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THE MARKETING COMPETENCY-EXPORT PERFORMANCE RELATIONSHIP: EVIDENCE FROM INDONESIA

Sefnedi^{1*}, Methaq Ahmed Sallam²

¹*University Bung Hatta, Indonesia

²Collage of Business Administration, Najran University P.O. Box 1988, Najran 11001, Saudi Arabia

Correspondence Author: sefnediphk@yahoo.com

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Abstract

Manufacturing sector plays a major role on Indonesia's exports and contributes significantly to gross domestic product (GDP). Indonesian exporters in manufacturing sectors are encouraged by Indonesian government to upgrade their export marketing competency in order to export more. This study investigates the impact of export marketing competency on export performance in Indonesian manufacturing firms. Four dimensions of export marketing competency-export product competency, export pricing competency, export promotion competency, and export distribution competency were extracted from factor analyses and hypothesized to affect the variations in export performance. The results of multiple regression analysis revealed that only export product competency and export pricing competency are statistically significant predictors of the firms' export performance. However, export promotion competency and export distribution competency is not so crucial in explaining the variations in export performance.

Introduction

Many countries recognize exports as a crucial factor for their nation's economic growth. As such, many national governments either in developed countries or developing countries assist their exporters. For instance, the Government of Indonesia (GOI) launched white paper policy 2013 in order to encourage Indonesian exporters and declared the 2000s as the era for increasing exports of non-oil and gas products.

Currently, manufacturing firms make up more than 75 per cent of the total export in Indonesia. Collectively, their contributions to the nation's economy are significant. The impact of manufacturing firms on the Indonesian economy can be seen from their contributions in terms of employment enhancement, income generation, and the increase in the amount of export. The importance of exports has become significant as demonstrated by the output of exports, worth USD 69,714 million or 33.7 per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 2014. Although the Indonesian total exports increased slightly during the year of 2011 to 2014, the contribution of manufacturing industry to the total exports seemed to decrease rapidly from the year of 2012 to 2014, which was accounted for 69.5%, 63.8%, and 55.3% respectively. According to Minister of Trade and Industry of Indonesia, Soewandi (2013) asserted that Indonesian successful exporters should emphasize product quality, pricing, promotion, and consumer satisfaction such as on-time delivery. However, her argument is still descriptive analyses. This suggests that there is a need for investigation on the determinants of export performance of the Indonesian manufacturing firms.

Despite the fact that marketing competency are crucial to the success of exporting firms, a review of the literature on manufacturing firms in Indonesia suggests that limited research has focused on this significant variable. The present study is intended to this research issue. More specifically, the purpose of this study is to investigate which marketing competency explains export performance in Indonesian manufacturing firms.

Literature review

The literature offers various definitions of competency depending from which perspective it is viewed. There at least two major paradigms used to explain competency namely the competitive forces view (Porter, 1980; 1985) and the resource based view (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990). The competitive forces view argues that the success of a company's competitive strategy depends on the choice of a strategy that posits the firm in its industry so that it can defend itself against competitive forces. Another dominant view of firm performance that has been widely accepted and gaining increasing acceptance in strategic management literature is the resource-based view. According to this view, a firm performs well over time because it develops a distinctive competence that allows it to outperform its competitors. In other words, the firm's performance depends on its competencies rather than the environment in which it operates.

According to Day (1994), there are two related types of resources that are necessary for creating competitive advantage namely, assets and capabilities. Assets are the resource endowments a firm has accumulated (e.g., investments in the facilities), and capabilities are a firm's complex bundles of skills and accumulated knowledge, experienced through organizational process that enable the firm to coordinate activities and make the best use of its assets. Marketing competency enables exporting firm to



outperform their competitors because its marketing competency rooted in the knowledge, skill, and experience of employees and others in the value chain (Prahalad & Hamel, 1990).

The efforts to understand marketing competency have been documented in recent years relate to the effect of resource-based view perspectives on competitive advantage. For instance, in the strategic export model Aaby and Slater (1989), export competency has been conceptualized in seven competencies namely, technology, export/market knowledge, planning, export policy, management control, quality, and communication. However, this definition is very wide and it does not focus on certain functional areas in organization. On the other hand, Katsikeas (1994) identified four capabilities in a firm's marketing competency namely, production capability, marketing and promotion capability, product superiority, and competitive pricing. In the study, he included production capability and excluded distribution capability makes this typology incomplete. It is argued that production is another firm's functional area, which is unusual in marketing unlike distribution that is one of the key marketing components. Therefore, it does not have any consistence with the 4Ps framework.

In the context of exporting firms' performance, Prasad, Ramamurthy and Naidu (2001) conceptualized marketing competency as how well or poorly firms possessed specific export marketing related competency as compared to their competitors. Meanwhile, Zou, Fang and Zhao (2003) conceptualized the marketing competency as the extent of an export venture's capability and positional advantages compared with those of its major rivals in the export market. Both of these studies found that marketing competency has a positive influence on export performance. For instance, Zou et al. (2003) conducted a study in China found that pricing and communication capabilities have positively significant effects on financial export performance measured by sales volume while distribution and product development capabilities are not significant. Table 1 summarizes the findings of marketing competency and performance. Of the seven studies listed, only one study conducted in Asean countries (Kim-Soon, 2005). He conducted a study in Malaysia found that out of the five marketing competency, only product differentiation; market segment and targeting are found to contribute significantly to overall export venture performance while the rests are not significant. This study hopes to fill the gap by providing evidence from Indonesia.

Hypothesis

The literature seems to suggest that the development and implementation of effective marketing competency is particularly important in the manufacturing industry because the business environment within this sector is constantly changing. Therefore, manufacturing firms must succeed in building and gaining competencies that lead to growth and/or long-term survival (Goldsmith, 2000). Therefore, in this study, firms with high export marketing competency are hypothesized to have a superior export performance.

Ha: Exporting firms with greater export marketing competency in terms of (1) export product competency, (2) export pricing competency, (3) export promotion competency, and (4) export distribution competency, will possess superior export performance.



Table 1. Findings of Marketing Competency on Performance

Author(s)	Country	Marketing Competency	Dependent Variable	Findings
Kim-Soon (2005)	Malaysia	Promotion, Export management, Segmenting and targeting, Product management, and Product differentiation	Overall export venture performance	Out of the five marketing competency, only the market segmentation & targeting and the product differentiation were found to contribute significantly to the export venture performance.
Zou et al (2003)	China	There are four marketing capability: Pricing capability, distribution capability, communication capability, and product development capability.	Export financial performance (Sales volume)	Only pricing capability and communication capability have positively significant effects on export financial performance.
Moore & Fairhurst (2003)	USA	There are four marketing capabilities: Customer service capability, store image differentiation capability, external (market level) knowledge capability, and promotional capability.	Firm performance	Among the four marketing capabilities, only promotional capability and image differentiation capability were significant related to firm performance
Guan & Ma (2003)	China	There are nine items to measure marketing capability.	Export ratio	Marketing competency contributed to export ratio significantly and positively.
Vorhies & Herkers (2000)	Australia	There are five dimensions of marketing capability: Pricing, promotion, distribution channel, market management and planning, and marketing research development.	Overall organizational performance	Promotion, distribution channel, and marketing research development are significantly related to overall business performance.
Woodside et al. (1999)	Finland	There five variables of distinctive marketing competency: Managing fund, Offering superior service, Superior images, Knowledge of customers & competitors, and planning & allocating skills	Organizational performance (Profit, ROI, Customer satisfaction)	Distinctive marketing competencies are associated positively and strongly with organizational performance. Specifically, all marketing competency variables with exception managing fund are significantly related to customer satisfaction. Only offering superior service is significantly related to ROI and none are found significantly to contribute to profit measurement.
Conant et al. (1990)	US	There are 20 items to measure marketing competency.	Organizational Performance (Profitability)	ANOVA. (marketing competency of prospector organizations is superior to those of analyzer, defender, and reactor organizations, all three archetypes perform equally well in term of profitability and outperform reactors).



Research methodology

Data was collected from Indonesian manufacturing firms through a mail survey instrument. The data collection spanned the period from April to October 2015. A total of 1,077 questionnaires were sent to targeted respondents' mailing address. The firms were randomly selected from the listing of Indonesian Manufacturing Industry Directory, 2015. The unit of analysis is conducted at the organizational level. Therefore, the top managers' perceptions of the study variables are measured. A total of 129 complete questionnaires were returned giving an overall response rate of 11.97%. Given the known difficulties of receiving a good response rate from Indonesian companies, the response rate of this study is similar to previous studies in Indonesian manufacturing firms (Herianto, 2006; Herri, 2002; Suhairi, 2003).

Twenty items measuring export marketing competency are derived from reviews of previous marketing competency measurement and other export marketing literature (Conant et al., 1990; Kim-Soon, 2005; Woodside et al., 1999; Zou et al., 2003). It is measured by using a 5-point Likert scale measured on a 1=much worse, to 5=much better. Export performance is the outcomes of a firm's activities in export markets. This study proposed three dimensions to measure export performance. First, financial export performance that deals with export profitability and export sales growth (adopted from Osman, 1994). Second, strategic export performance relates to what extent responding firms achieve their strategic goals in terms of positioning, knowledge acquisition, responded to competitive pressure in domestic market. Last, export satisfaction deals with the extent of satisfaction derived from export activities in terms of success and expectation (the last two dimension adapted from Zou, Taylor and Osland, 1998). The export performance is measured using a 5-point Likert scale measured on a 1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree consisting of nine items.

The Profile of responding firms

The major export market of the participating firms is advanced developed countries such as USA (24.8%), Japan (21.1%), Germany (9.2%), and Australia (6.4%). Most of them are the textile and apparel sector (39.4%). In terms of export experience, slightly less than half of them are relatively new in exporting with six years export experience or less (45.0%). Majority of the participating companies are made up of large firms (56.9%) with number of full time employees of more than 150 employees. With regard to export entry, majority of the respondent firms are exporting directly to distributor in importing country (35.8%), followed by exporting through foreign trading company based in Singapore (25.7%) and Indonesia (21.1%). Approximately 14.7 percent of responding firms are exporting through local Indonesian trading company, and the remaining three companies exported through own subsidiary overseas.

Data Analysis

There are at least two important methods to assess the goodness of measure namely: factor and reliability analyses (Sekaran, 2003). The purpose of factor analysis is to achieve data reduction or to retain the nature and character of the original items, but reduce the number of items (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson and Tatham, 2006). In conducting factor analysis, this study followed the assumptions that recommended by Hair et al. (2006). They are (1) KMO measure of sampling adequacy greater than .50, (2) Bartlett's test of sphericity is at least significant at .05, (3) anti-image correlation of items greater than .50, (4) communalities of items greater than .50, (5) minimum factor loading (cutoff) of .55, and (6) minimum eigenvalues of 1. To measure the internal consistency of the items, a reliability analysis was conducted on all factors. The minimum Cronbach's alpha of .70 considered to be acceptable (Sekaran, 2003). Reliability is an indication of the stability and consistency with which the instrument measures the concept and helps to assess the goodness of a measure (Sekaran, 2003). In addition, Cronbach's alpha is a reliability coefficient that indicates how well the items in a set are positively correlated to one another. The closer Cronbach's alpha is to 1, the higher the internal consistency reliability.

A factor analysis on 20 items of export marketing competency construct resulted in four factors explaining 76.72% of the overall variance. The all assumptions in factor analysis mentioned above were met. The factors and their corresponding items were labeled accordingly as presented in Table 3. The results of the reliability analysis affirmed that all the scales display satisfactory levels of reliability with Cronbach's alpha values much higher than the minimum threshold (Cronbach's alpha > .70). The patterns of mean values shows that export pricing competency achieved the highest mean score (3.61), followed by export product competency (3.56), export distribution competency (3.26), and export promotion competency (2.75).



Table 2. Factor and Reliability Analyses on Export Marketing Competency

Items	Factor Loading			
	F 1	F 2	F 3	F 4
Export Promotion Competency				
Selection and participation in relevant foreign trade fairs	.90	.08	.11	.15
Export promotion adaptation	.90	.18	.07	.11
Skills in communicating with importers	.89	.01	.06	.19
Managing sales promotional activities of export	.87	.14	.14	.07
Export Pricing Competency				
Export price discounts	.16	.86	.12	.27
Deciding the appropriate export price level	.07	.86	.17	.30
Providing export credit policy	.11	.84	.06	.25
Responding quickly to export competitors' pricing tactics	.19	.81	.08	.32
Export Distribution Competency				
Ability to on-time delivery of export products.	.07	.01	.82	.14
Adding value to export distributors' business.	.01	.24	.79	.03
24 Attracting and retaining the best export distributors	.21	.00	.78	.15
24 Providing high levels of support to export distributors	.05	-.02	.77	.03
Satisfying the needs of foreign distributors.	.06	.22	.77	.11
Export Product Competency				
New export product development	.11	.22	.20	.85
Ability to differentiate export product offerings.	.17	.28	.15	.81
Ability to provide export product warranty	.11	.39	.07	.79
Quality of export products	.20	.30	.15	.77
Variance Explained (%)	39.54	15.44	14.67	7.07
Eigenvalues	6.72	2.62	2.49	1.20
Cronbach's alpha	.93	.93	.86	.91
Mean Values	2.75	3.61	3.26	3.56
Standard Deviation	.97	.78	.68	.73

Note: Items with factor loading less than .55 were deleted



For construct of export performance, a factor analysis on the nine items produced only ⁵¹ single factor that accounted for 68.85% of the total variance. However, one item was dropped since it achieved low communalities (.15) and low factor loading (.38). This factor was labeled as overall export performance. The result of the reliability test for this factor was also above the satisfactory level (Cronbach's alpha = .94). As shown in Table 3, the mean value score of overall export performance was 3.60 and standard deviation of .60 indicating that the responding firms are rather modest in their evaluation of export performance.

Table 3. Factor and Reliability Analyses on Export Performance

Items	1) Factor Loadings
Firm's export has been successful	.86
Firm's export has increased the awareness of our product/company	.85
Firm's export has improved our experiential knowledge of international markets	.85
Firm's export has met our expectation	.84
Firm's export has achieved sales growth	.83
Firm's export has been satisfactory	.82
Responded to competitive pressure in domestic market	.81
Firm's export has achieved profits	.80
Percentage Variance Explained	68.85
Eigen-values	5.51
Cronbach's alpha	.94
Mean Values	3.60
Standard Deviation	.63

Note: Items with factor loading less than .55 were deleted

Relationship between Export Marketing Competency and ¹⁴ Export Performance

In order to investigate which export marketing competency explains the variation in export performance, a hierarchical regression was performed. In this analysis, firm's size and experience variables were treated as control variables. Table 4 displayed the results of regression of export marketing competency on overall export performance. In step 1, none of the control variables significantly influenced overall export performance and the coefficient of determination (R^2) was found 0.00 indicating only 0% of overall export performance was explained by the two control variables.

**Table 4. The Influence of Export Marketing Competency and Overall Export Performance**

Dependent Variable	Variables	Beta		
		Step 1	Step 2	
Overall Export Performance	<i>Control</i>			
	Firm Size	.01	-.01	
	Experience	.02	.00	
	<i>Independent</i>			
	Product Competency		.26*	
	Pricing Competency		.23*	
	Promotion Competency		.05	
	Distribution Competency		.16	
	R Square (R ²)	.00	.29	
	Adjusted R Square	-.02	.25	
	F change	.01	10.43**	

Note. Significant levels ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

In step 2, the addition of the four variables of export marketing competency has resulted in R² increased to 29%. It implied that the four dimensions of export marketing competency cumulatively contributed additional 29% of the variance in overall export performance. However, the results revealed that only two dimensions of export marketing competency significantly affected the overall export performance. They were export product competency ($\beta = 0.26$, $p < 0.05$) and export pricing competency ($\beta = 0.23$, $p < 0.05$). These results supported Ha (1) and (2), while Ha (3) and Ha (4) were not supported.

Discussion and Research Implication

The results of multiple regression analysis of this study support the contention that marketing competency creates export performance (Aaby & Slater, 1989; Prasad et al., 2001; Zou et al., 2003). The findings reveal that export product competency ($\beta = .26$, $p < .05$) and export pricing competency ($\beta = .23$, $p < .05$) significantly affect overall export performance. However, it was found that export promotion competency and export distribution competency are not as crucial as compared to export product competency and export pricing competency since they are not statistically significant related to overall export performance. Overall, it can be concluded that the findings of this study are in line with Guan and Ma (2003), Kim-Soon (2005), Prasad et al. (2001) and Zou et al. (2003) who found export marketing competency positively affects export performance in the export market. Although previous studies have emphasized the importance of promotion in export market (Kirpalani & MacIntosh, 1980) and found positive relationship between export promotion and export performance (Lee & Griffith, 2004; Zou et al, 2003), this study seems to show that export promotion competency is not so crucial for Indonesian manufacturing firms in explaining export performance. The insignificant finding on the relationship between export promotion competency and overall export performance can be perhaps resulted from the fact that the samples comprise a variety of business-to-business markets. Clearly, differences across business-to-business markets will have divergent influences on the relationship between export promotion and export performance. For instance, the importance of brand building, upon which promotion is a tenet for export success, differs substantially across business-to-business markets and therefore may contradict the results. The rationale for the result could be similar to that of Cavusgil and Zou (1994), who found insignificant relationship between promotion adaptation and export performance. They argue that simplistic adaptation without careful examination of the export market could account for insignificant findings.

Previous studies have emphasized the importance of distribution in the export market such as retaining the best distributor satisfying the needs of distributor, providing high levels of support and ability to on time delivery of export product and four the positive relationship between export distribution and export performance have been documented (Madsen, 1989; Zou & Stan, 1998; Zou et al, 2003). However, the finding of this study lends support other findings in developing countries (Herian, 2006; Kim-Soon, 2005) that distribution does not significantly influence performance. The logic behind the insignificant effect of export promotion competency and export distribution competency on export performance is that the tasks of distributing and promoting the products in Indonesian manufacturing exporting firms are often the domain of their importers. This study concurs with the Wortzel and Wortzel (1981) model that the buyers in the context of developing country export often control promotion and distribution activities. However, the finding of this study is slightly different from that by Vorhies and Herkers (2000), and



Woodsite et al., (1999). Their studies found significant relationship between marketing competencies (promotion and distribution channel) and export performance in the developed countries.

Previous research has indicated that international buyers purchase from developing country-based manufacturers because they are able to get good value for money, high product quality, satisfactory ordering / shipping procedures, reliability/security of regular delivery and long-term supply (Leonidou & Kaleka, 1998; Zou et al., 2003) whereas these factors are related product and distribution competencies. Judging from this finding, it appears that Indonesian exporters are at a disadvantage. They may be competent in pricing and product, but they seem to be least competent on delivery. They must strive to build their competency in non-price and product-related factors for long-term survival.

Conclusion

This study investigates the impact of export marketing competency on export performance in Indonesian manufacturing firms. The results suggest that export marketing competency in terms export product competency and export pricing competency significantly affect overall export performance. Export marketing competency in terms of export promotion competency and export distribution competency do not seem to have a significant impact on overall export performance. Given the findings of this study with regard to export marketing competency in exporting, approaches to enhance the firm's export marketing competency appear to be worthwhile. If Indonesian manufacturing firms are to be successful in exporting, their managers need to devote their efforts to develop higher levels of export marketing competency compared to their competitors. This greater commitment and efforts may provide Indonesian manufacturing firms with an additional opportunity to enhance their sustainable competitive advantages as well as to achieve better performance.

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