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INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY MANAGEMENT IN AN ECLECTIC APPROACH – STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK FOR THE ENTERPRISE (SBU)[1]

Summary

Purpose | The article analyzes the role of intellectual property (IP) as a strategic resource within Strategic Business Units (SBUs). Drawing on the Resource-Based View (RBV), Porter's competitive strategy, and the concept of absorptive capacity, it proposes an eclectic approach that integrates legal protection, commercialization, and innovation-driven collaboration. IP supports innovation, competitive advantage, and revenue diversification.

Research method | The study is conceptual and exploratory in nature, based on a literature review and the integration of theoretical models. It formulates research questions and hypotheses concerning the usefulness of IP as a strategic resource and the applicability of an eclectic IP management model in the dynamic operational conditions of SBUs.

Results | The results indicate the potential of IP in building market barriers and generating new value streams. The study contributes to the field of knowledge management by offering a framework for practitioners operating in innovation-driven sectors.

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Originality/value/implications/recommendations | The article provides a novel perspective by combining legal, commercialization, and strategic dimensions within IP management. It advocates for the implementation of managerial tools such as IP audits, licensing, and knowledge-based partnerships, integrating IP into strategic planning at the SBU level.

Keywords: intellectual property, business model, strategy, enterprise

JEL classification: K11, M10

1. Introduction

Contemporary management sciences are increasingly focusing on *intellectual property* (IP) as an important area of innovative activity within enterprises. Intellectual property, being the result of creativity, talent, and creative labor, plays a crucial role in building competitive advantage in rapidly changing markets. Until recently, IP was primarily viewed through a legal lens, focusing on procedures for obtaining exclusive rights to inventions, trademarks, or industrial designs. Today, IP is treated not only as a legal instrument but also as a strategic resource linked to corporate and SBU-level business strategies.The evolution of strategic management from the positional (Porter's) perspective to the resource-based view (RBV) has enabled a new understanding of IP as an organizational resource that can serve as a foundation for effective strategic actions. The RBV approach assumes that unique resources and capabilities of an enterprise, including intellectual property, are key to achieving competitive advantage and long-term success. Properly managed and protected IP can be used as intangible capital generating financial benefits, for instance through licensing, assignment (sale) of rights, or commercialization of innovations. Despite the importance of intellectual property (IP), Polish enterprises still rarely treat it as an integral component of business strategy. In particular, IP management in the SME sector seldom forms part of long-term strategic planning. Reports such as *Intellectual Property Rights and Firm Performance in the European Union* [2025] indicate a low level of IP utilization, resulting from insufficient managerial awareness and the limited integration of IP with strategic processes [Urząd Patentowy Rzeczypospolitej Polskiej, 2020]. Failure to identify and protect intangible assets constrains firms' ability to leverage IP

as a tool for innovation, business expansion, or access to external financing. Experts [Hanel, 2006; Grudzewski, Hejduk, 2008] emphasize that effective IP management, embedded within strategic planning, is essential for enhancing enterprise value and competitiveness. In response to the challenges associated with limited IP integration, this article proposes an eclectic approach that combines elements from various strategic frameworks – such as cost leadership and differentiation – thereby enabling strategic business units (SBUs) to develop flexible and context-specific IP management strategies.

An eclectic approach to IP strategy management involves a deliberate combination of elements from multiple strategic models in order to tailor IP practices to the specific needs of an enterprise or SBU. Rather than representing a fixed management style, this approach provides a flexible framework for developing hybrid strategies that draw on the most effective features of different schools of strategic thought. SBUs, as structurally distinct organizational units with a degree of autonomy in resource allocation and decision-making, constitute a particularly suitable context for implementing diversified and adaptive IP strategies. With regard to IP management models, the literature traditionally distinguishes between offensive and defensive strategies. More recent studies [Grimaldi et al., 2021] identify three dominant models: defensive, collaborative, and improvised. The first two models are characterized by clearly defined strategic objectives, whereas the improvised model emphasizes flexibility and limited formal planning. These models differ in their degree of formalization, strategic orientation, and the manner in which IP is integrated into the overall business strategy. Importantly, while a strategy model outlines potential approaches to IP management, a strategy itself reflects the concrete decisions and actions undertaken by an enterprise.

Based on these considerations, this study addresses the following research questions:

Q1: To what extent can intellectual property serve as a strategic resource in building competitive advantage for enterprises and SBUs?

Q2: How do enterprises and SBUs integrate intellectual property into their business strategies?

Q3: What strategic changes are required to effectively implement an eclectic approach to IP management at the SBU level?

From these research questions, the following hypotheses are derived:

H1: Intellectual property functions as a strategic resource for organizations operating in highly competitive and innovation-intensive markets.

H2: Enterprises and SBUs use IP strategically to create entry barriers, support innovation, and generate additional revenue through the licensing and commercialization of intangible assets.

H3: The successful implementation of an eclectic IP management strategy requires a consistent integration of IP with the broader business strategy.

The aim of this article is to examine how intellectual property can be embedded within enterprise-level and SBU-level strategies, and how an eclectic approach facilitates the development of adaptive and context-specific IP management practices. By emphasizing the strategic role of IP, this study offers both theoretical insights and practical guidance for managers seeking to enhance organizational value and competitiveness in dynamic market environments.

2. Theoretical background

The management and protection strategies of intellectual property (IP) represent a significant area of research in the context of innovation, technology transfer, and maintaining a competitive position in the market. In international literature, this issue is widely analyzed, particularly from the perspective of intellectual resource management, as well as the planning, organization, direction, and control of processes related to the protection and commercialization of IP [Teece, 1986; Hall et al., 2014; *Intellectual Property Rights and Firm Performance in the EU*, 2025]. A strategic approach to intellectual property goes beyond its legal protection by integrating actions aimed at effective IP portfolio management and adaptation to a dynamically changing market and technological environment. In this way, intellectual property becomes a key element of a broadly understood business strategy, influencing the overall direction of enterprise development. Strategic decisions include, among others, the choice of an appropriate form of IP protection such as a patent or trade secret as well as determining the optimal scope of protection. What is another important aspect is the timing of rights registration

and the adoption of rules regarding information disclosure [Hall et al., 2014]. Companies must also decide how to utilize their resources either through internal activities or in collaboration with external partners. The method of generating revenue is a crucial element, for example through licensing of owned solutions. Conscious management of these aspects allows firms to effectively secure innovations and increase their market value. In this context, the firm's absorptive capacity plays a particularly important role, defined as the ability to acquire, assimilate, and exploit external knowledge, which supports the development of intellectual resources [Cohen, Levinthal, 1990]. An intellectual property management strategy should integrate protective mechanisms with tools that foster the development and internalization of organizational knowledge. The literature distinguishes two main IP management strategies: offensive and defensive. An offensive strategy focuses on the active acquisition and use of IP resources for market expansion and strengthening competitive advantage, which is characteristic of technology-driven enterprises such as Apple. In contrast, a defensive strategy aims to protect against legal and competitive risks, for example by creating "patent thickets" or extensive protection portfolios that neutralize threats [Grimaldi et al., 2013].

The importance of the appropriability regime refers to a firm's ability to capture the value generated by its innovations. This is achieved through a combination of technological, legal, and organizational barriers such as patents, trade secrets, or adequate commercialization models that protect innovations from imitation and competition. Therefore, strategic intellectual property management is a comprehensive, deliberate, and flexible process that goes beyond legal protection and enables the effective use of IP resources as a key source of competitive advantage [Teece, 2000]. An effective IP strategy requires diversification of the portfolio, license management, and investment in know-how, encompassing both legal protection (e.g., patents, trademarks) and the active use of IP assets (e.g., technological alliances) [Granstrand, 1999]. It is necessary to dynamically adapt IP strategies to changing market and technological conditions, especially in high-innovation sectors such as biotechnology [Pisano, 2006]. There are three models of IP management strategies: defensive, collaborative, and improvised, with the first two having clearly defined strategic objectives, while the third one is characterized by greater

flexibility and limited planning [Grimaldi et al., 2013]. IP management can be understood as a planned and integrated set of actions that support business goals, where intellectual property is a strategically significant asset influencing innovation, marketing, and firm operations [Reitzing et al., 2007]. The contemporary approach to IP management also includes risk management aspects, such as protection against IP infringements and the activities of so-called "patent trolls". Due diligence is also essential during mergers, acquisitions, and inter-organizational collaborations [Hall et al., 2014]. Adapting the IP strategy to the specific industry is necessary because while in knowledge-intensive sectors, intellectual property forms the core of business strategy, it plays a supportive role in lower-intensity sectors. An effective IP strategy should evolve alongside the product life cycle and market changes, and be closely integrated with other business functions, such as project management, marketing, or HR policy. The Resource-Based View (RBV) is one of the fundamental theories in strategic management, emphasizing the importance of a firm's unique internal resources as the source of sustained competitive advantage [Barney, 1991]. In the context of IP management, RBV posits that intangible assets such as patents, trademarks, know-how, and trade secrets are key strategic assets characterized by high value, rarity, and inimitability, which enable the creation of lasting competitive advantage [Barney, 1991; Granstrand, 1999]. IP should be treated not only as a legal protection instrument but above all as a strategic resource, where effective management enables value creation and the maintenance of market position [Granstrand, 1999]. According to RBV, effective IP portfolio management requires integrating protection, commercialization, and development of intangible assets into the firm 's overall strategy. A company's success does not derive solely from owning intellectual property rights, but also from its ability to leverage them effectively through licensing, strategic alliances, and the creation of entry barriers for competitors [Teece, 2000]. Such an approach fosters the generation of long-term economic benefits and strengthens a firm's innovativeness [Pisano, 2006]. Empirical studies show that companies consistently applying the RBV approach in IP management achieve better financial performance and higher operational efficiency [Grimaldi et al., 2013; Reitzig et al., 2007]. Examples of companies such as ARM Holdings, Dyson, and Spotify illustrate how strategic patent portfolio management and investment in technology development are crucial elements of building a resource-based competitive

advantage. These companies apply the Resource-Based View (RBV) approach, focusing on unique intangible resources that form the foundation of their competitive edge.

ARM Holdings develops processor architecture and licenses its technology rather than engaging in manufacturing, allowing the company to generate technological rent through its patent portfolio and technical know-how. Dyson invests heavily in research and development (R&D), securing its innovations through patent filings, which enables it to compete through innovation rather than price. Spotify, on the other hand, bases its advantage on intangible resources such as recommendation algorithms and user data, which it protects through trade secrecy instead of traditional patent mechanisms. It is important to note that the RBV approach emphasizes the need for the continuous development and protection of intellectual property, which is achieved through systematic investments in R&D and ongoing monitoring of the value of the patent portfolio [Granstrand, 1999; Teece, 2000]. The Resource-Based View (RBV) strategy focuses on leveraging unique and hard-to-replicate organizational resources as a source of competitive advantage [Barney, 1991]. However, its effectiveness largely depends on the stability and predictability of the institutional and legal environment. In this context, two phenomena are particularly significant: the activity of patent trolls and dynamic legislative changes in the area of intellectual property. Patent trolls, formally referred to as *non-practicing entities* (NPEs), specialize in acquiring patents not for commercial use but for aggressive enforcement, often through lawsuits or coercive licensing fees [Cohen et al., 2019]. These entities often target innovative small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which lack the financial and legal resources necessary to defend themselves against costly legal proceedings. The result is not only an increase in legal uncertainty but also the emergence of defensive costs, such as the need to create protective funds (e.g., IP insurance), reduced willingness to file patents, and a shift in IP strategy from offensive to defensive. In response to these threats, collective defense initiatives, such as the LOT Network are gaining importance [Contreras, 2020]. Google, for example, acquired Motorola Mobility in 2011 primarily to obtain a defensive patent portfolio, allowing it to secure its technological assets from potential claims [West, Gallagher, 2006]. These examples demonstrate that effective management of intangible assets

under the RBV framework requires not only creating and exploiting them but also continuously monitoring the legal environment and maintaining adaptive flexibility. In practice, this means strategically managing regulatory risk, intellectual property rights, and the ability to coordinate legal and technological actions on a global scale. In recent studies (2024–2025), IP is depicted as a strategically significant asset for managing innovation, creating value, and ensuring long-term competitive advantage. Effective IP management involves aligning its operational functions with the overarching strategic goals of the organization. Companies that implement digital technologies and AI-based tools in their IP portfolio management demonstrate greater organizational efficiency and are better prepared for market and innovation challenges [Clarivate, 2024]. The WIPO report from 2024 highlights IP's role as an innovation policy tool supporting economic diversification and the development of innovation systems, especially in developing countries [World Intellectual Property Organization, 2024]. Experiences from China, India, and South Korea show that strategic use of IP can drive technological growth and bolster economic resilience. At the company level, IP also functions as a form of "reputational currency." Having a well-structured IP portfolio enhances an organization's ability to attract funding and secure strategic partnerships, particularly in high-innovation sectors [Caldwell, 2025]. The author argues that businesses with IP assets are over ten times more effective in attracting investors than those without them. Thus, the modern approach to IP in management goes far beyond its protective role – it is now recognized as a component of strategic, financial, and organizational policy. IP acts as a cross-functional resource, integrating technological, operational, and institutional domains, and its conscious utilization becomes a key tool for enhancing organizational competitiveness in a rapidly evolving market environment.

3. Theoretical methodology

This article adopts a conceptual and theoretical research approach, based on a critical and in-depth review of academic literature, industry reports (including those from the European Union Intellectual Property Office), and previous empirical studies related to intellectual property (IP) management. Specifically,

the work is grounded in a traditional literature review rather than a systematic review, with the aim of synthesizing existing knowledge, identifying research gaps, and formulating theoretical propositions to guide future empirical studies. Key sources include studies on IP strategy models [Grimaldi et al., 2023], research on IP as a strategic resource in the context of the Resource-Based View (RBV) [Barney, 1991; Hanel, 2006], analyses of positional strategies [Porter, 2006], and empirical findings regarding IP management practices in SMEs [Grudzewski, Hejduk, 2008; EUIPO, 2019].

Within this framework, the article proposes an original theoretical model of business IP strategies, based on an eclectic approach that integrates the core assumptions of RBV, positional strategies, and contemporary approaches to IP strategy, with particular attention to the context of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Poland. This perspective conceptualizes IP as a strategic organizational resource that can support the development and maintenance of competitive advantage in dynamic market environments.

By combining RBV and positional logic with contemporary strategic management thinking, the model highlights IP not merely as a legal protection tool, but as an asset with value-creating potential. It emphasizes the need for strategic alignment between IP management and the organization's broader development goals, capabilities, and market-institutional context. This alignment is particularly critical for SMEs, which often face limited resources, low managerial awareness of IP's strategic potential, and a lack of long-term strategic planning.

The proposed theoretical framework can serve as a foundation for future empirical research aimed at testing the model's applicability, usefulness, and scalability across different industries and national contexts. At the same time, it provides practical guidance for managers and policy-makers seeking to enhance the strategic utilization of IP as a lever for business growth, innovation, and long-term competitiveness. By explicitly linking the literature reviewed with the proposed model, this section strengthens the theoretical grounding of the study and clarifies the contribution of the work to the ongoing discourse on IP management and strategy.

4. Findings

4.1. Intellectual property as a strategic resource

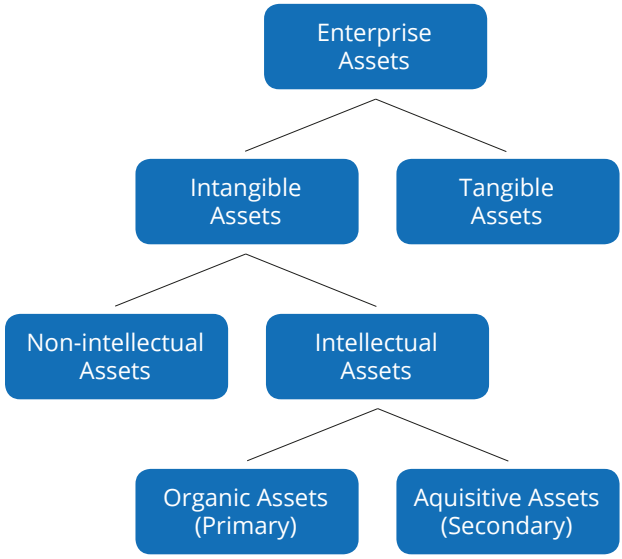
The literature review shows a shift in how enterprise resources are perceived – from the classical view, where capital and labor were treated as homogeneous factors of production, to a modern approach in which both tangible and intangible resources are essential components of business strategy. Already in the 1950s, researchers recognized the impact of both resource categories on firms' financial performance [Penrose, 1959]. R. Grant [2011] identified four main resource types: physical, human, financial, and technological, while P. Galbreath [2005] proposed a tripartite division into tangible resources, intangible assets, and organizational capabilities. In a similar vein, K. Lähtinen [2009] classifies intangible resources as human (experience, know-how), organizational (databases, routines), technological (patents, copyrights), and relational (brand, reputation, long-term relationships). P. Doyle [2003] expanded this classification to include technological, strategic, opinion-shaping, human, and organizational-cultural assets. M. Greco et al. [2023] emphasize the significance of both tangible and intangible resources, pointing to their impact on competitiveness, international relations, and organizational culture. Within this framework, two fundamental types of intellectual property can be distinguished [Dereń, Skonieczny, 2024]:

- organic intellectual property resources: encompassing internally developed innovations, patents, and know-how;
- acquisitive (secondary) intellectual property resources: acquired through mergers, acquisitions, licensing, or external collaboration.

This approach demonstrates that intangible assets play a key role in the strategies of modern enterprises, and that their effective management requires the integration of intellectual property protection with organizational and market processes. The above is illustrated in Figure 1.

FIGURE 1

Intellectual property resources of an original nature and intellectual property resources of an acquisitive (secondary) nature



Source: own study (based on [Dereń, Skonieczny, 2024]).

The listed assets represent fundamental developmental resources of an enterprise, which can be simultaneously utilized across various areas of activity. They are not subject to depreciation but rather strengthen alongside the growth of the organization, serving as a foundation for coordinating processes in line with the company' s vision and mission. Acquisitive intellectual property resources arise as a result of the company's activities and include:

TABLE 1

Organic and acquisitive intellectual property resources in an enterprise

Intellectual property resources of an organic (primary) nature	Intellectual property resources of an acquisitive (secondary) nature
• Knowledge and experience of the founders • Market contacts • Talent and behavioral skills of employees	• New knowledge • Copyrights • Neighboring rights • Inventions (patents)* • Utility models

Intellectual property resources of an organic (primary) nature	Intellectual property resources of an acquisitive (secondary) nature
• Company name (logo)* • Trademark • Website • Patents* • Company culture	• Industrial designs • Trademarks* • Geographical indications • Rights to new plant varieties • Topography of integrated circuits • Databases • Undisclosed information (trade secrets, know-how, formulas, processes, technologies, organizational techniques, etc.) • Licensing agreements • Collaboration networks

*Patents and trademarks in a company can be classified, depending on the stage of the organization's development, as organic or acquisitive resources.

Source: own study (based on [Dereń, Skonieczny, 2024]).

Intellectual property (IP) constitutes an important strategic asset that enhances the competitiveness and market value of enterprises. It encompasses the protection of innovations, processes, and trademarks, preventing them from being copied by competitors. Investments in the development and commercialization of intellectual property not only support innovation but also generate financial benefits through licensing and sales. Effective IP management involves three core areas: identification, protection, and commercialization. The first step is to identify resources with protective potential, which requires a research-driven strategy and active employee engagement in creative processes. Next, enterprises should implement protective mechanisms such as patents, copyrights, or trade secrets in collaboration with legal experts. The final stage is the active use of intellectual property to achieve business goals through market implementation and licensing negotiations. A strategic approach to IP management ensures long-term competitive advantage by safeguarding innovations and strengthening market development. In an era of globalization, IP management plays a critical role in building enterprise competitiveness. In highly innovation-intensive sectors – such as technology, pharmaceuticals, or automotive – effective IP protection allows firms to maintain high profit margins and bolster their market positions. One example of an effective IP strategy is Apple, which invests heavily in technological development and protects its

innovations with thousands of patents enabling profit maximization and control over key technological assets. In contrast, Tesla adopts a different strategy by implementing an open innovation model, allowing competitors access to its patents to accelerate the development of the electric vehicle market. Although this approach carries the risk of losing control over technology, it can also stimulate industry-wide progress and attract investment, fostering the growth of the technology ecosystem. Contemporary approaches to IP management have evolved from traditional innovation protection models to innovation ecosystems, which promote collaboration and knowledge exchange. Classic strategies focus on maximizing IP protection, while open innovation facilitates dynamic technological advancement and enhances sector-wide competitiveness. Innovation ecosystems integrate enterprises, R&D institutions, and other organizations, enabling the dynamic exchange of resources and technologies. In contrast to closed innovation, where IP is strictly protected, open collaboration models accelerate technological development and facilitate market adaptation. In sectors such as electromobility, the sharing of patents and infrastructure exemplified by Tesla accelerates the development of the entire market. Open source, used by companies like Red Hat and Mozilla, is another example of open innovation, in which technologies are made available to the global community. Microsoft, by employing a licensing strategy, built a dominant position in the computer market by integrating IP with the expansion of its technological ecosystem. While the openness of innovation ecosystems accelerates technological advancement, it also brings risks such as the loss of competitive advantage, diminished control over technology quality, and potential damage to the company's reputation. To mitigate these risks, companies implement controlled IP management models, such as monitored licensing, joint ventures, and industry standards, which allow for cooperation while maintaining oversight over the use of technology. The commercialization of IP is a key stage in intellectual property management and includes licensing, product development, and the sale of IP rights. Microsoft, through licensing its software, created a global technology ecosystem, reinforcing its market dominance.

Effective IP management requires a balance between protection and openness, allowing companies to benefit from innovation without losing control over their core technological assets. Contemporary intellectual property management

goes beyond the classical approach of maximizing innovation protection. Innovation ecosystems fostering collaboration and technology exchange play an increasingly important role in building the long-term competitiveness of firms. A successful IP strategy should take into account the balance between protection and openness, enabling companies to dynamically adapt to market changes and maximize the value of their innovations.

4.2. Intellectual property as a business strategy of the enterprise (SBU)

The goal of a business strategy is to achieve a competitive advantage over market rivals. Contemporary management literature defines an enterprise as a set of Strategic Business Units (SBUs), each pursuing distinct market objectives. A business unit is a deliberately shaped and organizationally distinct area of the company's activities, relatively homogeneous in terms of management and marketing criteria. The structure of SBUs depends on the overall strategy of the enterprise, and their creation aims to integrate various forms of activity into a coherent organizational structure to gain a competitive advantage.

A Strategic Business Unit (SBU) should meet three basic criteria, as highlighted in classical and contemporary literature [Hax, Majluf, 1984; Kotler, Keller, 2016; Porter, 2006; Prahalad, Doz, 1987]:

1. An SBU is a single business or a set of related activities that can be planned separately.
2. An SBU faces its own competitors, which it seeks to match or surpass.
3. An SBU has its own management responsible for strategic planning and financial performance, controlling most factors that influence profitability.

Given these characteristics, an important question arises: can the creation and management of intellectual property constitute a strategic area of a business unit's activity? The answer is affirmative, particularly in relation to start-ups – innovative, fast-growing, and scalable companies. Intellectual property (IP) has become a key factor in achieving competitive advantage, especially in

innovation- and technology-driven industries. IP is a valuable asset that not only enhances the uniqueness of products and services but also reinforces the enterprise's overall strategy.

For start-ups, IP management can form the foundation of competitive advantage and significantly influence a company's growth trajectory. Innovative enterprises operate in competitive, rapidly changing markets, where differentiation is crucial. Patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets provide legal protection against imitation or exploitation by competitors. Strategic IP management can also create entry barriers: patents block access to critical technologies, while trademarks safeguard market position and reputation. Moreover, IP commercialization represents a significant source of revenue, allowing companies to license technologies and generate income without scaling production. Licensing is particularly effective for start-ups lacking the resources to fully implement innovations themselves.

As companies grow, strategic IP management becomes increasingly important. A strong patent portfolio can serve as a platform for scaling operations and entering new markets, while robust IP assets can attract investors, as intellectual property is often recognized as a valuable component of a start-up's valuation. Open innovation can accelerate technology implementation and the development of collaborative ecosystems, enabling faster time-to-market for innovations while maintaining competitive advantage. However, managing IP also involves risks: companies must balance sharing innovations for collaboration with protecting IP to avoid losing strategic advantage. Licensing agreements, joint ventures, and open-source strategies require careful planning to ensure retention of key technologies. Non-disclosure agreements (NDAs), formalized licensing terms, and collaboration agreements are recommended mechanisms to minimize such risks.

The literature emphasizes that IP management strategies evolve as firms develop. Four fundamental IP management strategies can serve as a starting point for further refinement [Kasprzycki et al., 2008; Granstrand, 1999]:

- Risk Minimization Path: building a strong IP portfolio and entering cross-licensing agreements to avoid legal disputes;

- Cost Reduction Path: maintaining effective IP protection while minimizing management costs;
- Value Creation Path: leveraging IP to generate revenue and enhance competitiveness beyond the protected products or services;
- Strategic Value Path: using IP to influence market conditions, strategic patenting, redirecting R&D, and redefining relationships with stakeholders.

The complexity of IP management, organizational interdependencies, and the dynamic competitive and institutional environment make it difficult to define a single universal strategy. The importance of IP for competitive advantage varies depending on the industry, business strategy, and competitive environment. Patents are crucial in sectors with easily replicable innovations, while trade secrets may be equally effective in others. Consequently, IP strategy effectiveness is context-dependent.

By considering company characteristics, industry position, and market-institutional context, different approaches to building an IP strategy can be identified. As shown in Table 2, the choice of IP strategy depends on the SBU's economic orientation and market behavior: cost-oriented SBUs may focus on asset protection, while revenue-oriented SBUs may focus on monetizing IP.

TABLE 2
Intellectual property strategies depending on economic orientation

Behavior of the enterprise/SBU on the market	Economic orientation of enterprise/SBU	
	Cost orientation	Revenue orientation
Proactive	Strategy I: Protection of intangible assets	Strategy II: Establishing an additional source of revenue
Reactive	Strategy III: Limiting competitors	Strategy IV: Utilization of the full potential of intellectual property

Source: own study (based on [Kasprzycki et al., 2008]).

As illustrated in Table 3, the proposed IP strategy model distinguishes between internal and external sources of SBU development and passive vs. active responses to competitors, resulting in four fundamental IP strategies: external protection, internal protection, sale/acquisition of IP rights, and sharing/licensing of IP rights.

TABLE 3
Intellectual property strategies in SBU

Source of SBU development	SBU's response to competitors' behavior	
	Passive	Active
External	External p rotection (e.g., patenting)	Sale and acquisition of intellectual property rights
Internal	Internal p rotection (e.g., trade secrets)	Provision of intellectual property rights (e.g., licensing)

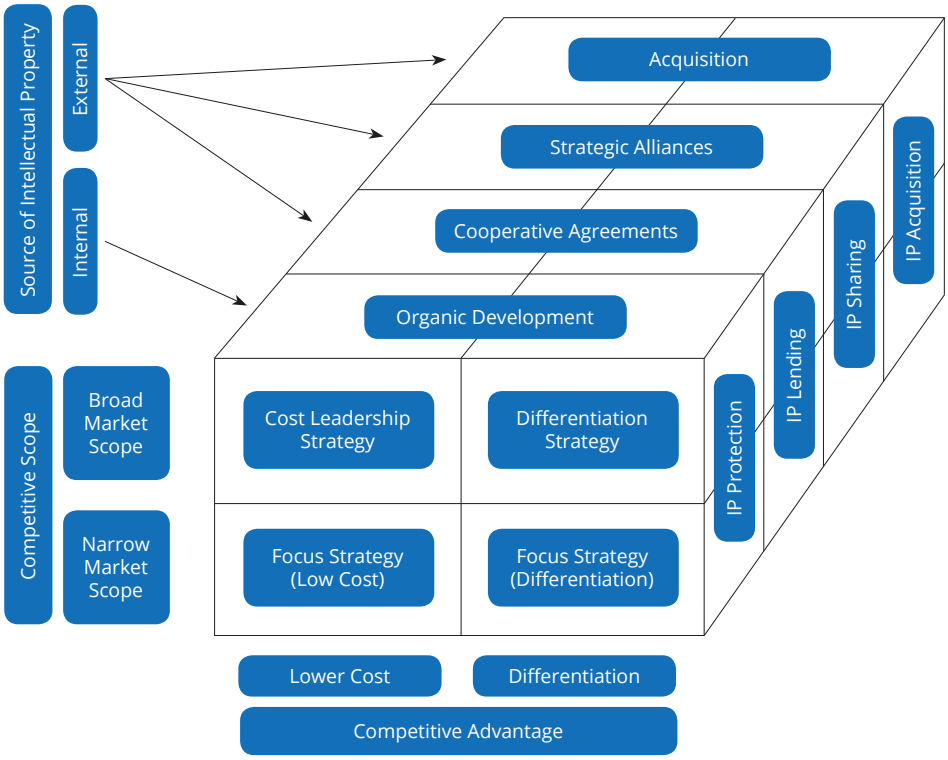
Source: own study.

4.3. Eclectic model of the intellectual property strategy

The intellectual property (IP) strategy within a Strategic Business Unit (SBU) is a plan for the development, growth, utilization, and monetization of a portfolio of intellectual assets such as patents, copyrights, trademarks, trade secrets, designs, and data. Its objective is to achieve competitive advantage and increase revenue and profitability. Developing an IP strategy does not have to be complex; it can begin with a simple, single-column analysis of the existing intellectual assets and a plan for their long-term development and management. Even the effective use of a single IP asset can significantly contribute to the realization of a business unit 's strategic objectives. However, a business unit achieves the highest level of effectiveness when it integrates the IP strategy with other competitive strategies. An example of such an approach is the combination of the intellectual property strategy with M. E. Porter's competitive strategies, as illustrated in Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

Eclectic model of the intellectual property strategy in an SBU



Source: own study (based on [Dereń, Skonieczny, 2023]).

The business model presented in Figure 2, developed by the authors of this study, enables Strategic Business Units (SBUs) to choose an appropriate strategy for protecting intellectual assets. In our view, the model is universal, meaning it can be used by both single-function and multi-function (business) structures. The model's dimensions are competitive objective and competitive advantage, highlighted in M. E. Porter's model of competitive strategies [Porter, 2006]. These dimensions allow us to distinguish four basic competitive strategies: cost leadership, differentiation, cost focus, and differentiation focus. Each strategy entails a different pathway to competitive advantage and a distinct set of strategic (competitive) goals. A third dimension we introduce is the mode of acquiring knowledge, that is, intellectual resources. L. Capron and W. Mitchell [2015] draw attention to the methods of acquiring various organizational

resources. They understand resources as the assets an organization needs to produce goods. These include tangible resources such as production facilities and equipment, as well as intangible ones such as know-how and intellectual property. Human resources, employees and other internal and external stakeholders who contribute to the activity of the SBU are also considered to be resources. The eclectic model of the intellectual property strategy presented here, designed for SBUs, allows for the selection of an appropriate (purposeful, acceptable, and feasible) strategy for managing and protecting intellectual assets. We believe the model is practical, as it can be successfully applied in both single-function and multi-function business structures.

The dimensions of the model are based on three key axes:

1. Strategic objective – the scope of activity: the entire market or a specific segment.
2. Source of competitive advantage – according to M. E. Porter's classification: cost advantage or differentiation.
3. Methods of acquiring intellectual property resources – internal (organic) or external (e.g., cooperation agreements, strategic alliances, business acquisitions).

This model allows for the identification of 16 variants (options) of business strategies that incorporate the use of intellectual property resources within the enterprise. These strategic options are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
Strategic options based on the company's intellectual property assets

Strategic option	Description
1	Broad Market Scope + Cost Leadership + Internal Development + IP Protection
2	Broad Market Scope + Cost Leadership + Cooperative Agreements + IP Lending
3	Broad Market Scope + Cost Leadership + Strategic Alliance + IP Sharing
4	Broad Market Scope + Cost Leadership + Acquisition + IP Acquisition
5	Broad Market Scope + Differentiation + Internal Development + IP Protection
6	Broad Market Scope + Differentiation + Cooperative Agreements + IP Lending

Strategic option	Description
7	Broad Market Scope + Differentiation + Strategic Alliance + IP Sharing
8	Broad Market Scope + Differentiation + Acquisition + IP Acquisition
9	Narrow Market Scope + Cost Leadership + Internal Development + IP Protection
10	Narrow Market Scope + Cost Leadership + Cooperative Agreements + IP Lending
11	Narrow Market Scope + Cost Leadership + Strategic Alliance + IP Sharing
12	Narrow Market Scope + Cost Leadership + Acquisition + IP Acquisition
13	Narrow Market Scope + Differentiation + Internal Development + IP Protection
14	Narrow Market Scope + Differentiation + Cooperative Agreements + IP Lending
15	Narrow Market Scope + Differentiation + Strategic Alliance + IP Sharing
16	Narrow Market Scope + Differentiation + Acquisition + IP Acquisition

Source: own study.

The sixteen strategic options presented should not be interpreted as equally applicable across all organizational contexts. They rather represent a configurational framework illustrating how intellectual property (IP) management can be aligned with different competitive orientations and modes of resource acquisition.

First, strategies combining broad market scope and differentiation (options 5–8) are particularly relevant for innovation-intensive industries where IP functions as a key mechanism of value appropriation. In such contexts, internal development and strong protection (option 5) tend to dominate when technological uniqueness is central to competitive advantage. Conversely, alliance- and acquisition-based variants (options 6–8) may be more appropriate in fast-evolving sectors characterized by high knowledge dispersion and network-based innovation ecosystems.

Second, strategies rooted in cost leadership (options 1–4 and 9–12) reflect a more efficiency-oriented logic of IP utilization. In these cases, intellectual property often serves as a defensive or optimization tool rather than a primary differentiation mechanism. For instance, internally developed IP combined

with protection (options 1 and 9) may reduce imitation risks and stabilize cost structures, while acquisition-based strategies (options 4 and 12) may accelerate access to standardized technologies.

Third, narrow market scope strategies (options 9–16) are especially relevant for SMEs and specialized SBUs operating in niche markets. In such settings, differentiation combined with internal development and IP protection (option 13) may create strong entry barriers and sustain premium positioning. At the same time, licensing- and sharing-oriented strategies (options 14–15) may facilitate scalability without substantial capital investment.

Importantly, the model assumes that strategic options are dynamic rather than static. SBUs may transition between configurations over time, depending on the product life cycle, technological turbulence, and institutional environment. Therefore, the eclectic framework should be understood as a strategic portfolio of possibilities rather than a prescriptive classification. Based on the above options, a company can adopt specific intellectual property (IP) management strategies that will be integrated within the eclectic model.

5. Discussion

Depending on the chosen strategic option, a company may implement specific intellectual property (IP) management strategies, including protecting intellectual assets (e.g., patenting, maintaining trade secrets), making assets available (e.g., partnership agreements, strategic alliances), sharing assets (e.g., licensing, open-source models), or acquiring intellectual assets (e.g., license purchases, acquisitions, mergers).

The eclectic model of the intellectual property strategy within a Strategic Business Unit (SBU), proposed by the authors of this study, represents an approach that integrates IP management with the company's overall competitive strategy. This model emphasizes the flexible use of various techniques and tools to build market advantage while aligning the IP strategy with the characteristics of the SBU, the industry, and the market environment. The essence of the model lies in eclecticism, understood as combining different approaches to IP

management and competitive strategies tailored to the needs of a particular enterprise. Companies are thus not limited to a single form of IP protection (e.g., only patenting or only licensing), but they rather apply a broad range of tools to optimally support strategic objectives.

Key features of the presented model include:

- Integration of IP strategy with the overall competitive strategy: Patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets may serve not only to protect assets but also as tools for building cost advantage, supporting differentiation strategies, or market focus.
- Diverse approaches to intellectual asset protection: A company may simultaneously use patenting, trade secrets, technology licensing, joint ventures, and open-source models. The choice depends on the company's nature, target market, time horizon, and risks related to knowledge disclosure.
- Harmonization of IP management with SBU goals: IP management should support long-term objectives, such as revenue growth, market expansion, reduced time-to-market, or increased innovation efficiency. For example, a rapidly scaling SBU may favor broad licensing of technologies to open new distribution channels and revenue streams.
- Flexibility and adaptation to changing environments: The eclectic model enables dynamic responses to market shifts, emerging technologies, and new business opportunities, enhancing the sustainability of competitive advantage.

5.1. Comparison with existing literature

The concept of eclectic or hybrid IP management has been discussed in the literature, although often in a fragmented manner. Arora et al. [2004] emphasize that technology and IP can be actively traded in technology markets, supporting both internal development and market-based collaboration. Similarly, Granstrand [1999] highlights the strategic value of combining IP protection and commercialization. Pisano and Teece [2007] classify IP strategies into protection, revenue generation, and strategic value paths, which partially overlap with the authors' proposed model. However, few studies explicitly

propose a fully integrated, eclectic model at the SBU level that combines the Resource-Based View (RBV), positional, adaptive, and dynamic capabilities approaches. This suggests that the present model is both innovative and extends current knowledge by providing a holistic framework that links IP management directly to SBU strategic goals.

5.2. Empirical and practical evidence

While direct empirical studies on eclectic IP strategies at the SBU level are limited, related research indicates that firms employing multiple complementary IP management approaches achieve better innovation outcomes and higher market valuation [Arora et al., 2004; Granstrand, 1999]. In practice, multinational corporations often combine patenting, licensing, open innovation, and strategic alliances, reflecting principles similar to the proposed model. Case studies in technology-driven industries, including pharmaceuticals and IT, confirm that hybrid IP strategies facilitate scaling, revenue diversification, and risk management.

5.3. Discussion of the proposed model

The eclectic IP strategy model confirms the study's research theses:

1. Intellectual property as a strategic resource: IP can be leveraged to build competitive advantage through both protection and market deployment.
2. Eclectic strategy enables competitive advantage: Integrating RBV, adaptive, positional, and dynamic approaches allows flexible and optimal use of IP assets. Exclusive rights support differentiation, while licensing and partnerships enable scaling and revenue diversification.
3. Integration with SBU organizational resources: Effective strategy implementation requires aligning IP with other resources, granting decision-making autonomy, and distinguishing intangible assets.

By comparing the model with existing literature and practice, it becomes clear that the eclectic approach aligns with observed corporate behavior and provides a theoretically grounded framework for flexible, SBU-specific IP management. It combines the strengths of multiple strategic perspectives, supporting

both innovation and commercialization while mitigating the risks of technological and market volatility. Strong legal protection (e.g., patents, trademarks) enables safe knowledge sharing with partners while maintaining control over proprietary assets [Arora et al., 2004].

In sum, the proposed eclectic model integrates theory and practice, providing managers and SBUs with a flexible toolkit to leverage IP strategically. It extends the literature by explicitly linking IP management to SBU-level strategy and demonstrating how hybrid approaches can enhance competitiveness, innovation, and organizational growth.

6. Conclusions

The eclectic model of the intellectual property (IP) management strategy in a Strategic Business Unit (SBU) presented in this study offers an innovative and comprehensive approach that enables the effective use of IP assets in a dynamically changing market environment. The integration of various tools for the protection, sharing, and acquisition of intellectual assets with the overall competitive strategy of the enterprise makes it possible to build a sustainable competitive advantage tailored to the specifics of the industry, the product life cycle, and the characteristics of the given business unit. An analysis of the model in the context of the research hypotheses confirms that the application of the eclectic strategy allows for the synergistic combination of various theoretical and practical approaches to IP management. This approach supports better alignment of actions with market needs and enterprise resources, which is particularly important in sectors characterized by rapid innovation, such as information technology, biotechnology, and the pharmaceutical industry. Examples of IT companies that combine patent protection with an open innovation model demonstrate how key solutions can be effectively secured by patents while simultaneously collaborating with external partners and sharing certain knowledge, thus fostering faster product development and expansion into new markets. The effectiveness of implementing the eclectic model is closely dependent on having the right resources – both tangible and intangible – such as team competencies, organizational culture, and the decision-making autonomy of the business unit.

Examples of companies like Dyson and ARM Holdings indicate that success in IP management is made possible thanks to advanced legal expertise and a strong research and development team that efficiently manages the patent portfolio and licensing activities. A strategic approach to intellectual property management has enabled these firms not only to protect innovation but also to generate additional revenue from technology licensing. From a practical standpoint, adopting an eclectic IP management strategy translates into increased organizational flexibility and adaptability to rapidly changing market and technological conditions. In the face of growing competition in the innovation space and the evolution of legal norms and business models, companies equipped with a broad range of IP protection and management tools can respond more effectively to emerging challenges and seize new opportunities. One sector that illustrates this phenomenon is energy, where companies combine patents with open standards to support the development of renewable technologies while simultaneously safeguarding their proprietary know-how.

In the case of Polish enterprises, the recommendation to adopt the eclectic model takes on particular significance. The Polish economy is characterized by a wide variety of entities – from micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), through technology start-ups, to large industrial corporations. Many of these entities face limited financial and competency resources in the area of IP management, as well as a low level of awareness of the strategic importance of intellectual property. The eclectic model, thanks to its flexibility and integrative nature, allows IP strategies to be adapted to the actual capabilities and needs of the enterprise, supporting the gradual development of competencies and investments in the protection and use of intellectual assets. Moreover, Polish enterprises are increasingly operating in international markets, where effective IP management is essential for maintaining competitiveness and expanding into new areas of activity. The eclectic model thus supports building global competitive advantage through the conscious and balanced use of various forms of intellectual property, from patents and industrial designs to know-how and licenses.

The recommendation to apply the eclectic intellectual property management strategy model for Polish SMEs is based on the following premises:

1. Flexibility in adapting to limited resources: The model allows for the gradual implementation of IP protection and utilization tools, minimizing risk and costs while simultaneously developing competencies.
2. Integration of diverse IP tools and approaches: This comprehensive yet accessible approach facilitates intellectual property management and increases the efficiency of resource use.
3. Adaptation to industry specifics and product life cycle: It enables the customization of strategies depending on the sector and the stage of enterprise development.
4. Support for developing IP management competencies and culture: The model fosters awareness and organizational knowledge, which is particularly important for SMEs lacking specialized IP departments.
5. Increased flexibility and adaptability to market changes: The ability to respond quickly to changing technological and regulatory conditions enhances competitiveness.
6. Support for internationalization and market expansion: It enables effective IP management in foreign markets, which is a prerequisite for the growth of many Polish SMEs.
7. Adjustment to the specificity of the Polish market and available institutional support: The integrative nature of the model facilitates the use of grant programs and cross-sectoral cooperation.

The eclectic model of intellectual property management represents a flexible, comprehensive, and practical solution that considers the specifics and constraints of Polish SMEs. At the same time, it promotes competitive advantage, supports innovation, and enables market expansion both domestically and internationally. The recommendation to adopt this strategy is justified from both theoretical and practical perspectives.

To summarize the considerations presented, several key features of the eclectic strategy should be emphasized. First, it integrates various strategic approaches – including the resource-based view (RBV), adaptive, positional, and dynamic concepts – enabling a more comprehensive use of intellectual property as a strategic asset. Second, it offers flexibility in intellectual property management, allowing companies to adapt their actions to changing market and technological conditions and to adopt various forms of IP utilization, from

protection and licensing to collaboration and acquisitions. Moreover, the eclectic strategy generates synergy with other competitive strategies by aligning intellectual property with a company's core approaches, such as cost leadership, differentiation, or market focus. It also emphasizes value orientation and monetization of intellectual property, going beyond mere protection and actively encouraging revenue generation through IP. Additionally, it supports life cycle-based and sector-specific IP management, enabling companies to tailor their portfolio strategies to reflect the unique dynamics of their industry. According to the authors, future research should focus on empirically verifying the effectiveness of the model within the context of the Polish economy. It should also aim to identify organizational and market factors that facilitate successful implementation such as the level of institutional support, access to capital, and collaboration.

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