



The Impact of International Marketing on Improving the Export Performance of Agricultural Exporting Companies

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Abstract

The introduction and methodology of research state that the impact of international marketing on the improvement of export performance of agricultural exporting companies. The study population is managers, deputies, supervisors, and agricultural exporting companies in Iran. In the study 168 people participated by random sampling method. This study is a descriptive survey design. The study measures are customer orientation, behavioral commitment, communication, export performance (margin, capability of payment and complaints), firm size, environmental uncertainties, and Length of the relationship. The reliability and content, face, and construct validity are evaluated using Cronbach's alpha and confirmatory factor analysis. The results showed acceptable reliability and validity of measures. In order to analyze data, the path analysis method was used with LISREL software. The results showed that the effect of customer orientation on relationship and behavioral commitment and the effect of communication have positive and significant on behavioral commitment and export performance. The relationship between clients' orientations has positive and significant on improving export performance. The effect of the relationship and size of the firm has positive and significant on the earnings but it affects the ability to pay and complaints have a positive and significant on the environmental ambiguity of earnings and complaints but it has an effect on the ability.

Keywords: Customer orientation, Communication, Behavioral commitment, Export performance, Firm size

Introduction

One of the most important events in present era is rapid growth of global trade and presence of countries in different international arena. Most countries cannot have good export performance despite their potentialities. The identification of effective factors on export performance is of great importance for exporting companies. In the present study, the effect of customer orientation on export performance is evaluated via behavioral commitment and communication. A review of literature shows that there are a few studies on the relationship of these variables. In addition, the role of controlling variables of length of relationship, firm size and environmental uncertainties on export performance can be investigated. This study is an effective step on exporting performance of exporting companies. The improvement of exporting performance guarantees the continuous growth and survival in (Alteren & Tudoran, 2016).

Communication improves coordination, commitment, participation, performance and trust (Alteren & Tudoran, 2016; Coote et al., 2003; Leonidou et al., 2014; Neset al., 2007). Communication is necessary for success in international relations due to the difficulty understanding of the customers' needs (LaBahn & Harich, 1997). A review of literature shows that the relationship between communication and behavioral commitment is not studied in the previous researches. Customer orientation is one of the effective variables on export performance. Customer orientation deals mostly with welfare of customers. Gatignon & Xuereb (1997) call the ability of organization for identification, analysis, perception and responding to the customer's needs as customer

international markets (Adu-Gyamfi & Korneliussen, 2013). Cavusgil & Zou (1994) define export performance as achievement of companies to their goals when they export their products to foreign markets. The majority of studies about export performance emphasizes on a set of effective variables. One of the effective variables on export performance is behavioral commitment. No study has been carried out on outcomes of behavioral commitment in export. Based on the studies on organizational and marketing fields, behavioral commitment is one of the main components of commitment in marketing. Behavioral commitment refers to the amount the exporters have high commitment in commercial relations via proposing special aids to the importer (Kim & Frazier, 1997). Communication refers to information sharing and plays an important role in development of trading relationship in cultural context as a behavioral structure

orientation. The researches show that the effect of customer orientation on performance is not clear.

Theoretical review of literature

Export performance

Navarro et al. (2014) define export performance as achieving goals in exporting to a foreign market. Singh (2009) investigates export performance from the view of resources and these resources should be valuable, rare, inimitable (Barney, 1991). Matanda & Freeman (2009) proposed for export performance improvement using inter-organization relations. Other researchers classified export performance improvement into economic and non-economic criteria.



Customer orientation

Customer orientation is emerged via prioritization of allocation of resources to provide good value and customers satisfaction (Narver and Slutter, 1990; Nobel et al ., 2002). Taking customer orientation approaches can lead to high performance and high perceived quality (Narver and Slutter, 1990; Brady & Cronin, 2001). The researchers of marketing refer to customer orientation as an element of organizational culture (Deshpandé et al ., 1993).

Behavioral commitment

The scholars of organization science have presented various definitions of commitment. The organizational commitment model of Meyer and Allen (1990) presents different definitions of organizational commitment. Commitment is the belief in values and organization goals, loyalty to organization, ethics, feelings and staying in organization (Madani, 2005). Jacobs (2008) considers commitment as internalized normative pressures for activities by organizational benefits and goals. Sarughi (1996) defines organizational commitment as emotional dependence on organization. Korkmaz et al., (2014) defines commitment as accepting the organization values and engagement in organization.

Communication

Marketing communication is a symbolic term for all communicative activities as applied in marketing. These activities include advertising, public relations, direct marketing, sale promotion, etc. In a traditional marketing, all communications are one-directional. In other words, the messages are designed by companies to be delivered to the

target customers. In current researches, communication is not only used for sending information but also to create a conversation by customer and company. The aim of marketing communication is increase of the value of a product both for customer and company. Via marketing communication system, the company communicates with sale brokers, consumers in different communities (Shimp, 1993).

Market environment

One of the effective factors on performance of companies is market environment. Three components of market environment (market confusion, technological turmoil and competition) are of great importance for marketing activities (Kaleka & Berthon, 2006). Competition means fighting to achieve economic facilities. The competition refers to the situation in which there are many competitors in market and due to the lack of growth opportunities, the competition is high (Auh & Menguc, 2005).

Firm size

One of the effective factors of companies on return and profitability is firm size. There are different views about the profitability of bigger or smaller companies (Haltiwanger et al., 2014). Most researchers have investigated the relationship between firm size and export activities. The firm size is measured via annual sale volume and number of employees. The organizational resources, economies of scale and perception of existing risk in international activities are three main factors for positive association of firm size and export performance.

The effective factors on international market

International marketing includes a wide field and some factors are considered. The effective factors on international marketing are divided into controllable and uncontrollable factors. The controllable factors are marketing mix and internal environment of company and uncontrollable factors are divided into internal uncontrollable factors and external uncontrollable factors (Philips et al., 1994).

Review of literature

Huda & ZaheerKhan(2021) in a study investigated the efficacy of marketing skills and market responsiveness in marketing performance of emerging market exporting firms in advanced markets: The moderating role of competitive intensity the findings show that marketing skills, positively mediated by market responsiveness, influence the marketing performance of such firms in advanced markets. The indirect relationship is positively moderated by a higher level of competitive intensity. This study extends the dynamic capability and export marketing streams of literature, particularly for emerging market exporting firms in advanced markets, and provides useful performance implications to export marketing managers.

Diana Escandon-Barbosa et al (2019) in a study investigated the born global: the influence of international orientation on export performance. Born Globals, our study examines the influence of international orientation on export performance. Additionally, we consider internal and external drivers for early and accelerated internationalization such as the Born Global's innovative capacity, the dynamism of the market and the favorability of the environment. By estimating a structural equation model, the results show that international orientation is a strong driver of the

export performance of Born Globals. However, this relationship is moderated by innovative capacity and the dynamism and favorability of the environment, thus achieving a greater effect on export performance when international orientation is complemented by these variables.

Dionysis Skarmeasa et al (2017) in a study investigated the importer and exporter capabilities, governance mechanisms, and environmental factors determining customer-perceived relationship value. The study results indicate that exporter core offering and customer responsiveness capabilities, importer market-sensing and customer relationship management capabilities, relational governance, psychic distance, and environmental munificence are important determinants of relationship value, while contractual governance has no detectable effect. Theoretical and managerial implications of the findings are discussed and future research directions are presented.

Alteren & Tudoran (2015) in a study investigated the customer orientation role, behavioral commitment and communication on export performance. The results showed that customer orientation had positive and significant effect on behavioral commitment and communication. Communication had positive and significant effect on behavioral commitment. The effect of behavioral commitment and communication on capability of payment was significant in export performance. The effect of communication on length of relationship and firm size was not significant. Lin et al., (2014) conducted a study on the impact of export market orientation on export performance on exporting companies in Taiwan. They found that commitment, trust and social interaction had positive and significant



effect on export marketing. In addition, export marketing has positive and significant effect on export performance. Navarro-García et al. (2014) investigated the relationship between exporting environment, psychological distance, marketing mix adaptation, export market orientation and export performance in exporting companies in Spain. The results of structural equations model showed that external environment and psychological distance had positive and significant effect on marketing mix adaptation. The export market orientation and marketing mix adaptation had positive and significant effect on export performance. In addition, export market orientation has moderating role in relationship between marketing mix adaptation and export performance. Villar et al. (2014) investigated the role of knowledge management methods in exporting in Spain and Italy. The study method was descriptive-survey. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The study sample was 157 exporting companies in Ceramic industry. For data analysis, structural equations using Lisrel software are used. The results showed that management methods were effective one export. In a study done by Bloemer et al., (2013), the effect of trust and affective commitment was evaluated as effective forces on export development. The study method was descriptive-survey. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The study sample is 134 exporting companies in Netherland. For data analysis, structural equations model with PLS smart software is used. The results showed that trust had positive effect on emotional commitment, emotional commitment was effective on risk taking, cultural sensitivity and innovation and cultural sensitivity and innovation were effective on export performance. Lengler et al., (2013)

examined the effect of marketing on export performance with moderating role of competition intensity. The results of study showed that inter-functional coordination had positive and significant effect on customer orientation and competition orientation. The effect of competition orientation on export performance was positive and significant. But the effect of customer orientation was not significant. Rodriguez et al. (2013) conducted a study to evaluate the effect of strategic capabilities on export performance of Mexican companies. The study method was descriptive-survey. For data collection, a questionnaire was used. 119 exporting companies with high Mexican export were included in the study. A structural equation model with smart PLS and Lisrel software was used for data analysis. The results showed that high engagement of Mexican companies for adaptation was effective via product design, technology management and participative relations on innovation and market adaptation. The entrepreneurial orientation was effective on flexibility, innovation transfer and export performance. Adu-Gyamfi & Korneliussen (2013) evaluated the effective factors on export performance. The study method was descriptive-survey. A questionnaire was used for data collection. The study sample was 100 registered exporting companies in export promotion council of Gana. For data analysis, structural equations with LISREL software was used. The results of study showed that firm size had positive relationship between internal export barriers. Firm size and internal barriers of export had positive relationship with export performance. Internationalization degree was effective on export performance.

The conceptual model of study and hypotheses

Figure 1 shows the conceptual model of study. In this model, customer orientation is an independent variable and behavioral commitment and communication are mediating variables and export performance (margin, capability of payment and complaints) are dependent variables. In addition, length of relationship, firm size and environmental uncertainty are controlling variables.

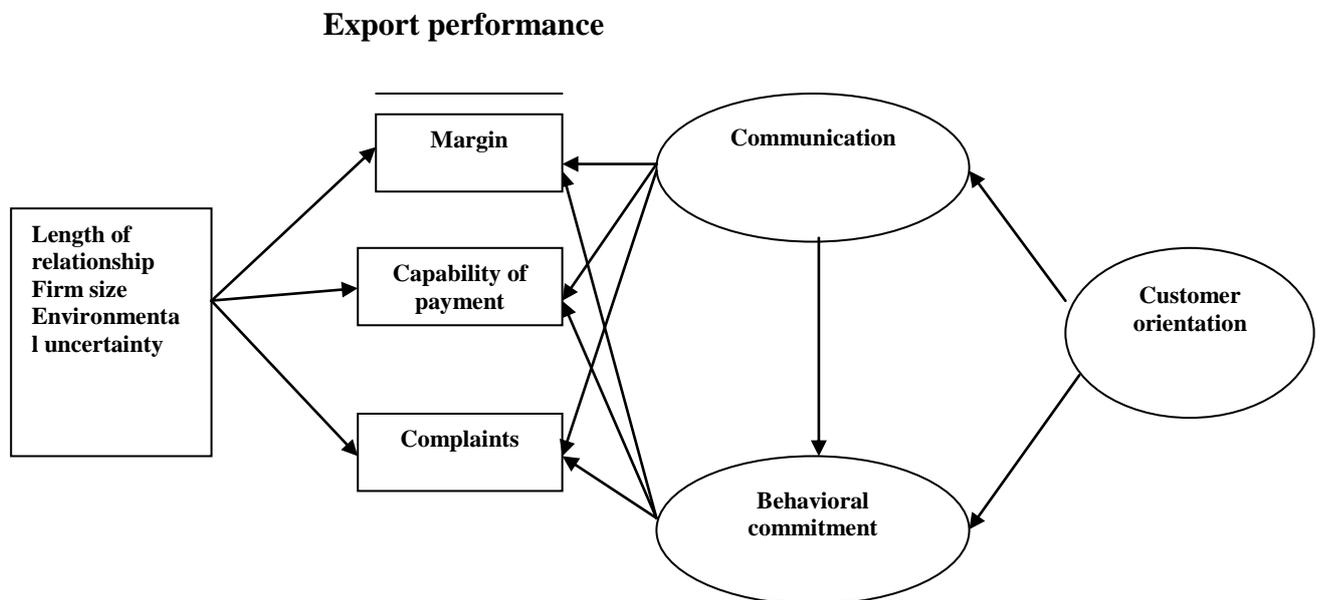


Figure 1. Conceptual model (Alteren & Tudoran, 2015)

1. Customer orientation is effective on the communication.
2. Customer orientation is effective on the behavioural commitment
3. Communication is effective on the behavioural commitment
4. Communication is effective on the export performance improvement (margin, capability of payment, complaints).
5. Behavioural commitment is effective on the export performance improvement (margin, capability of payment, complaints).
6. Behavioural commitment and communication are mediating in customer orientation and export performance improvement (margin, capability of payment, complaints).
7. Length of relationship is effective on the export performance improvement (margin, capability of payment, complaints).



performance (margin, capability of payment, complaints).

8. Firm size is effective on the export performance (margin, capability of payment, complaints).
9. Environmental uncertainty is effective on the export performance (margin, capability of payment, complaints).

Study population, sample and sampling method

The statistical population is 310 people that all managers, deputies, supervisors, financial managers, marketing managers were in agricultural exporting companies in Tehran city. Cochran's formula is used to determine sample size for finite population. Finally, in this study 168 People questionnaires were used in the analysis. The study sampling is simple random method. Therefore, we are used to data collection, library and field methods.

Study measures

To measure customer orientation (4 items), communication (5 items),

environmental uncertainty (4 items) and export performance (3 items), Alteren & Tudoran questionnaire (2016) is used. To measure behavioral commitment, Scarmix et al., (2002) questionnaire is used. This questionnaire consists of three items. To measure length of relationship, the number of years of the association of company with external markets is used (Alteren & Tudoran, 2016). The question is the number of years of relationship with foreign markets. To measure firm size, the number of employees with one company is used (Alteren & Tudoran, 2016). To measure export performance, this questionnaire evaluates three components of margin, capability of payment and complaints. The items are measured based on a five-item Likert scale of totally disagree (1) to totally agree (5). By the data of questionnaire and SPSS software, the reliability coefficient is computed using Cronbach's alpha. Table 1 shows Cronbach's alpha coefficients of study variables. To evaluate validity of the measure, face, content and construct validity is used.

Table 1. Cronbach's alpha coefficient of study variables

Variable	Alpha coefficient
Customer orientation	0.79
Communication	0.80
Behavioral commitment	0.90
Export performance	0.77
Environment	0.88
Total reliability of questionnaire	0.91

Data analysis methods

For data analysis, descriptive and inferential tests are used. In descriptive statistics, the percentage, mean and standard deviation and in inferential statistics, Pearson correlation test and path

analysis are used. For data analysis, SPSS, LISREL software is used. Data analysis method is confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis using Lisrel software.

Study results

The study results show that 87.5% of respondents are men and 12.5% women. Also, 10.12% of respondents are below 30 years, 50% 31-40 year, 27.38% 41-50 year and 12.5% above 51 years. 51.79% have BA, 48.21% above MA. To determine reliability of customer orientation, communication, behavioral commitment, environmental uncertainty and export performance, confirmatory factor analysis is used. Based on Lisrel output for customer orientation, χ^2/df is 1.70 and this shows good fit of the model. Also, RMSEA is less than 0.08 and in the full fit and fit indices are not reported for such models. After determining validity of measures, the next step is identification of the relationship between variables to enter path analysis. The relationship between the present variables is identified using Pearson correlation coefficient. The correlation coefficient of customer of payment and complaints).

model, this value is 0.065. The indices GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI are higher than 0.9 and in the model, they are higher than the determined value. Thus, the data of this study have good fit with factor structure of this scale and this indicates consistency of questions with customer orientation. For communication variable, χ^2/df IS 1.68. Also, RMSEA in the model is 0.064. The indices GFI, AGFI, CFI, NFI are higher than determined value. For behavioral commitment and export performance, this structure has three items and degree of freedom is zero and it is called saturated model. Such models have orientation has positive and significant relationship with communication and behavioral commitment. The correlation coefficient of communication and behavioral commitment with export performance is positive and significant (margin, capability

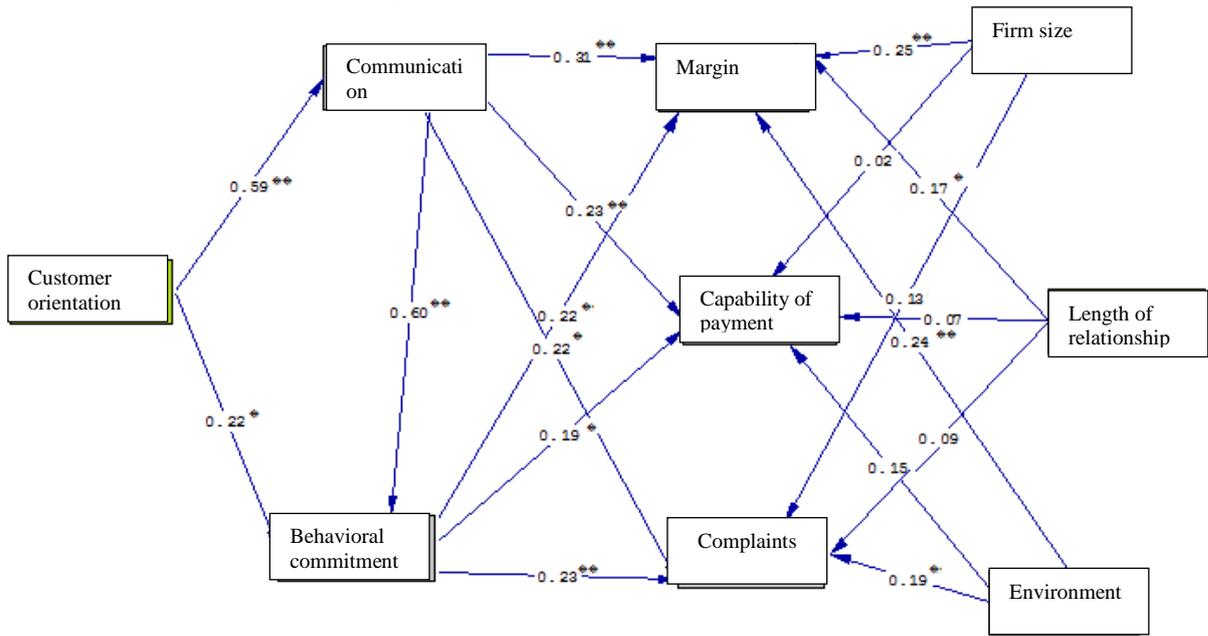
Table 2.The correlation matrix of study constructs

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1-Customer orientation	1								
2-communication	**0.59	1							
3-behaviorial commitment	**0.43	**0.59	1						
4-margin	**0.37	**0.41	**0.37	1					
5-Capability of payment	**0.36	**0.39	**0.36	**0.40	1				
6-Complaints	**0.24	**0.39	**0.41	**0.28	**0.39	1			
7-length of relationship	*0.17	**0.26	**0.29	**0.31	*0.18	**0.32	1		
8-firm size	**0.33	**0.22	**0.32	**0.27	0.09	**0.21	**0.24	1	
9-Environmental uncertainty	*0.19	**0.24	**0.20	**0.40	**0.27	**0.28	**0.32	*0.18	1

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$

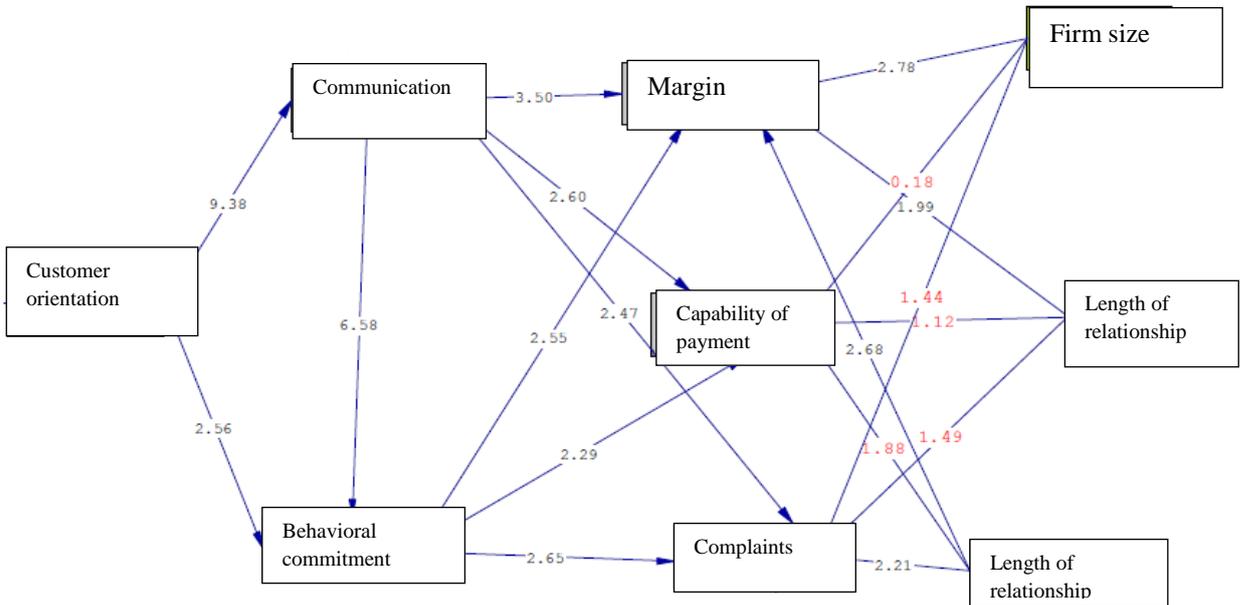
Figure 2 presents a tested model with standardized values on each of paths. The results show that the effective of firm size and length of relationship on capability of

payment and complaints is not positive and significant. The effect of environmental uncertainty on capability of payment is not positive and significant. The rest of path coefficients are positive and significant.



Chi-Square=27.39, df=18, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.056

Figure 2. Standardized coefficients of tested model (* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01)



Chi-Square=27.39, df=18, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.056

Figure 3. Standardized coefficients of tested model (* p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01)

Figure 3 shows t-coefficient of tested model to evaluate significance of path coefficients. T-coefficients above ± 1.96 to ± 2.58 are significant at the level 0.05 and t coefficients above ± 2.58 are significant at the level 0.01. As shown in Figure 3, the effect of firm size and length of

relationship on capability of payment and complaints is not positive and significant. The effect of environmental uncertainty on capability of payment is not positive and significant. The rest of coefficients of path are positive and significant.

Study hypotheses test

Table 3. The results of hypotheses test

Hypotheses		Path coefficients	Hypothesis support	Hypothesis rejection
Customer orientation is effective on communication.	-	0.59	Supported	-
Customer orientation is effective on behavioural commitment	-	0.22	Supported	-
Communication is effective on behavioural commitment	-	0.60	Supported	-
Communication is effective on export performance improvement (margin, capability of payment, complaints).	Margin	0.31	Supported	-
	capability of payment	0.23	Supported	-
	Complaints	0.22	Supported	-
Behavioural commitment is effective on export performance improvement (margin, capability of payment, complaints).	Margin	0.22	Supported	-
	capability of payment	0.19	Supported	-
	Complaints	0.23	Supported	-
Behavioural commitment and communication are mediating in customer orientation and export performance improvement (margin, capability of payment, complaints).	Margin	0.31	Supported	-
	capability of payment	0.24	Supported	-
	Complaints	0.26	Supported	-
Length of relationship is effective on export performance (margin, capability of payment, complaints).	Margin	0.17	Supported	-
	capability of payment	0.07	-	Rejected
	Complaints	0.09	-	Rejected
Firm size is effective on export performance (margin, capability of payment, complaints).	Margin	0.25	Supported	-
	capability of payment	0.02	-	Rejected
	Complaints	13	-	Rejected
Environmental uncertainty is	Margin	0.24	Supported	-



effective on export performance (margin, capability of payment, complaints).	capability of payment	0.15	-	Rejected
	Complaints	0.19	Supported	-

The direct effect of customer orientation on behavioral commitment and communication is positive and significant. The effect of communication and behavioral commitment on margin, capability of payment and complaints is positive and significant. The indirect effect of customer orientation on margin, capability of payment and complaints via communication and behavioral commitment is positive and significant. The effect of firm size and length of relationship on capability of payment and complaints is not positive and significant. The effect of environmental uncertainty on capability of payment is not positive and significant. Totally, 30% of variance of margin, 13% of capability of payment, 16% of complaint variance, 41% of behavioral commitment variance and 35% of communication variance are explained by the study model. The fit indices for the tested model show that RMSEA index with 0.056 has acceptable level and other fit indices as CFI, GFI, NFI, AGFI with 0.97, 0.93, 0.96 and 0.90, respectively at good level and the goodness of fit shows that the data of this study has good fit with factor structure.

Conclusion

The results of hypotheses show that it effect customer orientation have positive and significant effect on the communication and behavioral commitment. Although the company has a good understanding of how customers judge the quality of products and customer service, the company always evaluates customer satisfaction with

respect to the quality of products and customer service. Thus, the communication was too necessary for increase commitment in international commercial relationship. Also, an exchange of information were among customers and exporting companies, with two-way commercial relationship between customers and exporting companies, fulfilling the expectations, informing each other regarding the changes and defining the type of communication and information exchange between customers and exporting companies can lead to the improvement of export performance of exporting companies. These results are consistent with the study of Alteren& Tudoran (2015). Also, behavioral commitment and communication have mediating, positive and significant role in customer orientation and export performance improvement (margin, capability of payment, complaints). Thus, customer orientation via behavioral commitment and communication has positive and significant effect on export performance improvement (margin, capability of payment, complaint). This leads to the increase of profit, improvement of capability of payment and reduction of customers' complaint. Also, behavioral commitment has positive and significant effect on export performance improvement (profit, capability of payment and complaints). This result is consistent with the results of study of Fatahi et al. (2014) and Alteren & Tudoran (2016). If the company should be adapts of the customers, the company helps them in case of any problem and the responds to the requests of customers

and this leads to the improvement of export performance of exporting. Thus, the higher the commitment of exporters in commercial relations via aids of importer, the better the export performance. The results showed that the effect of length of relationship have positive and significant on the firm size on margin but it effect have not positive and significant on capability of payment and complaints. Communication refers to information sharing and plays a vital role in development of commercial relations as a behavioral construct. Communication improves coordination, commitment, participation and high performance (Alteren & Tudoran (2016). Communication is necessary for success in international relations due to the difficulty understanding of the customers' needs (LaBahn & Harich, 1997). This communication via understating the needs of customers, coordination, commitment and participation can lead to profit increase of company. Alteren & Tudoran (2016) found that the effect of length of relationship have not positive and significant on the export performance. The bigger companies had more resources and better operating methods than to the export activities, this had increased margin. One of the effective structural and internal factors on return and profitability is firm size. it effect have positive and significant on return and profitability are considered by most of researchers. Some researchers consider bigger companies profitable for the following reasons: First, the big company with high activity variety, this variety helps their profitability. Second, big companies with the credit in global markets can supply the money with low interest. Third, one of the reasons the companies with small market value achieved high return, is that they had high discount rate compared to the

bigger companies. Alteren & Tudoran (2016) found that the effect of firm size have not positive and significant on the export performance. The results showed that the effects of environmental uncertainty have positive and significant on the margin and complaints and the capability of payment. Thus, demand trend, import control, trade rate and economic changes of company satisfaction were achieved to the margin percentage and low complaint to satisfactory. Thus, environmental uncertainty and market conditions have positive and significant on the export performance. One of the factors of environmental uncertainty is the change in needs and preference of customers. In varied the organizations working markets have need to the change of products with requirements of customers. In stable markets, the companies are less inclined to adjust the needs of customers. In addition, economic changes trades have effective on the export performance. Which are consistent with the findings of Alteren & Tudoran (2016) found that the effect of environmental uncertainty have positive and significant on the export performance.

The importance of the need for research indicates that the dimensions of export performance from this perspective include return on investment, export satisfaction, perceived success in export markets, perceived export growth. As a result, it is stated that the implementation of a well-designed export marketing strategy can determine the rate of export success, for example: market segmentation, product quality, pricing strategies, intermediary support and advertising have a positive effect on performance in export markets.



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