

INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS INTEGRATION: BUSINESS PLATFORMS, INTERNATIONAL BUSINESS SYNERGY AND COOPERATION

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Abstract. The subject of the study is the integration of international business: business platforms, international business synergy and cooperation. The *purpose of the study* is to formulate the concept of integrating international business into a single powerful platform by applying existing practices of business platforms. *Methodology.* The study used general and specific methods of scientific knowledge: the method of system analysis, the dialectical method, the formal logical method and the structural-functional method, as well as a number of empirical methods. *Results.* It is found that the study of international business integration is not new at the level of doctrine in foreign countries. However, in Ukraine, this phenomenon has not been thoroughly studied and requires the formation of a national vision and laying the foundations for business integration in modern conditions. The main factors that necessitate the creation of business platforms for Ukraine as tools for achieving synergy in the integration of international business in Ukraine include: globalisation processes, technological progress, integration, the need for unification of legislation, the full-scale invasion by the Russian Federation of Ukraine, resource saving, economic growth, etc. The role of civil society in relations with business was highlighted, as it has become a bridge for the state and business in addressing important issues and a communication intermediary between Ukrainian business and the international community, as well as the importance of academic partnerships and incubation programmes in business integration and cooperation. It was noted that the integration of international business is an effective way to attract investment, move business, increase instruments, and provide opportunities to deepen business through integration processes into another financial system that is more capacious and capable. The article substantiates that integration of international business into a single powerful business platform is a long and gradual process which has to go through various stages related to cultural, legal, financial and other types of adaptation. At the same time, the creation of such a mechanism for integrating international business is the goal of the platform.

Keywords: globalisation, integration, interaction, partnership, synergy, business communication, business community, business, platform, cooperation, function, social entrepreneurship, academic partnership, incubation programme, investment, relocation.

JEL Classification: F60, F02, M21, L31

1. Introduction

The development of Ukraine and society depends to a large extent on the implementation of the principles of legality and justice, on trust in the government, and for this purpose it is necessary to ensure the ability of enterprises to solve internal problems through generally recognised financial regulatory bodies. The reform of the public administration system, the improvement of the current legislation on the management of the financial situation of enterprises, its adaptation to the standards of the European Union require a theoretical rethinking of a number of scientific regulations. One of the key elements is the

measures directly aimed at stabilising the financial activities of enterprises in the context of globalisation and integration of business structures.

The urgency of studying the principles of interaction between companies at the international level is reinforced by a significant update of the theory of financial management and the functioning of corporate structures at the supranational level. Existing economic relations require a qualitatively new method of consolidation. Updated international regulations should be implemented in the legal norms in general, when generally recognised national mechanisms are relatively ineffective due to a number of factors, conditions or

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reasons. The creation of business platforms on the basis of which supranational cooperation will take place, which is the basis of international business integration, will be attributed to such regulators.

In today's hypercompetitive business environment, the need for business integration is more acute than ever. Organisations operate in complex ecosystems where market dynamics, technological advances and customer expectations are constantly changing. To succeed in this environment, organisations need to be agile, responsive and adaptable. Business integration enables organisations to streamline operations, optimise resources, improve communications and accelerate decision-making. Moreover, in an era of increasing attention to equality, diversity and inclusion, business integration is key to promoting these values within the organisation (Parihar, 2024).

A separate factor in the relevance of the chosen scientific research is the legal regime of martial law in Ukraine, which necessitates more active cooperation of domestic entrepreneurs with foreign partners. In general, it is possible to speak about the relevance of the chosen direction of cognitive research, its importance for practice and science.

2. Methodological Foundations of the Concept of International Business Integration

The doctrinal basis for substantiating the concept of international business integration is formed from works of various disciplines, taking into account previous developments on the issue of the impact of globalisation on business structures, where cross-border ties and the phenomenology of globalisation are components of the political and economic security of the state (Logvynskiy, 2024).

For example, interesting conclusions have been drawn about economic integration as a broader category that reflects the process of developing deep and stable interrelationships between the national economies of different countries, leading to their gradual economic merger, based on the implementation of coordinated interstate economics and policies by these countries and regulated by interstate bodies (Kaminska, 2011: 126). The study of economic integration is the basis for the formation and operation of international business (McCarthy, 1992).

Regarding the role of synergy in international business integration, as Martin Holubčík (2016) rightly points out, cooperation creates one of the forms of connection between certain groups of companies. Together, in the case of successful activity, they are more resistant to the turbulent changes caused by globalisation. One of the benefits of cooperation is the synergy effect. This effect is often not externally visible, but arises from solving common problems

or achieving common goals. Synergy emphasises the achievement of greater value through cooperation (Henrich, 2006; Safarzynska, 2013).

Another element in the development of international business integration is the use of platform business models due to the advancement of digital technologies. As a result, there are differences in the heterogeneity of innovation speed among SMEs that act as complementary participants in digital platforms. Combining the evidence-based view with the latest research on platform synergies has allowed to doctrinally confirm the impact of two types of platform synergies (i.e., synergies with platform owners and synergies with other complementary participants) on the speed of innovation in international business. The findings suggest that platform owners and other participants will provide different sets of information and knowledge that will complement each other. In addition, SMEs with different organisational structures and geographical locations may benefit differently from the two types of synergies on collaboration platforms (Aiqi Wu, Di Song, Yihui Liu, 2022).

In this context, the term 'platform' is generally understood as a structure or ecosystem that facilitates interaction between different sides of the market – consumers, partners and other participants. According to Hagiu and Wright (2015:163), a platform is seen as a unified place for communication and transactions between users, thereby providing meaning and value to each participant in the ecosystem. At the same time, platforms encompass components such as interaction, economic relationships, and shared value, and are not limited to technological components alone.

Thus, the study of international business integration is not new at the level of doctrine in foreign countries. In Ukraine, however, this phenomenon has not been thoroughly studied and requires the formation of a national vision for laying the foundations for business integration.

3. Business Platform: Concept, Organisational Structure, and Key Functions

A business platform is designed to open up opportunities for creating ecosystems where participants can share resources, complement each other and develop in synergy.

In this context, platforms: a) become a tool for achieving competitive advantages through effective coordination and interaction between different parties; b) contribute to the transformation of traditional business models by providing a convenient infrastructure for interaction between different participants (Smetaniuk and Tsisar, 2013: 387).

The platforms can be classified according to their thematic focus and areas of interest:

1. IT platform.

2. Public platform.
3. Business platform.
4. Educational platform.
5. Medical platform.
6. Legal platform, etc.

Platforms can also be graded by type, depending on the focus of the audience:

1. Platforms: a) horizontal (social networks or platforms for joint consumer activities that can create mass consumer ecosystems (e.g., Facebook)) and b) vertical (aimed at a specific industry or business area (e.g., Upwork platform, which brings together freelancers, professionals from different industries to complete projects and tasks and serve customers)).
2. Platforms: a) consumer-oriented and b) business-oriented (Zeng, Proserpio, 2016: 76).

A business platform is proposed to be understood as a single place for communication, cooperation, training, pooling of efforts and resources between representatives of the business community, potential consumers, investors and other stakeholders to achieve a common goal (in particular, increasing profits, expanding the customer base, entering the international market, etc.), as well as for business development.

Each platform has its own structural organisation and may include the following structural elements:

1. Subjective component (entities that may be its participants).
2. Geographical component (the area of distribution, may have restrictions on operation).
3. Interactive component (forms offered for communication, interaction, cooperation).
4. Economic component (this may be the accession procedure or the effect of cooperation).
5. Value component (defines common values).
6. Technological component (provides a matrix of the platform's functioning, its technological capabilities), etc.

A platform as a business model has its own structure, which includes the following components:

1. Core (the main functionality or service provided to users and defining the basic context of the platform).
2. External extensions (additional features, products or services provided by third-party developers or partners).
3. Linkages between participants (a key component of a platform's success that forms a network of cooperation based on the principle of mutual benefit) (Zott, Amit, Massa, 2011).

When it comes to the organisational levels of a business platform, it should be said that it can be:

1. Local type (for example, the geography of which is the relevant settlement, hromada).
2. Regional type (for example, the geography of which is the relevant region).
3. National type (e.g., the geography of which is the territory of Ukraine).

4. International type (e.g., geographically spread over several countries).

The key functions of a business platform may include the following:

1. Communication function, which consists in establishing communication between business platform participants, exchanging contacts and strengthening interaction.
2. Financial benefit function, which consists in combining the efforts of business platform participants to obtain financial benefits from cooperation.
3. Sustainability function, which consists in forming sustainable relationships between business platform participants in order to obtain financial benefits from cooperation (conclusion of cooperation agreements, memoranda, and so forth).
4. International cooperation function, which involves the involvement of the international community by the business platform participants and the establishment of cooperation.
5. Educational and methodological function, which consists in conducting events aimed at acquiring new knowledge, skills and qualifications by business platform participants (trainings, seminars, roundtables, courses, and so on).
6. Innovative function, which consists in both the development of innovative forms of interaction and the application of an innovative approach in production processes or in the provision of works or services.
7. Security function, which is to ensure the required level of security and protection of personal data of platform participants.
8. Adaptive function, which is the ability to quickly adapt to new conditions.
9. Scaling function, which is the ability of the platform to attract and unite a large number of participants at the same time.

While it used to be common to talk about competition in business, in today's environment, businesses synergise by combining their efforts. In order to improve the legal culture among businesses, various trainings are organised to share the successful experience of integration initiatives in business on a win-win basis.

In particular, with the participation of representatives of civil society – the Centre for Journalism at Kyiv School of Economics and the business community – a series of events entitled "Synergy for Business" was held, where the essence of win-win cooperation between entrepreneurs was revealed through specific examples. A successful example of synergy in business was presented as cooperation between companies involved in postal services, payment systems and banking services, which were able to successfully think through the allocation of resources so that the synergy worked. At the same time, such cooperation was also aimed at developing e-commerce, introducing modern information and communication

technologies (in particular, innovative programmes), and creating the most convenient service for customers on the basis of the "one-stop shop" principle (Synergy for Business: How does it work? Money transfer at the post office), which is essential on Ukraine's path to EU accession. In this case, it can be considered an example of a successful form of cooperation based on the "synergy for business" model.

4. Justification for the Need to Create and Operate Business Platforms

In today's world, where cross-border linkages and globalisation play an important role, the protection of enterprises becomes a key issue. Businesses and investors face complex challenges arising from economic and political instability (Logvynskyi, 2024: 608).

The processes of globalisation, technological progress and integration are leading to a kind of blurring of borders, the need to combine the efforts of both the public and private sectors of different countries, cooperation, unification of legislation (in particular, the development of common rules of trade and accounting), and the formation of platforms designed to unite industry communities and meet their interests.

For Ukraine, as for most countries in the world, the need to create various platforms, with a significant focus on business platforms, has increased with the new challenges and threats that Ukraine has faced in recent years. First of all, the global COVID pandemic has had significant negative consequences, with restrictions on the movement of people and businesses simply ceasing to function. Then came the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, which had a negative impact on all spheres of public life, including business, as production facilities were destroyed, maritime communications were effectively blocked, and part of Ukraine's territory was temporarily occupied, there was a shortage of personnel for certain specialities (in particular, a significant number of specialists left the country, while others joined the Armed Forces), fuel prices rose, the dollar exchange rate became unstable, entry abroad was restricted for certain categories of persons, the investment climate deteriorated, and there was no possibility for any forecasts and stability.

The active phase of Ukraine's accession to the European Union has become a challenge for the country, which also creates the need for the business community to get closer to and integrate into these processes.

The above has led to the unification of various communities, including business communities. Of particular relevance is the creation of business platforms, which involve the formation (usually through information and communication technologies) of a virtual environment that brings together like-

minded people, provides an opportunity to share best practices, contacts, resolve pressing issues (including taxation, changes in legislation), expand the market for services and works, attract investments, international donors, implement grant activities and various sustainable development programmes, etc.

The main factors driving the need to create business platforms for Ukraine include globalisation, technological progress, integration, the need for legislative unification, the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, resource saving, economic growth, etc.

At the same time, the integration of international business is an effective way to attract investment, relocate business, increase the number of instruments, and provide opportunities to deepen business through integration processes into another financial system that is more capacious and capable. Accordingly, there is a need to integrate international business into a single powerful business platform.

This process is certainly a long-term and gradual one, involving various stages of cultural, legal, financial and other types of adaptation. At the same time, the creation of such a mechanism for integrating international business is the goal of the platform.

Civil society has a special role to play in these processes, as it is, on the one hand, a bridge between the state and business in addressing important issues, and, on the other hand, a facilitator of communication between Ukrainian business and the international community.

Civil society institutions should be used not only to train specialists (including international ones), strengthen women's leadership, address gender equality and inclusion, and introduce social entrepreneurship, but also to take measures to prepare businesses for international integration.

5. The Role of Academic Partnerships and Incubation Programmes in Business Integration and Cooperation

The modern world is characterised by a continuous movement towards new technologies, ideas and approaches, making innovation a key element in the development of society, the economy and science. In this context, higher education institutions play an important role by becoming centres for the production and dissemination of new knowledge, technologies and ideas. The role of research and development (R&D) in creating innovative solutions that can turn global challenges into opportunities is growing (Podolchak, Sokil, Nebesnyi, 2023: 5). This is particularly relevant for business.

Academic partnership involves engaging representatives of the scientific professional community as partners in relevant research areas, platforms, and

projects that require their professional participation and expertise. An example of this is the academic partnership under the RWS Campus programme, which involved the faculty of Poltava State Agrarian University as academic partners. RWS Campus is a global programme that develops the localisation of automated translation tools. Working with more than 600 universities worldwide, the programme establishes strong connections for the training and development of localisation professionals, including access to and partnerships in the use of Trados automated translation software. RWS Campus partners with universities to provide localisation technology for classroom instruction so that students can learn in an environment that matches professional workplace scenarios (Academic Partnership under the RWS Campus Program).

In general, platform implementation mechanisms should use integration tools that include incubation and acceleration programmes. Incubation programmes are aimed at developing concepts, creating teams and prototypes. Incubation programmes should not be equated with acceleration programmes, which, unlike the former, allow to "polish" the product, develop a sales methodology and, in fact, enter the market. Both programmes provide consulting and mentoring assistance, in which entrepreneurs work with experts from various fields - IT specialists, business consultants, financiers, marketers, lawyers, etc. Most of these programmes include workshops, internships and trainings in related fields.

The successful integration of Ukrainian start-ups demonstrates a good example of how to properly use the opportunities of cooperation with foreign investors, and the construction of an appropriate structure of incubation platforms, following the example of Ukrainian start-ups Grammarly and PetCube, reflects the possibility of generating tens of billions of dollars in revenue through the use of investment platforms.

Accelerators and incubators provide entrepreneurs with office space and technical facilities. For example, Microsoft has provided startups with free access to its Azure cloud platform as part of its IoT Lab programme. And the Technology Company Development Centre (TCDC) provides office space to participants in its acceleration programme.

Some programmes may provide direct funding to the best projects that successfully complete the programme, help find investors, or facilitate fundraising through the crowdfunding platform Kickstarter. For example, Ecoisme raised 67,000 USD through crowdfunding and 100,000 EUR by winning the annual European startup competition EDF Pulse. In turn, Kwambio, a startup that develops a platform for customising and 3D printing interior items, accessories, and gadgets, managed to raise 650,000 USD from the Boston-based TechStars accelerator and

business angels (Incubators and Accelerators: How a startup can attract hundreds of thousands of investments).

Moreover, this idea is supported by vivid success stories of companies that have independently achieved business integration and significant success, in particular in the United States:

- Founded in Ukraine in 2019, Grammarly was valued at 13 billion USD in 2021 after successfully integrating into the US market;
- PetCube - also founded in Ukraine in 2012 from scratch, after integration into the US in 2017, reached a valuation of up to 50 million USD in the US.

This successful integration of Ukrainian start-ups demonstrates how to properly use the opportunities of cooperation with foreign investors. Building an appropriate structure for incubation platforms, following the example of Ukrainian startups Grammarly and PetCube, confirms the large, multi-billion dollar opportunities for financial revenues through incubation platforms.

Some programmes are also aimed at supporting young entrepreneurs. For example, the SOCIAL IMPACT AWARD (SIA) incubation programme provides young entrepreneurs with training, mentoring and grant support to help them implement their social start-up.

Thus, it can be concluded that academic partnerships and incubation programmes play an important role in business integration and are an effective form of cooperation that is extremely relevant for Ukrainian business in times of war.

6. Conclusions

It is proposed to understand the term "business platform" as a single place for communication, cooperation, training, pooling of efforts and resources between representatives of the business community, potential consumers, investors and other stakeholders to achieve a common goal. The types of platforms are identified:

- Depending on the thematic focus and area of interest (IT platform; public platform; business platform; educational platform; medical platform; legal platform).
- Depending on the focus of the audience (horizontal; vertical; consumer-facing; business-facing).

According to the author, each platform has its own structural organisation, which may include various structural elements, the main ones being: subject component; geographical component; interaction component; economic component; technological component. Among the structural elements of a platform as a business model, it is customary to distinguish such components as 1) core; 2) external extensions; 3) links between participants. The organisational levels of the business platform are identified, which include: 1) local type; 2) regional

type; 3) national type; international type. The key functions of the business platform are allocated, which include: communication, financial benefit, sustainability, international cooperation, educational and methodological orientation, innovation, security, adaptation and scaling.

The author points out that that in modern conditions, business synergises by combining its efforts. The paper provides examples of successful synergy in business. Besides, the publication identifies the main factors that determine the need to create business platforms in Ukraine. The author highlights the role of civil society in relations with business, which is a bridge for the state and business in addressing important issues and a communication intermediary between Ukrainian business and the

international community, as well as the importance of academic partnerships and incubation programmes in business integration and cooperation.

The article emphasises that integration of international business is an effective way to attract investment, relocate business, increase tools and provide an opportunity to deepen business through integration processes into another financial system that is more capacious and capable. Accordingly, there is a need to integrate international business into a single powerful business platform. This process is certainly a long-term and gradual one, involving various stages of cultural, legal, financial and other types of adaptation. At the same time, the creation of such a mechanism for integrating international business is the goal of the platform.

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