

Strategic Orientations, Firm Capabilities, and Export Performance: An Empirical Analysis in Turkey

by

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Abstract. According to “Gold Jewellery Sector Reports 2012” which was made by Republic of Turkey-Ministry of Economy, Turkey is one of the global leaders in gold jewellery production and in gold jewellery exports. Turkey has approximately 500 exporter firms. In 2011, gold jewellery export sales was 1.8 billion dollars, import was 349.6 million dollars in Turkey. Main aim of this study is to investigate the relationships between strategic orientations (customer, entrepreneurial, and brand) and export performance in Turkish jewellery exporter firms. In addition we study the effects of firm capability (customer relationship capability and brand capability) on export performance. Therefore, the study tested the hypotheses and investigated both direct and indirect effects among the research variables. For testing our hypotheses, questionnaires were given to jewellery exporter firms by e-mail. We used convenience sampling method. The research hypotheses were tested by correlation and regression analyses. The results indicated that there were strong relationships among the research variables. Finally, theoretical and managerial implications of the study findings are discussed.

Key words: Customer Orientation, Entrepreneurial Orientation, Brand Orientation, Export Performance, Turkish Gold Jewellery Sector.

JEL classification: M31

1 Introduction

According to “Gold Jewellery Sector Reports 2012” which was made by Republic of Turkey-Ministry of Economy, Turkey has the total capacity of producing 400 tons of gold and produce 250-300 tons of jewellery annually. In addition, Turkey is one of the global leaders in gold jewellery production and in gold jewellery exports. Turkey has approximately 500 exporter firms. In 2011, gold jewellery export sales was 1.8 billion dollars, import was 349.6 million dollars in Turkey. The Turkish gold jewellery companies exported to more than 100 countries. Moreover, they have their own distribution channels in export markets. The first aim in this study is to investigate the relationships between strategic orientations (customer, entrepreneurial, and brand) and export performance in Turkish jewellery exporter firms. In addition we secondly study the effects of firm capability (customer relationship capability and brand capability) on export performance.

Meta-analysis studies of the relationship between market orientation and firm performance show that there was a link between

customer orientation and performance (Cano, Carrillat and Jaramillo, 2004; Grinstein, 2008; Liao et al., 2011). Previous studies in this area focused on business performance and targeted manufacturing (e.g. clothes, high-technology, and textile) and services industry (Liao et al., 2011). Ellis (2006) found that the strong of link between market orientation and performance was significantly affected by a number of methodological and contextual factors (e.g. cultural distance from the US, market size, and economic development). His findings demonstrated that market orientation had a strong effect on performance in mature economies. The current research focuses on the relationship between customer orientation and export performance in developing countries such as Turkey. Moreover, our research model includes some contextual factors.

Li, Huang and Tsai (2009) pointed that there were a lot of studies on the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance but the empirical results about the relationship were unclear. It was stressed that entrepreneurial orientation had a strong positive effect on performance. We aim to investigate individual

and joint effects among customer orientation, entrepreneurial orientation and brand orientation on performance, especially export performance. We contribute to fill in the gap of joint effect, relatively less investigated brand orientation.

2 Literature review

In marketing literature customer orientation was studied at two levels (organizational and employee). We deal with organizational level in this study. Customer orientation focuses on better understanding customers' needs and wants. It was defined as customers' needs and wants which were embedded in all cells of businesses in order to maintain long-term relationships between firms and customers.

Deshpande et al. (1993) view customer orientation as being synonymous with market orientation. Liao et al. (2011) investigated that researches focused on market orientation in marketing literature. They argued that there was a relationship between market orientation and both macro level-business performance and micro level-performance (e.g. new product performance, financial performance, retail performance, brand performance, salesperson performance). Armario, Ruiz and Armario (2008) found that the link between market orientation and export performance was significant and positive. They argued direct effect of market orientation on firms' international competitiveness. Similar results were found by Kropp, Lindsay and Shoham, (2006).

Thoumrunroje and Racela (2013) argued that empirical results of customer orientation on performance were not consistent. For example, Jeong, Pae, and Zhou (2006) stressed that extant literature which showed strategic orientations had a direct impact on organizational performance and especially customer orientation. Smirnova et al. (2011) found that customer orientation didn't have a direct significant effect on firm performance but it has indirect effect. Panayides (2004) stresses a weak association between customer orientation and performance in Stank, Keller and Daugherty'

(2001) study. Augusto and Coelho' (2009) findings showed that customer orientation was positively related with new-to-the-world product innovation. Empirical findings demonstrated that customer orientation was positively related to organizational outcome –it measured four items that included the change in an organization's product mix, the change in brand mix, the change in selling strategies, and the change in sales promotion and advertising strategies- (Liu, Luo, and Shi, 2002). Kim et al. (2011) showed that customer orientation affected innovativeness via relationship quality, technological capability, and external customer information management. Hence, they found that there was a positive relationship between innovativeness and financial return.

H₁: Customer orientation has a positive effect on export performance.

Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) refers to “the processes, practices, and decision making activities that lead to new entry” (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996, 136). Lee and Peterson (2000) emphasize that entrepreneurial orientation differ from entrepreneurship. They explain “although entrepreneurship simply refers to new entry, a firm's EO refers to the entrepreneurial process...”. Lumpkin and Dess (2001, 432) define entrepreneurial orientation as “the concept of an EO to explain the mindset of firms engaged in pursuing new ventures provides a useful framework for researching entrepreneurial activity”. Tajeddini (2010, 222) point out that many scholars accept entrepreneurial orientation as a critical organizational process that contributes to firms' survival and performance. Hence, recently there were several empirical studies that have demonstrated the strong relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and performance (e.g. Soininen et al., 2012; Anderson and Eshima, 2013; Tajeddini, Elg, and Trueman, 2013; Roxas and Chadee 2013). Boso, Story and Cadogan (2013) found main and interaction effects of entrepreneurial orientation and market orientation on firm performance (both sales performance and profitability). Keh, Nguyen and Ng (2007) showed that there was a positive relationship between entrepreneurial orientation

and firm performance. Given the link between entrepreneurial orientation and export performance, direct effects of protectiveness and risk taking on export success were found significant (Patel and D'Souza, 2009). Boso (2010) emphasized that export entrepreneurial-oriented behavior was a strong determinant of export performance and a key ingredient for export success. In literature, several empirical studies have showed strong relationship between export performance and entrepreneurial orientation or its components (Godwin Ahimbisibwe and Abaho 2013; Gaber, 2013; Ibeh and Young, 2001; Boso, Cadogan and Story 2012; Surer and Mutlu, 2012).

H₂: Entrepreneurial orientation has a positive effect on export performance.

Brand orientation was defined as specific type of strategic orientation or corporate culture, was characterized by high relevance of the brand as the basis of the business model (Baumgarth and Schmidt, 2010, 1252). Urde (1999, 118) defined brand orientation: "Brand orientation is an approach in which the process of the organization revolve around the creation, development, and protection of brand identity in an ongoing interaction with target customers with the aim of achieving lasting competitive advantages in the form of brands" Santos-Vijande et al. (2013, 149) stressed that "brand orientation refers to the extent to which the firm recognizes the importance of brands as valuable assets and centers its marketing strategy and activities on developing the ability to build strong brands". Ahmad and Iqbal (2013) investigated those relationships among market orientation, brand orientation and brand performance in beverage industry of Pakistan. They found a strong relationship between brand orientation and brand performance. Moreover, they emphasized that components of market orientation (especially customer orientation) were antecedent of brand orientation. Baumgarth and Schmidt (2010) showed that brand orientation had positive effects on internal brand equity, internal brand commitment, internal brand knowledge, and internal brand involvement. Their findings demonstrated that effective branding in B2B

market depended on brand-oriented corporate culture. Gupta and Kumar (2013) argued that brand orientation was a strategic resource and it could contribute customer confidence. Hankinson' (2001) study that analyzed brand orientation in charity sector discussed three factors as consequences of brand orientation in academic literature. Brand orientation supports (a) the development of a strong brand, (b) the successful fulfillment of organizational objectives, and (c) an inclusive employee culture. Hirvonen, Laukkanen and Reijonen (2013) analyzed moderating effects of firm-related internal factors (firm age, firm size, and branding know-how) and market-related external factors (customer type, industry type, and market life cycle) on the relationship between brand orientation and brand performance. None of internal factors had a moderated effect but customer type and industry type within the external factors had it. Malaska, Saraniemi and Tahtinen (2011) indicated that brand orientation had a positive effect on market performance and business growth in not only large companies but also small businesses. Napoli (2006) put forward that high performing nonprofit organizations were more brand oriented than lower performers. A conceptual study made by M'zungu, Merrilees and Miller (2010) showed that brand orientation was a foundation requirement for brand equity in all investigated cases.

H₃: Brand orientation has a positive effect on export performance.

3 Method

The research focuses gold jewellery firms in Turkey. The sample method is convenience sampling. A self-administered questionnaire was used. The questionnaires were e-mailed to firms. Their e-mail addresses were obtained from Turkish Jewellery Association web page. The firms were given a week to respond. However, there were a few return questionnaires. Although we made second call our sample didn't reached desired sample. We have decided to follow different procedure. We communicated with firm executives by phone.

We explained the purpose and procedures of our study. The questionnaires were e-mailed to them who agreed to attend our study. A total of 33 questionnaires were collected.

We used 5-point Likert type scales. To measure research variables, modified versions of previously developed scales were used.

The customer orientation (CO) was adopted from the work of Narver and Slater (1990) and measured 8 items. It has been commonly used in literature. Entrepreneurial orientation (EO) was measured a scale that was adopted by Tajeddini (2010) and contained 6 items. Brand orientation (BO) was taken from Wong and Merrilees (2007; 2008). It has 5 items. The 5-point scale was anchored by “strongly disagree (1)” to “strongly agree (5)”.

In order to capture customer relationship capability (CRC) has 3 items, we used Kaleka (2012). Brand management capability (BMC) has 4 items. It was measured a scale that was adapted by Morgan, Slotegraaf and Vorhies (2009). The originality scale was used by Vorhies and Morgan (2005). Export performance (EXPERF) has 5 items from Navarro et al. (2010). In addition we evaluated customer relation performance (CRPERF) and brand performance (BPERF) in export market and general financial performance (FINPERF). CRPERF, BPERF, and FINPERF scales respectively were adopted Hooley et al. (2005), Wong and Merrilees (2008) and Gunday et al. (2011). The respondents were asked to rate their firms on capabilities and performance indicators which are relative to their competitors. The 5-point scale was anchored by “strongly much worse” (=1) to “strongly much better” (=5) compared to other firms.

We measured competitive intensive (CI), market turbulence (MT), firm size (SIZE), firm age (AGE), and export experience (EXP). CI and MT included respectively 5 items and 4 items (Sarkees 2011). SIZE, AGE, and EXP was measured only an item –SIZE: number of employee, AGE: Foundation date and EXP: initial beginning exporting date. In addition, we inquired firms to exchange of country (CDiv) and product diversity (PDiv) in export market for last three years.

4 Analyses

Firstly, we analyzed the profiles of the respondents profile and firm characteristics. Our questionnaire was responded by the firm owners (24.3%), the top (9%) or department manager (24.3%), others (3%), and non-respondent (39.4%). Firms have firm age between 1 and 77 years and export experience between 1 and 33 years. The averages of firm age and export experience are 17.46 and 11.90 years. The number of employees is in between 2 and 300. Main export zone of firms is Europe (4), Middle East (6), North America (6), Asia (3), and non-respondent (14). Main export country is USA (5), Azerbaijan (1), UAE (6), Georgia (1), Israel (1), Russian (4), Ukraine, (1) and non-respondent (14).

Secondly, we made correlation analyze with research variables. Correlation matrix in table 1 reports the means, standard deviations, and bivariate Pearson correlations of the constructs. We found positive correlations between EXPERF and CRC ($r=0.46$; $p<0.01$), CDiv ($r=0.43$; $p<0.05$), PDiv ($r=0.38$; $p<0.01$), CRPERF ($r=0.49$; $p<0.01$), BPERF ($r=0.53$; $p<0.01$), and FINPERF ($r=0.35$; $p<0.05$) variables.

Finally, to test hypotheses we used regression analyses. The analyses showed in table 2. Firstly, we tested the effects of CO, EO, and BO on EXPERF. There are not significant effects. Secondly, CRC and BMC were added. Regression model in the second step was found significant ($F=2.179$; $p<0.10$). Therefore, regression results in this step showed that CRC have significant and positive effect on EXPERF ($\beta= .864$; $p<0.05$). Finally, CRPERF and BPERF were added on regression model. Final regression model was significant ($F=8.076$; $p<0.01$). Regression results demonstrated that CO, CRC, BMC, CRPERF, and BPERF had significant effects on EXPERF. The effects of CO and BMC were negative. These results did not support our research hypotheses.

Table 1: Regression Analyses (Dependent Variable: EXPERF)

Independent Var.	β	$\beta_{(Std)}$	t	R ²	ΔR^2	F	ΔF
1 CO	-.040	-.029	-.128	.065	.065	.669	
EO	.244	.188					
BO	.166	.179					
2 CO	-.339	-.247	-1.135	.287	.223	2.179*	4.220**
EO	-.080	-.061	-.277				
BO	.102	.110	.628				
CRC	.864	.697	2.864**				
BMC	-.194	-.183	-.949				
3 CO	-.381	-.278	-1.755*	.693	.406	8.076***	16.547***
EO	-.070	-.054	-.349				
BO	.147	.159	1.365				
CRC	.802	.648	3.845***				
BMC	-.305	-.288	-2.074**				
CRPERF	.500	.331	2.730**				
BPERF	.539	.507	4.124***				

***: $p < 0.01$; **: $p < 0.05$; *: $p < 0.10$

Table 2: Correlation Matrix

	CO	EO	BO	CRC	BMC	CI	MT	CDiv	PDiv	SIZE	AGE	EXP	CRPERF	BPERF	FINPERF	EXPERF
CO	1															
EO	.619**	1														
BO	.212	.084	1													
CRC	.582**	.407	.163	1												
BMC	.110	-.037	.267	.404	1											
CI	.315	.200	.526*	.103	.073	1										
MT	.287	.347	.596**	.258	.020	.188	1									
CDiv	.247	.228	-.302	.200	-.377	-.228	-.241	1								
PDiv	.316	.140	-.029	.287	-.227	.206	-.004	.459*	1							
SIZE	-.459*	-.226	-.074	-.252	-.160	.030	-.298	.067	-.110	1						
AGE	.016	-.057	.220	-.073	.471*	.100	.063	-.292	.164	.003	1					
EXP	-.093	-.210	.169	-.001	.380	.102	.046	-.062	.344	.153	.744**	1				
CRPERF	.043	.225	-.222	.134	-.194	-.183	-.186	.435*	.275	-.015	-.478*	-.028	1			
BPERF	.139	.012	.119	.184	.371	.138	-.134	.177	.409	.325	.302	.521*	.192	1		
FINPERF	-.102	.008	.076	-.107	.027	-.352	-.108	.285	.058	.364	.211	.310	.248	.541*	1	
EXPERF	.194	.192	.043	.558**	.117	.033	.001	.522*	.396	.210	-.176	.204	.497*	.627**	.379	1

CO: Customer Orientation; EO: Entrepreneurial Orientation; BO: Brand Orientation; CRC: Customer Relationship Capability; BMC: Brand Management Capability; CI: Competitive Intensive; MT: Market Turbulence; CDiv: Country Diversity; PDiv: Product Diversity; SIZE: Firm Size; AGE: Firm Age; EXP: Firm Export Experience; CRPERF: Customer Relationship Performance; BPER: Brand Performance; FINPERF: Financial Performance; EXPERF: Export Performance.

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). * Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

5 Conclusions

The study aims to investigate the relationships between strategic orientations (customer, entrepreneurial, and brand) and export performance in Turkish jewellery exporter firms. Furthermore, we study the effect of firm capability (customer relationship capability and brand capability) on export performance. Therefore, the study tested the hypotheses and investigated both direct and indirect effects among the research variables.

Correlation analyses indicated two important findings. Both of the findings related to diversity. The relationship between export performance and diversity -both country and product- has positive correlation coefficients. The findings emphasize the importance of diversity for exporter firms.

Research findings showed that all of the strategic orientations did not have significant effects. However, regression results demonstrated that customer orientation negatively affected export performance. The finding is at variance with the commonly view that “there is the strong relationship between customer orientation and performance”. Strategic orientation literature rarely has mix results.

The results about firm capability in export market demonstrated that customer relationship capability has a positive effect but brand management capability has a negative on export performance. The findings indicated that jewellery exporter firms would prefer to improve customer relationship rather than brand management capability. Hence to this, development of brand management capability for each export market can involve high costs in particular jewellery sector. However, branding performance in export market has a stronger effect on export performance (see table 1; $\beta_{(std)} = .507, p < 0.01$) rather than customer relationship performance. This study indicates the strength of customer relationships in export market and jewellery sector.

This study has several limitations. The first limitation is associated with the small size of the sample. Although several significant results

were yielded, a larger sample would provide the model with more statistical power. The other limitation only is the direct effects among variables which have been discussed in this study. In future studies, indirect, mediating, and moderator effects should be researched.

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