



THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ENTREPRENEURSHIP ORIENTATION AND EXPORT PERFORMANCE: EVIDENCE FROM TURKEY

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Abstract:

Exporting is a strategic way of accessing international markets for many companies. However, operating successfully can be challenging because of the highly competitive and dynamic business environment. Therefore, how to be a successful and competitive exporter and how to use its scarce resources and capabilities is a matter of great importance. All international activities can be considered entrepreneurial since they contain a combination of risk and innovation that are crucial to creating value. As a company's prominent resource and capability, entrepreneurship orientation captured the attention of many researchers in the field of international business. Based on the dynamic capability and resource-based view, the purpose of this research is to further investigate the impact of entrepreneurship orientation on export performance and more specifically to examine and highlight the effectiveness and the effect of each dimension of entrepreneurship orientation on export performance. A questionnaire survey was conducted with 70 managers of exporting companies in Turkey to reveal the relationship among the constructs in question. The study's results supported the positive relationship of proactiveness and innovativeness dimensions on export performance. According to the results of the research, some insights were suggested to contribute to exporters to identify and reinforce their entrepreneurial behaviors as well as to recognize the contribution of each entrepreneurship orientation dimension and develop it accordingly for better export performance.

Keywords:

Entrepreneurship, Entrepreneurship Orientation, Resource-Based View, Export Performance, Export.

1. Introduction

Exporting is not only a growth opportunity for companies, but it also plays an important role in a country's economy, influencing the level of economic growth, employment, and the balance of payments (Ahmad et al., 2017). Export performance is seen as a fundamental indicator of a company's ability to effectively utilize its global resources and capabilities to create a business value that results in more organizational benefits (Peng, 2003). Hence, the exporting performance serves as a guide in assessing the company's overall level of success in foreign markets (Ural, 2009).

Succeeding in foreign markets relies on the company's capabilities to reconfigure its resources to adapt to the changing environment, which reflects the main assumption of the resource-based view (Barney, 1991). The Resource-based view claims that the company's competitive advantage stems from its own various resources (Barney, 1991) and that these resources and capabilities are characterized by heterogeneity (Teece et al., 1997). Resources play a vital role in developing capabilities to reach a sustainable competitive advantage (Gaur et al., 2011). A company wishing to internationalize needs to determine the opportunities in the foreign market and to provide the new environment with new products, and technologies or implement new processes. This internationalization process can be interpreted as an entrepreneurial act (Ripollés- Meliá et al., 2007).

Today's highly competitive and dynamic business environment leads companies to look for strategies that will help increase their performance, especially in terms of export contribution. The entrepreneurial orientation serves as an impellent power in the development and the performance of the companies (İşlek and İyigün, 2021). Entrepreneurial

orientation as a managerial capability impacts the company's strategic orientation and decision-making style, practices, and methods, and consists of proactiveness, innovativeness, and risk-taking (McDougall and Oviatt, 2000; Lee et al. 2001) with autonomy and competitive aggressiveness (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996) intending to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Because of the crucial effects of the entrepreneurship orientation on the company's export performance and its contribution to creating a sustainable competitive advantage this construct acquired significant attention in the context of the export (Thanos et al., 2016).

Companies with entrepreneurial-oriented activities are expected to increase their export performance (Sahoo and Yadav, 2017). However, the studies investigating the relationship between entrepreneurship orientation and export performance found empirical evidence of the positive influence generally considered the entrepreneurship orientation construct uni-dimensionally (e.g., De Clercq et al., 2005; Knight, 2000).

In light of the above, the purpose of the current study is to examine how the individual dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation may exert discrete effects on export performance and to understand the precise role of entrepreneurial orientation in achieving their goals in the international scope and particularly in the context of Turkey. To this purpose, this study is organized as follows: first, it outlines the theoretical background from which we draw our arguments for the hypothesis development. Afterward, we continue with a methodology section to describe the data collection process and measures used to test the hypotheses, followed by the empirical analysis and discussion of the results. The paper concludes with a discussion of the key findings and contributions.

2. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis Development

In the literature, the terms entrepreneurship and entrepreneurial orientation have been used interchangeably. Lumpkin and Dess (2001) came up with a distinction among these terms and defined entrepreneurial activities as the actions of individuals or businesses, and entrepreneurship orientation as to how the activities are run. Entrepreneurship orientation is defined as the processes, practices, and decision-making manners at the firm level of entrepreneurial companies (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). Wiklund and Shepherd (2003) described EO as a managerial behavior that enables the companies to get through the competition by being innovative, taking risks, and being highly proactive to the opportunities available in the market.

As an organizational capability entrepreneurship orientation facilitates the managers' task of identifying and exploiting opportunities in the international scope (Kocak, Abimbola 2009). By providing companies with the capability to identify new opportunities in the new markets, entrepreneurship orientation allows companies to differentiate and consequently overcome the competition (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005; Kraus et al. 2012). Moreover, it leads companies to leverage capabilities necessary in the international scope (Zhang et al., 2009) and by implication affects their export performance.

While some researchers claimed no significant relationship between entrepreneurship orientation and the company's performance (Covin et al., 1994; Slater et Narver, 2000), many other studies believed that entrepreneurship orientation plays an important role in achieving a competitive advantage that can boost the company's performance (Zahra et Covin, 1995) and reported a positive relationship between EO and export performance where companies possessing stronger EO attain higher export performance (Radulovich et al., 2018; Thanos et al., 2016). In particular, Calantone et al. (2006) conducted a cross-cultural study in the US, Korea, and Japan, and reported that companies inclined towards innovation exert a higher export performance. Balabanis and Katsikea (2003) examined the relationship between entrepreneurial-oriented behavior and export performance in UK and found a positive relationship between the constructs. Cavusgil (1984) presumed that risk-taking companies are positively linked to export performance. Also, Hult et al. (2003) and Wiklund and Shepherd (2005) claimed that companies adopting a strong EO and behaving accordingly achieve higher performance.

Past studies mostly presumed the uniformity of the sub-dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation and didn't take into consideration their different influences (Hughes and Morgan, 2007). Some differences are relevant to the entrepreneurship orientation sub-dimensions–export performance relationship that needs to be examined from a different perspective more precisely from a multi-dimensional approach.

One of the dimensions of entrepreneurship orientation is proactiveness. Proactiveness is about the company's capability to anticipate the upcoming needs and proceed accordingly (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005). Proactivity shows the decisiveness of the company to follow up on any potential up-and-coming opportunities (Miller, 1983). Therefore, companies that behave proactively can be first movers and are more progressive, and serve as a model in

the market (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). In the international scope, proactiveness plays an important role in building and preserving a place in different overseas markets through identifying opportunities preemptively (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004). Furthermore, proactiveness allows companies to be more susceptible to the new markets' needs and ready to benefit from these opportunities suitable to their capabilities (Morris et al., 2011). Proactive companies are poised to make audacious actions like foreseeing the future demand and exporting new products or services as a first mover to constitute, change, and shape the market (Keh et al., 2007). This tendency of the proactive companies to benefit from the opportunities and be present abroad despite the difficulties and the obstacles contribute to their development in these international markets (De Clercq et al., 2005). Therefore, the proactiveness dimension helps companies to be anticipatory and create a competitive advantage that induces a higher export performance. This statement leads to the following hypothesis:

H1: There is a positive relationship between the proactiveness dimension of entrepreneurship orientation and export performance.

Another entrepreneurship orientation dimension is innovativeness. In the international context, innovativeness is about the company's willingness to engage in new opportunities, and new ideas, and adopt new processes (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996) that promotes new products or services, techniques, processes, and technologies that fit and can be demanded in the international markets (Cassiman and Golovko, 2011). Therefore, the innovativeness dimension is considered a strategic resource that makes the company more competitive because of its ability to offer the target customers products and services with a new or differentiated added value when compared to competitors (Kim and Park, 2010; Schilke, 2013). Innovativeness is a vital determinant of a higher export performance because the international markets are different and more difficult than the local markets and necessitate greater competitiveness (Lu and Beamish, 2004). Past studies showed that exporting companies view the innovativeness lack as a serious obstacle that keeps them from expanding and growing in the international markets (Uner et al. 2013). Innovation-oriented companies are more capable of generating various sorts of new products to succeed in international expansion, diversification, and differentiation (Kim and Park, 2010). Moreover, innovation-oriented companies are capable of forming the market's needs and its consumer behavior to shift into a more advantageous market (Tellis, Prabhu, and Chandy 2009). Rizzoni (1991) claimed that companies adopting innovation-based strategies develop particular capabilities that differentiate them from their competitors and more adaptable to the variable environment. Bleaney and Wakelin (2002) stated that innovativeness fosters remarkably export performance and that non-innovating exporters rely merely on cheap labor costs. Herewith, it can be concluded that higher levels of innovativeness are essential for greater export performance. Thus, we hypothesize the following:

H2: There is a positive relationship between the innovativeness dimension of entrepreneurship orientation and export performance.

As to the third dimension of entrepreneurship orientation, risk-taking indicates the tendency and readiness of companies to involve in a great resource commitment considering the uncertainty in the market environment and the high failure probability to acquire high returns (Wiklund and Shepherd 2005; Lumpkin and Dess 1996) and achieve long-term profitability (McGrath, 2001). De Clercq et al., (2005) suggested that the risk-taking dimension can be advantageous and foster international expansion only if it is adopted at a moderate level. Also, Zahra et al., (2001) claimed that risk-taking is essential for exporting but may cause a contrary effect in the case of extremity. However, low levels of risk-taking can constrict the exporting activities and prevent companies from seizing the potential beneficial opportunities (Hughes and Morgan, 2007). Prior studies revealed the positive effect of the risk-taking dimension on the export performance, but also mentioned that its impact is remarkably smaller compared to the other dimensions (Imran et al., 2018; Rauch et al, 2004) Accordingly, we hypothesize the following:

H3: There is a positive relationship between risk-taking dimension of entrepreneurship orientation and export performance.

3. Research Design and Methodology

This study was conducted in the context of exporting companies in Turkey. Registered companies in the Turkish exporter directories were taken as the study population. The sample size consisted of 70 exporting companies. A simple random sampling technique was used to select the sample from the Turkish Exporters Associations' online database. Data was collected through an online questionnaire. The firm level was taken as a unit of analysis and the responses were taken from the companies' owners/export managers/senior managers just as several previous studies

used (Calantone et al., 2004; Cavusgil and Zou, 1994). The questionnaire employed a five Likert scale to elicit the degree of agreement or disagreement. A five-point likert scale with 1 "strongly disagree" and 5 "strongly agree" was adopted. Entrepreneurial orientation was measured by innovativeness (4 items), proactiveness (4 items) and risk-taking (4 items) as adopted from (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Lumpkin and Dess, 2001). To measure export performance this study employed Zou, Taylor, and Osland's (1998) Experf scale with 9 items comprising three basic dimensions such as financial, strategic, and satisfaction export performance that are rooted in export performance literature

4. Data Analysis and Results

To analyze the relationship between export performance (dependent variable) and the dimensions (Proactiveness, Innovativeness, Risk-taking) of entrepreneurship orientation (independent variable) a descriptive analysis and correlation analysis were applied.

The results showed that the majority of the participant managers are men (77.1%). Regarding the education level, 67.1% of the participants had a bachelor's degree and 32.9% had a master's degree. The majority of the companies have been exporting for 11-19 years (35.7%), they are followed by companies exporting for more than 20 years (28.6%).

The distribution of entrepreneurship orientation and export performance scores was analyzed based on the skewness and kurtosis coefficients. In order to meet the assumption of normal distribution, it is sufficient for the skewness and kurtosis coefficients to be in the range of ± 1 (Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson, 2013). The skewness and kurtosis coefficients calculated in this study were within the specified range (Table 1).

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Skewness		Kurtosis	
					z	Std. Error	z	Std. Error
Risk-taking	4	20	13,49	3,14	-0,91	0,29	0,95	0,57
Innovativeness	8	20	15,81	2,51	-0,50	0,29	0,76	0,57
Proactiveness	8	20	15,07	3,14	-0,57	0,29	-0,07	0,57
Export performance	15	45	34,63	6,59	-0,83	0,29	0,88	0,57

EO= Entrepreneurship Orientation

Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to examine the relationships between EO and export performance scores. Multiple linear regression analysis was applied to determine the predictive effect of EO components on export performance. Some assumptions were checked before the regression analysis. Cook distance values were calculated to determine multivariate outliers. The obtained values (Cook distance <1) showed no multivariate outliers in the data set. Whether there is multicollinearity between the independent variables was investigated by calculating the variance inflation factor (VIF) values. A VIF <10 indicates that there is no multicollinearity problem (Çokluk, Şekerciöğlü and Büyüköztürk, 2010). The largest calculated VIF value was 1.80, and it was understood that there was no multicollinearity between the variables. The Durbin-Watson coefficient was calculated to examine the assumption of independence of errors. The fact that this coefficient is in the range of (>1.5 and <2.5) indicates that the assumption is met (Kalaycı, 2017). The Durbin-Watson coefficient was calculated as 2.28, and the assumption was met. Graphs of standardized residuals were examined to determine whether the homoscedasticity assumption was met. In the histogram graph, it was observed that the residuals were distributed very close to normal. In the normal P-P chart, a large proportion of the residuals are distributed close to and parallel to the normal distribution line. The results obtained indicated that the covariance assumption was met. Analyzes were performed using the IBM SPSS 25.0 statistical package program.

The relationships between EO dimensions and export performance were analyzed through Pearson's Correlation Analysis technique. The direction and strength of linear relationship can be determined between the variables with the Pearson Correlation analysis.

Table 2. Pearson Correlation with Entrepreneurship Orientation and Export Performance

Variables	1.Risk Taking	2.Innovativeness	3.Proactiveness	4.Export Performance
1. Risk-taking	1			
2. Innovativeness	0.51**	1		
3. Proactiveness	0.44**	0.61**	1	
4. Export performance	0.07	0.31**	0.45**	1

**p<0,01; N=70

When Table 2 is examined, export performance is positively correlated with innovativeness ($r=0.31$, $p<0.01$) and proactiveness ($r=0.45$, $p<0.01$). As innovativeness and proactiveness increase, the export performance also increases. However, the variable risk-taking results ($r=0.07$, $p>0.05$) showed a weak and insignificant relationship with export performance.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

The evidence from this study shows that entrepreneurship orientation is an essential factor in increasing export performance. However, as presumed earlier the effect of each dimension is not similar; while there was a positive relationship between “innovativeness and export performance” and between “proactiveness and export performance”, the results revealed a weak relationship between risk-taking and export performance. The result regarding the risk-taking and export performance relationship affirms the previous studies' results such as Vallaster, and Angerer (2018), Imran et al. (2018), and Rauch et al, (2004) that didn't find a strong relationship between these variables. From this result, it can be deduced that companies willing to take a risk and commit resources to ambiguous opportunities may not achieve the expected enhancement in their export performance. Moreover, both low and high levels of risk-taking behavior are influencing the export performance negatively (Zahra et al., 2001; Hughes and Morgan, 2007), therefore a moderate level of risk-taking is more appropriate and may lead to better results (De Clercq et al., 2005).

According to the results of the innovativeness dimension of entrepreneurship orientation ($r=0.31$, $p<0.01$), innovativeness is related positively to export performance, which is consistent with the existing literature. Some scholars claimed that being innovation-oriented contribute significantly to the export performance (Kim and Park, 2010; Bleaney and Wakelin, 2002; Rizzoni, 1991; Lu and Beamish, 2004). Accordingly, a higher export performance can be achieved by being a company more innovation-oriented that promotes and develop novelty at all levels to adapt to the international market. As to the results related to the proactiveness dimension of entrepreneurship orientation, it emphasizes the importance of being proactive in international scope and seizing any potential new opportunity and also being a rule setter able to shape the market. This result confirms earlier evidence found by some authors that consider proactiveness as a key factor in improving the export performance (Lumpkin et al, 2011; Lumpkin and Dess, 2001; Knight and Cavusgil, 2004; Keh et al., 2007). EO is not only an antecedent of export performance, it is a vital capability to exploit and sustain the companies' competitive advantage, especially in the turbulent international environment. Considering the result of this study, companies with the aim of higher performance, profitability, and growth in the international markets should adjust their efforts to emphasize capabilities development and market penetration in their exporting activities through being supremely proactive, highly innovative, and strategically risk-taking and benefiting from strategic entrepreneurial orientation.

This study is subject to some limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, the study's sample size is small due to the limited access to managers, also the sample does not cover all the exporting firms in Turkey. In future studies, researchers may wish to consider a larger sample in a specific sector and industry, or in a precise region and they may have different findings. It would be also worthwhile for future studies to examine other related constructs to test the relations between entrepreneurship orientation and export performance.

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