

A RESEARCH AGENDA PROPOSAL ON THE INFLUENCE OF APEXBRASIL ON EXPORT, INTERNATIONALISATION AND FOREIGN TRADE

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ABSTRACT

Objective: The present technical report aimed at presenting a research agenda regarding the influence of the Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil) on academic research about export, internationalisation, and foreign trade for academia, policymakers, practitioners, and other stakeholders. **Method:** We pursued a case study approach divided in a two-stage process. Firstly, we systematically reviewed 35 articles related to ApexBrasil's influence on scientific research. Secondly, we analysed official documents and conferences, besides consulting a panel of specialists from ApexBrasil, in order to propose the research agenda. **Main Results:** Firstly, the results suggested that the knowledge about ApexBrasil's influence on scientific research is scattered in different journals, researchers, and themes; furthermore, many studies do not have an impact on the international academy. Secondly, based on the data analysed, we propose a research agenda that might narrow the gap between ApexBrasil, academia, and other stakeholders. **Relevance / Originality:** The findings suggest unique insights about how and to what extent ApexBrasil's influence is reported by scientific research and show which themes for future investigations are aligned with the agency's interests, as well as the interests of its stakeholders in a scenario affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. **Theoretical / Methodological Contributions:** Our main contributions consist in a research agenda proposal based on theoretical and practical perspectives developed as a technical report. By doing so, we seek to raise awareness of academia, practitioners, and policymakers about ApexBrasil's influence and potential relevance for international business studies, whilst pointing out important research gaps in the literature and potential new research avenues.

INTRODUCTION

Exporting is one of the main strategies used by companies to access international markets due to two main reasons: reduced costs, and lower risks

compared to other entry model strategies (Root, 2008; Ribeiro, Figueiredo, & Forte, 2020). However, exporting remains a challenging task given that there are difficulties that restrict, or even discourage, companies from internationalising, such as financial, bu-

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reaucratic, managerial, and know-how barriers (Root, 2008; Leonidou, Paliawadana, & Theodosiou, 2011). To overcome these challenges, especially in developing countries, export programs play an important role devising export and internationalisation strategies, seeking to make exports an engine for economic growth (ITC, 2009).

This is the case of Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil). In 2019, ApexBrasil supported 14,485 firms and, amongst them, 6,133 had participated for the first time in ApexBrasil's activities in the last two years, and 9,379 firms participated in qualification programs (ApexBrasil, 2020d).

As one of the key players dedicated to fostering export of products and services abroad, ApexBrasil promotes internationalisation, facilitates and enables foreign trade, and attracts foreign direct investments to Brazil (ApexBrasil, 2020d), combining strategic industry development and public policies support (Bonfim, Padovani, & Duque, 2015; Alcaraz & Zamilpa, 2017).

During the period between 2016 and 2019, the strategic objectives of ApexBrasil were successfully met, and forthcoming actions are taking place. For the next period (2020-2023), ApexBrasil is looking forward to achieving new strategic objectives based on three main perspectives: social, internal processes, and sustainability (ApexBrasil, 2020e).

Focusing on the social perspective, the target project named Foreign Trade Teaching Project (Projeto Ensino de Comércio Exterior — ECEX) was one of ApexBrasil most important initiatives in the academic field. The ECEX was created due to the lack of high-qualified human resources in international businesses that are necessary for the country's insertion in the global value chain (ApexBrasil, 2020e). It is important to notice that initiatives of this nature seek to congregate the interests of practitioners, stakeholders, and academia, in order to further academic research and public awareness about export, internationalisation, and foreign trade in Brazil.

ApexBrasil has launched several relevant initiatives at national level. For instance, the first International Business Symposium of ApexBrasil took place with online transmission on YouTube in 2020. Amongst the participants, different groups of stakeholders have joined the event, such as scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and students. In the

same year, ApexBrasil promoted, through ECEX, the first call for papers, in which the main research themes were focused on the COVID-19 pandemic and its impacts on digital transition in international business (ApexBrasil, 2020a, 2020c).

Thus, the present technical report sought to develop a research agenda regarding the influence of ApexBrasil on academic research about export, internationalisation, and foreign trade for academia, policymakers, practitioners, and other relevant stakeholders.

The technical report was developed based on a case study approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018) of ApexBrasil's influence in academic research, focused on a set of three distinct data sources:

- a systematic literature review (Tranfield, Denyer, & Smart, 2003) of ApexBrasil's influence on export, internationalisation, and foreign trade;
- a documental research aimed at ApexBrasil's strategic planning and academic integration initiatives;
- a non-structured interview with a panel of specialists from ApexBrasil to inquiry information about the future research themes of ApexBrasil's interests and the identification of ongoing actions in this regard.

We believe that the current technical report is a relevant tool to raise awareness amongst the academic community, as well as the practitioners (Motta, 2017) on the ApexBrasil's relevance and influence on international business studies. Furthermore, the technical report may serve as a guide for ApexBrasil to improve its pursuit to strengthen the ties with academia and civil society in general.

Case study presentation: ApexBrasil and its context

The Brazilian Trade and Investment Promotion Agency (ApexBrasil) was created in 1997 as an export promotion organisation. Since its inception, a number of export consortia was founded with the support of the agency and succeeded in Brazil, promoting the country's export culture and increasing the international expansion of consortium companies and the diversification of exported products, helping to consolidate Brazil as a brand (Carpes, Scherer, & Beuron, 2012; Carpes, Scherer, Beuron, & Kneipp, 2012a; Carpes, Scherer, Beuron, Santos, Borges & Carvalho,

2012b; Lima & Carvalho, 2012; Farias & Tatsch, 2014; Monticelli, Calixto, Vasconcellos, & Garrido, 2017) by having direct impact on the three stages of the internationalisation cycle: international insertion, consolidation in international markets, and expansion of international operations (Repezza, 2013).

Furthermore, ApexBrasil has been promoting the Programa de Qualificação para Exportação (PEIEX program) since 2008/2009, which is the most well-known training oriented export promotion program in Brazil, spearheading many other relevant programs from ApexBrasil and providing the services expected from export promotion programs such as specialised training and coaching on the fundamentals of exporting and the development of tailored export plans (Carpes et al., 2012; Lourenção & Giraldo, 2015; Monticelli et al., 2017; Cruz, Bussolo & Iacovone, 2018; Dornelas & Carneiro, 2018; ApexBrasil, 2020e).

ApexBrasil has consistently shown its capacity to structure and facilitate the entry of exporters into foreign markets, developing the competitiveness of Brazilian companies through integrated sectoral projects that facilitates trade promotion, internationalisation training, as well as investments in research and physical assets (Repezza, 2013; Palma, Gomes, Kneipp, & Rosa, 2014; Ban, 2015; Farias & Miranda, 2016; Bianchi & Figueiredo, 2017; Monticelli et al., 2017).

Another key attribute of ApexBrasil, which has considerable impact on investment promotion, is helping to attract foreign direct investment. Given that, Brazil attracted relatively little innovation-intensive and export-oriented foreign investment during the liberalisation period of 1990 to 2010, especially compared with international competitors such as China and India (Alcaraz & Zamilpa, 2017).

ApexBrasil has a key impact on local productive arrangements, as well as integrated sector projects, as the institution helps them to address the problems and difficulties related to the need for modernization and development of sectors and regions. The most important collective gains are increasing commercial networking, access to technical consultancy and experts (Lima & Carvalho, 2012; Camozzi, Sacomano Neto, & Camargo, 2014; Monticelli, Garrido, & Vasconcellos, 2017).

ApexBrasil's sectoral projects serve sectors or production chains across Brazil. Besides all the support to export and to the internationalisation, the agency is

fundamental for branding management. The sectorial branding aims to identify the competitive advantages of the sector's products and to position its attributes in the minds of customers and consumers, generating experimentation and loyalty (Lourenção & Giraldo, 2015).

Thus, given its impact on exporting initiatives across the country (Carpes et al., 2012a; Carpes, Scherer, Carvalho & Santos, 2013; Farias & Tatsch, 2014; Monticelli et al., 2017), we have decided to explore the relevant academic studies on ApexBrasil in order to evaluate the key areas of academic interest in the agency and the quality and relevance of the existing investigations, thinking on structure an important research agenda.

1. METHOD

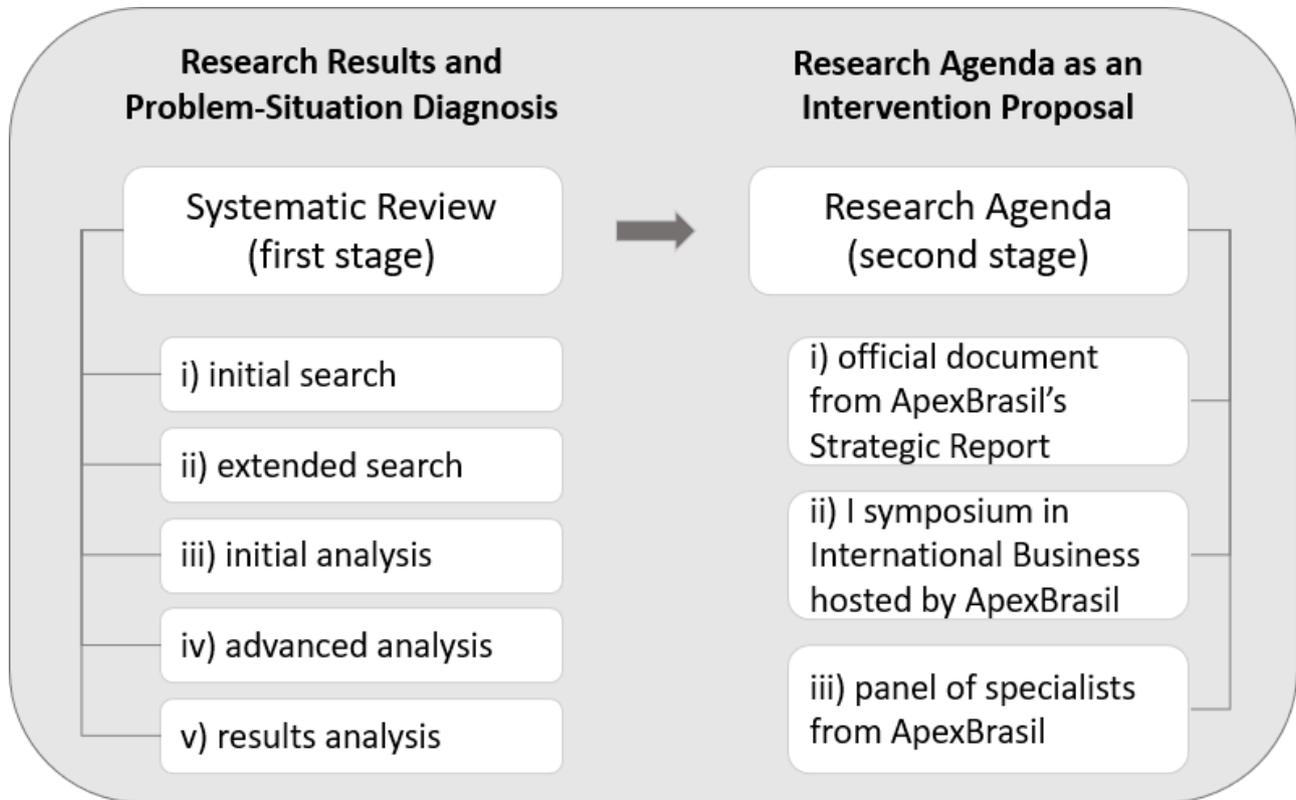
This technical report follows a case study approach divided in a two-stage process, as illustrated in Figure 1.

At the first stage, a systematic review (Tranfield et al., 2003) is presented to identify ApexBrasil's influence on export, internationalisation, and foreign trade. To achieve that, we systematically reviewed the articles in a five-stage process:

- initial search;
- extended search;
- initial analysis;
- advanced analysis;
- results analysis.

The first step consisted of searching for papers related to ApexBrasil in the Web of Science and Scopus databases. The search strategy employed was "search by topic", inquiring about the following keywords and its most common variations: ApexBrasil AND Export; ApexBrasil AND Internationalisation; ApexBrasil AND Foreign trade. Only peer-reviewed articles published in specialised journals were consulted. As a result, five articles were retrieved, despite the fact that no time restrictions were established.

Due to the lack of meaningful results in the previous phase, in the second step we changed the search methodology by extending it into a more comprehensive approach, employing the same keywords selected before and all previous criteria; however, retrieving papers related to ApexBrasil by searching "terms in the entire body of the text" including also the EBSCO data-



Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Figure 1. Methodology and analysis of the results strategy.

base. As a result, 342 articles were retrieved, including the five articles previously retrieved on step 1.

The third stage started filtering procedures. In this phase, the authors examined the title, abstract and keywords of all articles in order to select those that dealt with the topics related to the research objective — ApexBrasil's influence on export, internationalisation, and foreign trade. After applying these criteria and excluding duplicate articles, a total of 73 articles was selected for a thorough analysis.

The fourth stage consisted in a comprehensive analysis of the remaining articles. Two criteria were established to choose the relevant articles:

- ApexBrasil as the object of the study.
- ApexBrasil was directly related to the object of the study by its authors.

Whenever ApexBrasil was only quoted as a source for some specific data or on a general reference, the article was excluded. In order to guarantee that those criteria were strictly followed, the authors adopted a cross-checking approach to find inconsistencies or disagreements in the analysis. As

a result, 35 relevant articles, that are at the core of the current analysis, remained.

At the second stage, a research agenda proposal was designed based on three data sources:

- official documents from ApexBrasil including the ApexBrasil's Strategic Report 2020–2023;
- the I Symposium on International Business hosted by ApexBrasil;
- a non-structured interview with a panel of three specialists from ApexBrasil to collect information about research themes of ApexBrasil's interest and to identify current strategies and actions designed to increase research output, whilst bridging the gap between ApexBrasil and business researchers in Brazil.

The panel of specialists was chosen by convenience, based on the networking connections the authors had with the agency through the PEIEX program from Rio Grande do Norte state, Brazil. In total, we consulted three specialists, all of them with over five years of experience within ApexBrasil and direct involvement in initiatives related to knowledge management and networking with academia such as the ECEX.

The combination of both methodologies was intended to draw a broader and more in-depth understanding about the ApexBrasil's influence on academic research, as well as alternatives to develop a research agenda that could have significant impact on society, specifically facing the demands of a scenario affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with theoretical and practical contributions combined, as recommended for impactful research by Wickert, Post, Doh, Prescott, and Prencipe (2021).

1.1. Research results and problem-situation diagnosis: systematic review

During the descriptive analysis, our results showed that 32 out of 35 articles collected were published in different journals; that is, only two out of 32 journals published more than one relevant paper. This is the case for *Internext: Revista Eletrônica de Negócios Internacionais*, and *Revista Brasileira de Gestão de Negócios*, accounting for three and two articles, respectively (see Supplementary Material 1).

In line with the previous results, the variety of journals was matched by the plurality of researchers. In other words, 69 authors were identified in this research and, amongst them, only 10 have published more than once. Such results indicate that the knowledge about the ApexBrasil's influence on export, internationalisation, and foreign trade in academia is diffuse in terms of journals and researchers.

According to Avelar, Boina, Ribeiro and Santos (2015), when a field of research is diffuse, the body of knowledge about a research topic is dispersed, which, in turn, may negatively impact the research continuity, consolidation, innovation, and progress. In light of ApexBrasil's relevance, size and performance in the Brazilian economy (Calixto, Garrido, Vasconcellos, & Monticelli, 2013; Palma et al., 2014; Bonfim et al., 2015), we consider it is a significant problem to be analysed in order to propose relevant solutions.

Furthermore, another important element of the research was the keywords applied in the articles. The greatest challenge faced to complete the current analysis was the fact that ApexBrasil was rarely mentioned as a keyword or within the abstracts, which goes against the notion of its attributed importance already discussed. Appendix 2 summaris-

es the keywords found in the articles, as well as their prevalence. We found 66 keywords, and it is important to notice that synonyms or words with approximate meaning were brought together to facilitate the analysis such as internationalisation / internationalisation model. The variety of keywords seems to point out to the fact that the research is, in general, rather sparse, not focusing on specific topics or industries.

The main results from the first stage process are illustrated in Figure 2.

To improve the presentation of the results, Figure 2 summarises the results from the first stage of analysis in three different parts:

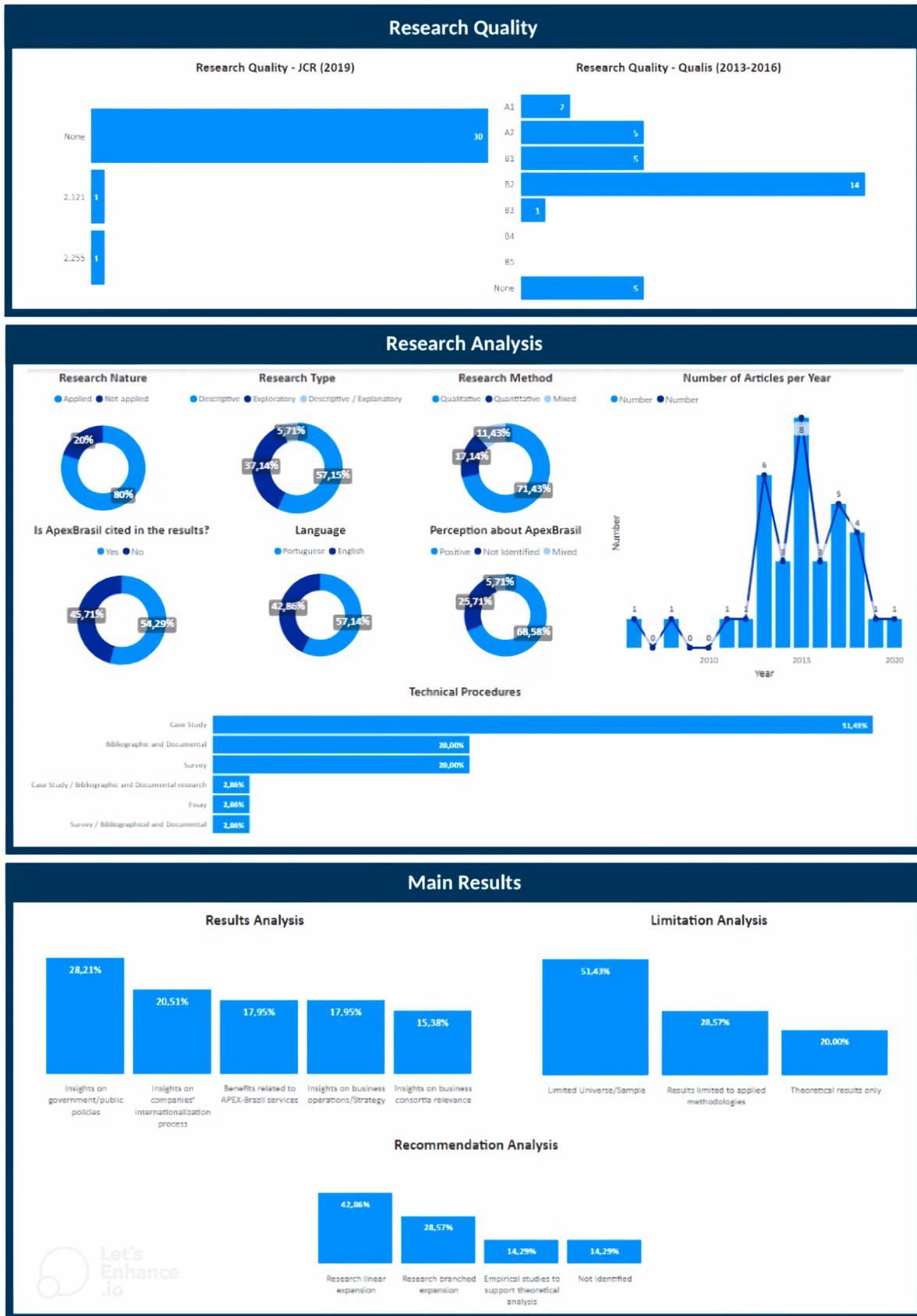
- research quality;
- research analysis;
- main results.

In the first part of the systematic review report, we investigated the research quality and its impact on the academic community by identifying the Journal Citation Reports (JCR) and Qualis scores of each journal. In summary, JCR is an international quality metrics for journals developed by Clarivate Analytics (Clarivate, 2019), whilst Qualis is a quality metrics for journals developed by the Coordination of Superior Level Staff Improvement (Coordenação de Aperfeiçoamento de Pessoal de Nível Superior — CAPES) and it is used in Brazil only (Soma, Alves, & Yanasse, 2016).

In the national quality metrics, it is observed a concentration of 43.75% within the B2 Qualis score (14 articles), whilst 15.63% (five articles) of the journals did not score at all. Furthermore, more than 30% of the journals were classified between A1 and B1 Qualis. In the international quality metrics, only two articles have JCR score, whilst the remaining did not score at all.

In the second part, we summarised the overall characteristics of our sample. By doing so, the articles were classified under eight main criteria:

- research nature;
- research type;
- research methods;
- technical procedures;
- perception about ApexBrasil;
- ApexBrasil's reference in the results;
- language;
- number of articles per year.



JCR: Journal Citation Reports.
 Source: Elaborated by the authors.
Figure 2. Systematic review report.

In Figure 2, we can see a predominance of applied research, with descriptive and explanatory approaches, and the prevalence of qualitative research methods. The most common technical procedure utilised was case study; the perception about ApexBrasil is mostly positive, its citation in the results is present in the majority of the papers, and more than half of the articles are written in Portuguese only.

It is valid to notice that we consider as positive any analysis that recognizes the overall impact of ApexBrasil on export promotion, internationalisation, or foreign direct investment independent of its scope or industry. Once again, a cross-checking examination amongst the authors was adopted in order to avoid any potential judgement bias.

In terms of time period, over 80% of the articles were published between 2013 and 2018. Even though the COVID-19 pandemic could be seen as a reasonable explanation for the shortage of articles in 2020, there is no such influence in 2019, which indicates that other factors may be behind the phenomenon. That is an issue that has to be further analysed given the favourable trade balance Brazil has experienced in the past decades, the increase in export, the favourable exchange rates, and the overall economy performance towards international growth (Brasil, 2020).

In the third part, as a way to support an in-depth understanding about how the results analysis and the main contribution were performed, three main categories were analysed in the sample:

- results analysis;
- limitation analysis;
- recommendation analysis.

Despite the variety of results, to some extent it is possible to categorise the results based on common features. For instance, the result analysis provided different insights on government and public policies (28.21%), as well as on companies' internationalisation process (20.51%), followed by insights on business operations/strategy (17.95%) and benefits related to ApexBrasil services (17.95%).

Regarding the limitations found in the articles, 51.43% of them are related to limited universe/sample, which also includes data restrictions and non-probabilistic samples. The remaining ones are related to limitations of the results for applied method-

ology (28.57%), thus preventing generalisation from the specific universe studied; and theoretical results only (20%).

The findings also suggest that the recommendations for future research are focused mainly on linear expansion (42.86%), that is, it is related to expanding the research in terms of scope, increasing the original research universe, but maintaining the methodology previously applied. Hence, forthcoming research would have a starting point and it would be primarily to assess the validity of the results obtained from the original research. The second most cited recommendation type was branched expansion, accounting for 28.57%. In this specific case, the recommendation is related to new research development that may extrapolate the findings reported by bringing new insights and exploring different angles. The last two recommendation categories were empirical studies to support theoretical and non-identified claims, accounting for 14.29% each.

1.2. Research agenda as an intervention proposal

In systematic reviews research (*e.g.*, Agwu & Besant, 2021; Loviscek, 2021), the research agenda proposal is a result of the literature analysis. Nonetheless, in the current technical report, the systematic review is used as a first stage to allow an overview, that is, a generalisation of ApexBrasil's influence on export, internationalisation, and foreign trade in the academic sphere, in order to diagnose potential problems.

The second stage analysis followed a different approach by pursuing an analytical frame based on practical criteria and perspectives raised during the consultation with the panel of specialists, the discussions taken during the I Symposium on International Business hosted by ApexBrasil, and the ApexBrasil's strategic report. The information obtained was then triangulated in order to find patterns that may point to robust conclusions in the case study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

During the analysis, the results suggested that, as to be of practical use as an intervention tool, the research agenda proposal should be based on three categories:

- institutional partnerships;
- academic partnerships;
- knowledge management.

Each category has been subjected to four identification processes:

- guidelines;
- current actions;
- initial results;
- recommendations.

The results are summarised in Table 1.

The guidelines are centred on a revision of institutional partnerships. It is well-known that ApexBrasil works in partnership with several universities and research centres in projects all over Brazil, such as PEIEX, in which associated institutions work as executive entities, taking on the task of operationalizing PEIEX in a given municipality/region, participating directly in the process of qualification of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) to start to export activities in a planned manner (Cruz et al., 2018; Dornelas & Carneiro, 2018).

Even though there are many prerequisites in the technical evaluation process carried out by ApexBrasil through their PEIEX managers as to establish that the associated institutions meet the institutional partnership criteria, there is nor a requirement for research or content production, neither an organised effort to generate that kind of response from executive entities. A revision of those criteria would encourage aca-

demical partners to further pursue the development of scientific research aligned with ApexBrasil's strategic objectives. It is possible to identify current actions and initial results in this regard by strengthening the ECEX initiatives and by defining them as strategic objectives to be achieved.

In the academic partnerships, the research has pointed out the necessity to create a long-term sustainable relationship with academic journals. This need was raised both by the panel of specialists and during the I Symposium on International Business hosted by ApexBrasil.

As previously presented, there is no predominance of a specific journal or a prolific author related to research or academic production on ApexBrasil. It could be rather useful for ApexBrasil to analyse the publications that seem more likely to attract the type of research that is relevant for the institutions and its stakeholders. The selection criteria of papers and journals should be based on scope, academic impact, and target audience. Partnerships with such publications to promote special issues or to launch a call for papers directed at that type of research in which they are interested could significantly increase ApexBrasil's influence on the academic sphere, reinforcing institutional bonds.

Table 1. Analysis of ApexBrasil's strategic report 2020–2023 and panel of specialists.

	Institutional partnerships	Academic partnerships	Knowledge management
Guidelines	Revision of the PEIEX program institutional partnership selection criteria	Developing long-term partnerships with academic journals	Turning ApexBrasil into a knowledge hub for international business in Brazil
Ongoing actions	ECEX	Mapping knowledge demand from firms, government, ApexBrasil, and practitioners	Fostering networking activities with the academic community and other stakeholders
Initial results	Strengthening ECEX visibility and initiatives	Development of an academic demands support initiative	- Call for papers; - I Symposium on International Business; - Release of e-book
Recommendations	Increasing the number and the nature of partnerships with universities and research centres	Improvements in ApexBrasil website and external communication	Encouraging different formats of research

PEIEX: Programa de Qualificação para Exportação; ECEX: Foreign Trade Teaching Project (Projeto Ensino de Comércio Exterior — ECEX).

Source: data results (2020).

Furthermore, the mapping of authors and their research is an option that can also be utilised to bring together the academic community by identifying the main potential contributors to relevant current and future investigations. As previously seen, there were 69 different authors whose work have been analysed. However, it was also noticed that most authors have published only one article (within the criteria established in this study). Such initiatives could be a stepping stone for an integrated, yet autonomous, research community. In this respect, important actions are taking place by ApexBrasil, such as the identification of knowledge demands from firms, government, and practitioners. As an initial result, the academic demands support development is underway at ApexBrasil website, which is one of the key recommendations for improvement in this technical report.

The knowledge management analysis based on the panel of specialists, as well as the documental research, has shown that ApexBrasil has the potential and the intent to build their position as the Brazilian knowledge hub for international business research and initiatives. The amount of data and information stored in their databases, as well as the large number of potential case studies related to ApexBrasil activities, should play an important role in the development of exploratory and/or descriptive research. Also, in-house production of relevant business research may also be an alternative to increase research output. For that, it would be necessary the mapping of collaborators with the skill and formation that could spearhead the increasing number of papers from within the agency.

For the overall knowledge management initiatives, some important ongoing actions to increase the networking activities with academic community and key stakeholders have been happening with immediate results, such as:

Call for papers: in November 2020, ApexBrasil launched the first call for papers on digital transition in international business (ApexBrasil, 2020a). Three main research themes were identified in this call for papers:

- digital transition in international commercial promotion;
- digital transition in internationalisation;
- digital transition in investments.

Symposium: in November 2020, ApexBrasil promoted the I Symposium on International Business (ApexBrasil, 2020c). This event received delegates and speakers from the government, academia, practitioners, companies and ApexBrasil staff in debates about international business trends. In general, it was possible to identify the outlining of a research agenda by concentrating on the following topics:

- COVID-19's impacts on the current trade and investment landscape;
- export in times of COVID-19: implications for policies, research and business;
- internationalisation in a digital world: new models and strategies;
- global value chains: reorganisation and impacts on foreign investments in Brazil.

E-book: in January 2021, ApexBrasil launched an e-book that encompasses 16 essays written by PEI-EX executing institutions members. In summary, this e-book endeavours to find the best management practices and innovative experiences of Brazilian companies during the COVID-19 pandemic. Besides the knowledge sharing and consolidation by the executing institutions, this e-book also motivated the registration of ApexBrasil as an editor with the Brazilian Book Chamber (Câmara Brasileira do Livro — CBL) (ApexBrasil, 2020b).

Although those initiatives are integrated into the ECEX project by leading efforts to transform ApexBrasil into a knowledge hub of international business, there is still room for improvements. The current scenario is optimistic, but ApexBrasil endorsement for developing innovative publications must encourage, as pointed before, the revision of institutional partnership.

According to Van Aken (2005), there are different research types that target different audiences. Besides academic research and essays, there are technological articles (see Motta, 2017), teaching cases (see Alberton & Silva, 2018), and tutorial articles (see Martins & Mendes-da-Silva, 2020) that are related to professional and/or practitioner-scholar approach. These initiatives could meet the demands from a wide range of stakeholders and, consequently, to a more diverse audience.

Furthermore, it is possible to publicising traditional scholarly studies as a mean towards a complementary

knowledge contribution written in a different format, such as journals dedicated to a specific professional field, or alternative non-journal format like blogs and LinkedIn posts, or the authors' institution through the Public Relation Department in order to publicise their research contributions (Wickert et al., 2021). As mentioned, there are several research types that should be supported and recommended by ApexBrasil's initiatives in the academic sphere.

Besides the publications and call for papers, some recent surveys were carried out by ApexBrasil as an attempt to find emerging themes of research, such as safer export for SMEs (ApexBrasil, 2020b), as well as challenges faced by those who want to invest in Brazil (ApexBrasil, 2020f). Even though these publications are not part of any structured research agenda yet, they are in line with many of the articles analysed in this study.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The main objective of this technical report was to develop a research agenda about ApexBrasil's influence on academic research aimed at export, internationalisation, and foreign trade, by following a two-stage process. In the first stage, we systematically reviewed relevant papers retrieved from three different research databases in order to understand how ApexBrasil is perceived in academia research. In the second stage, we proposed a research agenda based on official documents, events, as well as by consulting a panel of specialists from ApexBrasil.

Our analysis suggest that important actions and initiatives have been pursued by ApexBrasil in order to consolidate a research agenda proposal, such as the development of the academic demand support in the ApexBrasil website, the call for papers, the Symposium on International Business (ApexBrasil, 2020c), and the e-book release (ApexBrasil, 2020b).

Despite the academic papers' and ApexBrasil's relevance, there is considerable room for improvements, such as increasing the number of partnerships with universities and research centres through programs like PEIEX, as well as strengthening ECEX project initiatives and endorsement for publishing different research formats. Furthermore, the analysis also suggests a research agenda proposal for future studies that coordinates the different interests and

demands of ApexBrasil and key partners in government and civil society.

The main themes for future research are related to digital transition in international business; COVID-19's impacts on current export, international trade and investment landscape; implications for policies, research and business in a scenario affected by the COVID-19 pandemic; as well as studies on global value chain.

In short, the current research has presented an original perspective about how and to what extent ApexBrasil's influence on export, internationalisation and foreign trade is reported by relevant academic papers, besides introducing a research agenda proposal containing future research themes of interest for ApexBrasil in the forthcoming years, as well as guidelines to consolidate such research.

Regarding its limitations, this study is restricted to methodological constraints. For instance, the procedures applied can be biased by the paper's selection criteria, in the first stage, and by the category identification, in the second one. Furthermore, the research agenda proposal should be further analysed by comparing it with other key stakeholders' demand on internationalisation and export research in order to assess its viability and integrative nature.

Finally, as a suggestion for future research, it would be necessary to check the relevance of other content produced around ApexBrasil's remit — newspaper articles, books, thesis, TV programmes, business cases and so forth. As outside the academic sphere, there might be a more structured and widespread perspective that could be rather useful in the process of turning ApexBrasil into a knowledge hub for international business.

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UMA PROPOSTA DE AGENDA DE PESQUISA SOBRE A INFLUÊNCIA DA APEXBRASIL NA EXPORTAÇÃO, INTERNACIONALIZAÇÃO E COMÉRCIO EXTERIOR

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RESUMO

Objetivo: Este relatório técnico teve como objetivo apresentar uma agenda de pesquisa sobre a influência da Agência Brasileira de Promoção de Exportações e Investimentos (ApexBrasil) na pesquisa acadêmica sobre exportação, internacionalização e comércio exterior para pesquisadores, empresários, governo e outros *stakeholders*. **Método:** Adotou-se uma abordagem de estudo de caso dividida em duas etapas. Na primeira etapa foi realizada uma revisão sistemática da literatura de 35 artigos relacionados à influência da ApexBrasil na pesquisa científica. Na segunda etapa foram analisados documentos oficiais e conferências, assim como foi consultado um painel de especialistas da ApexBrasil para, em seguida, propor uma agenda de pesquisa. **Principais Resultados:** Na primeira etapa os resultados sugeriram que o conhecimento sobre a influência da ApexBrasil na pesquisa científica é disperso em diferentes periódicos, pesquisadores e temas. Além disso, os impactos dos resultados encontram-se incipientes na pesquisa científica internacional. Na segunda etapa, com base nos dados analisados, uma agenda de pesquisa foi proposta como forma de estreitar a lacuna entre ApexBrasil, academia e outros *stakeholders*. **Relevância / Originalidade:** Os resultados sugerem *insights* sobre como e em que medida a influência da ApexBrasil é reportada na pesquisa científica, assim como sinaliza temas para investigações futuras que poderiam estar alinhadas aos interesses da agência, bem como de seus *stakeholders*, em um cenário afetado pela pandemia da COVID-19. **Contribuições Teóricas / Metodológicas:** As principais contribuições desta pesquisa consistem em uma proposta de agenda baseada nas perspectivas teóricas e práticas proporcionadas pelo relatório técnico. Com isso, busca-se aumentar a conscientização da academia, dos empresários e do governo sobre a influência da ApexBrasil e sua potencial relevância para a área de negócios internacionais, ao mesmo tempo em que procura sinalizar importantes lacunas na literatura e sugestões para pesquisas futuras.

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