

What factors determine the outsourcing intensity? A dynamic panel data approach for manufacturing industries

Díaz-Mora, Carmen

Postprint / Postprint

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

Zur Verfügung gestellt in Kooperation mit / provided in cooperation with:

www.peerproject.eu

Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Díaz-Mora, C. (2008). What factors determine the outsourcing intensity? A dynamic panel data approach for manufacturing industries. *Applied Economics*, 40(19), 2509-2521. <https://doi.org/10.1080/00036840600970179>

Nutzungsbedingungen:

Dieser Text wird unter dem "PEER Licence Agreement zur Verfügung" gestellt. Nähere Auskünfte zum PEER-Projekt finden Sie hier: <http://www.peerproject.eu> Gewährt wird ein nicht exklusives, nicht übertragbares, persönliches und beschränktes Recht auf Nutzung dieses Dokuments. Dieses Dokument ist ausschließlich für den persönlichen, nicht-kommerziellen Gebrauch bestimmt. Auf sämtlichen Kopien dieses Dokuments müssen alle Urheberrechtshinweise und sonstigen Hinweise auf gesetzlichen Schutz beibehalten werden. Sie dürfen dieses Dokument nicht in irgendeiner Weise abändern, noch dürfen Sie dieses Dokument für öffentliche oder kommerzielle Zwecke vervielfältigen, öffentlich ausstellen, aufführen, vertreiben oder anderweitig nutzen.

Mit der Verwendung dieses Dokuments erkennen Sie die Nutzungsbedingungen an.

gesis
Leibniz-Institut
für Sozialwissenschaften

Terms of use:

This document is made available under the "PEER Licence Agreement". For more information regarding the PEER-project see: <http://www.peerproject.eu> This document is solely intended for your personal, non-commercial use. All of the copies of this documents must retain all copyright information and other information regarding legal protection. You are not allowed to alter this document in any way, to copy it for public or commercial purposes, to exhibit the document in public, to perform, distribute or otherwise use the document in public.

By using this particular document, you accept the above-stated conditions of use.

Mitglied der

Leibniz-Gemeinschaft



WHAT FACTORS DETERMINE THE OUTSOURCING INTENSITY? A Dynamic Panel Data Approach for manufacturing industries

Journal:	<i>Applied Economics</i>
Manuscript ID:	APE-05-0542.R1
Journal Selection:	Applied Economics
JEL Code:	L22 - Firm Organization, Market Structure: Markets vs. Hierarchies; Vertical Integration < L2 - Firm Objectives, Organization, and Behavior < L - Industrial Organization, L60 - General < L6 - Industry Studies: Manufacturing < L - Industrial Organization, L23 - Organization of Production < L2 - Firm Objectives, Organization, and Behavior < L - Industrial Organization
Keywords:	Outsourcing, Manufacturing industry, Subcontracting, Unit labor costs

powered by ScholarOne
Manuscript Central™

WHAT FACTORS DETERMINE THE OUTSOURCING INTENSITY? *

Abstract:

The present paper investigates the determinants of outsourcing production using a panel of 93 Spanish manufacturing industries for the period 1993-2002. Outsourcing is measured as production tasks which are contracting out to external suppliers, a more direct and suitable indicator. After controlling for unobserved heterogeneity and simultaneity, our results show a high persistence of the outsourcing intensity. Moreover, outsourcing of production is positively related to unit labour costs, skills requirements, national ownership and orientation to international markets. We also find evidence for a negative link between the outsourcing intensity and the share of small firms.

JEL classification: L23, L60.

Key words: Outsourcing, Manufacturing Industries, Explanatory Factors, Unit Labour Costs.

I. INTRODUCTION

According to international empirical evidence, a new and complex production organization strategy is currently being developed. This strategy, called fragmentation of production, favours the splitting up of production processes into more specialized and discernible phases in order to obtain the most efficient producer and location for each product or component. It is devised mainly by developed-countries' enterprises, which face a very competitive market where, on the one hand, products coming from developing countries are highly competitive due to lower labour and production costs and, on the other hand, customers demand highly differentiated products. The main aim of adopting it is to take advantage of specialization and scale economies in components or other production tasks by specialized suppliers as well as to gain flexibility to respond to demand changes quicklyⁱ. In this way, firms specialize in those activities or phases where they have a competitive edge seeking to improve production efficiency, and consequently, their competitiveness.

Two dimensions of fragmentation can be distinguished (Curzon Price, 2001; Kimura and Ando, 2005): an ownership dimension and a geographical dimension (Figure 1). The first one refers to the controllability of a firm over fragmented production and the second one does to the geographical location of that segmented production. One of the most important features of fragmentation of production is that more and more often goes beyond the boundaries of the firm. When the segmented production is carried out by other independent firms, the term outsourcingⁱⁱ is used. Outsourcing comprises dimensions 2 and 3 of fragmentation of production in Figure 1. It is important to note that even though there is no direct shareholder control over the segmented phases, it does not mean that there is not any control over them at all. Transactions cannot be considered completely independent market transactions for two reasons: firstly, because the relationship between companies has a long-term nature, and secondly, because of the great quantity of information, such as detailed instructions and specifications, which the external provider receives. As Curzon Price (2001) points out, outsourcing lies somewhere in between

1
2
3 total ownership and complete arm's length transactions. Moreover, the externalized production
4
5 can be outsourced to suppliers located abroad (international or foreign or cross-border
6
7 outsourcing) or to domestic providers (national or domestic outsourcing).
8
9

10 Outsourcing of production is thus understood as a process of vertical disintegration of the
11
12 value chain where some phases or even the whole production process are now contracting out to
13
14 external enterprises instead of performing inside the firm. This is the aspect of fragmentation we
15
16 want to study. Our data can not allow to distinguish between national or foreign suppliers, so we
17
18 focus on *total* outsourcing which comprises domestic and cross-border outsourcing.
19
20 Understanding what factors determine the intensity of *total* outsourcing production using panel
21
22 data is the object of the present paper.
23
24
25

26
27 In spite of the increasingly use of outsourcing of production activities according to
28
29 business pressⁱⁱⁱ and academic literature, empirical research about its determinants remains very
30
31 limited: Kimura (2001) and Tomiura (2005) for Japanese manufacturing industry, Görg and
32
33 Hanley (2004) for Irish electronics industry, Girma and Görg (2004) for some UK manufacturing
34
35 industries and Holl (2004) for Spanish manufacturing industry. Of these, only the last three are
36
37 panel data instead of cross-section analysis and exclusively Görg and Hanley (2004) and Girma
38
39 and Görg (2004) try to infer the factors that may affect the level of outsourcing, whereas Holl
40
41 (2004) focuses on the determinants of the probability that a firm does take the decision of
42
43 outsourcing using a probit model.
44
45
46
47

48 Hence, as far as the author knows, our study is the first on the determinants of
49
50 outsourcing intensity using panel data for the Spanish manufacturing industry. The estimation
51
52 includes the GMM approach proposed by Blundell and Bond (1998) especially suitable to deal
53
54 with models for moderately persistent series from short panels. Furthermore, this paper
55
56 contributes to the empirical literature by employing a direct and more adequate indicator for
57
58 outsourcing of internal production. This type of outsourcing is often measured by the ratio of
59
60 material intermediate inputs to output. But this is a broad measure because it includes raw

1
2
3 materials purchases and arms-length purchases of standardized components in the market. A
4
5 specific characteristic of outsourcing is that the relationship between the firm which contracts out
6
7 production and external provider is long-term and it usually implies sharing information about
8
9 the product. That is, purchases of intermediate inputs through a usual marketing channel have
10
11 not to be regarded as outsourcing. As Grossman and Helpman (2005) notes “outsourcing means
12
13 more than just the purchases of raw materials and standardized intermediate goods”. At the same
14
15 time, the ratio of material intermediate inputs to output is a narrow indicator because it does not
16
17 capture the outsourcing of the final production stage, the assembly or specific production tasks.
18
19

20
21
22 For these reasons, we use an indicator that fulfils these required conditions. This is
23
24 *Production works done by other firms* which refers to tasks which being a part of the own
25
26 production process are carried out by other firms. It involves contracting out manufacturing of
27
28 parts and components and also any stage of the production process such as product design or
29
30 specific tasks (for instance, in the textile industry, tailoring or press ironing) or even the final
31
32 assembly^{iv}. That is, neither external services such as maintenance of fixed assets, accounting,
33
34 consulting, cleaning, transportation, etc., nor purchases of raw materials and supplies such as
35
36 office materials or fuel are included. Subcontracts are included within this concept^v.
37
38
39

40
41 The paper is structured as follows. In the next section, we briefly review previous
42
43 literature on the determinants of outsourcing. In section III we describe the data set used for the
44
45 empirical analysis and then we present some descriptive statistics as well as the econometric
46
47 model. The results of the empirical estimation are showed in section IV. Lastly, in section V,
48
49 some conclusions are made.
50
51

52 **II. DETERMINANTS OF OURTSOURCING OF INTERNAL PRODUCTION.**

53
54
55 Companies will opt for outsourcing when externalisation of certain value chain phases
56
57 allows them to reduce costs and when de-internalizing has more advantages than in-house
58
59 production. The technological revolution that has taken place in last decades has allowed for a
60
significant drop in the costs associated with finding information, transport communication and

1
2
3 business coordination, lowering the transaction costs and augmenting the possibilities for
4
5 outsourcing.
6

7
8 According to transaction cost theory (Coase, 1937; Williamson, 1975), outsourcing
9
10 would entail a variety of coordination costs associated with various aspects of inter-firm
11
12 transactions. Search costs to find the right supplier, negotiation costs, costs to design the contract
13
14 and the incomplete contracts problem, coordination costs, technology transfer risks, etc. have to
15
16 be considered^{vi}. At the same time, firms which outsource production search to obtain two types
17
18 of advantages: first, an increase of flexibility for adapting to changes in demand and
19
20 technological conditions and, second, a reduction in production costs^{vii}.
21
22
23

24
25 If firms outsource in order to reduce costs relative to in-house production and, therefore,
26
27 to increase efficiency, we would expect that those firms and sectors where the labour costs are
28
29 higher were more active in outsourcing strategy. To test the relevance of the labour cost-saving
30
31 motive for outsourcing, Girma and Görg (2004) include the wage rates for skilled and unskilled
32
33 workers. However, they do not obtain conclusive results. The sign of the coefficient changes
34
35 depending on the manufacturing industry and on the estimation technique and frequently the
36
37 variable is statistically insignificant. Görg and Hanley (2004) introduce the average wage per
38
39 employee when they investigate outsourcing determinants. They also find that the effect of
40
41 wages is statistically insignificant and not robust to different estimation techniques. Holl (2004)
42
43 does obtain a positive and significant coefficient of the wages on the probability of
44
45 subcontracting products, parts and components.
46
47
48
49

50
51 In our opinion, a variable more relevant than wage is unit labour cost, that is, the
52
53 remuneration of labour to produce one unit of output. This indicator of cost pressures in the
54
55 labour market is computed as the ratio of labour cost to output. It is measured as well as the ratio
56
57 of labour cost per worker (or per hour worked) divided by labour productivity (output per worker
58
59 or per hour worked). By this way, changes in unit labour cost are the result of two forces:
60
changes in wage rate and changes in productivity. It has been assumed that high wage firms do

1
2
3 more outsourcing because the cost cutting motive will be more important. But those high wages
4 could respond to higher efficiency due to high skills, resulting in lower unit labour costs. That is,
5
6
7
8 it would be the wage, once productivity differences are taken into account, one of the key drivers
9
10 of outsourcing. Hence, we expect that high unit labour cost manufacturing industries tended to
11
12 contract out more production works than the rest^{viii}. This result would confirm the initial
13
14 hypothesis that fragmentation of internal production is an strategy carried out by developed-
15
16
17 country firms in order to improve their efficiency in a context of strong competitiveness coming
18
19 from cheaper labour regions.
20
21

22 As Abraham and Taylor (1996) suggest, the cost savings derived from outsourcing can be
23
24 obtained by two ways: first, exploiting the economies of scale in producing these specialized
25
26 components or phases which are being contracted out (outsourcing for specialization) and,
27
28 second, turning fixed costs in variable costs and gaining flexibility if there are frequents
29
30 fluctuations in the product demand (outsourcing for capacity).
31
32

33
34 The specialization motive for outsourcing introduces firm size as a determinant of this
35
36 strategy. There may be economies of scale in the production of specific inputs and, in this sense,
37
38 size variable have to be considered to control for this scale economies effect. Since small and
39
40 medium enterprises will have more difficulties to reap the minimum efficient scale, they will opt
41
42 more intensively for outsourcing.
43
44

45
46 Nevertheless, we also argue that outsourcing is an strategy for gaining flexibility that
47
48 allows large firms to reduce their rigidity. In a very strong competence environment, a high
49
50 grade of product differentiation is increasingly required. Consumers demand more and more
51
52 specific product characteristics and firms have to achieve flexibility to adapt to changes in
53
54 consumer wishes. Contracting out the manufacturing of specific components or tasks is one of
55
56 the alternatives to obtain it. That is, firms would tend to back to the basics focussing on those
57
58 activities where they are more efficient and outsourcing the rest. In this sense, large firms have
59
60 more incentives to carried out this process of vertically de-integration of production structures.

1
2
3 Another reason to expect a positive relationship between size and outsourcing intensity is
4 proposed by Tomiura (2005), who suggests that smaller firms could face to higher search costs,
5 that is, due to stronger market power large firms might find contracting partners more easily.
6
7
8
9

10 The sign of firm size is, therefore, ambiguous. Whereas empirical works such as Holl
11 (2004) have obtained positive coefficients, the sign is negative in Görg and Hanley (2004). This
12 last study, however, excludes small firms because it uses a Survey that provides information only
13 for firms with thirty or more employees.
14
15
16
17
18

19 The size or thickness of the market is also related with the outsourcing intensity. The
20 larger the market, the more chance of finding a good external supplier and, therefore, more likely
21 to engage in outsourcing. Grossman and Helpman (2002) and McLaren (2000) consider the
22 effects of market thickness on the outsourcing of intermediate inputs in their transaction cost
23 models where the trade off between vertical integration and outsourcing is investigated. Since
24 international trade increases the ease for a firm to match with an specialized input provider, one
25 expects that higher international trade lead to a rise in outsourcing through an increase in market
26 thickness. Empirical works such as Görg and Hanley (2004) introduce export propensity pointing
27 that export propensity may have a positive effect on outsourcing. It could be argued that the
28 more a company exports, the more the possibilities there are in finding specialized foreign
29 suppliers.
30
31
32
33
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

46 Previous works usually control for ownership nationality. According to Görg and Hanley
47 (2004) and Girma and Görg (2004), since foreign firms are part of an international network
48 competing in a global market, the potential to contract out to more efficient producers abroad
49 increases. Hence, it could be assumed that they do more outsourcing than domestic firms.
50 However, if foreign affiliates are located in a country just for doing production tasks for the
51 parent company, the possibility from these manufacturing plants for using subcontractors could
52 decrease. The sign of national ownership variable is, as well as firm size, ambiguous and will be
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 an empirical matter. Previous works have obtained positive signs (Girma and Görg, 2004) but
4
5 also negative signs (Holl, 2004; Görg and Hanley, 2004).
6
7

8 Finally, it seems reasonable that the decision about the outsourcing intensity in period t is
9
10 related to the level of outsourcing in previous period $t-1$. The lagged dependent variable is taken
11
12 into account to consider the persistence in the outsourcing decision (Girma and Görg, 2004).
13
14 Moreover, Swenson (2004) shows that outsourcing exhibits hysteresis caused by sunk entry costs
15
16 using data of the U.S. offshore assembly program. The existence of important transaction costs
17
18 would explain the persistence in the outsourcing intensity. They are a key difficulty in the
19
20 decision of outsourcing internal production according to the theoretical model by Grossman and
21
22 Helpman (2002). These costs will be higher in the first moments, when the outsourcing strategy
23
24 is becoming to be used. There would be sunk entry costs associated with outsourcing strategy
25
26 (such as search costs in finding a suitable provider). In following years, transaction costs
27
28 probably will be decreasing and they will be compensated by the advantages of farming out parts
29
30 of the production process. These explanatory variables and the expected signs in previous
31
32 outsourcing literature are summarized in table 2.
33
34
35
36
37

38 **III. DATA AND METHODOLOGY DESCRIPTION.**

39
40
41 In order to investigate the determinants of outsourcing of internal production we use
42
43 industry level data for manufacturing in Spain. The data are derived from the Industrial
44
45 Companies Survey (*Encuesta Industrial de Empresas*) published by the Spanish National
46
47 Statistics Institute. The Survey, which is undertaken annually since 1993, provides information
48
49 on employed persons, wages, hours worked, sales, intermediate inputs, external services and
50
51 some more variables for 93 manufacturing industries. The sectors correspond mostly to the 3-
52
53 digit level of NACE Rev.1 (Table 1). The Survey basic unit is industrial company with one or
54
55 more remunerated employed persons. Approximately 43,000 firms compose the sample in 2002.
56
57
58
59

60 The inclusion of the variable *Production works done by other firms*, as defined in the
introduction section, makes the Survey particularly interesting for our analysis of outsourcing of

1
2
3 internal production. We measure outsourcing of internal production as the ratio of these
4
5 production tasks carried out by other firms to gross output. If the ratio goes up, we interpret that
6
7 manufacturing firms are replacing in-house production for external contract production.
8
9

10 Figure 2 plots the extent of outsourcing for Spanish manufacturing industries in 2002. We
11
12 observe the heterogeneity in the outsourcing intensity among sectors. Outsourcing level is higher
13
14 for Textile Industries, Wearing Apparel, Footwear, Publishing and Printing, Fabricated Metal
15
16 Products and Shipbuilding and Aerospace Industry. All of them show fragmentation levels well
17
18 above 10% of gross production, and 20% for the last two sectors. According to this indicator, for
19
20 the average Spanish manufacturing industry around 5% of output are production works
21
22 contracted out to outside producers. Moreover, our data show that fragmentation of production
23
24 has increased steadily in many sectors (average rise of 40% from 1993 to 2002)^{ix}. Therefore, we
25
26 find evidence of the growing disintegration of the production process and rising of outsourcing
27
28 production activities in Spain.
29
30
31
32
33

34 In order to obtain more information about the characteristics of those sectors where
35
36 outsourcing is more intensive, we use a classification which cluster industries by their typical
37
38 input combinations: labour-intensive, technological-driven, capital intensive, marketing-driven
39
40 and mainstream manufacturing industries (Peneder, 1999). Outsourcing is common to all groups
41
42 of industries. Nevertheless, it is more relevant for labour-intensive industries where most of these
43
44 sectors shows outsourcing levels above average, many of them even above 10% of the gross
45
46 production (which can be interpreted as a high level of outsourcing). So, we argue that industries
47
48 producing goods intensive in labour relative to capital and technology seem to give stronger
49
50 support to fragmentation based on contract out physical production to specialized producers than
51
52 the rest of industries (Figure 3).
53
54
55
56

57 To analyse the determinants of outsourcing of internal production we consider the
58
59 following regression equation which relates outsourcing intensity to a broad range of industry's
60
characteristics:

$$\text{OUTS}_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 \text{OUTS}_{i,t-1} + \beta_2 \text{ULC}_{it} + \beta_3 \% \text{Small-Firms}_{it} + \beta_4 \text{National-own.}_{it} + \beta_5 \text{Export-prop.}_{it} + \beta_7 \text{DSKILLS}_{it} + \beta_8 D_t + u_{it} \quad (1)$$

Where i represent the 92 manufacturing sectors^x, t is the time period 1993-2002, OUTS is the outsourcing level measured as production works carried out by other firms per unit of output, UCL are the unit labour costs measured as defined above and %Small-Firms variable is the percentage of small firms (less than 20 employees) in a sector. We include a variable of ownership nationality (National-own.) which reflects the percentage of domestic firms (those with one hundred percent of national capital). Export-prop. is the export propensity ratio measured as exports to output. If firms use outsourcing as a cost-cutting strategy, we would expect that high skill sectors gave stronger support to fragmentation based on contracting out production phases to specialized producers than the rest of the industries, mainly those production tasks more intensive in low skilled labour^{xi}. For this reason, the model also includes a dummy variable to control for high skill requirements (DSKILLS), which takes on value 1 for sectors with high skill requirements and 0 for the rest using the Peneder (1999) classification. This classification is based on the OECD's occupational data, which distinguish between white and blue-collar workers, on the one hand, and between high and low skilled labour on the other. At last, 10 time dummies are introduced to control for period-specific effects.

The equation (1) represents a standard dynamic model, where lagged dependent variable is included among the regressors. Furthermore, we will treat the unit labour cost variable as endogenous, since it is conceivable that changes in outsourcing level lead to changes in future unit labour cost. For similar reasons, we consider the share of small firms and the export propensity ratio as not strictly exogenous and we also include these variables lagged.

We calculate the outsourcing intensity, the unit labour costs and the percentage of small firms from data of the Industrial Companies Survey. Data for the ownership are drawn from the firm level panel survey, the Survey of Firm Strategies (*Encuesta sobre Estrategias*

1
2
3 *Empresariales, ESEE*) of the Spanish Ministry of Science and Technology which offers data for
4
5 20 manufacturing industries.
6

7
8 All variables are expressed in logarithms. We use a one-way error component model for
9
10 the disturbance term, $u_{it} = \alpha_i + v_{it}$, where α_i denotes the unobservable individual specific effects
11
12 that are independent and identically distributed (iid) over the sectors with variance σ_α^2 and v_{it}
13
14 denotes the remainder disturbance that are iid over the whole sample with variance σ_v^2 . The time
15
16 invariant variables are often difficult to measure or hard to obtain. For example, a sector-specific
17
18 production technology may allow the dispersion of phases of production process better in that
19
20 sector than in another sector. This production technology varies across sectors but it is not
21
22 expected to change very much in a short time period.
23
24
25
26

27 Taking into account these three aspects (potential industry unobserved heterogeneity,
28
29 dynamic nature of the model and endogeneity of some explanatory variables), the appropriate
30
31 estimator is the Generalized Method of Moments (GMM) developed by Arellano and Bond
32
33 (1991). They suggest first differencing the model to get rid of the industry specific effects and
34
35 then using valid instruments (lagged values of the instrumented variables) to deal with the
36
37 problem that by construction the new error term is correlated with the lagged dependent variable.
38
39 The use of instruments is also required to control for the potential endogeneity of other
40
41 explanatory variables. We use at least three lagged values of unit labour cost as instruments for
42
43 the equations in first differences to control for the potential influence of current outsourcing level
44
45 on current unit labour cost. The same lagged values are chosen for the rest of the endogenous
46
47 variables. Since national ownership is assumed to be strictly exogenous, it is instrumented with
48
49 itself.
50
51
52
53
54

55 A draw back of the difference GMM estimator of Arellano and Bond (1991) is that when
56
57 first differences are taken, time invariant variables are wiped out. So, the estimator does not use
58
59 cross sectional information reflected in the differences between industries. Another disadvantage
60
is that lagged levels are often poor instruments for the equation in differences, especially in the

1
2
3 case of panel with a small number of time periods with highly persistent data. It can cause large
4 finite-sample biased and poor precision in the estimators. To reduce this problem associated with
5 the difference GMM estimator, we use a new estimator, the system GMM, developed by
6 Arellano and Bover (1995) and Blundell and Bond (1998). This estimator is based on an
7 augmented system that includes the regression in differences in addition to the regression in
8 levels with lagged differences as instruments. The second part of the system requires the
9 additional assumption of no correlation between the variables in differences and the unobserved
10 industry effects, although there may be correlation between the levels of the explanatory
11 variables and the fixed effects.
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23

24
25 Some summary statistics for the variables used are provided in Table 3. We observe that,
26 in manufacturing industry labour cost are about 20 percent of the output value and about 30
27 percent of the output is sold to foreign markets. In addition to, small firms as well as firms
28 without any foreign participation are clearly predominant in Spanish industry (around 80 percent
29 of total industries). Table 4 presents the simple correlations between pairs of variables. Since the
30 correlations between the independent variables are small (except between the shares of small
31 firms and national firms), we interpret there are not multicollinearity problem in the regressions.
32 In addition, we see that outsourcing is positively correlated with most of the independent
33 variables, mainly with levels of the unit labour costs, the proportion of domestic firms and the
34 high skill requirements. Nevertheless, the outsourcing intensity is determined jointly with these
35 variables and other factors which have to be controlled. For these reasons, an econometric
36 analysis is applied.
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51

52 **IV. ECONOMETRIC RESULTS.**

53
54
55 The results of the econometric analysis are reported in Table 5. The first column presents
56 the outcomes from the estimation of equation (1) using GMM system procedure. The positive
57 and significant coefficient of lagged dependent variable indicates a high degree of persistence in
58 outsourcing strategy. Moreover, in line with our prior expectations, higher unit labour costs are
59
60

1
2
3 related to higher level of outsourcing. We can interpret that sectors tend to use fragmentation of
4 production as a defensive strategy trying to improve their competitiveness. The positive and
5 significant coefficient of unit labour cost is an important result because it provides empirical
6 evidence of the cost-cutting motive for outsourcing. Additionally, according to the positive link
7 between the share of domestic firms and the outsourcing level, as the percentage of national
8 firms increases, so do outsourcing activities. This result would contradict that foreign firms were
9 more prone to contract out internal production. In our opinion, this is because the last have been
10 located in Spain as production affiliates carrying out parts of the production process for the
11 parent firm. Moreover, the dummy variable high skill requirements exhibits a positive and
12 significant sign showing that industries intensive in high skilled-labour tend to farm out internal
13 production more intensively. Lastly, two variables, the percentage of small firms and the export
14 propensity, are statistically insignificant. Most of the time dummy variables are highly
15 significant although, in order to spare space, the coefficients are omitted from the results table.
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23
24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32

33
34 Consistency of the GMM estimators depends on the validity of the instruments which is
35 examined by four specifications tests. The first is the Sargan test of overidentifying restriction.
36 The Sargan test does not reject the validity of the instruments employed in the estimation
37 process. Since system GMM used additional moment conditions over the difference GMM, a
38 Sargan Difference test can be employed to examine the validity of these additional instruments
39 obtained from the equation in levels. The Sargan difference test does not rejected the validity of
40 them ($\chi^2[8]=5.53$). The validity of the instruments also requires the lack of second order serial
41 correlation in the dynamic formulation whereas, by construction, first-order correlation is
42 expected even with uncorrelated original error term. Two additional tests are included to
43 examine the absence serial correlation in first differenced residuals. The null hypothesis of no
44 second order correlation cannot be rejected and we can conclude that original error is not serially
45 correlated.
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

1
2
3 We test the robustness of the regressions by removing those variables which do not have
4 a significant impact on the dependent variable. The column 2 of Table 5 presents the results from
5 the estimation of equation (1) excluding the share of small firms whereas we have removed the
6 export propensity in the column 3. According to the System GMM estimations, the positive
7 coefficients for previous outsourcing intensity, unit labour cost, national ownership and skill
8 requirements remain robust. Moreover, the negative coefficient of the share of small firms turns
9 out significant when export propensity is not included. According to this result, those sectors
10 where the share of small firms is lower outsource more internal production than the rest, pointing
11 the existence of less difficulties in searching specialized outside producers for large firms.
12
13
14
15
16
17
18
19
20
21
22
23

24
25 Taking into account the interaction between the share of small firms and the export
26 propensity variable, we use a variable for international market penetration measured as the
27 percentage of firms in each sector whose main market is foreign^{xiii} (column 4 and of table 5). In
28 this case, both variables (size variable and foreign market penetration) are significant. The
29 positive and significant coefficient points out that outsourcing intensity grows when the
30 proportion of firms which produce mostly to foreign markets does. By this way, firms orientated
31 mainly to international markets would use more intensively outsourcing strategy. A greater
32 pressure to improve their efficiency and competitiveness or a greater probability to find
33 specialized suppliers could explain this outcome.
34
35
36
37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44

45
46 Finally, table 5 contains a last column where the model for a sub-sample of more
47 homogeneous 3-digits sector is estimated^{xiii}. In particular, we have considered exclusively labour
48 intensive sectors according to Peneder taxonomy. Previous outsourcing level and unit labour
49 costs remains positive and highly significant pointing out the robustness of the empirical
50 estimates for these variables. For labour intensive sector, neither firm size nor national
51 ownership seem to have an significant impact on outsourcing intensity. On the contrary, export
52 propensity shows a positive and significant coefficient.
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

V. CONCLUSIONS.

In this paper we have investigated the determinants of outsourcing of internal production using industry level data for Spanish economy. Our study covers 93 manufacturing sectors and the period 1993-2002. We observe that manufacturing industries are fragmenting the value chain and they are opting increasingly for contracting out production works to specialized providers.

We test a model where the outsourcing intensity at industry-level depends on lagged level of outsourcing, unit labour cost, share of domestic firms, proportion of small firms, export propensity and skill requirements. We employ the system-GMM estimator proposed by Blundell and Bond (1998) that provides better instruments when right-hand variables are persistent over time.

We find that current level of outsourcing is highly related to previous outsourcing intensity, that is, outsourcing exhibits hysteresis. The market transaction costs associated to contracting out production are probably higher when firms make the decision of outsourcing (some of them are even sunk costs). In due course, some of these costs will be reduced and so the advantages of in-house production will be dropped. Therefore, if firms are achieving their objectives of gaining flexibility and decreasing costs, the outsourcing strategy will be used more and more intensively allowing firms to concentrate on their innermost core competence.

Furthermore, our results show that the unit labour costs affect positively the ratio of production works that are contracted out to external providers related to output. The pressure of low-cost competitors could be more intensive in manufacturing industries with higher unit labour costs and, therefore, they would be mostly encouraged to outsource production works to cheap and specialized contract manufacturers. We find significant evidence for the positive link between the outsourcing intensity and the share of domestic firms, the orientation to foreign markets as well as the high skill requirements. Finally, we observe a negative effect of the share of small firms on outsourcing intensity.

References

- Abraham, K. and Taylor, S. (1996): Firm's use of outside contractors: theory and evidence, *Journal of Labour Economics*, 14, 394-424.
- Antras, P. (2003): Firms, Contracts and Trade Structure, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 118, 1375-1418.
- Antras, P. and Helpman, E. (2004): Global outsourcing, *Journal of Political Economy*, 112(3), 552-580.
- Arellano, M. and S. Bond (1991): Some tests of specification for panel data: Monte Carlo evidence and an application to employment equations, *Review of Economic Studies*, 58 (2), 277-297.
- Arellano, M. and O. Bover (1995): Another look at the instrument variable estimation of error-components models, *Journal of Econometrics*, 68 (1), 29-52.
- Blundell, R. and S. Bond (1998): Initial conditions and moment restrictions in dynamic panel data models, *Journal of Econometrics*, 87 (1), 115-143.
- Buehler, S. and Haucap, J. (2006): Strategic outsourcing revisited, *Journal of Economic Behaviour and Organization*, forthcoming.
- Coase, R. (1937): The Nature of the firm, *Economica*, New Series, 4, 386-405.
- Curzon Price, V. (2001): Some causes and consequences, in *Fragmentation: New production patterns in the world economy* (Eds.) S.W. Arndt and H. Kierzkowski, Oxford University Press, Oxford.
- Eckel, C. (2004): International trade, flexible manufacturing and outsourcing, *CeGE Discussion Papers 45*, University of Goettingen, Goettingen.
- Girma, S. and Görg, H. (2004): Outsourcing, foreign ownership and productivity: evidence from UK establishment level data, *Review of International Economics*, 12, 817-832.
- Görg, H. and Hanley, A. (2004): Does outsourcing increase profitability?, *The Economic and Social Review*, 35 (3), 367-387.
- Görzig, B. and Stephan, A. (2002): Outsourcing and firm-level performance, *Discussion Paper No. 309*, DIW Berlin, Berlin.
- Grossman, G.M. and Helpman, E. (2002): Integration versus outsourcing in industry equilibrium, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 117 (1), 85-120.
- Grossman, G.M. and Helpman, E. (2005): Outsourcing in a global economy, *The Review of Economic Studies*, 72 (1), 135-160.
- Holl, A. (2004): Production subcontracting and location: Panel data evidence from Spanish manufacturing firms, *TRP Working Paper 146*, University of Sheffield, Sheffield.

- 1
2
3 Kimura, F. (2001): Fragmentation, internalization, and interfirm linkages: Evidence from the
4 micro data of Japanese manufacturing firms, in *Global Production and Trade in East Asia*
5 (Eds.) L.K. Cheng and H. Kierzkowski, Kluwer Academic Publishers, Boston.
6
7
8
9 Kimura, F. and Ando, M. (2005): Two-dimensional fragmentation in East Asia: conceptual
10 framework and empirics, *International Review of Economics and Finance*, 14, 317-348.
11
12 McLaren, J. (2000): Globalization and Vertical Structure, *American Economic Review*, 90,
13 1239-1254.
14
15
16 Peneder, M. (1999): Intangible investment and human resources. The new taxonomy of
17 manufacturing industry, Working Papers No. 114, WIFO, Vienna.
18
19 Piga, C. and Vivarelli, M. (2003): Sample selection in estimating the determinants of cooperate
20 R&D, *Applied Economics Letters*, 10, 243-246.
21
22
23 Piore, M.J. and Sabel, Ch.F. (1984): *The Second Industrial Divide Possibilities for Prosperity*,
24 Basic Books, New York.
25
26
27 Shy, O. and Stenbacka, R. (2003): Strategic outsourcing, *Journal of Economic Behaviour and*
28 *Organization*, 50, 203-224.
29
30 Swenson, D.L. (2004): Entry costs and outsourcing decisions: evidence from the U.S. overseas
31 assembly provision, *North American Journal of Economics and Finance*, 15, 267-286.
32
33
34 Tomiura, E. (2005): Foreign outsourcing and firm-level characteristics: evidence from Japanese
35 manufacturers, *Journal of the Japanese and International Economics*, 19, 255-271.
36
37
38 Williamson, O. (1975): *Markets and hierarchies: Analysis and antitrust implications*, Macmillan,
39 New York.
40
41
42
43
44
45
46
47
48
49
50
51
52
53
54
55
56
57
58
59
60

Table 1: Sectoral disaggregation of Industrial Companies Survey 2002

Manufactures of food products, beverages and tobacco	Manufacture of fabricated metal products
151 Production, processing, preserving of meat, meat products	2811 Manufacture of metal structures and parts of structures
152 Processing and preserving of fish and fish products	2812 Manufacture of builders' carpentry and joinery of metal
153 Processing and preserving of fruit and vegetables	282 Manufacture of tanks, central heating radiators and boilers
154 Manufacture of vegetable and animal oils and fats	283 Manufacture of steam generators
155 Manufacture of dairy products	284 Forging, pressing, stamping and roll forming of metal
156 Manufacture of grain mill products, starches and starch products	2851 Treatment and coating of metals
157 Manufacture of prepared animal feeds	2852 General mechanical engineering
1581-2 Manufacture of bread, biscuits and bakery products	286 Manufacture of cutlery, tools and general hardware
1583-4 Manufacture of sugar, cocoa and chocolate	287 Manufacture of other fabricated metal products
1585-9 Manufacture of other food products	Manufacture of machinery and equipment
1591-7 Manufacture of alcoholic beverages	291 Manufacture of machinery for the production of mechanical power
1598 Production of mineral waters and soft drinks	292 Manufacture of other general purpose machinery
160 Tobacco products	293 Manufacture of agricultural and forestry machinery
Manufacture of textiles, wearing apparel, leather and footwear	294 Manufacture of machine-tools
171 Preparation and spinning of textile fibres	295-6 Manufacture of other special purpose machinery and weapons
172 Textile weaving	297 Manufacture of domestic appliances n.e.c.
173 Finishing of textiles	Manufacture of office machinery, computers and precision equipment
174 Manufacture of made-up textile articles, except apparel	300 Manufacture of office machinery and computers
175 Manufacture of other textiles	331 Manufacture of medical and surgical equipment
176 Manufacture of knitted and crocheted fabrics	332-5 Manufacture of instruments for measuring and optical instruments
177 Manufacture of knitted and crocheted articles	Manufacture of electrical equipment
181-2 Manufacture of leather clothes and other wearing apparel	311 Manufacture of electric motors, generators and transformers
183 Dressing and dyeing of fur; manufacture of articles of fur	312 Manufacture of electricity distribution and control apparatus
191 Tanning and dressing of leather	313 Manufacture of insulated wire and cable
192 Manufacture of luggage, handbags and the like, saddler	315 Manufacture of lighting equipment and electric lamps
193 Manufacture of footwear	314/316 Manufacture of accumulators and electrical equipment n.e.c.
Manufactures of paper, paper products, publishing and printing	321 Manufacture of electronic valves and other electronic components
211 Manufacture of pulp, paper and paperboard	322 Manufacture of television, radio transmitters, apparatus for line telephony
212 Manufacture of articles of paper and paperboard	323 Manufacture of television and radio receivers, sound or video recording
221 Publishing	Manufacture of transport equipment
222-3 Printing and service activities related to printing	341 Manufacture of motor vehicles
Manufacture of chemical	342 Manufacture of bodies for motor vehicles, trailers and semi-trailers
241 Manufacture of basic chemicals	343 Manufacture of parts, accessories for motor vehicles
242 Manufacture of pesticides and other agro-chemical products	351 Building and repairing of ships and boats
243 Manufacture of paints, varnishes and similar coatings	352 Manufacture of railway, tramway locomotives, rolling stock
244 Manufacture of pharmaceuticals, medicinal and botanical products	353 Manufacture of aircraft and spacecraft
245 Manufacture of soap, detergents, cleaning, polishing	354-5 Manufacture of motorcycles and other transport equipment n.e.c.
246 Manufacture of other chemical products	Manufacture of wood, furniture; manufacturing n.e.c.
247 Manufacture of man-made fibres	201 Sawmilling and planning of wood, impregnation of wood
Manufacture of rubber and plastic products	202 Manufacture of veneer sheets and other panels and boards
251 Manufacture of rubber products	203 Manufacture of builders' carpentry and joinery
252 Manufacture of plastic products	204 Manufacture of wooden containers
Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products	2051 Manufacture of other products of wood
261 Manufacture of glass and glass products	2052 Manufacture of articles of cork, straw and plaiting materials
262 Manufacture of ceramic goods	361 Manufacture of furniture
263-4 Manufacture of construction products	362 Manufacture of jewellery and related articles
265 Manufacture of cement, lime and plaster	364-5 Manufacture of sports goods and games and toys
266 Manufacture of articles of concrete, plaster, cement	363/366 Miscellaneous manufacturing n.e.c.
267 Cutting, shaping and finishing of stone	
268 Manufacture of other non-metallic mineral products	
Manufacture of basic metals	
271 Manufacture of basic iron and steel and of ferro-alloys (ECSC)	
272 Manufacture of tubes	
273 Other first processing of iron and steel	
274 Manufacture of basic precious and non-ferrous metals	
275 Casting of metals	

Table 2: Outsourcing explanatory variables and expected signs in previous literature

Variable	Expected sign	Previous works
Labour costs	+	Abraham and Taylor (1996) Girma and Görg (2004) Görg and Hanley (2004) Holl (2004)
Firm Size	—	Abraham and Taylor (1996)
	+	Tomiura (2005) Holl (2004)
Market Size [Export propensity]	+	McLaren (2000) Grossman and Helpman (2002) [Görg and Hanley (2004)]
National ownership	—	Girma and Görg (2004) Görg and Hanley (2004)
	+	Holl (2004)
Previous outsourcing level	+	Girma and Görg (2004) Swenson (2004)

Table 3: Summary Statistics

	1993		2002		1993-2002	
	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Mean	Std. Deviation
Outsourcing	3.83	3.59	5.11	4.71	4.49	4.17
Unit Labour Cost	24.27	7.68	18.26	5.98	19.55	6.78
% Small Firms	79.21	12.18	74.91	13.21	77.55	13.20
Export Propensity	28.01	20.07	31.16	19.46	29.76	19.28
National Ownership	77.53	12.14	77.41	13.10	77.14	12.37
Foreign market penetration	5.15	3.59	8.02	4.98	6.78	4.64
Skills (dummy)	0.12	0.33	0.12	0.33	0.09	0.28

Source: Industrial Companies Survey, Comext, Survey of Firm Strategies and Peneder (1999).

Note: All the variables are before taking logarithms.

Table 4: Simple Correlations between variables

	Outsourcing	ULC	% Small firms	Export Propensity	National Ownership	Foreign-market penetration	Skills
Outsourcing	1.000						
Unit Labor Cost	0.440	1.000					
% Small Firms	0.155	0.176	1.000				
Export Prop.	0.184	0.153	-0.320	1.000			
National Own.	0.385	0.159	0.421	-0.183	1.000		
Foreign-market penet.	0.184	0.042	-0.293	0.411	-0.126	1.000	
Skills	0.321	0.281	-0.080	0.249	-0.109	0.298	1.000

Source: Industrial Companies Survey, Comext, Survey of Firm Strategies and Peneder (1999).

Note: All the variables are before taking logarithms. The number of observations is 870.

Table 5: Determinants of Outsourcing (GMM Regression Results).

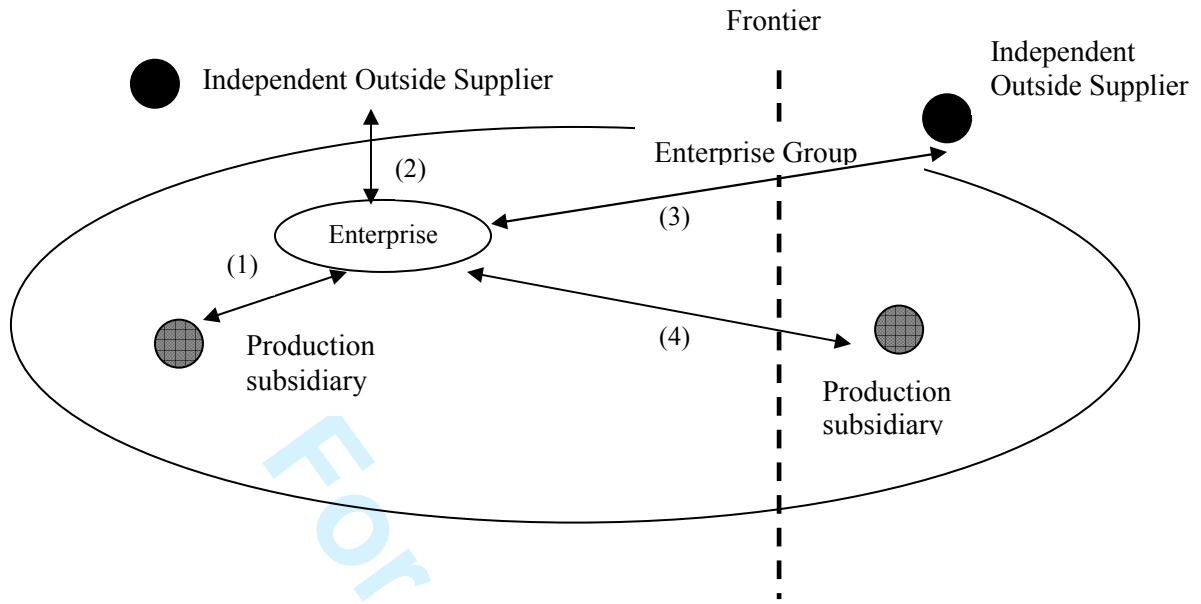
Parameters	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
Outsourcing _{t-1}	0.802*** (0.029)	0.789*** (0.031)	0.802*** (0.029)	0.827*** (0.031)	0.922*** (0.018)
ULC	0.288*** (0.097)	0.282** (0.128)	0.255** (0.126)	0.159** (0.072)	0.107** (0.048)
%Small-firms	-0.031 (0.101)	-0.277* (0.151)		-0.233* (0.132)	-0.055 (0.047)
National-ownership	0.342** (0.136)	0.533*** (0.169)	0.365*** (0.135)	0.443*** (0.135)	0.308 (0.209)
Export-propensity	-0.005 (0.028)		-0.015 (0.033)		0.013* (0.006)
Foreign-market penetration				0.010* (0.006)	
Standardization	-0.084* (0.050)	-0.097* (0.057)	-0.114* (0.061)	-0.067 (0.052)	
High Skills	0.033* (0.017)	0.040 (0.026)	0.040** (0.018)	0.037* (0.018)	
Constant	-0.674** (0.268)	-0.595* (0.317)	-0.196 (0.359)	-0.424 (0.257)	-0.062 (0.145)
Observations	783	828	783	828	207
Sectors	87	92	87	92	23
Test (p-values)					
AR(1)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000
AR(2)	0.318	0.337	0.329	0.381	0.189
Sargan test	1.000	0.993	0.994	1.000	1.000

Notes: Standard errors in parenthesis; statistically significant * at 10%, ** at 5%, *** at 1%.

All equations include year dummies. AR(1) and AR(2) are tests of first and second order serial correlation.

Sargan is a test of the over-identifying restrictions (two-step estimations). P-values below 0.05 suggest a rejection of the validity of the instruments at the 5% critical level.

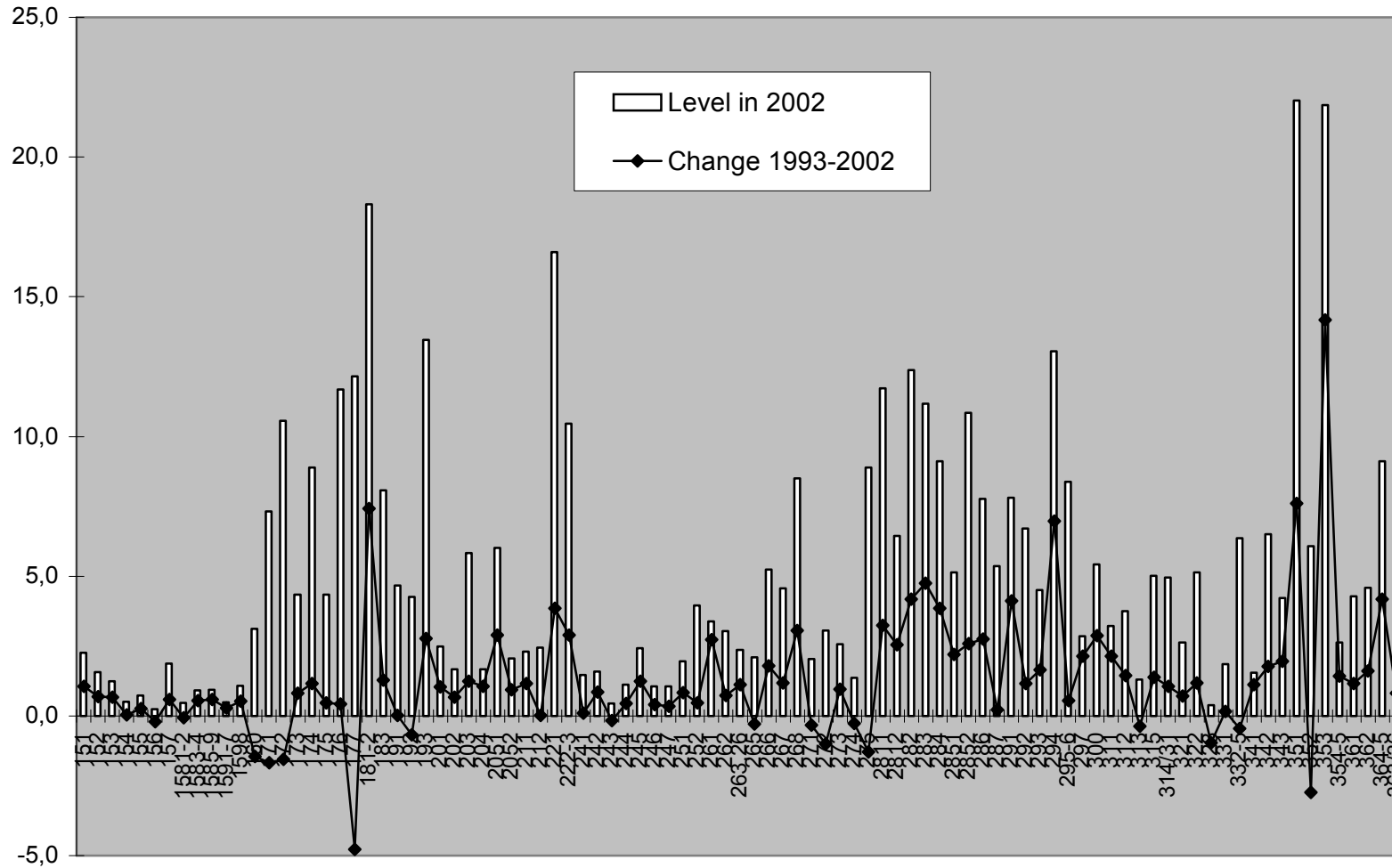
Figure 1: Dimensions of Fragmentation of Production.



- (1) Intra-firm national fragmentation
- (2) Inter-firm national fragmentation (national outsourcing)
- (3) Inter-firm international fragmentation (international outsourcing)
- (4) Intra-firm international fragmentation (FDI is required).

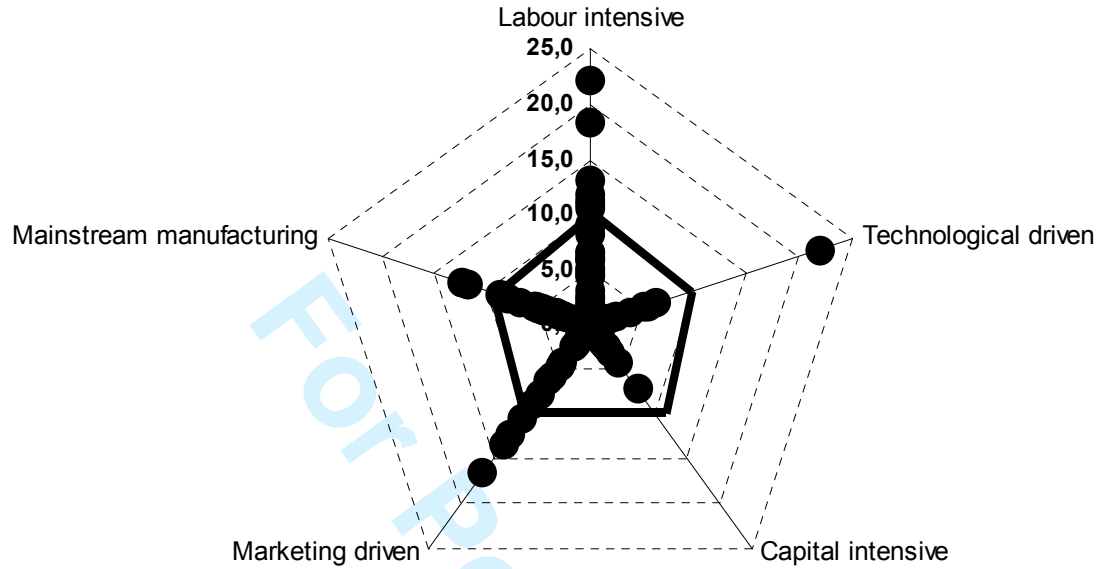
Source: Own elaboration from Kimura and Ando (2005) and Curzon Price (2001).

Figure 2: Outsourcing of Internal Production: Level in 2002 and Change 1993-2002
 (Production works carried out by other companies / Gross production, in percentage; change in percentage points)



Source: Industrial Companies Survey 2002 (National Statistical Institute of Spain).

Figure 3: Outsourcing of production according to industry taxonomy based on factor inputs



Source: Industrial Companies Survey 2002 (National Statistical Institute of Spain) and Peneder (1999).

* I am indebted to Rosario Gandoy, Juan Ignacio Palacio and Oscar Bajo for constructive comments on a previous version of this paper. I also thank participants at the 7th European Trade Study Group Conference (Dublin, Ireland, September 2005) as well as an anonymous referee for helpful suggestions. Financial support by the Consejería de Educación y Ciencia of the Junta de Comunidades de Castilla-La Mancha under the project PBI-05-021, cofinanced by FEDER funds, is gratefully acknowledged.

ⁱ See Piore and Saber (1984). The higher flexibility can be obtained through flexible production which allows firms to adapt standardized inputs to a variety of specifications (Eckel, 2004). Through flexible production, firms can alter the final goods they provide according to the specific needs or desires of their customers.

ⁱⁱ Nevertheless, fragmentation of production and outsourcing are often treated as synonymous. The term outsourcing comes from the compound expression “outside resource using”. Along this paper, the terms outside and external refer to outside or external to the firm.

ⁱⁱⁱ *The Economist* has recently published a survey of outsourcing, in which is pointed that “manufacturing has already gone a long way down the road of outsourcing” (*The Economist*, November 13th 2004).

^{iv} Tomiura (2005) employs a similar indicator but, as pointed out above, he uses cross-section data. Holl (2004) opt for a narrower indicator, the subcontracting of products, parts and components, to study the probability of outsourcing. At last, Girma and Görg (2004) use a bit wider measure, the industrial services receive, which comprises activities such as processing of inputs but also certain services as maintenance of production machinery or engineering services.

^v Various types of outsourcing exist in the manufacturing industries depending on the relationship between the principal and the third-party company. Subcontracting is a particular case where a “dominant/dominated” relationship is created. Specifically, subcontracts correspond to the relationship between two companies (the subcontractor and the main contractor), where the subcontractor company participates in the production process of a particular product, which belongs to the contractor company. The subcontract conditions require the main contractor to provide a diagram and precise technical specifications for the manufacture of the product, as well as the supply of its main raw materials.

^{vi} In the context of transaction costs and contractual incompleteness Grossman and Helpman (2002) examine theoretically the decision between outsourcing or vertical integration of intermediate inputs (*make or buy decision*) taking into account the costs that arise from search frictions and imperfect contracting and the costs of running a larger and less specialized organization. To consider the international dimension as well as the ownership dimension, Antras and Helpman (2004) develop a theoretical framework in which, based on productivity and sectoral characteristics, firms decide whether to integrate into the production of intermediate inputs or outsource them and firms also choose the location of inputs production (at home or abroad).

^{vii} A strategic motive can be added to these usual motives for outsourcing when a firm outsourcing decision affects the rivals’ outsourcing decisions and the firm takes into account it in the decision process. Shy and Stenbacka (2003) and Buehler and Haucap (2006) study how firms may strategically outsource the productions of inputs analysing the trade-off between the fixed cost of investing into in-house production facilities for an input or the higher marginal cost for sourcing the input over the market (which is caused by changes in input demand and inputs prices).

^{viii} This hypothesis is in accordance to Antras (2003) who using a model of outsourcing based on the property rights approach shows that final goods in the capital-intensive sector are produced under vertical integration whereas those in the labour-intensive sector are outsourced.

^{ix} This increase is higher than the average scored by German manufacturing enterprises, which has placed in 27% for the period 1992-2000 according to Görzig and Stephan (2002). However, it should be noted that the fragmentation processes in German industry had most probably taken place before the 1990s.

^x The sector “Manufacture of office machinery and computers” has been removed from the econometric analysis. The data in 2002 show a sharp decrease of output which is not present in employment or number of enterprises suggesting a measure error for that year. Since the indicator of outsourcing used is calculated related to output, the level of fragmentation will be overestimated.

^{xi} Although some American and British firms have already begun to outsource some of their business services abroad (so far mostly to India), the outsourcing of white-collar work is still only emerging (*The Economist*, November 13th 2004).

^{xii} Following Piga and Vivarelli (2003) those firms which face tougher foreign competition may exhibit a stronger tendency to cooperate. For this reason, we also could expect that firms competing in international markets were more prone to engage in outsourcing agreements.

^{xiii} The author is grateful to the anonymous referee for this suggestion.