaining competitive advantage.

3.4. Comparative assessment of findings with research on Sino-Foreign IJVs

Quite surprisingly, we discovered a generally rather high number of references to key success factors and many similar topics between Russian-, Soviet- on the one hand and Sino-Foreign IJVs on the other. In fact, the foci elaborated above generally may be seen in line with similar categories as developed by prior research on Sino-Foreign IJVs (Nippa et al., 2007). However, the explicitness, theoretical/conceptual scope and in-depth scientific investigation of success factors of particularly Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs by means of operationalization relationships are far less abundant compared to research findings on Sino-Foreign IJVs. Thus, the primarily qualitative research outcomes on success factors for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs do hardly allow for sufficient generalizations or cross-country comparisons with Sino-Foreign IJVs yet.

In contrast to research on critical success determinants of IJVs in China certain issues are largely neglected among relevant literature on Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs. With reference to the cluster ‘IJV attributes’ our
analysis has confirmed no treatment of a likely positive relationship between e.g. the coastal location of an IJV and its successful performance. Additionally, the length of operation, the age of the company and past performance of a Russian- or Soviet-Foreign IJV have not been analyzed qualitatively and investigated empirically among scholars by now. As regards the clusters ‘Local IJV parent attributes’ and ‘Foreign IJV parent attributes’ research on Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs has not yet emphasized success factors related to the strategy and resources of the IJV (e.g., timing of entry; strategic importance for the foreign parent; absorptive capacity). Similarly, aspects such as IJV-related strategies or resource variables that might arise from the ‘Fit categories between the IJV and all IJV parents’ or from the ‘Fit categories between the IJV and its local parent’ influencing the success of the Russian-Foreign IJV are largely disregarded in the text sample analyzed. In light of this, also key success factors other than trust (e.g., behavior, conflict) relating to the foci ‘Relationship management between the IJV and the local IJV parent’ and ‘Relationship management between the IJV and the foreign IJV parent’ have not been studied thoroughly yet. Likewise, the analysis of critical determinants relating to the cluster ‘Relationship management between the IJV and the IJV parents (n.s. if local/foreign)’ has not matured yet for both Russian-, Soviet- and Sino-Foreign IJVs. This especially proves true for issues such as e.g. the parent introduction or familiarity, the relationship age and the previous collaboration between the IJV parent companies. Unfortunately, other issues relating to the behavior of the IJV and its parent companies (e.g., personal attachment, procedural justice) were also not found to be treated at all in the 19 research articles on key success factors for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs analyzed. In terms of the cluster ‘IJV governance’ findings reveal that compared to prior research on Sino-Foreign IJVs the contractual design regarding e.g. term specificity or contingency adaptability as well as contract completeness may stipulate compelling avenues for further research. Lastly, similar to prior research on Sino-Foreign IJVs (Nippa et al., 2007), our investigation of research articles has revealed that critical determinants to be grounded in the ‘Environmental context in Russia and the Soviet Union’ such as industry or sales growth, structural opportunities in the specific industry, industry asset intensity and environmental hostility have not been analyzed in terms of performance evaluation of Russian-Foreign IJVs so far. Thus, these and other primarily external aspects might provide for interesting, additional research avenues when determining key success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs.

4. Discussion

Based on the in-depth analysis of relevant research articles, deriving important success determinants of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs as well as comparing it with research on Sino-Foreign IJVs several propositions for further research avenues emerge. These propositions may be divided into two main groups: The first group of propositions is based on findings regarding the general relevance of the topic and the formal theoretical, conceptual and methodological analysis. The second group particularly mirrors the contents analysis of research articles, thus drawing on key success factor-related propositions.

4.1. Suggestions relating to the topic’s general relevance and rigor of prior research

The relatively low number of publications on key success factor research for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs may on the one hand be due to a generally lacking interest among scholars regarding the topic of Russian IJVs or on the other hand might reflect or prove that – especially in comparison to China – IJVs as FDI mode are of minor practical relevance in Russia. Whatever the answer will be, the internationally evaluable literature on the topic is – both in terms of quantity and quality – far away from being sufficient for generalizable findings on success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs as well as for fruitful cross-country comparisons. In addition, there is only little topical recording of a likely changing current and past importance of IJVs in the Russian economy due to e.g., the country’s transition processes.

Thus, two central suggestions relating to a general prominence of the topic might be derived from this particular aspect for further research:

**Suggestion 1a:** A general interest of scholars in IJVs – and strategic alliances – in Russia is necessarily to be elevated. Next to the real examples of Russian-Foreign IJVs such as shown in the introductory section of the paper another strong incentive for arising scholar’s curiosity on the topic can be found in recent statements of the Russian government according to which the country intends to spur export-oriented technological
alliances (The Russian Government, 2013). It might be wise to support such developments by fostering more frequent, empirically-oriented publications in (top-ranked) management journals.

**Suggestion 1b:** We endorse research to investigate whether there is only little practical significance of IJVs in Russia at this stage, and, if so, whether such underrepresentation can be attributed to the assessment of generally critical foreign investment determinants in Russia (e.g., deterioration of international investment protection standards). We further encourage research to scrutinize whether a possibly low number of operational IJVs in Russia are accompanied with the emerging dominance of other modes of FDI such as e.g. WFOEs. Both research avenues would allow for a basic evaluation of the topic’s general relevance and for interesting comparisons with research on e.g., the role of environmental risks and the conversion of Sino-Foreign IJVs into WFOEs (Burgers, & Padgett, 2009; Puck, Holtbrügge, & Mohr, 2009).

Our findings also show that the majority of research is of empirical-qualitative character, yet without any claims laid to generalizability or conceptually sound description and analysis of case studies. Little attention is given to a thorough discussion and application of methods and techniques regarding the identification and assessment of critical success factors as suggested in the relevant literature. Furthermore, acknowledged theories and constructs to explain IJVs and their success such as e.g. transaction cost economics, resource-based view, and institutional theory are largely neglected. However, they might provide for interesting frames regarding a sufficient consideration of Russia’s environmental dynamisms or the importance of relational factors. The same proves true for a general explanation of FDI in Russia by means of relevant concepts such as e.g. Dunning’s eclectic paradigm. Thus, deriving assumptions, hypotheses and implications for theory building and development are by and large absent, which subsequently limits the authors’ to critically evaluate their research findings in light of theoretical constructs. Additionally, the rather superficial character of available Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJV case descriptions confirms prior fundamental criticism regarding research design on IJV performance. Yet, the sound in-depth analysis of cases can be considered inevitably necessary in order to foster theory development and theory building while at the same time drawing practically useful conclusions. Hence, the following suggestions for further research are given:

**Suggestion 2a:** IB/IM theory-based empirical-quantitative and empirical-qualitative research on key success factors of IJVs in Russia should be conducted. Especially process theories and increasing longitudinal studies will foster the quality of research. Literature in the IB/IM field on peculiarities of theory application in the context of Russia (and CEE in a more general sense) may serve as stimulus for innovative research questions, corroborating the general quest for more IJV theory development (e.g., Meyer, & Peng, 2005; Parkhe, 1993; Nippa, & Beechler, 2013).

**Suggestion 2b:** Similarly, further research is to embrace the valid identification and investigation upon the impact(s) of direct and indirect success factors on Russian-Foreign IJV performance, including the integration of likely causalities. Thereby, sound, theory-based operationalization of relevant independent, dependent and control variables are urgently needed, also accounting for a clear conception of the IJV parties, relations and stakeholders surveyed. Furthermore, prospective research might reappraise the few empirical-quantitative studies on key success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJV, augmenting replication rates and verification of subjacent scientific rigor.

**Suggestion 2c:** The demand for more investigations on clear relationships between key success factors and IJV performance also needs a rigorous utilization, shaping and further developing of the key success factor approach (e.g., Rockart, 1979; Boynton & Zmud, 1984; Leidecker & Bruno, 1984). Hence, further research on both, Russian- and Sino-Foreign IJVs has to apply more concisely qualitative research methods and the case study methodology as illustrated in the literature (e.g., Eisenhardt, 1989). We consider this to be crucially important for the longevity of the concepts themselves in the field of IJV research. In doing so, integrating more examples of IJV exit, termination or survival could yield interesting results.

Enlightening results from an increase in cross-sector investigations of success factors of Russian-Foreign IJVs are also expected. A particular emphasis should be laid on comparisons between studies on IJVs in, on the one hand, the Russian energy and service sector and, on the other hand, the Russian –light– manufacturing industry.
In addition, particular attention should be given to the question whether certain company types such as e.g., SMEs are more appropriate for an exploration of relationships between key success factors and IJV performance. Requesting more samples of Russian-Foreign IJVs with an adequate representation of SMEs from Russia and other (European) companies could be a promising research avenue. In light of this, Germany’s ‘Mittelstand’ and its attempts at entering and penetrating the Russian –manufacturing– market by means of IJVs might provide for fascinating reference points to further explore key success factors of Russian-Foreign IJVs. Alternatively, a comparison between IJV strategies in Russia implemented by large MNEs and those realized by SMEs likely might generate interesting, yet presumably diverse results.

Only little research relating to cross-cultural comparisons has been conducted when analyzing the performance of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs. This gap might be attributed to significant methodological and conceptual challenges following from such an approach. Against this background, we recommend the following:

**Suggestion 3a:** Further research on key success factors of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs may focus on comparisons between IJVs in Russia and those in other transitional economies. An alternative research path would be exploring the similarities and differences of IJVs in Russia and those in other resource-rich or large-domestic-market emerging economies. When including e.g., IJVs in China into the analysis – as done in this paper –, such a comparative analysis could resort to prior research (Buck, Filatotchev, Nolan, & Wright, 2000) picturing each country’s different historical and economic development for the deduction of profound assumptions and hypotheses on key success factor-IJV performance relationships both on the micro- and the macro-level of the IJV.

**Suggestion 3b:** It is further suggested to either continue to focus on IJV parent firms from US as done by prior research and to replicate existing studies. Another highly recommended option is to expand the view by including more IJV parent firms from Asian countries into the samples. Furthermore, we assume that further research might disclose interesting (comparative) insights when deploying several variations regarding the IJV’s local parent’s country of origin, thus not exclusively relying on IJVs in Russia with a Russian parent.

With regard to *Suggestion 3b* it is likely that cross-cultural comparisons of key success factors for IJVs might involve great merits when combining them with cross- or single-industry and/or -sector perspectives. Though rather time-consuming, threatened by difficult-to-access data and the most likely need for mixed research methods such complex, comparative analyses might result in the sound determination and justification of specific characteristics of Russian-Foreign IJVs. In addition, a rigorous research design could sufficiently yield in both, country- and sector-specific strategies for successfully establishing and managing IJV.

### 4.2. Contents-related suggestions

The success determinants of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs derived in the paper reflect great diversity inducing also recommendations for prospective research of great plurality. Due to formal restrictions of the paper we will, thus, concentrate on only a few selected proposals.

Existing literature on firm resources and characteristics of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs draws on a multitude of single factors. As many of the publications were published already several years ago reflecting the experience of early Western entrants it is doubtful whether the assumptions and conditions underlying these studies still exist in today’s Russia. Exemplarily, authors refer to a lack of knowledge, experience, and the incapability among Russian companies, specifically managers, to engage in business transactions with foreign partners drawing on the country’s general conditions and the location of IJVs (e.g., Nigh et al., 1990; Szymanski, 1998). Besides, scholars repeatedly refer to the integration of at least two *entirely* different businesses and management cultures regarding IJVs in Russia (e.g., Cattaneo, 1992). Thus, we end up with the following suggestion:

**Suggestion 4:** Future research on key success factors of Russian-Foreign IJVs should carefully assess the temporal development and adaptation of certain investment determinants, thereby adequately mirroring the results of proceeding transformation processes (e.g., liberalization processes in several industry sectors). We expect the growing number of foreign companies with prior business experience in Russia during the last two
decades to serve for interesting insights into successfully implementing and adapting IJV strategies being originated from primarily Western (US) value-driven perspectives.

Despite this fact, however, we may re-confirm the lasting existence of certain risks and obstacles arousing from the internal management of IJVs in Russia, namely serious communication problems due to e.g., deficits regarding foreign language skills and dissenting views on managerial values (both on individual/organizational and national levels). Next, studies have shown rather opposite—even contradictory—results while evaluating the role of certain relational and cultural success factors such as trust and commitment (e.g., Fey, 1996; Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007). Exemplarily, though Russian companies in the oil and gas sector assess commitment, monitoring and control as well as terms of contract and trust to be highly relevant for IJV success, they consider trust to be less important than commitment. What is even more, they do not particularly emphasize issues such as national and corporate cultures. At the same time, mainly Western view-centered publications repeatedly highlight the quest of Russian firms to gain access to private sector and management skills as well as foreign firms’ chances of transferring competences and of pro-actively implementing acculturation processes (e.g., integration), among others. Hence, we propose the following:

**Suggestion 5:** Prospective research may further clarify the assumed dualism of interorganizational/ interpersonal trust and long-term involvement of all parties involved in a Russian-Foreign IJV on the one hand as well as the role of monitoring/control and mutual adjustment of organizational structures and management practices on the other hand. Thereby, research may focus also on risks following from the lack of trust, trustworthiness and common understanding between the partners rooted in differing (corporate, individual and national) values and the likely negative impact of these obstacles on the efficacy of IJV objective and expectation achievement, inter-party knowledge flows, social relations as well as organizational development (e.g., innovative and technological capabilities; R&D activities). In light of this, it could also be interesting to identify grounds for the little importance assigned to cost management as success factor among foreign partners engaged in IJVs in the Russian oil and gas sector (Katsioloudes & Isichenko, 2007).

We also identified several publications that focus on causes of conflict and dissatisfaction between especially the parent firms of a Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJV. At the same time, however, only little research has already pointed to likely positive consequences following from conflict as well as the quest for a general sensitivity among foreign companies to open, namely consent-based approaches as regards conflict resolution involving Russian partners. Applying theories such as principal-agent, behavioral and social exchange theory may help to explain bargaining as well as negative emotions, conflict and opportunism following from e.g., asymmetric, hidden information among the parties involved in a Russian-Foreign IJV have not been applied by now. In addition, despite the rather high probability of failure, strategies relating to exit, termination and withdrawal as well as survival of Russian-Foreign IJVs have not been explored so far (Nemeth & Nippa, 2013). Hence, we further suggest:

**Suggestion 6:** As inter-party, namely intra-IJV, conflicts constitute a significant source for poor IJV performance, IJV failure and—intended/unintended—termination prospective research should focus on the further clarification as regards causes, types and actors involved in conflicts as well as patterns regarding resolution strategies (e.g., combination of or single strategies depending on the age of the collaboration and experience of the partner firms; efficacy of resolution strategies; short- and long-term effects of conflicts and little mutual forbearance). Accounting for a temporal perspective might also unveil interesting results from a conceptual viewpoint (e.g., embedding of the individuals’ perspectives and actions in an IJV; perceptions, roles and joint responsibilities of IJV top managers; organizational learning processes; restoring of trusting relationships; short-, mid- and long-term alteration of IJV strategies and IJV parent firms’ roles).

By now, only a few studies have been concentrating on issues relating to trustworthiness, reputation and mutual perception of both, the local (Russian) and the foreign partners. In addition, marginally low studies proved to account for mirroring Russian perspectives and expectations regarding (less) successful IJV formation and operation as well as further separate internationalization processes after the formation of an IJV. At the same time, however, commitment and joint efforts of both partners are repeatedly emphasized as crucially necessary for the successful accomplishment of the project. Next to this, Russian companies are seen to primarily
contribute e.g., knowledge and information about local market conditions and environmental circumstances in order to mitigate risks and to foster the performance and the sustained competitive advantage of the Russian-Foreign IJV. On the other hand, interestingly, less importance is placed on issues relating to strategic (contingency) planning among Russian partners. Thus, we propose the final research avenue:

**Suggestion 7:** Reflecting the ongoing transition processes in Russia we expect increased transfers of knowledge of former primarily Western management and organizational practices to have been likely affecting the understanding of each partner’s objectives, roles and competences. The same assumedly proves true for the adoption of mutual perceptions, criteria regarding partner selection and IJV design due to an increase in experience and know-how. An investigation regarding such changes and the dynamic transformation of IJV firm assets, including antecedents, drivers and impacts might reveal specific features of Russian-Foreign IJVs pointing to their competitiveness and embedding in a particular environmental, temporal context. Prospective research may focus on the permeability of foreign management approaches, the specificity and efficacy of intercultural communication and intercultural management to the Russian IJV context and its competitiveness.

To sum up, analyzing the multiple interconnectedness of success factors at the macro-level (e.g., emergence of formal/informal institutions; development of regulatory regime; availability of infrastructure in Russia’s remote regions; environmental friendliness or hostility) and at the micro-level (e.g., top management and employee qualifications; reputation and trustworthiness enhancement; corporate governance and corporate culture) from both a Russian and a foreign investor perspective may serve to foster the awareness towards peculiar success factors of Russian-Foreign IJVs.

5. Conclusion

In contrast to research on Sino-Foreign IJVs a comprehensive literature review, an in-depth deduction and analysis of key success factors relevant to Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs does not exist up to now. As the paper rigorously selects, categorizes and analyzes relevant publications it notably fills this research gap, providing for a profound state-of-the-art of internationally accessible scholarly literature on key success factors for managing Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs.

The exploration of key success factors for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs and their comparison with those of Sino-Foreign IJVs reveals similarities and differences. Exemplarily, congruence was to be found between the success factors deduced as regards the characteristics of the IJV and those of its parents for both Russian-, Soviet- and Sino-Foreign IJVs. The same proves true for selected critical determinants following from the relationship management between the IJV parents as well as between the IJV and its parent companies. Interestingly, key success factors arising from the fit between an IJV and its local parent firm as well as from the fit between an IJV and its foreign parent firm have not attracted much interest on both sides so far. On the contrary, success factors relating to control and ownership, thus governance of an IJV as well as the behavior of all parties involved in an IJV have been treated far less in the context of Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs than with regard to Sino-Foreign IJVs. At the same time, however, research on both Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs seems to have been more emphasizing single success factors which may evolve from the particular environmental context of an IJV than prior research on Sino-Foreign IJVs.

Recent criticism on IJV research at large and particularly Sino-Foreign IJVs reveals substantial deficits in terms of theoretical/conceptual, methodological and practical rigor (Nippa & Beechler, 2013; Nippa et al., 2007; Parkhe, 1993). The findings regarding the manifest and latent contents of research articles on Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs re-confirm the deficits and inconsistencies derived from research on IJVs in general and Sino-Foreign IJVs in particular. Perhaps mostly worrying, the research articles – except for the studies of Fey & Beamish (2000, 2001) – do not entail an extensive theory application for explaining key success factors of IJVs in Russia and the Soviet Union, respectively. Findings reveal the neglect of both general and Russia-specific IJV (or in a more general sense FDI) theory building and theory development. Thus, future research on this particular topic hypothetically encounters a wide range of chances and opportunities, thereby also taking into account certain peculiarities in the CEE context (e.g., development of institutional environment). Similar to prior research on Sino-Foreign IJVs we were to identify several deficiencies regarding the rigor of methods used (e.g.,
lack of back-translation and multiple informants). Findings also show a low number of empirical-quantitative studies and generalizable outcomes on success factors due to missing operationalization relationships.

The still exploratory character of research on IJVs in Russia and the Soviet Union reveals a rather descriptive, qualitative patchwork of single references to somewhat isolated key success factors. As shown in the discussion section of the paper future scholars are encouraged to further develop the existing caricature towards a more total, holistic view on the success (and failure) of IJVs in Russia. Prospective research is to account for a compilation between different factors determining the micro-level of the IJV, thus the IJV itself including its relations with its parent firms, as well as the macro-level, namely the embedding of the IJV in Russia’s environmental and institutional context. Likely interdependencies or causalities affecting the actions of the IJV, its performance and the longitudinal-oriented determination of success factors have not been of prime concern among scholars by now. Scholars should also critically prove the applicability of existing IB/IM theoretical and conceptual foundations to the Russian context. Thereby, publications could also rely on non-empirical and other types of research articles (e.g., periodicals) as well as databases fuelled with primarily Russian management journals which might provide insight into Russian scholars’ perspectives on the topic.

We are aware that the research design of this study is to a large extent based on the authors’ subjective assessments and evaluations. Other scholars’ opinions regarding the success factors identified for Russian- and Soviet-Foreign IJVs may be dissenting when choosing e.g., different categories for content analysis. Moreover, the paper lays emphasis only on key success factors of IJVs in Russia and the Soviet Union, respectively, with at least one Russian or (formerly) Soviet partner. Prospective research could also include texts that – next to IJVs in Russia and the Soviet Union – simultaneously regard IJVs or strategic alliances in other CEE countries and/or other regions of the former Soviet Union or that focus on Russian IJVs located outside of Russia.

The practical and managerial contributions of our study are twofold: First, the systematic overview of factors likely impacting the performance of a Russian-Foreign IJV provides a thorough base for decision-making and relationship management processes. Second, our in-depth analysis involves critical determinants relating to multiple perspectives, parties and relations, thus accounting for the complexity of successfully managing a Russian-Foreign IJV.

References


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- ✓ = Applies
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Overall of manifest content in empirical research articles on key success factors for Russian–Foreign and Sovie–Foreign JVIs (N = 19) (cont.)
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= Applies, * = Partially applies, ** = Does not apply, n.s. = Not specified