

REVIEW ARTICLE

Going the Extra Mile While Internationalizing: A Systematic Literature Review About the Role of CSR Commitment

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ABSTRACT

Current understanding of corporate social responsibility (CSR) overlooks the impact of internationalization on CSR practices, as it focuses on specific countries. Hence, this paper systematically reviews the literature to analyze how firms, while internationalizing, find themselves in the need to act upon their CSR practices and implementation, thus going the extra mile. Through an in-depth content analysis of 53 articles, four thematic groups were identified: (1) CSR performance: Institutional differences between home country and host country; (2) CSR Reporting and Emerging Market Multinational Enterprises' (EM-MNEs) Internationalization; (3) Is CSR an antecedent or outcome of firms' internationalization in EM-MNEs?; (4) The portrait of CSR in the internationalization of developed country firms. The review highlights factors such as environmental regulations, leadership, and gaining legitimacy in host countries as drivers of stronger CSR during internationalization. However, a key challenge is balancing standardization and adaptation of CSR practices across borders. The paper proposes an integrative framework to guide firms in navigating the complex relationship between CSR and internationalization. Finally, future research avenues may include the study of conflicting stakeholder demands and legitimacy pressures, as well as how CSR efforts can overcome reputational biases.

1 | Introduction

Since the 1980s, companies have been under increasing pressure to adopt more responsible business practices due to environmental concerns (Hart 1995; King and Lenox 2002). The role that organizations play in climate change has further intensified stakeholders' attention on corporate sustainability (Tseng et al. 2019). Sustainability reports provide a comprehensive overview of a company's environmental, social, and governance (ESG) performance. However, corporate social responsibility (CSR) reports are a subset of sustainability reporting, focusing

specifically on a company's social and ethical responsibilities. Although the former serve as a communication channel for companies to showcase their responsible and environmentally friendly initiatives, thereby positively influencing corporate reputation, purchase intentions and stakeholder loyalty, the latter emphasize the social impact of a company's activities (Aguinis and Glavas 2012; Torres et al. 2012).

The interest in CSR has been growing among customers, managers, investors, policymakers, suppliers, and other stakeholders (Kiliç 2016). As CSR reporting may be interpreted differently

by various stakeholders, it has become an important communication tool (Kiliç 2016; Grimstad et al. 2020). Following recent studies (e.g., Mattera and Alba Ruiz-Morales 2021; Xu and Shi 2022), this study adopts the triple bottom line perspective of CSR, encompassing economic, social, and environmental concerns (Elkington 1998). This perspective goes beyond a firm's national borders and applies to its values, culture, strategy, and operations (Bondy and Starkey 2014). Additionally, CSR fosters interaction and communication between firms and their stakeholders (Carroll 2008).

In their international expansion, multinational enterprises (MNEs) must navigate legal, cultural, or market challenges regarding their CSR as they operate in both home and host country environments and engage with diverse stakeholders (Bondy and Starkey 2014). For example, Brazilian firms have adopted new CSR regulations as they expanded internationally (Mazboudi et al. 2020), while MNEs often increase CSR commitments to broader markets (Venugopal et al. 2023) or face cultural differences between home and host countries (Munro et al. 2018). This dual embeddedness creates institutional complexity, fueling the global–local debate (Bondy and Starkey 2014). In the context of internationalization, CSR is especially relevant as firms need to effectively perform responsible practices complying with different national and international regulations Strike et al. (2006). Effectively communicating CSR activities across different markets is vital to maintaining a responsible, legitimate, and transparent image (Christmann 2004).

International management research addresses several gaps regarding the need for firms to adapt CSR to international markets, including transitions from less stringent to more demanding CSR environments (Mazboudi et al. 2020), alignment with market demands (Venugopal et al. 2023) and adaptation to culturally distinct markets (Munro et al. 2018). To date, the literature has primarily examined CSR within specific contexts or focused on conceptualizing CSR in international settings (e.g., Bhattacharyya 2020a). Bhattacharyya (2020a) provides a valuable framework and a typology for international corporate social responsibility (ICSR) to guide managers, it does not explore the relationship between internationalization and CSR evolution in detail. Similarly, Aspelund (2017) conducted a systematic literature review (SLR) on social responsibility in firm internationalization but has limitations, including a focus on international entrepreneurship, the exclusion of CSR as a keyword, and a limited number of 33 studies. Neither study explores the evolution of CSR commitment during internationalization. Scholars have thus called for further research on CSR in international contexts (Bhattacharyya 2020b) to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Aspelund 2017).

To gain a comprehensive understanding of the institutional legitimacy and compliance challenges MNEs face when expanding into foreign markets, as well as the diverse stakeholder expectations that influence CSR reputation and the tensions arising from operating in multi-country, multi-stakeholder contexts, this study aims to address these gaps. Specifically, it examines how firms adapt their CSR practices in response to international expansion, thus going the extra mile to enhance legitimacy and

attract stakeholders. Through a SLR, this paper aims to answer the following research question: *How do firms balance CSR commitments between home and host countries under the pressures of internationalization?*

This paper is structured as follows: after this introductory section, the paper outlines the methodology in the next section. Then, we highlight the main results of our review and discuss the identified thematic groups. Finally, the paper concludes by providing an integrative framework to help firms and practitioners in understanding the relationship between CSR and internationalization. Future research directions will be outlined.

2 | Method

This study has adopted an SLR methodology, ensuring a rigorous, systematic, and transparent approach to studying the selection compared to a traditional narrative review (Denyer and Tranfield 2009). We have followed the three steps proposed by Tranfield et al. (2003): (i) planning the review (defining the research question and objective); (ii) conducting the review (identifying relevant literature, detailing both inclusion and exclusion criteria); and (iii) reporting and disseminating the results. The first step was addressed in the introduction section. The following sub-section details the second step, outlining both inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure transparency and replicability (Denyer and Tranfield 2009). Finally, Sections 3 and 4 present the reported results and discussion of the identified thematic groups, respectively.

To identify relevant studies, we selected the Scopus database, searching titles, abstracts and keywords using two complementary search words: corporate social responsibility (“corporate social responsibility*” or “CSR*”) and internationalization (including all the potential variations of the term internationaliz*). We restricted the search to articles and reviews published in peer-reviewed English-language journals. Regarding the time coverage, we have limited the search to papers published in the last 10 years, between 2012 and 2023. This search, conducted in January 2024, yielded a total of 117 articles.

Abstracts, keywords, and citation information were extracted and exported to an Excel spreadsheet to identify relevant studies and monitor the selection and analysis process. All authors reviewed the abstracts, excluding those that did not meet the following criteria: (i) explicit reference to both CSR and internationalization; (ii) a clear connection between CSR and firm internationalization, thereby contributing to the field of international business research; and (iii) a broad scope, avoiding a focus on specific case studies or industries that hinder generalizability. This process resulted in the selection of 64 articles for full-text review.

Based on the full-text analysis, 11 additional articles were excluded based on scope considerations. The exclusion criteria adopted were as follows: (i) a focus on specific case studies; and (ii) the absence of a clear link between CSR and firm internationalization. This resulted in a final sample of 53 articles. Figure 1 provides an overview of the identification and selection process.

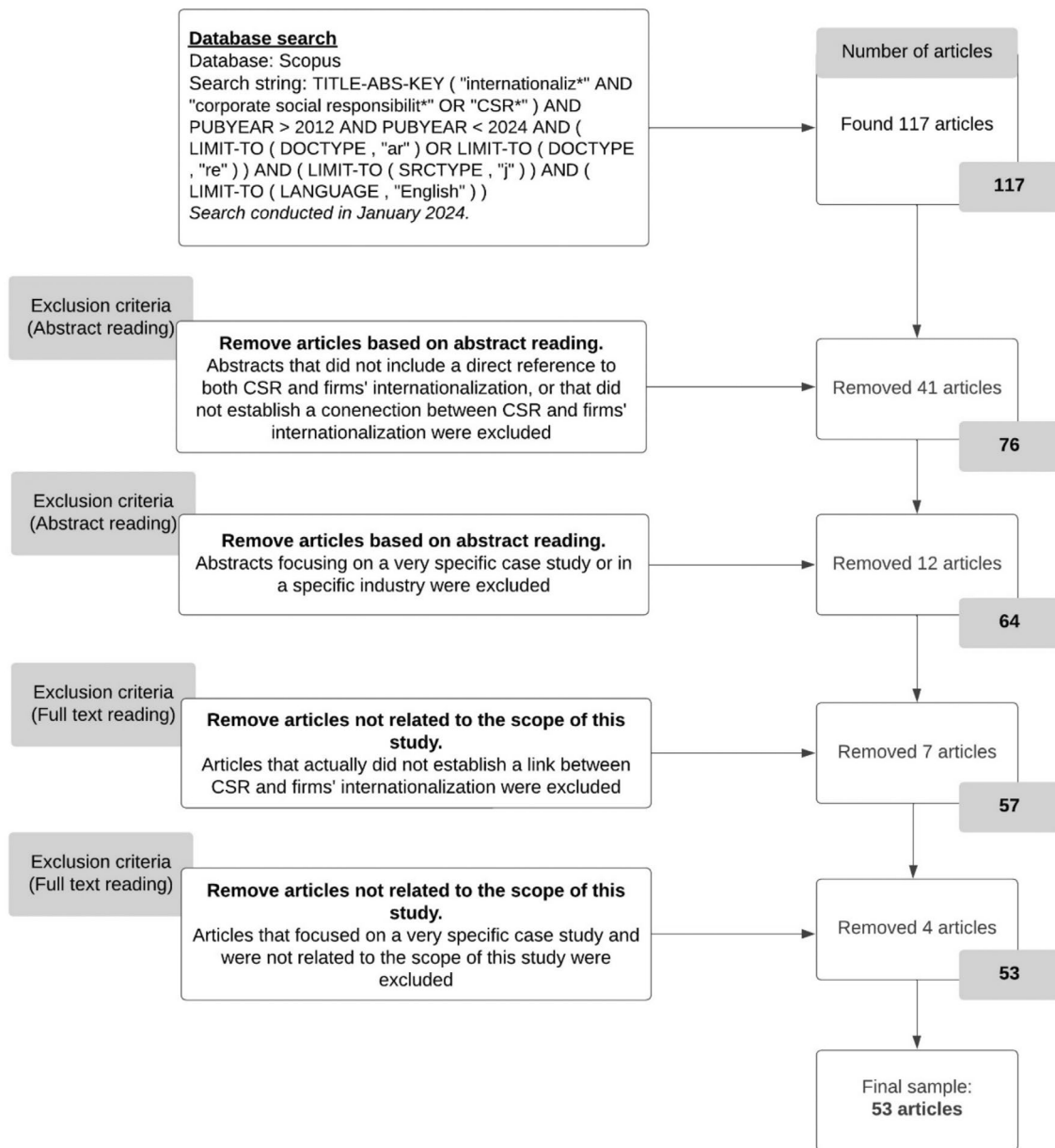


FIGURE 1 | Schema representing the identification and selection process in this SLR.

The final pool of publications included in this SLR is provided in Appendix A.

3 | Characterization of the Sample

This section presents the results of this SLR, starting with a characterization of our sample based on publication dates, citations per year, publication sources, most-cited articles, theoretical perspectives, and geographical focus.

3.1 | Date of Publication and Citations

The articles in this review were published between 2014 and 2023. Figure 2 presents the distribution of publications by year, alongside their total global citations (TGCs) extracted

from the SCOPUS database. It also shows the average citations per year (ACY), calculated by dividing the total number of citations by the years since publication, using 2024 as the reference year. The highest number of citations was observed for articles published between 2016 and 2017, followed by fluctuating citation counts in subsequent years. However, lower citation counts for recent publications (2022–2023) should be interpreted with caution, as these studies have had limited time to accumulate citations. ACY analysis further indicates that articles from 2017 to 2019 have had the greatest annual impact, with Marano et al. (2017) receiving 323 citations and Tashman et al. (2019) 244 citations.

A significant rise in publications began in 2020, followed by a slight decline in 2021–2022. In 2023, 11 articles were published, reflecting a growing interest in this topic. As shown in Figure 2, nine articles were published from 2014 to 2016, 12 articles between

2017 and 2019, and 32 articles from 2020 to 2023. Thus, more than half of the reviewed articles were published in the past 4 years, underscoring increasing academic attention to this field.

3.2 | Publication Sources

The review found that this topic of research is covered in 43 peer-reviewed journals across different fields. As shown in Figure 3, only seven journals published two or more papers: *Journal of Business Ethics* (3 articles), *Social Responsibility Journal* (3), *Sustainability* (3), *International Business Review* (2), *Journal of Business Research* (2), *Journal of International Business Studies* (2) and *Management International Review* (2). These journals are related to social, cultural, ethical, and sustainability areas and to business and international management research themes, demonstrating a direct connection to our research focus. The remaining 36 articles were published in different outlets that have a particular emphasis on marketing, communication, international relationships, and

economics, highlighting the potential multidisciplinary nature of CSR in firm internationalization.

3.3 | Top 10 Most-Cited Articles

Table 1 lists the 10 most-cited articles, two of which were published in the *Journal of International Business Studies* and two in the *Journal of Business Ethics*. Ranked by TGCs, it also presents the average number of citations per year (ACY). The most-cited articles make important contributions to CSR and internationalization. While Marano et al. (2017) have the highest TGCs, Tashman et al. (2019) rank first in ACY, indicating its continued influence and topic's contemporary relevance. Tashman et al. (2019) build on Marano et al. (2017) by demonstrating how home-country institutional voids drive both CSR reporting and CSR decoupling in emerging market multinational enterprises (EM-MNEs). However, as firms internationalize, increased global scrutiny can mitigate CSR decoupling by

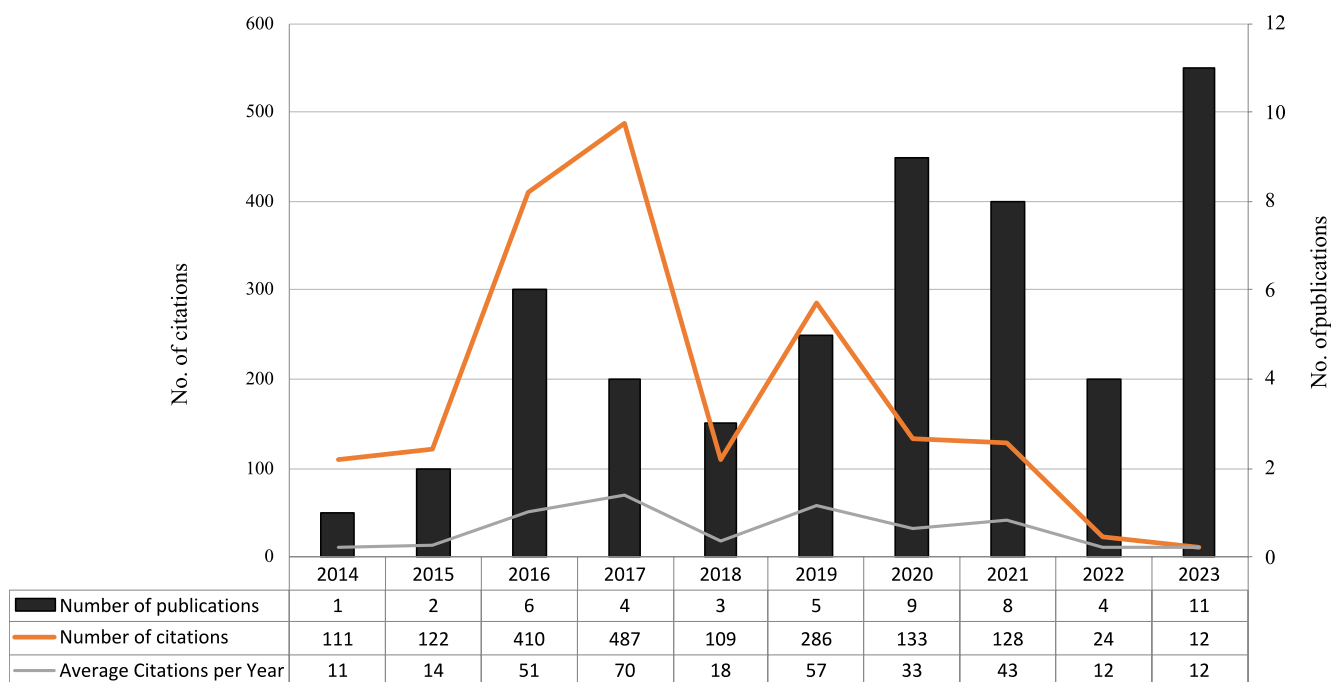


FIGURE 2 | Historical publication and citation trend.

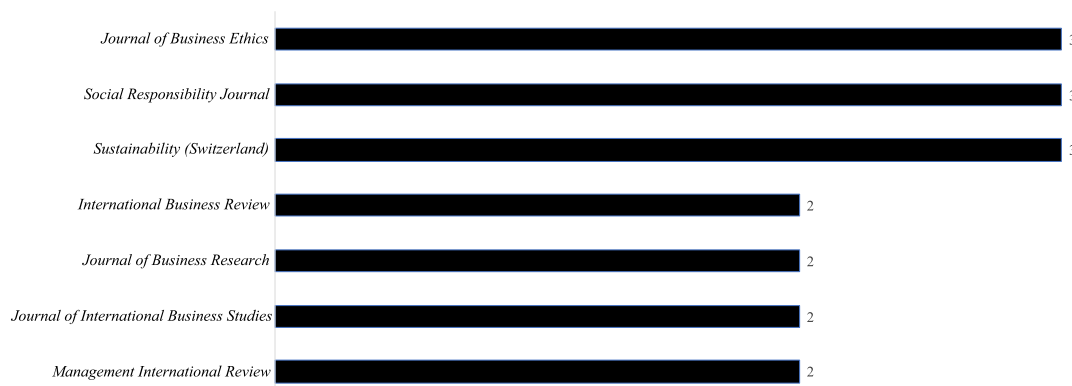


FIGURE 3 | Main sources of publication (top 7 journals).

TABLE 1 | Top 10 most cited articles of our sample.

Reference	Title	Journal title	TGC	ACY
Marano et al. (2017)	Escaping the Iron Cage: Liabilities of Origin and CSR Reporting of Emerging Market Multinational Enterprises	<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	323	46
Tashman et al. (2019)	Walking the Walk or Talking the Talk? Corporate Social Responsibility Decoupling in Emerging Market Multinationals	<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	244	49
Attig et al. (2016)	Firm Internationalization and Corporate Social Responsibility	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	199	25
Dyduch and Krasodomska (2017)	Determinants of Corporate Social Responsibility Disclosure: An Empirical Study of Polish listed Companies	<i>Sustainability (Switzerland)</i>	119	17
Bondy and Starkey (2014)	The Dilemmas of Internationalization: Corporate Social Responsibility in the Multinational Corporation	<i>British Journal of Management</i>	111	11
Miska et al. (2016)	Drivers of Global CSR Integration and Local CSR Responsiveness: Evidence from Chinese MNEs	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	90	11
Xu et al. (2018)	Signaling Good by Doing Good: How Does Environmental Corporate Social Responsibility Affect International Expansion?	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	67	11
Cheung et al. (2015)	Being Good When Being International in an Emerging Economy: The Case of China	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	66	7
Aguilera-Caracuel et al. (2015)	International Cultural Diversification and Corporate Social Performance in Multinational Enterprises: The Role of Slack Financial Resources	<i>Management International Review</i>	56	6
Kiliç (2016)	Online Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) Disclosure in the Banking Industry: Evidence from Turkey	<i>International Journal of Bank Marketing</i>	54	7

exposing firms to greater scrutiny from global stakeholders. In this context, CSR disclosure practices are crucial as legitimization strategies, as emphasized by Kiliç (2016) and Dyduch and Krasodomska (2017). Kiliç (2016) explores the importance of CSR online reporting, while Dyduch and Krasodomska (2017) identify key disclosure drivers, including profitability, financial leverage, and environmental sensitivity.

Some highly cited articles directly link CSR to internationalization. Although in different geographical settings, Attig et al. (2016) and Cheung et al. (2015) find that internationalization positively influences CSR activities and performance, respectively. Similarly, Xu et al. (2018) highlight CSR's indirect effect on export performance, especially when mediated by

third-party certification. Aguilera-Caracuel et al. (2015) argue that internationalizing to culturally distant countries enhances CSR diversity and social performance when firms have sufficient financial resources.

Bondy and Starkey (2014) and Miska et al. (2016) address the global-local CSR debate. Bondy and Starkey (2014) show that MNEs' "universal" CSR policies often reflect Western values, marginalizing local concerns. Miska et al. (2016) find that multicultural experienced members in the top management teams can increase firm's local CSR responsiveness.

Overall, the most-cited articles emphasize challenges and opportunities in CSR implementation while internationalizing,

particularly for EM-MNEs, alongside the importance of CSR reporting and decoupling.

3.4 | Research Methodologies and Data Collection

Research methodologies presented in Table 2 reveal a clear predominance of quantitative empirical studies, with 43 articles (81%) adopting this methodology. Within these quantitative studies, it is worth noting that the majority of data collection relied on secondary sources (35 articles), while only seven articles collected primary data. Only one article in this subset used both primary and secondary data. Empirical qualitative methodologies were employed by seven articles, six of which used primary data, and one collected secondary data. Additionally, the sample included two conceptual papers and one SLR. Overall, this panorama suggests a clear preference for quantitative methodologies and secondary data sources. The reduced number of qualitative papers calls for more research using this methodology, while the limited number of conceptual and review papers signals a potential theoretical gap, further justifying the importance of this review.

3.5 | Theoretical Perspectives

The analysis of the papers reveals that the stakeholder theory and institutional theory are the most commonly employed theoretical perspectives exploring the relationship between CSR and firm internationalization. As shown in Table 3, each theory appears 14 times. Stakeholder theory (Freeman 1984) highlights the role of stakeholders in pressuring firms to uphold social and environmental responsibility. Institutional theory (Meyer and Rowan 1977) explains how firms adapt to external environments, including society, governments, and global markets. Table 3 lists the theoretical perspectives employed more than once. Some articles adopt

TABLE 2 | Research methodologies and number of articles.

Research methodologies	Data collection origin	No. of articles	%
Empirical qualitative		7	13
	Primary data	6	11
	Secondary data	1	2
Empirical quantitative		43	81
	Primary data	7	13
	Secondary data	35	66
	Primary and secondary data	1	2
Conceptual/ conceptual review		2	4
SLR		1	2
<i>Total</i>		53	100

Note: All percentages are calculated with reference to the total number of articles (53).

an integrative approach, combining two theories (e.g., Barbaglia et al. 2023; Li and Wang 2023; Ma et al. 2016).

3.6 | Geographical Focus

Table 4 presents the geographical focus of the articles, revealing that the majority of the studies investigated firms from emerging markets, mainly China and India. There are also some studies conducted in developed countries, including Spain, the USA, and Finland. Some studies also conducted cross-country analyses in emerging countries, for instance, examining Indonesia and Vietnam (Munro et al. 2018) or by comparing developed and emerging economies, namely Brazil and Sweden (Mazboudi et al. 2020). Additionally, some studies used multiple-country samples from different regions, including

TABLE 3 | Most used theoretical perspectives.

Theoretical perspective	Frequency
Stakeholder theory	14
Institutional theory	14
Legitimacy theory	7
Neo-institutional theory	3
Signaling theory	3
Resource-based view	2
Global value chain theory	2

TABLE 4 | Distribution of articles by countries.

Countries	Number of articles
China	13
Several countries	10
India	6
USA	4
Spain	3
Cross-country (developing and emerging countries)	3
Finland	2
South Korea	2
UK	2
NA	2
Poland	1
Brazil	1
Turkey	1
Norway	1
Japan	1
Russia	1

European countries (Barbaglia et al. 2023) and emerging economies (e.g., Corciolani et al. 2022; Tashman et al. 2019). There are two studies in which the geographical location does not apply, as they employed literature review methodologies (Aspelund 2017; Bhattacharyya 2020a).

3.7 | Main Themes

To define the main themes emerging from the literature, this study utilized an interpretative synthesis approach as proposed by Jones et al. (2011). This involved inductively identifying the core themes and arguments prevalent across the 53 articles. These themes were inductively derived from the content itself. Secondly, we incorporated elements of content and thematic analysis, drawing on the work of Weed (2008). This method entailed creating labels (topics) and overarching comprehensive themes. The categorization process started with a detailed review of the selected studies, where each researcher individually identified and formulated labels (topics) that accurately reflect the core ideas of the articles. This evaluation centered on pinpointing and identifying key terms and/or content used in the papers, which were progressively adjusted by comparing their resemblances and differences. As patterns arose, the topics were organized into more homogeneous categories, shaping themes that encapsulate more abstract concepts, refining the fundamental patterns that define the essence of this study. Following this in-depth content analysis of the selected manuscripts, the authors grouped them into four thematic groups based on the content they addressed: (1) CSR Performance: Institutional differences between home country and host country; (2) CSR Reporting and EM-MNEs' Internationalization; (3) Is CSR an antecedent or outcome of firms' internationalization in EM-MNEs?; (4) The portrait of CSR in the internationalization of developed country firms.

Table 5 outlines the thematic groups identified, specifying the number of articles, authorship, and keywords per theme. The overlap of some articles across different themes highlights the interconnected nature of CSR studies. For instance, certain studies examine the institutional differences between home- and host-country while also analyzing firms from developed nations (e.g., Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2017). In the following sub-sections, we discuss each one of these thematic groups.

4 | Results

This section reports the results of the SLR based on the main thematic groups identified.

4.1 | CSR Performance: Institutional Differences Between Home Country and Host Country

CSR has evolved from a voluntary strategy focused on social and environmental concerns to a complex business strategy with significant implications for firm performance (Hadjikhani et al. 2016). Several studies found that different types of CSR practices, like responsible animal welfare (Reis and Molento 2020), home market donations (Su and Liu 2021) and responsible

innovation practices (Carrasco and Buendía-Martínez 2016), are intrinsically correlated with a successful internationalization, especially in multinational enterprises (MNEs) with limited international experience (Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2017). When companies internationalize, they increase their geographic diversification, fostering intensive learning on foreign markets that enhances CSR initiatives (Ma et al. 2016). Indeed, Aguilera-Caracuel et al. (2017) claim that broader geographic presence strengthens CSR performance, allowing companies to gain legitimacy and reputation, facilitating the internationalization process as companies become more experienced at it. Additionally, as expected, the higher the institutional distance to countries with weaker institutions, the stronger CSR responses are (Roedder and Schmid 2023).

While some MNEs may resist adopting and learning from foreign CSR practices, favoring home-country strategies in host countries (Bhattacharyya 2019), empirical studies highlight the importance of international CSR (ICSR) planning based on insights gleaned from foreign operations (Aspelund 2017; Bhattacharyya 2020b; Carrasco and Buendía-Martínez 2016; Gao et al. 2022). Hence, building reputation, mitigating resistance in target countries, and regulating the flow of appropriate and relevant information are crucial aspects MNEs need to focus on (Gao et al. 2022). Based on institutional distances between the home country and host country, Bhattacharyya (2020a) proposes four types of CSR activities when companies seek to internationalize: (a) Extension of home-country CSR to the host country; (b) Replication of home-country CSR in the host country; (c) Adaptation of home-country CSR in the host country; and (d) implementation of distinct CSR practices in each host country. However, there are different types of institutional differences that influence CSR adaptations and performance.

When companies pursue operations abroad, the institutional contexts in which they operate play a crucial role in shaping the performance of CSR both locally and internationally (Khojastehpour and Jamali 2020). Internationalization exposes firms to complex environments and global stakeholders that have different perspectives and expectations that need to be matched locally when firms are acting globally. Some studies highlight some of these complex institutional differences perceived in a global market ecosystem: regulations (Attig et al. 2016; Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020; Li and Wang 2023); social norms and stereotyping (Tashman et al. 2019); culture and religion (Bondy and Starkey 2014; Cho et al. 2021; Hadjikhani et al. 2016; Liou et al. 2021; Munro et al. 2018); and state-owned companies (Aray et al. 2021; Cheung et al. 2015). These four relevant factors contribute to disparities in CSR performance across local and international contexts. It implies that MNEs need to effectively manage these cultural, regulatory and economic complexities, recognizing that a “one-size fits all” approach is not viable.

Environmental and social regulations play a key role in influencing a company's acceptance in a host country based on CSR performance. Developed countries tend to have consistent regulatory systems, whereas those in emerging economies are often unstable and inconsistently enforced (Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020). The voluntary nature of CSR practices in developing countries, with soft public regulations, offers companies

TABLE 5 | Thematic groups.

Thematic groups	No. of articles	Keywords	References
CSR Performance: Institutional differences between home country and host country	26	CSR performance; country-of-origin effects; credibility; cultural differences (religion, social norms, uncertainty avoidance); emerging market specificities; foreign markets learning; global market ecosystem; global stakeholder pressures; home market donations; home-country institutional voids; host-country institutions; informal institutions; institutional distance; institutional environment complexity; liabilities of origin; legitimacy; ownership structure; regulatory systems; reputation	Aguilera-Caracuel et al. (2017); Aray et al. (2021); Aspelund (2017); Attig et al. (2016); Bhattacharyya (2019); Bhattacharyya (2020a); Bhattacharyya (2020b); Bondy and Starkey (2014); Carrasco and Buendía-Martínez (2016); Cheung et al. (2015); Cho et al. (2021); Gao et al. (2022); Hadjikhani et al. (2016); Khojastehpour and Jamali (2020); Li and Wang (2023); Liou et al. (2021); Ma et al. (2016); Mazboudi et al. (2020); Miska et al. (2016); Munro et al. (2018); Reis and Molento (2020); Roedder and Schmid (2023); Su and Liu (2021); Tashman et al. (2019); Venugopal et al. (2023); Wang et al. (2023).
CSR Reporting and EM-MNEs' Internationalization	9	CSR communication; CSR decoupling; CSR disclosure; CSR reporting; Emerging Market Multinational Enterprises (EM-MNEs); global legitimization strategy; home-host country interactions; international audiences; online CSR; reporting practices; stakeholder pressure; transparency; voluntary reporting frameworks; website communication	Agnihotri and Bhattacharya (2019); Almontaser and Gerged (2023); Aray et al. (2021); Corciolani et al. (2022); Dyduch and Krasodomska (2017); Hadjikhani et al. (2016); Kiliç (2016); Marano et al. (2017); Tashman et al. (2019); Xu and Shi (2022)
Is CSR an antecedent or outcome of firms' internationalization in EM-MNEs?	14	Antecedents; corporate decisions; CSR engagement; domestic versus international CSR; external pressures; internal CSR logic; internal pressures; international certifications; international compliance; internationalization impact on CSR; internationalization strategy; inward institutionalization; level of internationalization; management skills; outcomes; response to internationalization	Bu and Chen (2023); Cheung et al. (2015); Dyduch and Krasodomska (2017); Gao et al. (2022); Liou et al. (2021); Liu et al. 2021; Manogna and Mishra (2021); Sahasranamam et al. (2022); Shirodkar and Shete (2021); Su and Liu (2021); Xu et al. (2018); Yang, Lin, et al. (2020); Yang, Ali, et al. (2020); Zhang et al. (2021)
The portrait of CSR in the internationalization of developed country firms	15	Availability of resources; CEOs' role; CSR activities; CSR investments; developed country firms; financial performance; firm size; firms' responsible behavior; international performance; international standards; internationalization activities; managers' perceptions; MNEs; multi-stakeholder initiatives; ownership internationalization; role of top managers; SMEs; standardization vs. globalization	Aguilera-Caracuel et al. (2015); Aguilera-Caracuel et al. (2017); Attig et al. (2016); Barbaglia et al. (2023); Bondy and Starkey (2014); Godos-Díez et al. (2018); González-Moreno et al. (2019); Grimstad et al. (2020); Khojastehpour and Saleh (2020); Mattered and Alba Ruiz-Morales (2021); Park (2023); Roedder and Schmid (2023); Stoian and Plakoyiannaki (2023); Torkkeli and Durst (2022); Uzhegova et al. (2019)

little incentive to engage in them. However, some studies suggest that internationalization can be a driver for CSR commitment, as evidenced by the improved CSR performance in firms entering international markets (Mazboudi et al. 2020). Nevertheless, it was found that when MNEs from developed countries internationalize to emerging countries, where CSR regulations are weaker, those firms reduce their sustainable performance (Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020), suggesting a potential negative influence of internationalization on CSR. Conversely, Roedder and Schmid (2023) found that the higher the institutional distance (weaker institutions) demands stronger CSR responses, implying that firms internationalizing to countries with weaker institutions may need to reinforce their CSR practices.

In regard to emerging market multinational enterprises (EM-MNEs), if the home country has little incentives for CSR, internationalization acts as a driver for CSR action, as it happens with Chinese firms that enhance their CSR commitment to gain a competitive advantage when internationalizing (Li and Wang 2023). Similarly, Mazboudi et al. (2020) find that Brazilian firms resort to CSR for legitimacy purposes, both domestically and internationally. Although Brazil has minimal CSR regulations, companies voluntarily adopt CSR initiatives to gain legitimacy, stakeholder approval, and demonstrate socially responsible behavior (Mazboudi et al. 2020). So, when internationalizing, Brazilian companies do not increase their CSR efforts, as they perceive they are engaged enough prior to internationalization. Although CSR performance (CSR_P) increases when companies seek internationalization, it is found that MNEs' concerns about social and environmental initiatives are not always genuine, as CSR activities are only undertaken to enhance the relationship with stakeholders from host countries (Attig et al. 2016). Nevertheless, Venugopal et al. (2023) argue that home-country voids can motivate EM-MNEs to embrace CSR while internationalizing, thereby leading to increased CSR_P (Venugopal et al. 2023). As these firms increase their visibility, as a result of their expansion abroad, their commitment to CSR also increases to address global stakeholders' expectations, enhancing their credibility and legitimacy while mitigating liabilities of origin (Venugopal et al. 2023). CSR can also have an impact on corporate financial performance, especially under the influence of internationalization, although the effect varies depending on the industry and the firm's internationalization stage (Wang et al. 2023). With time and the diversification of internationalization scope, the effect of CSR on financial performance diminishes over time (Wang et al. 2023).

Cultural differences between countries can also influence different types of CSR disclosure practices between subsidiaries of the same firm based in different countries. After internationalizing, firms can adopt CSR initiatives in their home country that are shaped by the host country environment. As such, the country's cultural context influences the adoption of CSR in the host country. For instance, greater uncertainty avoidance and power distance in a firm's home country are positively related to improved CSR_P in EM-MNEs. However, individualism has a negligible effect (Liou et al. 2021). Hence, the cultural imprinting of the home country can improve or jeopardize the adoption of CSR initiatives from the host country (Liou et al. 2021). Cho et al. (2021) find that US MNEs have extensive disclosure information about CSR policies, but their Polish subsidiaries,

a non-transparent country, do not adopt the same practices (Hadjikhani et al. 2016).

Munro et al. (2018) highlight the influence of socio-economic development and cultural differences on CSR practices in Vietnam and Indonesia. The differences in CSR practices are explained based on country development stages, reflecting different CSR sustainability levels and religious differences. Indonesia, being more socio-economically advanced, exhibits higher CSR sustainability levels, whereas Vietnam's CSR approach is deeply rooted in Buddhist principles of altruism and benevolence, fostering humanitarian and philanthropic engagement, an important part of employee-centric CSR initiatives. In contrast, Indonesia's CSR framework, shaped by Islamic values, emphasizes duty and financial support, particularly through charitable giving (Munro et al. 2018). These distinctions underscore the limitations of applying Western CSR models to Eastern contexts or generalizing across emerging economies, as both cultural and developmental factors shape CSR practices. However, MNEs from developed countries tend to standardize their CSR approaches based on Western frameworks (Bondy and Starkey 2014). Greater CSR local responsiveness and overall CSR integration could be achieved by incorporating, for instance, top management members with multicultural experience (Miska et al. 2016).

Private and state-owned companies have different levels of CSR commitment and practices, both domestically and internationally. On one hand, a study conducted on Russian state-owned companies, with large-scale international operations, finds the reports of their CSR initiatives more detailed and precise when compared to private companies (Aray et al. 2021). Indeed, as state-owned companies usually face preconceived assumptions about the true motives behind their international expansion, they try to overcome these biases by increasing transparency in their CSR reporting (Aray et al. 2021). Additionally, a study on Chinese state-owned MNEs concluded that state involvement positively influences a firm's global CSR integration, together with the adoption of comprehensive CSR reporting standards, CSR policies, the multicultural experience of top management teams, and presence in the West (Miska et al. 2016). On the other hand, Cheung et al. (2015) suggest that government-supported Chinese firms may not prioritize CSR initiatives when entering foreign markets, as they often have sufficient resources to expand abroad (Cheung et al. 2015).

4.2 | CSR Reporting and EM-MNEs' Internationalization

In general, internationalization is linked to CSR disclosure, as international firms have a wider impact on society and face increased exposure to global stakeholders' scrutiny (Kiliç 2016; Tashman et al. 2019). Hence, the development of CSR reporting must be done in parallel with firms' internationalization strategies to overcome the negative country-of-origin stereotypes held by stakeholders in the host country (Aray et al. 2021; Tashman et al. 2019).

Our review unveiled that there is a focus on CSR communication, particularly CSR reporting, in internationalization

research specifically on EM-MNEs. When they internationalize, they face increased pressure from developed countries' stakeholders that question their legitimacy. To address these concerns and satisfy the demands of host countries' markets, EM-MNEs engage in CSR communication, with a particular emphasis on CSR reports (Aray et al. 2021; Kiliç 2016; Xu and Shi 2022). The disclosure of CSR activities strengthens both legitimacy and trust in international markets (Agnihotri and Bhattacharya 2019; Aray et al. 2021; Hadjikhani et al. 2016; Kiliç 2016; Tashman et al. 2019). EM-MNEs thus voluntarily adopt non-market legitimization strategies, as is the case with CSR reporting, even if it is not legally required (Marano et al. 2017).

CSR reporting, one of the main communication tools used by firms to voluntarily disclose their practices (Hadjikhani et al. 2016; Kiliç 2016; Tashman et al. 2019), is perceived as a global legitimization strategy that allows emerging market firms (EMFs) to overcome the institutional voids at home and the liabilities of origin that they face in host countries (Agnihotri and Bhattacharya 2019; Marano et al. 2017; Tashman et al. 2019). Stakeholders recognize that those institutional voids (i.e., weaker institutional frameworks) hinder a firm's capacity to act socially responsibly (Aray et al. 2021; Tashman et al. 2019). By enhancing transparency regarding social and environmental externalities, CSR reporting allows stakeholders to better assess a firm's CSR efforts (Tashman et al. 2019). However, MNE's CSR disclosure practices are affected and also influence macro-level factors, such as socio-political transformations in the host-country (Almontaser and Gerged 2023). As observed during the Libyan oil crisis, highly disclosing MNEs can potentially influence political decisions in the host country, highlighting the pivotal role of CSR in shaping political responses (Almontaser and Gerged 2023). Besides, institutional convergence between MNEs' home and host countries influences CSR disclosure levels, with firms exhibiting a greater degree of alignment with the host country's standard (Almontaser and Gerged 2023).

CSR reporting usually starts by covering general issues, progressively focusing on more specific ones, as firms accumulate knowledge about that foreign market (Hadjikhani et al. 2016). Online CSR reporting is considered one of the most effective means of communication, as it enables firms to publicly disclose their CSR performance to a wider international audience in a faster and more cost-effective manner (Kiliç 2016; Tashman et al. 2019; Xu and Shi 2022). For that reason, CSR themes on corporate websites usually revolve around stakeholder interests (customers, employees, communities, governments) and community-related issues (Xu and Shi 2022).

Some firms adopt voluntary reporting frameworks, like the global reporting initiative (GRI), offering guidelines for reporting economic, environmental, and social issues (Kiliç 2016). However, as language is not neutral, the firm's use of language in CSR reporting is a very important aspect (Corciolani et al. 2022). Indeed, GRI promotes an isomorphic convergence to international Western standards and guidelines, emphasizing core topics addressed in developed countries' reports, thus neglecting the specificities of institutional demands faced by EMFs in their home countries (Corciolani

et al. 2022). Therefore, a possible solution lies in anisomorphism, where firms selectively translate international guidelines, adapting them to their home country specificities (Corciolani et al. 2022).

There is no consensus in the literature regarding the impact of EMFs' internationalization and CSR reporting practices. While some studies show that internationalization is a driver of CSR reporting behavior among EMFs, with CSR communication increasing as EMFs internationalize (Agnihotri and Bhattacharya 2019), the strength of this effect is contingent upon the host market (Aray et al. 2021). For instance, when Russian firms internationalize to culturally and linguistically similar developing markets within the CIS (Commonwealth of Independent States) region experience a weaker positive effect compared to those entering non-CIS markets. This can be attributed to reduced pressure for legitimacy faced by firms operating within familiar cultural contexts (Aray et al. 2021). Also, the effect of internationalization on CSR reporting depends upon the negative home-country image perceptions, as the fear of being perceived as hypocritical may lead some firms to under-report some CSR activities to avoid accusations of greenwashing (Aray et al. 2021). This is exemplified by Russian firms' focus on community activities, rather than on environmental ones, due to the commonly associated stereotypes (Aray et al. 2021).

However, other studies fail to corroborate the positive relation between internationalization and the level of online CSR reporting, thus challenging the legitimacy theory (Kiliç 2016). Moreover, some studies point out that internationalization does not reduce the imprint effects of home country institutional voids on EM-MNEs' CSR decoupling, that is, a gap between a firm's self-reported CSR activities and its actual practices (Tashman et al. 2019). Tashman et al. (2019) find some gaps between CSR reporting and CSRP among EM-MNEs, meaning that some of them engage in CSR decoupling to gain acceptance in developed countries. As EM-MNEs usually do not have a strong CSRP prior to internationalization due to less institutional pressure, they will find it easier to engage in symbolic CSR reporting even after internationalizing, as it requires minimal changes to existing operational practices (Tashman et al. 2019). This creates a paradox: the home country's institutional voids can be a driver for EMFs to engage in CSR reporting to fill the legitimacy gap (Corciolani et al. 2022), but they also promote CSR decoupling (Tashman et al. 2019).

Several other factors can influence CSR reporting practices, such as: (i) firm size, with large companies facing increased scrutiny but also having more resources to address them (Kiliç 2016); (ii) company-level factors, such as top managers' experience overseas (Xu and Shi 2022); and (iii) industry sector (Xu and Shi 2022). Finance and service industries are usually less direct in their CSR disclosures than firms operating in polluting sectors (Xu and Shi 2022). This is explained by the general belief that banks, for example, do not directly engage in socially/environmentally hazardous activities (Kiliç 2016). Nevertheless, banks use a considerable amount of resources and, especially in emerging countries, they contribute indirectly to the country's sustainable development by financing projects that have a positive environmental and social impact (Kiliç 2016). In contrast, firms in polluting industries with a higher degree of

internationalization face greater pressure for CSR reporting and tend to be more proactive in their CSR communication strategies (Dyduch and Krasodomska 2017; Xu and Shi 2022).

4.3 | Is CSR an Antecedent or Outcome of Firms' Internationalization in EM-MNEs?

The relationship between CSR and internationalization in EM-MNEs is multifaceted and cyclical. EM-MNEs are often rooted in institutional contexts with weak internal supervision and regulatory norms, thus facing less pressure from their home country and more from the global market (Bu and Chen 2023). Therefore, EM-MNEs may experience a phenomenon of “inward institutionalization” of CSR pressures (Bu and Chen 2023, p. 1448). Regardless of the source of the pressure (internal or external to the home country), achieving social responsibility in emerging markets can contribute to the adoption of internationalization strategies, enhancing long-term firm value and reducing the probability of sanctions in host countries during internationalization (Yang, Lin, et al. 2020). CSR performance is positively related to the level of internationalization (Cheung et al. 2015), regardless of firm size, as even SMEs from emerging economies can gain a competitive advantage due to their CSR performance (Liu et al. 2021). In this respect, EM-MNEs should improve their environmental management skills, including green innovation, and their sense of responsibility, interacting with the markets and supply chains of developed countries (Yang, Ali, et al. 2020). Strategic green marketing innovation, for example, has proven to be a successful practice for internationalization (Gao et al. 2022).

However, EM-MNEs must ensure the veracity of their CSR claims to avoid the risk of greenwashing. To mitigate the possible misalignment between CSR reporting and a firm's actual actions, firms often resort to international certifications like ISO 14001, signaling their commitment to environmental responsibility to foreign customers and stakeholders (Xu et al. 2018). Compliance with international regulations serves as an effective and credible practice amongst EM-MNEs to demonstrate their commitment to CSR (Xu et al. 2018).

Internationalization is one of the most important factors that positively influences CSR and the need for legitimacy (Zhang et al. 2021). Indeed, companies operating in polluting industries tend to provide better quality CSR disclosures compared to other companies, which demonstrates that environmental disclosures function as a legitimizing tool (Dyduch and Krasodomska 2017). Managers may undertake initiatives to improve transparency and corporate governance structures to attract foreign institutional investments, which can further support the firm's internationalization process (Manogna and Mishra 2021). Additionally, studies show that the internationalization of EM-MNEs to developed countries has a positive effect on CSR in their home country (Liou et al. 2021), such as home donation (Su and Liu 2021). For instance, Sahasranamam et al. (2022) found that internationalization enhances Indian MNEs' home-country CSR engagement. Furthermore, this positive effect of domestic CSR on internationalization is greater when EM-MNEs target developed countries compared to emerging economies (Sahasranamam et al. 2022). Indeed, when EM-MNEs increase

their domestic CSR, they are able to meet international CSR expectations in developed countries (Shirodkar and Shete 2021).

In conclusion, a pre-existing commitment to CSR can establish a positive reputation for EM-MNEs regarding their social and environmental concerns during internationalization. Nevertheless, expanding their businesses into developed countries requires further refinement of CSR strategies to gain a competitive advantage over other MNEs, particularly from emerging economies. This cyclical relationship between CSR and internationalization highlights the strategic importance of CSR for EM-MNEs navigating the global market.

4.4 | The Portrait of CSR in the Internationalization of Developed Country Firms

Although most of the articles reviewed focused on firms from emerging countries, there are a few studies that link CSR and the internationalization of firms (MNEs or SMEs) from developed countries. Firm size influences CSR adoption when firms from developed countries internationalize. Compared to larger firms, smaller firms face additional challenges due to resource constraints (Torkkeli and Durst 2022). Additionally, their closer relationships with local communities pressure them to be socially responsible (Grimstad et al. 2020). Conversely, MNEs have more abundant and available resources, including slack financial resources that enable them to engage in more advanced CSR practices and increase CSR investments as they internationalize (Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2015; Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2017; Attig et al. 2016; Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020). So, the positive impact of internationalization on CSR is usually more pronounced for large firms (Attig et al. 2016). Besides, engaging in specific CSR activities, such as participation in multi-stakeholder initiatives, allows MNEs to overcome the liability of foreignness in host countries and consequently improve firm financial performance during internationalization (Park 2023). These multi-stakeholder initiatives play a moderating role on the internationalization-firm performance relationship mainly due to their signaling effect, as it is shown in the case of South Korean MNEs (Park 2023).

A current trend in MNE internationalization is the strategic shift from focusing on traditional competitive advantages (i.e., price or quality) to prioritizing social and environmental responsibility (Bondy and Starkey 2014; Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020). Due to their wider societal impact, MNEs are especially held accountable for their socially responsible behavior (Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2015; Attig et al. 2016; Mattera and Alba Ruiz-Morales 2021). Their ability to promote economic progress and drive social and environmental changes is greater than that of smaller firms in both developed and developing countries (Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2015). As such, driven by increased sustainability awareness and commitment, European MNEs have recently embarked on reconfiguring their global strategies and revising the geographical distribution of their value chains by relocating previously offshored operations to different locations (Barbaglia et al. 2023). This implies a shift in destination countries, motivated by the need to meet stakeholder expectations. Hence, CSR signaling has the potential to

influence MNEs' revision of their internationalization strategies (Barbaglia et al. 2023).

CSR is thus perceived as having a positive influence on firms' internationalization process (Godos-Díez et al. 2018; Mattera and Alba Ruiz-Morales 2021), with the internationalization of corporate activities being positively related to increased CSR activities (Attig et al. 2016; Godos-Díez et al. 2018; Roedder and Schmid 2023). Also, CSR activities and commitment can also influence the level of internationalization in MNEs (Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020). For Japanese firms, CSR is also a source of legitimacy, enabling them to address potential threats arising across different internationalization dimensions, including the internationalization of activities, ownership, and boards (Roedder and Schmid 2023). Thereby, top managers should strategically leverage CSR to mitigate legitimacy threats during internationalization (Roedder and Schmid 2023).

A key challenge for MNEs when internationalizing is the balance between standardization or globalization of CSR practices during policy development and implementation (Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2015; Bondy and Starkey 2014; Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020). While MNEs advocate for an integrated approach that blends both local and global needs in their CSR strategies to answer to the global-local debate, it was found that they actually ignore (intentionally or unintentionally) the host country's cultural context in the development of their CSR policy (Bondy and Starkey 2014). Hence, MNEs sometimes resort to standardized policies, often mirroring Western practices, which they claim to be universal (Bondy and Starkey 2014). Even though these standardized policies, defined by headquarters, may be adapted to local culture during implementation, they can marginalize local issues (Bondy and Starkey 2014). Instead of applying Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions when shaping CSR policy, MNEs resort to applying "universal" standards, such as the United Nations Global Compact (UNGC) (Bondy and Starkey 2014; Mattera and Alba Ruiz-Morales 2021), or the GRI, as instruments to meet the demands of global stakeholders (Park 2023). Both the GRI sustainability reports and the UNGC serve as examples of multi-stakeholder initiatives that explicitly signal the firm's commitment and orientation towards social and environmental responsibility (Park 2023). Additionally, these initiatives can streamline the process for stakeholders in host countries to evaluate the credibility of a foreign MNE's CSR effort (Park 2023). It is believed that the use of these international standards will avoid CSR initiatives to be perceived as greenwashing, as these initiatives establish a baseline level of expected CSR performance (Mattera and Alba Ruiz-Morales 2021). However, to effectively manage CSR globally, some CSR activities need to be adapted to each host country (Attig et al. 2016; Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020).

In the case of SMEs, the backbone of many developed economies, internationalization is also linked to CSR adoption. Engaging in CSR activities enables them to gain competitive advantages and legitimacy in international markets (Grimstad et al. 2020; Torkkeli and Durst 2022; Uzhegova et al. 2019). Given that CEOs in SMEs typically hold a significant ownership stake, their decisions, interests, and characteristics can significantly influence

a firm's commitment to CSR, as they foster closer relationships with employees and stakeholders (González-Moreno et al. 2019). Understanding managers' perceptions of international CSR within SMEs is crucial for these firms crafting internationalization strategies (Stoian and Plakoyiannaki 2023). A study from the UK outlines four different approaches to practicing international CSR in SMEs: (i) CSR as a driver of international performance, emphasizing the economic dimension and international customer focus; (ii) CSR as a means to promote international distinctiveness, achieved through adopting international standards and exceeding compliance requirements; (iii) CSR as a means to foster successful international collaboration, enabling positive economic, social, and environmental performance; and (iv) CSR as a catalyst for change, empowerment, and sustainable internationalization, which entails adopting a triple bottom line approach and encouraging stakeholders to implement changes that benefit society and the environment (Stoian and Plakoyiannaki 2023). These different approaches and interpretations of CSR are mainly shaped by managerial worldviews and have an impact on firms' internationalization strategies and on their overall engagement with global markets and stakeholders (Stoian and Plakoyiannaki 2023).

Research suggests that internationalization plays a moderating role in the relationship between SMEs' intrinsic motivation and CSR activities (Grimstad et al. 2020). SMEs are predominantly driven by intrinsic motivation when adopting CSR practices, which drives them to implement CSR initiatives and develop advanced CSR standards, especially when internationalizing (Grimstad et al. 2020). Recent studies also show the importance of learning orientation within SMEs, as it increases the success of both the internationalization process and the development of CSR activities in that process (Torkkeli and Durst 2022).

5 | Conclusions

This SLR identified four different thematic groups, which were presented and discussed in the previous section. Tables 6 and 7 present the main firm-based and context-based factors related to the four thematic groups identified, respectively.

To address the research question of how firms balance CSR commitments between home and host countries under the pressures of internationalization, three key characteristics emerge: institutional and cultural differences, stakeholder pressures and legitimacy, and strategic CSR.

As firms expand internationally, they must navigate diverse regulatory frameworks, cultural and religious expectations, and societal norms. Consequently, they must account for variations in CSR regulations and legal frameworks, which often differ between home and host countries. Companies typically adopt one of two approaches: standardization, wherein they implement global CSR policies aligned with international norms (e.g., the UN Global Compact), or localization, wherein they adapt CSR initiatives to address the specific needs and expectations of the host country.

Balancing CSR commitments in the context of internationalization requires firms to respond to diverse and sometimes

TABLE 6 | Internal factors influencing the internationalization of CSR.

Thematic group	Firm-related factors
CSR performance: Institutional differences between home country and host country	International CSR planning: Companies' ability to adapt and learn from foreign CSR practices to develop effective international CSR plans to strengthen reputation and gain legitimacy (Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2017; Aspelund 2017; Bhattacharyya 2020b; Carrasco and Buendía-Martínez 2016; Gao et al. 2022)
CSR reporting and EM-MNEs' internationalization	Strategic CSR commitment: MNEs may adopt CSR mainly as a strategic tool rather than a genuine commitment (Attig et al. 2016) Top management characteristics: Multicultural experience in leadership teams improves local CSR responsiveness (Miska et al. 2016) Corporate financial performance: CSR impact on financial performance weakens as firms internationalize (Wang et al. 2023) Top management experience overseas: Managers' international experience can influence the use of language and adoption of CSR reporting practices (Xu and Shi 2022) Firm size: Larger firms face greater scrutiny and have more resources for CSR reporting (Kiliç 2016) Type of industry and environmental risk: Firms in polluting industries face stronger pressure for CSR disclosure than finance/service firms (Dyduch and Krasodomska 2017; Kiliç 2016)
Is CSR an antecedent or outcome of firms' internationalization in EM-MNEs?	Fear of greenwashing perceptions: Firms may under-report CSR activities to avoid accusations of hypocrisy (Aray et al. 2021) CSR decoupling: EM-MNEs may engage in symbolic CSR reporting without real operational changes (Tashman et al. 2019) Pre-existing CSR commitment: A strong CSR foundation can enhance reputation and internationalization success (Bu and Chen 2023) Environmental management skills: Importance of green innovation for internationalization (Yang, Lin, et al. 2020) Adoption of international certifications: Firms use globally recognized certifications (e.g., ISO 14001) to enhance credibility in foreign markets (Xu et al. 2018)
The portrait of CSR in the internationalization of developed country firms	Industry-specific CSR strategies: Firms in high-risk industries (e.g., polluting sectors) provide better-quality CSR disclosures as a legitimizing tool (Dyduch and Krasodomska 2017) Firm size and resource availability: Even SMEs from emerging markets can leverage CSR for internationalization despite resource constraints (Liu et al. 2021) Firm size and resources: Larger MNEs have more resources for advanced CSR practices (Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2015; Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2017; Attig et al. 2016; Khojastepour and Saleh 2020); Smaller firms face resource constraints for CSR (Torkkeli and Durst 2022) Strategic shift towards CSR-driven internationalization: Firms increasingly prioritize CSR over traditional competitive advantages (Bondy and Starkey 2014; Khojastepour and Saleh 2020) Management perception and strategic use of CSR for MNEs: Ability to strategically leverage CSR to address legitimacy threats during internationalization (Roedder and Schmid 2023)
	Management perception and strategic use of CSR for SMEs: CEO characteristics and ownership stakes drive CSR commitment (González-Moreno et al. 2019). Managerial worldviews shape CSR engagement to international CSR (Stoian and Plakoyiannaki 2023). Learning orientation improves both internationalization and CSR development (Torkkeli and Durst 2022)

TABLE 7 | External factors influencing the internationalization of CSR.

Thematic group	Context-based factors
<p>CSR performance: Institutional differences between home country and host country</p>	<p>Institutional differences: Variations in regulations, social norms, culture and religion between home and host countries (Attig et al. 2016; Bondy and Starkey 2014; Cho et al. 2021; Hadjikhani et al. 2016; Khojastehpour and Jamali 2020; Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020; Liou et al. 2021; Munro et al. 2018; Roedder and Schmid 2023; Tashman et al. 2019)</p>
<p>CSR reporting and EM-MNEs' internationalization</p>	<p>Market pressures: Firms from emerging markets strengthen CSR to improve credibility and legitimacy abroad (Gao et al. 2022; Li and Wang 2023; Mazboudi et al. 2020; Venugopal et al. 2023)</p> <p>Ownership structure: Public versus private ownership (Aray et al. 2021; Cheung et al. 2015)</p> <p>Target market: Pressure from stakeholders in developed countries (Aray et al. 2021; Tashman et al. 2019). Strength of effect depends on host market characteristics (cultural similarity, home country image) (Aray et al. 2021)</p> <p>Institutional pressures: Weaker home country institutions can be a driver for CSR reporting (to fill legitimacy gap) but also promote CSR decoupling (Corciolani et al. 2022; Tashman et al. 2019). Institutional convergence between home and host countries can influence reporting standards (Almontaser and Geiged 2023)</p>
<p>Type of industry: Is CSR an antecedent or outcome of firms' internationalization in EM-MNEs?</p>	<p>Polluting industries tend to disclose more CSR information due to higher stakeholder pressure (Dyduch and Krasodomska 2017; Xu and Shi 2022). Firms in less directly impactful sectors (finance, services) disclose less CSR information (Kiliç 2016; Xu and Shi 2022)</p> <p>Firm size: Larger firms have more resources for CSR reporting but also face greater scrutiny (Kiliç 2016)</p> <p>CSR reporting frameworks: Potential for isomorphic convergence to Western standards, neglecting home country specificities (Corciolani et al. 2022). Importance of adapting international guidelines to local context (Corciolani et al. 2022)</p> <p>Institutional voids in home country: Weak regulatory frameworks in home countries push EM-MNEs to adopt CSR practices that align with global standards (Bu and Chen 2023); Compliance with stricter CSR regulations in developed countries is essential for market entry and acceptance (Xu et al. 2018)</p> <p>Legitimacy pressure from developed markets: EM-MNEs need strong CSR performance to meet stakeholder expectations in developed economies (Zhang et al. 2021)</p>
<p>The portrait of CSR in the internationalization of developed country firms</p>	<p>Differentiation strategy: Strong CSR practices enable firms to stand out among competitors from other emerging markets (Shirodkar and Shete 2021)</p> <p>Attraction of foreign institutional investment: Transparent and credible CSR practices help firms attract foreign investors, supporting their internationalization process (Manogna and Mishra 2021)</p> <p>Internationalization and regulatory expectations: The positive impact of internationalization on CSR is usually more pronounced for large firms as they internationalize and to markets with stricter CSR norms, which force MNEs to enhance CSR practices (Attig et al. 2016; Roedder and Schmid 2023)</p> <p>Stakeholder pressures: MNEs are held more accountable for CSR due to wider societal impact (Aguilera-Caracuel et al. 2015; Attig et al. 2016; Mattered and Alba Ruiz-Morales 2021). Need to meet stakeholder expectations in destination countries (Barbaglia et al. 2023)</p> <p>Standardization versus adaptation of CSR practices: Balancing standardization for efficiency with adaptation to local contexts (Bondy and Starkey 2014; Khojastehpour and Saleh 2020)</p> <p>Use of international CSR standards: Potential for greenwashing if not adapted (Mattered and Alba Ruiz-Morales 2021). Can streamline stakeholder evaluation and signal commitment (Park 2023)</p>

conflicting stakeholder demands. On one hand, home-country stakeholders, for example, investors and consumers, often expect adherence to high ethical standards, particularly in developed economies. On the other hand, host-country stakeholders, such as local communities, governments, and employees, may prioritize concerns such as employment opportunities, infrastructure development, and fair wages. Thus, firms must align their CSR strategies to maintain legitimacy in both contexts, often by ensuring transparency in reporting and actively engaging with local communities.

CSR can serve as a tool for differentiation and competitive positioning. To achieve this, firms must allocate resources to CSR initiatives that align with both business objectives and stakeholder expectations. Effective utilization of internal resources, leadership, and managerial strategies is essential for defining strategic commitments that foster legitimacy and address institutional voids. In doing so, firms can ensure that their CSR efforts maintain global consistency while remaining locally relevant.

Internationalization presents challenges for firms navigating CSR differentials between home and host countries. Successfully managing these complexities requires firms to integrate global standards with local responsiveness, establish universal minimum CSR benchmarks across all markets, align with stakeholder expectations, use CSR as a strategic asset, and proactively address ethical dilemmas. Leading international firms view CSR not as a regulatory obligation but as a driver of long-term value creation in both home and host markets.

Figure 4 presents an integrative framework that summarizes the relationship between CSR and internationalization, emphasizing their interconnected nature. This incremental approach enables firms to accumulate knowledge about a market's cultural, social, environmental, and economic environment. Firms with a higher degree of internationalization tend to exhibit a stronger commitment to CSR activities compared to less internationalized firms, as they are more exposed to global sustainability standards and stakeholder expectations. Key factors that drive and enhance CSR engagement in internationalizing firms include environmental regulation, CSR reporting, corporate governance influence, and the need to gain legitimacy in the host countries. These elements collectively shape how MNEs integrate CSR into their global operations.

Most of the studies in this literature review focus on CSR in emerging markets, highlighting institutional voids (i.e., culture and religion) as one of the main challenges for firms seeking to build a reputation, credibility, and strengthen their internationalization process. For EM-MNEs, internationalization provides an opportunity to learn from host countries and improve CSR commitments in their home markets, fostering an outside-in perspective where global best practices inform local CSR strategies. In these markets, philanthropic initiatives, such as donations, are frequently adopted CSR strategies, often as a means to establish legitimacy and social acceptance. In contrast, in developed countries, CSR is embedded as a mainstream practice, heavily influenced by firm size. Larger firms, with greater resources, are more likely to invest in sustainable initiatives and integrate CSR into their core operations.

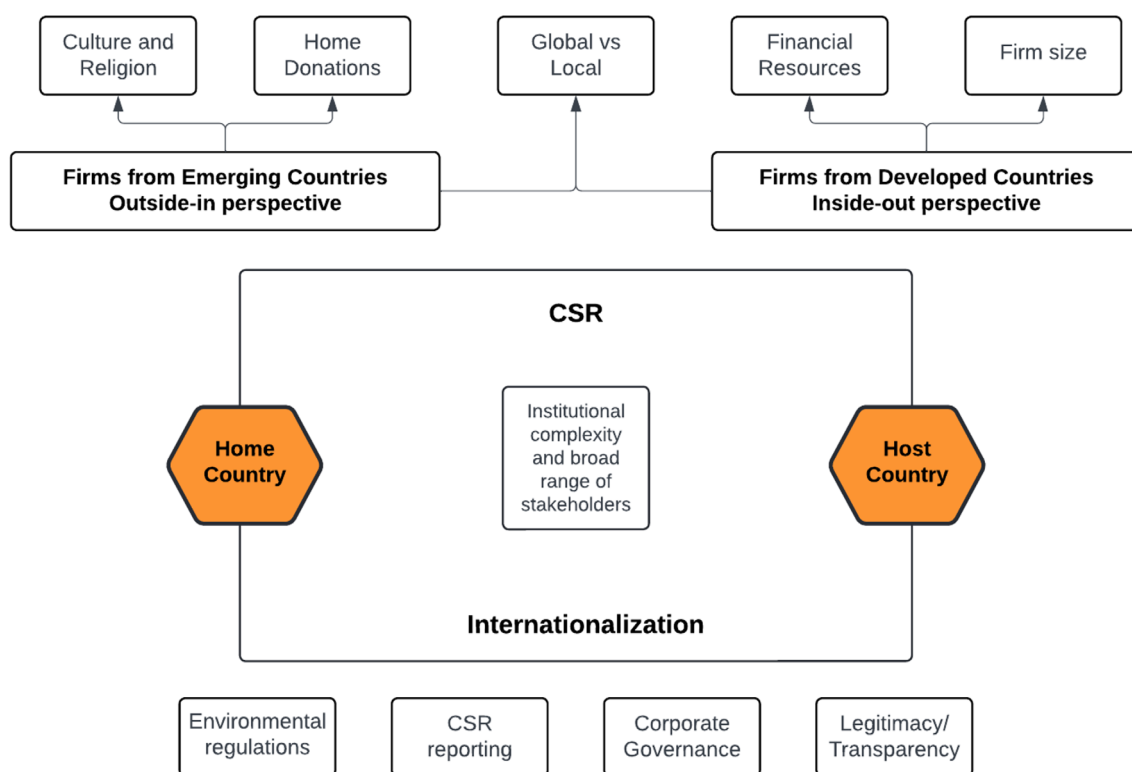


FIGURE 4 | Integrative framework on the factors influencing CSR commitment in internationalizing firms.

Regardless of whether firms originate from emerging or developed countries, a key challenge in internationalization is striking the right balance between standardizing CSR practices across global operations and adapting them to local institutional and cultural contexts. All firms must navigate the complexities of diverse regulatory environments while meeting the expectations of global stakeholders. Achieving this balance often requires a hybrid CSR approach, integrating universal principles with localized strategies to ensure both legitimacy and competitive advantage in foreign markets.

This SLR revealed some research gaps that provide promising avenues for future studies. Given the institutional complexity firms face when internationalizing, the following broad directions are suggested.

A key driver of CSR decoupling and greenwashing across firms in both developed and emerging countries is internationalization. While often associated with responsible corporate behavior, international expansion can spur some firms to engage in symbolic CSR to meet institutional pressures without substantive commitment. The literature suggests firms face conflicting stakeholder demands and legitimacy pressures, which may incentivize CSR misrepresentation. Future studies could explore when international expansion leads to misalignment between CSR policies and actual practices, particularly examining how institutional voids and regulatory discrepancies across markets contribute to such behaviors. Additionally, future studies can also address the role of managerial and CEO leadership styles in addressing this challenge. While leadership influences CSR engagement, further study is needed on how traits like ethical orientation, transformational leadership, or stakeholder inclusivity help firms resist greenwashing and foster genuine responsibility.

Another research gap relates to CSR assessment validity. Misalignments in CSR reports underscore the need for empirical studies relying on primary data. The majority of the reviewed articles relied on longitudinal studies using secondary sources, which may not fully reflect actual CSR practices. Future research could employ cross-country longitudinal studies, incorporating primary data collection through interviews, surveys, or observational methods to enhance validity. This would better capture the discrepancies between reported and actual CSR behaviors, particularly in firms operating across diverse institutional environments.

Additional studies on stakeholders' perceptions could help determine how negative stereotypes tied to firms' country of origin evolve with CSR commitment. The literature indicates that firms from emerging markets often face reputational biases, shaping stakeholder expectations and engagement. Research could examine how sustained CSR efforts influence these perceptions over time and mitigate negative stereotypes. Moreover, as the role of customers cannot be disregarded, investigating the CSR impact on customer behavior in emerging markets, where price sensitivity and brand trust dynamics differ from developed economies, is another avenue.

As religious beliefs and cultural context are influential, further examination is needed. Culture plays a key role in both home and host markets and can help analyze the link between

internationalization and CSR and understand how culture influences corporate governance mechanisms and business group affiliations among EM-MNEs. Cross-cultural comparisons could reveal whether firms from different cultural backgrounds adopt distinct CSR approaches when expanding abroad.

Examining how firms acquire and adapt institutional knowledge in foreign markets could also be of added value. Given regulatory and societal expectations during internationalization, research could examine how firms internalize institutional knowledge and shape CSR commitments over time.

Expanding research to compare emerging markets is also recommended, as findings from one may not apply to another due to socio-economic, regulatory, and cultural variations. Exploring how economic development stages influence CSR priorities could offer a nuanced understanding. Additionally, studying whether firms from high-growth economies (e.g., China, India) follow different CSR trajectories than those in lower-income markets would be valuable.

Addressing these gaps can deepen our understanding of CSR and internationalization, offering theoretical advancements and practical insights for multinational firms navigating global sustainability challenges.

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Appendix A

Final Pool of Publications Included in This SLR (Ranked by TGCs)

Authors	Journal	Quartile*	TGCs
Marano et al. (2017)	<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	323
Tashman et al. (2019)	<i>Journal of International Business Studies</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	244
Attig et al. (2016)	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Q1: Arts and Humanities	199
Dyduch and Krasodomska (2017)	<i>Sustainability (Switzerland)</i>	Q1: Geography, Planning and Development	119
Bondy and Starkey (2014)	<i>British Journal of Management</i>	Q1: Business, Management and Accounting	111
Miska et al. (2016)	<i>Business Ethics Quarterly</i>	Q1: Business, Management and Accounting	90
Xu et al. (2018)	<i>Business Strategy and the Environment</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	67
Cheung et al. (2015)	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Q1: Arts and Humanities	66
Aguilera-Caracuel et al. (2015)	<i>Management International Review</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	56
Kiliç (2016)	<i>International Journal of Bank Marketing</i>	Q2: Marketing	54
Aguilera-Caracuel et al. (2017)	<i>European Journal of Management and Business Economics</i>	Q2: Business and International Management	35
Aray et al. (2021)	<i>International Business Review</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	34
Ma et al. (2016)	<i>Management Decision</i>	Q1: Business, Management and Accounting	33
Grimstad et al. (2020)	<i>European Business Review</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	33
Munro et al. (2018)	<i>International Journal of Emerging Markets</i>	Q2: Business and International Management	29
Zhang et al. (2021)	<i>Emerging Markets Review</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	28
Hadjikhani et al. (2016)	<i>International Marketing Review</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	27
Mazboudi et al. (2020)	<i>International Business Review</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	25
Yang, Ali, et al. (2020)	<i>South African Journal of Business Management</i>	Q3: Business and International Management	24
Mattera and Alba Ruiz-Morales (2021)	<i>Marketing Intelligence and Planning</i>	Q2: Marketing	16
Agnihotri and Bhattacharya (2019)	<i>Journal of Marketing Communications</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	14
Godos-Diez et al. (2018)	<i>Administrative Sciences</i>	Q2: Business, Management and Accounting	13
Bhattacharyya (2019)	<i>Business Strategy and Development</i>	Q1: Economics, Econometrics and Finance	13
Khojastehpour and Saleh (2020)	<i>Social Responsibility Journal</i>	Q1: Social Sciences	12
Khojastehpour and Jamali (2020)	<i>Social Responsibility Journal</i>	Q1: Social Sciences	12
Gao et al. (2022)	<i>Journal of Cleaner Production</i>	Q1: Environmental Science	12
Bhattacharyya (2020a)	<i>Social Responsibility Journal</i>	Q1: Social Sciences	11

Authors	Journal	Quartile*	TGCs
Shirodkar and Shete (2021)	<i>Management International Review</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	11
Aspelund (2017)	<i>International Journal of Entrepreneurship</i>	Discontinued in Scopus as of 2021	10
Reis and Molento (2020)	<i>Journal of Business Ethics</i>	Q1: Arts and Humanities	10
Manogna and Mishra (2021)	<i>Journal of Asia Business Studies</i>	Q1: Economics, Econometrics and Finance	10
Liou et al. (2021)	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	Q1: Marketing	10
Liu et al. (2021)	<i>Journal of Multinational Financial Management</i>	Q1: Finance	10
Cho et al. (2021)	<i>Meditari Accountancy Research</i>	Q1: Economics, Econometrics and Finance	9
Uzhegova et al. (2019)	<i>Management Revue</i>	Q2: Business, Management and Accounting	8
Carrasco and Buendía-Martínez (2016)	<i>Journal of Small Business Strategy</i>	Q2: Strategy and Management	7
González-Moreno et al. (2019)	<i>Sustainability (Switzerland)</i>	Q1: Geography, Planning and Development	7
Sahasranamam et al. (2022)	<i>Journal of Business Research</i>	Q1: Marketing	7
Yang, Lin, et al. (2020)	<i>Soft Computing</i>	Q2: Geometry and Topology	4
Torkkeli and Durst (2022)	<i>Sustainability (Switzerland)</i>	Q1: Geography, Planning and Development	3
Bu and Chen (2023)	<i>Asian Business and Management</i>	Q1: Political Science and International Relations	3
Barbaglia et al. (2023)	<i>Journal of International Management</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	3
Bhattacharyya (2020b)	<i>Review of International Business and Strategy</i>	Q2: Business and International Management	2
Corciolani et al. (2022) (x)	<i>Journal of Management Studies</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	2
Stoian and Plakoyiannaki (2023)	<i>Journal of Small Business Management</i>	Q1: Business, Management and Accounting	2
Venugopal et al. (2023)	<i>Thunderbird International Business Review</i>	Q1: Political Science and International Relations	2
Li and Wang (2023)	<i>Journal of Business Finance and Accounting</i>	Q1: Accounting	1
Wang et al. (2023)	<i>Journal of Environmental Planning and Management</i>	Q1: Environmental Science	1
Su and Liu (2021)	<i>Technology Analysis and Strategic Management</i>	Q2: Technology Analysis and Management	0
Xu and Shi (2022)	<i>Chinese Journal of Communication</i>	Q1: Communication	0
Park (2023)	<i>Multinational Business Review</i>	Q1: Business and International Management	0
Almontaser and Gerged (2023)	<i>Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management</i>	Q1: Development	0
Roedder and Schmid (2023)	<i>Journal of General Management</i>	Q3: Business, Management and Accounting	0

Note: * This information was obtained from the SCOPUS database. At the time of the research, all articles were fully available (one of them as 'early cite'/article in press) in 2022; however, this article (x) was published in 2024; TGC: Total Global Citation (actual overall Scopus citation).