

**การประเมินงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการส่งออก:
อดีต ปัจจุบัน และอนาคต
Export Research Assessment:
Past, Present and Future**

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บทคัดย่อ

บทความนี้ได้ประเมินงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการส่งออก โดยจำแนกงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการส่งออกเป็น 4 กลุ่ม ได้แก่ ลักษณะของกิจการที่ทำการส่งออก กลยุทธ์การส่งออก สภาพแวดล้อมที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อส่งออก และผลการดำเนินงานของการส่งออก กลุ่มที่หนึ่ง ลักษณะของกิจการที่ทำการส่งออกประกอบด้วย กิจการที่ทำหน้าที่เป็นตัวกลางในการส่งออก ขนาดของกิจการ และโครงสร้างขององค์กร กลุ่มที่สอง กลยุทธ์การส่งออก รวมถึงกลยุทธ์การตลาดและการบริหารกิจการที่เน้นกลยุทธ์ กลุ่มที่สาม สภาพแวดล้อมที่ส่งผลกระทบต่อส่งออก ซึ่งเน้นความแตกต่างระหว่างประเทศที่ทำการส่งออกกับประเทศเป้าหมาย ด้านวัฒนธรรม ภูมิประเทศ กฎหมาย และการเมือง และกลุ่มที่สี่ ผลการดำเนินงานของการส่งออก โดยให้ความสำคัญกับวิธีการวัดผลการดำเนินงาน นอกจากนี้ บทความนี้ได้กล่าวถึงวิธีการดำเนินการวิจัยและงานวิจัยที่เกี่ยวข้องกับการส่งออกของกิจการในประเทศด้อยพัฒนา รวมถึงประโยชน์และข้อเสนอแนะสำหรับงานวิจัยในอนาคต

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Abstract

This paper assesses export research in the past. The export research is grouped into four categories: exporting firm characteristics, export strategy, export environment, and export performance. Export firm characteristics consist of export intermediary, firm size, and organizational structure. Export strategy includes marketing strategy and strategic orientation. Export environment emphasizes differences among home and host countries, such as cultural, geographical, legal, and political differences. Export performance is focused on how to measure export performance. Research methods and export research on firms in less developed countries (LDCs) are also mentioned. Contributions and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Introduction

Export has been one of main studies in international business. It refers to the transfer of goods or services across national boundaries, using direct or indirect methods (Leonidou and Katsikeas, 1996). Previous research has proposed and examined many factors that are linked to export research, such as structure, strategy, and environment (Li, 1999; Kaynak and Kuan, 1993; Shoham, 1999; Stylics and Ambler, 2000). Export performance that is a final outcome of export activities is also examined more. Export research has also been reviewed. Leonidou and Katsikeas (1996) classify export research in various aspects: export development models, structural characteristics, methodological aspects, and conceptual issues. Two years later, Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Pierce (1998) group export research into four aspects: export propensity, export development, export aggressiveness, and export performance. Leonidou and Katsileas (2000) also do another integrative review and emphasize four aspects of export performance: past research on export performance, review of export performance measures, evaluation of export performance measures, and guidelines for export performance measure development.

Even though many studies already reviewed export research, this paper is one attempt to provide a useful framework of export research. Hence, the primary purpose of this paper is to review literature in the field of export, and to provide a clear picture of the past research and the future trend. The focus is to explore the field of export research and classify the past studies into different categories based on their main contributions to the field. Each category is identified with examples from research in the past. Key research questions, major theories, conceptual models, key concepts, and typical

research methods that have been used to explain the export phenomena will be discussed. Export research on firms in less developed countries (LDCs) is also discussed. The discussion on recent research trends as well as the suggestions for future research will also be presented.

Scope of the Study

Selection Procedures

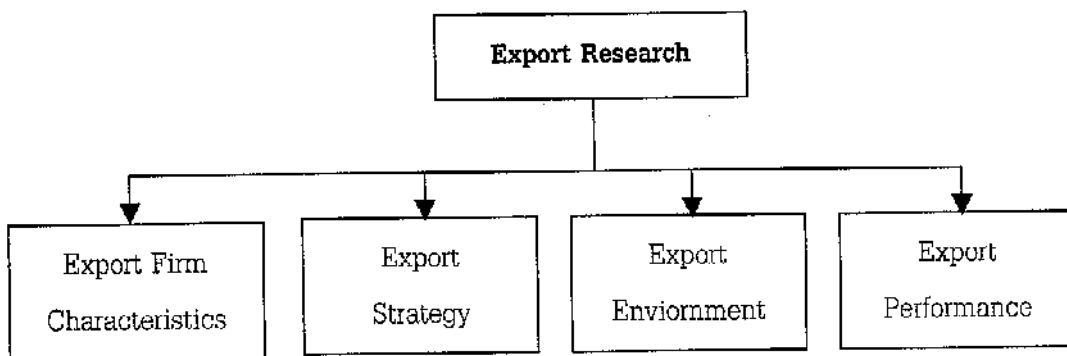
In an attempt to gain a wide framework and obtain an integrative view of export research, top five academic journals in international business are surveyed. Those five consist of Journal of International Business Studies, Journal of World Business, International Marketing Review, Management International Review, and Journal of International Marketing. Key words are used in searching studies, such as export, export development, export strategy, export influence, and export performance. The scope of this review encompasses the past five-year period (1996-2001). However, some relevant studies that were published prior to 1996 are also mentioned here. In addition, several studies in other journals are also included, such as Academy of Management Journal, Academy of Management Review, Journal of Marketing, Multinational Business Review, and Strategic Management Journal.

Criterion of Classifying Research

To clearly understand the state of export research, the classification scheme used in this paper is established on a process of export activity, including an influence of export, a development of export, and a measurement of export. In this paper, four categories are

discussed: exporting firm characteristics, export strategy, export environment, and export performance. The first three categories emphasize effects of organizational characteristics, strategy, and environment on the process of export activity. The last category is concerned with how export performance is measured. Here, a proposed model is explored in detail in the following section.

Figure 1: Classification Model of Export Research



Classification of Export Research

Exporting Firm Characteristics

Exporting firm characteristics have been key factors that support firms to export products and services to international markets, and enhance them in order to achieve superior export performance. They refer to organizational characteristics that affect operations of export activities, including organizational structure, firm size, resources, and capabilities. Researchers have proposed the firm characteristics as principal components to influence export activities and to determine their successes (Beamish et al., 1999; Wolff and Pett, 2000). Key concepts of the firm characteristics, which are examined consist of export intermediary, firm size, and organizational structure.

Previous research on export attempts to answer many research questions: 1) how export intermediaries help firms sell their products and services to an international market and what key factors that the export intermediaries are concerned with, and 2) how differences in size of firms and how market commitment through a separate export unit affect export performance.

Firms have used export intermediaries to sell their products and services (Karunaratna and Johnson, 1997). Transactions, agents, and resources have played important roles on export intermediaries (Peng and York, 2001). Based on high psychic distance, young matured operation, and low international experience, export intermediary can help firms reduce risks, achieve customer satisfaction, and gain high performance in an international market (Burgel and Murray). Both transaction cost and resource-constrained also influence the firms to choose foreign channel intermediaries. Using export intermediaries, the firms need to trade off a lack of control and deal with principal-agent conflicts (Burgel and Murray, 2000; Peng and York, 2001). Cooperation and negotiation between the firms and the export intermediaries are needed (Peng and Linitich, 1998). Agency, transaction cost, resource-based, and network theories are therefore proposed to explain export intermediary phenomena.

Firm size has also been a key player to determine the success of the exporting firms (Moen, 1999). Large firms have more resources and capabilities than small firms. More competitive advantages in both products and technology are pursued. Based on a size-related resource base, small firms cannot exhibit competitive patterns through their resources, but export intensity does not depend on the size (Wolff and Pett, 2000). In order to gain more competitive advantages, small firms

may need to perform both proactive and reactive motives (Moen, 1999). Resource-based theory is also proposed to explain relationships between firm size and export performance (Wolff and Pett, 2000). Heterogeneous resources and capabilities that are experience of managers and strategy of firms are needed to help the small firms achieve high performance.

Organizational structure is also examined. Differences in organizing structure of firms have significant effects on performance. Exporting firms that make a separate export unit within their organizations achieve higher performance than firms that treat export activities as domestic business (Bearnish et al., 1999). Internationalization theory is proposed to support their study. Recognizing important export activities through establishing the separate export unit create organizational commitment and influence the firms to achieve superior performance.

Much research has used three concepts (export intermediary, firm size, and organizational structure) in order to examine export activities since 1996. However, there are still many factors that also come interplay on relationships between those concepts and export activities, such as organizational culture, business characteristics, manager characteristics, export planning, marketing program, research and development, export experience, adequacy of firm's resources, management style, technology characteristics, and environment (Holzmuller and Stottinger, 1996; Kayank and Kang-yen Kuan, 1993; Li, 1999; Shoham, 1999). Thus, effects of those factors also need to be explored.

Export Strategy

Strategy is another key factor that affects export activities in both before and after firms involve their export activities. Export strategy refers to how a firm develops an advantage with respect to competition in an industry (Aulakh, Kotabe and Teegen, 2000). It includes marketing strategy and strategic orientation. Previous research has proposed both marketing strategy and strategic orientation as explainable concepts of export performance. Research on export attempts to answer many research questions: 1) how export strategy affects export success, and 2) what key components of strategic orientation that firms emphasize and how those components help the firm survive.

Firms have used an export strategy to sell their products and services in an international market. It consists of cost leadership, product differentiation, product standardization, price leadership, product specification, and so on. Firms use a differentiation strategy in order to create a products and services which customers see as unique (Aulakh, Kotabe and Teegen, 2000). The differentiation strategy can practice through a superior brand image, technology, customer service and innovative products. In addition, cost leadership refers to a managerial action that is directed toward controlling and minimizing costs (Dess, Lumpkin and McGee, 1999).

Both production differentiation and cost leadership influence differences between high-and low-performance exporters. The cost-based strategies effectively works in developed country markets (Aulakh, Kotabe and Teegen, 2000). Product differentiation, in contrast, is appropriate for developing countries. Firms need to be concerned with good product quality and design in order to increase export

success (Kaynak and Kang-yen Kuan, 1993). Product unique and innovation is thus explicitly accepted in an international market. However, the success of exporting firms not only depends on export strategies but organizational characteristics and environment are also considered.

Product standardization is determined by country image, competitor's similarity, competitive position similarity, physical market environment, legal environment, government influences, and media similarity (Shonham, 1999). However, it has negative effects on export performance. Both product and advertising adaptations enhance export performance. To gain superior export performance, firms may also need to concern with export planning (Kaynak and Kang-yen Kuan, 1993).

Entrepreneurship orientation is a driving force of export success in the uncertain high-tech environment (Francis and Collins-Dodd, 2000). Proactive and conservative export strategies have positive and negative effects on export performance. Based on the above discussion, many researchers have used theories in order to explain relationships between strategy and export activity. Resource-based, contingency and network theories can explicitly explain those relationships (Dow, 2000; Kaynak and Kang-yen Kuan, 1993). Innovation model also helps explain the relationships (Li, 1999; Shoham, 1999).

Export Environment

Several studies have examined effects of environment on export performance. How the export environment influences export success is needed to answer. Psychic distance is an important factor that affects export market selection (Dow, 2000). It refers to differences among home and countries, such as cultural differences, graphical

differences, legal and political differences, and so on (O'Gary and Lane, 1996). The psychic distance has strong effects on market selection in the first market entry decision (Dow, 2000; Myers, 1999). After firms get in the markets, the psychic distance decreases, but remains a significant predictor. The psychic distance is a key player in the internationalization theory of Johanson and Vahlne (1977). Recourse commitment has negative effects on the psychic distance, but it has positive effects on knowledge.

Environmental characteristics (dynamism, hostility, complexity, and heterogeneity), cultural differences, differences in consumer's tastes, competition in the market have well been researched since 1994 (John and Arunthanes, 1995; Raven, McCullough, and Tansuhaj, 1994; Zahar, Neubaum, and Huse, 1997). Those factors have a great impact on export performances. Those environmental characteristics are significantly associated with higher export performance (Zahar, Neubaum, and Huse, 1998). However, formal export planning and technological sophistication are conducive to higher export performance (Myers, 1999). Environmental characteristics can directly influence export performance (Stottinger and Holzmuller, 2000). Organizational culture, business characteristics, and manager characteristics can help firms deal with those characteristics (Beamish et al., 1999; Gencturk and Kotabe, 2001; Holzmuller and Stottinger, 1996).

Export Performance

Many key factors affect export activities, such as firm characteristics, strategy and environment. These categories explicitly link to export performance, but the export performance measurement is

not discussed. This category will thus discuss export performance measurement. A key research question which researchers attempt to answer is how to measure export performance.

Export performance has been evaluated in many measures: export intensity, profitability, sales, and achievement of strategic objectives (Styles, 1998; Zahra, Neubaum and Huse, 1997; Zou, Taylor and Osland, 1998). Effectiveness, efficiency, and adaptiveness are also introduced as measures of export performance (Al-khalifa and Morgan, 1995). To operationalize the measurement cross-culturally, four dimensions of export performance consisting of sales, profitability, achieve of strategic objectives, and manager's perceptions of success are considered. (Styles, 1998).

EXPERF is a scale of export performance (Zou, Taylor, Osland, 1998). This measure consists of three scales: financial export performance, strategic export performance, and satisfaction with export venture. Madsen (1998) also introduces another perspective of export performance by emphasizing how managers judge export performance. Short-term goals that are evaluated by sales are compared with their international competitors and domestic players. While there are many measures to evaluate export performance, these measures may lead to confusions in what determine export performance (Zou, Taylor and Osland, 1998). Researchers thus need to concern with key determinants of export performance and environment before they choose measures of export performance.

Research Methods on Export Research

Research methods in export research are important for making the research more valuable contributions. Most researchers have used

raw data through questionnaires in order to collect data (Balabanis, 2000; Francis and Collins-Dodd, 2000; Myers, 1999; Zahra, Neubaum, and Huse, 1997). Both managers and executives are key samples of the studies. For instance, Li (1999) used presidents or chief executive officers as samples in his study. Likert scales have been used to measure all variables (Myers, 1999). However, some studies have used secondary data for their studies (Zahra, Neubaum, and Huse, 1997). They use both primary and secondary data in their study. Cross-national study has also been made in some studies (Styles and Ambler, 2000).

Regression analysis is a valuable statistics tool to answer research questions and test hypotheses. Both logistic regression and multiple regression models are more popular (Balabanis, 2000; Peng and York, 2001). One study used hierarchy regression model (Zahra, Neubaum, and Huse, 1997), but Hart and Tzokas (1999) and Moen (1999) used correlation to show relationships between independent variables. To test validity and reliability, a confirmatory factor analysis is used (Shoham, 1999).

Based on the above discussion on the research methods, much research has done data collection through questionnaires. Managers are the key samples of the study. Cross-national study has also been conducted to explain export activity phenomena. Most significant statistics tools on export research are logistic and multiple regression models. A confirmatory factor analysis has also been used to test reliability and validity of models in export research.

Export Research on Firms in LDCs

How the export research can be applied to firms in less developed countries (LDCs) is interesting. In this paper, we classify the export research into four categories: exporting firm characteristics, export strategy, export environment, and export performance. Here, we will discuss those categories in a case of the firms in LDCs.

Export intermediary is more valuable for the LDCs Firms. Because of the lack of international experience and resources, such firms may use export intermediaries in order to export their products and services. However, the firms need to consider many factors related to the export intermediary, such as control, cooperation and negotiation between principal and agent, and trust. Size has a significant effect on export activities of the LDCs firms. Small firms in LDCs have many limitations of resources and capabilities. However, heterogeneous resources and capabilities can help the firms achieve export success.

Export strategy helps the firms gain competitive advantages in the international markets. Choosing export strategy is a critical factor. The LDCs firms may choose to practice product differentiation strategy in order to compete in the markets. However, they need to concern themselves with how to find and create specific knowledge and skills, more international experience, and high innovative concern. Those variables can help the LDCs firms to gain competitive advantages, achieve superior performance, and survive in the international markets.

Conclusion

This paper provides a clear picture of export research in the past. The export research is grouped into four categories: exporting firm characteristics, export strategy, export environment, and export

performance. However, those categories are related to each other. Linking concepts in studying export phenomena are needed. Export intermediary is a hot issue which researchers have explicitly examined. Many theories are used to explain the export intermediary phenomena, such as resource-based, transaction cost, agency, and network theories. Resource-based theory is an effective concept to explain export activity phenomena. Even though there are many studies discussed the export development, the product development, and the export performance, there is still much room for future research. First, how can SMEs and LDCs firms use the export intermediary to compete the international markets. Key components of the export intermediary need to be considered. Second, based on the limitations of resources in SMEs and LDCs firms, what heterogeneous resources and capabilities do the firms need to concern with and how do these factors influence the firms to achieve export access? Third, cross-national study is needed for future research. Few studies have attempted to examine export activity across national boundaries. Fourth, the previous research shows that only one or two variables could not explain export activity phenomena well. Future research needs to put more independent, moderating, mediating and control variables to the model. How those variables worked together are interesting. Finally, appropriate theories are needed in order to help explain the export activity phenomena, such as resource-based and network theories.

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