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DETERMINANTS OF EXPORT PERFORMANCE AND MODERATING EFFECTS OF
MARKETING PROGRAMME ADAPTATION: A REVIEW, CONCEPTUAL
FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

BY

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**DETERMINANTS OF EXPORT PERFORMANCE AND MODERATING
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A REVIEW, CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND RESEARCH HYPOTHESES**

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses existing knowledge in export marketing dealing with the relationship between internal and external factors, marketing strategy and export performance. The purpose of this paper is to combine recent grounded findings, concerning the impact of export performance on marketing strategy (Lages, 1998), with literature concerning the contingency perspective of international marketing and export marketing. A review of several determinants of export performance is presented. At the internal level, (1) firm's characteristics and competencies, (2) management characteristics, (3) management attitudes and perceptions, and (4) product characteristics have been analysed. At the external level, determinants are (1) industry characteristics, (2) foreign market characteristics and (3) domestic market characteristics. Concerning the impact of degree of marketing mix adaptation on export performance, factors which have been discussed are (1) product, (2) promotion, (3) distribution and (4) price. Previous years' export performance, internal factors and external factors, are presented as influencing export performance through marketing programme adaptation. Through the development of a conceptual framework, useful in the analysis of the relationship between the degree of marketing programme adaptation and export performance, a new approach is presented in this field. Directions are given to operationalise and empirically test this conceptual framework.

Keywords: conceptual model, literature review, export performance, standardisation, contingency perspective, internal and external factors

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INTRODUCTION

Despite tremendous developments over the last two decades in the international arena (Boyd, Walker, and Larreche, 1995), several review articles have revealed the absence of a strong theoretical framework in international marketing research (Albaum & Peterson, 1984; Aulakh & Kotabe, 1993; Bradley, 1987; Boddewyn, 1981; Cavusgil & Nevin, 1981). Similarly, many authors (Bradley, 1986; Cavusgil & Nevin, 1981; Katsikeas, Bell, and Morgan, 1998) believe that the lack of interest in the findings of previous empirical studies in the field of international marketing has restricted the development of this field. This study intends to contribute to the development of international marketing through an analysis of existing findings.

This paper presents several contributions and extends the work carried out by previous researchers (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Hoang, 1998; Koh, 1991). In addition to the analysis of possible direct relationships, as traditionally suggested in the literature, this article develops a conceptual model (Model I, p:23) which involves the analysis of the indirect impact of internal and external factors on export performance and examining moderating² effects of marketing strategy (Koh, 1991). Additionally, taking into account existing findings concerning the relationship between export performance and marketing strategy (see Lages, 1998, 1999; Lages and Shaw, 1999), a different approach is suggested. Based on a qualitative investigation of Portuguese wine exporters, Lages' (1998) study suggests that export performance also influences export marketing strategy. Therefore, in contrast to what has been done by most investigators in this field, who analyse exclusively the 4Ps as independent variables influencing export performance, the conceptual model suggests that the 4Ps' variables are also being influenced by the level of export performance achieved in previous year, an issue which is worthy of further investigation.

The contingency perspective of export marketing has never been applied simultaneously to export performance, nor to the '4Ps' standardisation/adaptation debate. Thus, one of the cornerstones of this model is based on this perspective when applied to the standardisation controversy. This perspective suggests that rather than selecting from either pure adaptation or standardisation, several internal and external factors must be taken into consideration in order to determine the appropriate degree of adaptation (Lages, 1999).

After a brief discussion of the contingency perspective, a review of two bodies of export marketing literature is presented: (1) export performance measurement, and (2) its determinants. Based on this review and on recent grounded findings in export marketing (Lages, 1998), a conceptual model has been developed (see Model I). This model systematises the relationships among (1) internal factors, (2) external factors, (3) degree of marketing adaptation and (4) previous year's export performance.

² For an illustration of the distinction between 'moderator' and 'mediator' variables see Baron and Kenny (1986).

BACKGROUND

Several empirical works (Cavusgil, Zou, and Naidu, 1993; Cavusgil & Zou, 1994) have already demonstrated that the degree of marketing adaptation is influenced by both internal and external factors. Indeed, a review of the literature concerned with studies of both international marketing and standardisation reveals that the internal forces affecting the degree of marketing programme adaptation include (1) firm characteristics and competencies (Leontiades, 1984; Zou & Stan, 1998), (2) management characteristics (De Luz, 1993; Koh, 1991), (3) management perceptions and attitudes (Andrus & Norvell, 1990; Cavusgil, Zou, and Naidu, 1993) and (4) product characteristics (Boddewyn, Soehl, and Picard, 1986; Huszagh, Fox, and Day, 1986). Other studies in this area show that the degree of marketing adaptation also depends on (1) the industry (Hite & Fraser, 1988; Seifert & Ford, 1989), (2) foreign market characteristics (Hite & Fraser, 1988; Synodinos, Keown, and Jacobs, 1989) and (3) domestic market characteristics (Hill & Still, 1984; Yip, 1997). Nevertheless, as the key topic of this paper is concerned with the determinants of export performance, while taking into consideration the contingency perspective of international marketing, this paper's main focus is on these determinants. Thus, this work will present a review of several works that have discussed the determinants of export performance. As with the determinants of marketing mix adaptation at the internal level, (1) firm's characteristics and competencies, (2) management characteristics, (3) management attitudes and perceptions, and (4) product characteristics will be analysed. Again, at the external level, the determinants under examination will be (1) industry characteristics, (2) foreign market characteristics and (3) domestic market characteristics. Finally, concerning the degree of marketing mix adaptation (1) product, (2) promotion, (3) distribution and (4) price will be discussed.

Several studies (Cavusgil, Zou, and Naidu, 1993; Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Koh, 1991; Seifert & Ford, 1989; Namiki, 1989; Shoham, 1996; Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997) have provided enormous insights into both the standardisation controversy and export marketing literature, and can serve as a basis for formulating the conceptual model. However, none of these studies has attempted to examine *all* the interrelationships among these three areas, that is, the causal relationship between 1) internal and external factors, 2) degree of 4Ps' adaptation/standardisation (i.e., degree of marketing programme adaptation), and 3) export marketing performance. Additionally, performance research concerning the degree of marketing programme adaptation requires further investigation (Hamel & Prahalad, 1985; Hout, Porter, and Rudden, 1982; Huszagh, Fox, and Day, 1986; Jain, 1989). Indeed, research is required for analysing the relationship between export performance and the degree of marketing adaptation, particularly when looking at the impact of export performance on marketing strategy.

Most of the studies in the field of export marketing that concentrate on the export marketing process are descriptive in nature and ignore the causal determinants of export performance (Donthu & Kim, 1993). Indeed, when commenting on the advances in exporting marketing theory and practice, Katsikeas, Bell and Morgan (1998) point out that a richer understanding of export marketing is provided by the use of contingent elements in conceptual frameworks, research designs and statistical analysis. One of the aims of the present paper is to look at export performance as being influenced by export marketing strategy as well as by internal and external

factors (Bilkey, 1987; Zou & Stan, 1998). Looking at the process of export marketing itself, this study aims to investigate and develop an export model where export performance will be a function of the direct and/or indirect effects of the (1) degree of marketing programme adaptation, and (2) internal and (3) external uncontrollable factors. As argued by Koh (1991), until 1991 no attempts had been made to simultaneously link all these factors. Further, as we reach the end of this decade, there are still very few investigations concerning this issue, and many research avenues are yet to be discovered (Zou & Stan, 1998).

DEGREE OF MARKETING PROGRAMME ADAPTATION

Over the last four decades, the contingency perspective has been advocated by many theorists and discussed at several levels (Galbraith & Schendel, 1983). This perspective has been widely accepted in organisational studies (McKee, Varadarajan, and Pride, 1989) and, in particular, in the field of marketing research (Zeithaml, Varadarajan, and Zeithaml, 1988). The most recent literature in international marketing, particularly that concerned with the degree of marketing programme adaptation/standardisation, is based on this perspective (Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997). The assumption of the contingency perspective, also known as the “middle of the road approach”, is that ‘no strategy is the best across situations and each strategy can be the best in the particular condition’ (Wang, 1996:103). This perspective looks for a balance between both standardisation and adaptation (Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997). It asserts that both standardisation and adaptation are contingent upon a variety of internal and external factors (Jain, 1989; Zou & Cavusgil, 1996).

In the 1960s, long before Levitt’s (1983) controversial article, the first steps of the contingency approach when applied to the standardisation controversy were given (Buzzell, 1968; Bartels, 1968; Miracle, 1968; Ryans, 1969). During the ‘decade of confusion’ (Agrawal, 1994), the contingency perspective was presented as an alternative approach to the mix up occurring with regard to the standardisation controversy. Its main strength is based on the fact that it recognises both advantages and disadvantages associated with each of the two extremes (adaptation and standardisation). Following the works of Britt (1974) Peebles, Ryans, and Vernon, (1978) who argued that the question should not be whether or not one should standardise; rather, it should involve an examination of the potential for standardisation for a product or service, taking into consideration several internal and external factors (Britt, 1974). Apparently, this question no longer exists. More recent studies (Baalbaki & Malhotra, 1993; Jain, 1989; Lee, Lee, and Ulgado, 1993; Yavas, Verhage, and Green, 1992; Wang, 1996; Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997) argue that the contingency perspective provides the right way to deal with the debate. With this new approach, the debate ‘has given way to a more fruitful dialogue focusing on [...] the desired degree of standardisation (or adaptation)’ (Szymanski, Bharadwaj, and Varadajan, 1993:1). Rather than discover whether a company should adapt its marketing strategies, or not, it is more important to look at the degree of adaptation as well as the forces that influence it. It is essential to ‘understand under what conditions the globally standardised marketing strategies should be employed’ (Wang, 1996:89). In short, the underlying thought of today’s approach to this debate is based on the idea of degree rather than absolute standardisation or adaptation (Samiee & Roth, 1992; Szymanski, Bharadwaj, and Varadajan, 1993; Wang, 1996).

EXPORT PERFORMANCE MEASUREMENT

In today's complex business world, performance is an indispensable guide for any company analysing its level of success, both in the domestic and international arenas (Lages & Shaw, 1998). Assessing export performance is quite a complex task as its usefulness depends on the credibility of the measures (i.e., financial and non-financial) and on the ways in which one measures it (i.e. objective versus subjective terms). However, there is little agreement on how export performance can be measured and defined (Das, 1994). Indeed, the task of dealing with this dependent variable may become very complicated because, as we will see in the following sections, export performance can be conceptualised and operationalised in many ways (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmilch, 1994).

The two principal modes in looking at export performance involve the usage of financial and non-financial measures (Zou & Stan, 1998). As both financial and non-financial measures have their own advantages and disadvantages, it is advisable to use both types of variables to measure export performance (Bijmolt & Zwart, 1994; Shoham, 1996). While the use of non-financial variables is rare at the international level (Evangelista, 1994), financial variables are very popular (Das, 1994). Indeed, the most common way to *measure* export performance is from a financial perspective (see Table I, p:5)³. Financial measures can be divided into static (e.g., export intensity, export sales, export profit) and dynamic measures (e.g., export sales growth, export profit growth) (Donthu & Kim, 1993). Most empirical investigations use export intensity and export profit intensity. Many non-static studies also use export sales growth. Other financial measures, which are not so common include export sales, export profits, export profits growth, market share, return on investment, return on assets and ratios of export sales to number of export managers and to number of export employees.

However, there are some limitations associated with the exclusive use of these variables (Axinn, Sinkula, and Thach, 1994; Cavuşgil, 1984; Dalli, 1994; Evangelista, 1994; Katsikeas, Piercy, and Ionnidis, 1996; Madsen, 1989; Yang, Leone, and Alden, 1992). As Bijmolt and Zwart (1994) point out, although it is possible to measure export success with one variable, in order to capture the complexity of export success, it is advisable to construct a scale based on a set of different variables.

Firstly, as suggested by Axinn, Sinkula and Thach (1994), one of the key limitations concerns the fact that some variables (e.g. export intensity and export profit intensity) are dependent on the firm's overall performance and not just export performance. This evidence has been supported by some empirical studies (Dalli, 1994; Lages, 1999). It is also demonstrated by the way in which company financial statements and reports are presented. Many of these financial documents view company performance as a whole, not making a clear distinction between the domestic and export activities (Katsikeas, Piercy, and Ionnidis, 1996; Yang, Leone, and Alden, 1992). Therefore, some managers are unable to answer simply because accurate elements do not exist (Katsikeas, Piercy, and Ionnidis, 1996; Lages, 1999).

Secondly, managers are not only guided by financial measures of export performance, but also by subjective evaluations (Madsen, 1989). The 'strategic choice' school of thought (Child, 1972) asserts that

³ About this theme see Bilkey (1984), Matthyssens and Pauwels (1996) and Madsen (1987).

management action is guided by a manager's perceived reality of the internal and external environment, rather than by an objective reality. Similarly, with regard to performance evaluation, managers use their own perceptions of performance, rather than objective values, in order to formulate their own decisions (Bourgeois, 1980). Thirdly, as suggested by some empirical investigations in the export field (Katsikeas, Piercy, and Ionnidis, 1996; Lages, 1999; Shoham, 1996), export managers might be unwilling to respond efficiently to absolute values.

Table I: Export performance measures

Financial measures	Relevant literature
export intensity i.e., relative export sales (<i>export sales vs. total sales or vs. domestic sales</i>)	Axinn, 1988; Axinn and Tach, 1990; Axinn, Noordewier, and Sinkula, 1996; Beamish, Craig, and McLellan, 1993; Bilkey, 1982; Chetty and Hamilton, 1993; Das, 1994; Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmich, 1994; Kaynak and Kuan, 1993; Kotabe and Czinkota, 1992; Namiki, 1994; Samiee and Roth, 1992; Shoham, 1996; Sriram and Manu, 1995; Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997
export sales	Ito and Pucik, 1993; Kaynak and Kuan, 1993; Lee and Yang, 1990; Madsen, 1989; Samiee and Roth, 1992
export sales growth	Carpano and Chrisman, 1995; Cavusgil and Zou, 1994; Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 1985; Das, 1994; De Luz, 1993; Lee and Yang, 1990; Madsen, 1989; Samiee and Roth, 1992; Shoham, 1996
relative export profitability (<i>i.e. export profits vs. total profits or vs. domestic profits</i>)	Axinn, Noordewier, and Sinkula, 1996; Beamish, Craig, and McLellan, 1993; Bilkey, 1982, 1985; 1987; Kaynak and Kuan, 1993; Koh, 1991; Kotabe and Czinkota, 1992; Louter, Ouwerkerk, and Bakker, 1991; Shoham, 1996; Sriram and Manu, 1995
export profits	Cavusgil and Zou, 1994; Kaynak and Kuan, 1993; Namiki, 1994; Seifert and Ford, 1989; Shoham, 1996
export profits growth	Shoham, 1996
market share	Fraser and Hite, 1990; Shoham, 1996; Sriram and Manu, 1995
return on investment	Carpano and Chrisman, 1995; Fraser and Hite, 1990; Shoham, 1996
return on assets	Shoham, 1996
exp. sales / nr. exp. managers	Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmich, 1994
exp. sales / nr. of employees	Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmich, 1994
Non-financial	Relevant literature
goal achievement	Cavusgil and Zou, 1994; Katsikeas, Piercy, and Ionnidis, 1996; Naidu and Praisad, 1994;
satisfaction	Evangelista, 1994; Patterson, Cicic and Shoham, 1997; Seifert and Ford, 1989; Shoham, 1996
perceived success	Cavusgil and Zou, 1994; Raven, McCullough and Tansuhaj, 1994; Singer and Czinkota, 1994
perceived importance	De Luz, 1993

Fourthly, there are problems associated with a comparison of export performance across industries, firms and products. What might be a tremendous success for one company, may be a tremendous failure for another (Covin, 1991; Evangelista, 1994). According to Katsikeas, Piercy, and Ionnidis (1996), the existing differences in terms of characteristics of the market, level of competition and technology intensiveness might lead to a comparison of measures that do not have the same meaning across the various sectors. Finally, as suggested by

Cavusgil (1984), this type of terms does not indicate whether or not a firm has adequately explored the existing export opportunities. Therefore, due to the existing limitations associated with the exclusive use of financial measures, there has been an increase in recent years in the use of non-financial measures. As we can observe in Table I, non-financial measures include goal achievement, satisfaction, perceived success and perceived importance of a certain item to export performance.

Both financial and non-financial measures can be operationalised when using either objective or subjective terms (Evangelista, 1994). However, in most studies, while financial measures (e.g., sales, profit, market share) have been associated with objective terms (normally absolute terms), non-financial measures (e.g., satisfaction levels, goal achievement, success) have been associated with subjective terms (e.g., managers perception) (Katsikeas, Piercy, and Ionnidis, 1996).

Following Bonoma and Clark's (1988) work, as well as Aaby and Slater's (1989) review, several empirical studies (see Table II, p:7) have already shown evidence that supports the reliability and validity of subjective measures of exporting performance. For example, 'satisfaction' is a subjective measure that became frequently used in recent years at the exporting level (Evangelista, 1994; Patterson, Cicic, and Shoham, 1997; Shoham, 1996). After being introduced by Bonoma and Clark (1988) in the marketing field, it was empirically tested by Seifert and Ford (1989) in the exporting field across several industries (i.e., companies in the electrical, machine tool, food processing equipment, and fluid power industries). Similar to other non-financial measures (e.g., goal achievement, perceived success and perceived importance), these types of measures overcome some of the limitations associated with the exclusive use of financial measures. Using a subjective measure such as satisfaction, managers might be able to evaluate export performance, taking into consideration (some of) the following factors: a firm's context, responsiveness level to the existing export opportunities, differentiation between a firm's export performance and a firm's overall export performance. Therefore, by measuring satisfaction we might be able to assess 'the effectiveness of a marketing programme as the congruity or incongruity between what management expects in terms of results [and those] that actually accrue from the programme' (Bonoma & Clarke, 1988:64).

The use of multiple measures is advisable (Cameron, 1986). In order to test the provided conceptual model, we plan to look at export performance, using financial and non-financial static measures in both objective and subjective terms. Table II presents a compilation of several empirical exporting studies that have looked at export performance measurement from a static perspective. For each study, both performance measures (financial or non-financial) and performance terms (objective or subjective) are presented.

Table II shows that most exporting studies have looked at export performance at the level of the firm. Indeed, the use of the firm as the unit of analysis is quite common. Nevertheless, other units may also be used. For example, Sriram and Manu (1995) present one of the few static studies that uses export venture as its unit of analysis. Other examples of unit of analysis can also be observed in dynamic studies: on product (Cavusgil & Kirpalani, 1993), one product in one country (Madsen, 1989), individual product-market export venture (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994) and business-unit (Samiee & Roth, 1992).

Table II: Operationalisation of static measures of export performance

Exp. perfor. measures	Relevant literature	References	Allusion to question* / Question**	Type of measure	Scale / Assessment	Country of origin	Unit of analysis	Type of exporters	Sample size	Data collect.
Export sales intensity	# Axinn, Noordewier, and Sinkula, 1996	exp. sales to total sales	Approximately what percentage (%) of your firm's total 1990 sales volume came from export sales? * **	objective	%	US	firm	multiple industries	75	survey
	# Beamish, Craig, and McLellan, 1993	exp. sales to total sales	'what percentage of total annual sales come from exports?' **	objective	%	US/ Canada	firm	multiple industries	197	survey
	Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmich, 1994	exp. sales to total sales	-	objective	absolute	Germany UK/ US	firm	one industry	296	survey
	Sriram and Manu, 1995	exp. sales to total sales	-	objective	4 groups: <10%, 10-25%, 26-50%, >50%	US	exp. venture	multiple industries	121	survey
	# Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997	exp. sales to total sales	-	objective	%	Colombia	firm	multiple industries	51	survey
Export profit intensity	# Axinn, Noordewier, and Sinkula, 1996	exp. profits to total profits	'Approximately what percentage (%) of your firm's total 1990 profits would you attribute to its export activities?' * **	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Beamish, Craig, and McLellan, 1993	domestic vs. export profitability	'What is export profitability relative to domestic profitability' **	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
	Sriram and Manu, 1995	exp. profits to total profits	-	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Export goals	Katsikeas, Piercy, and Ionnidis (1996)	Relative to specific goals: a)export sales, b)market share, c)profitability	'Perception of how well the company had performed in achieving each of the following objectives to a specific market': a)export sales, b)market share, c)profitability *	subjective	5 point scale 1-very badly to 5-very well	Greece	firm	one industry	87	interv.
Export satisfaction	Evangelista, 1994	Relative to implicit definition of export performance	The executive was asked to indicate the extent of their satisfaction or dissatisfaction with their company's performance*	subjective	5 point scale	Australia	firm	multiple industries	193	survey
	Seifert and Ford, 1989	Relative to implicit definition of export performance	The executive was asked to indicate how satisfied they were with their overall export performance *	subjective	5 point scale: from extremely satisfied to extremely dissatisfied	US	firm	multiple industries	65	survey

Legends: # the author acknowledges these authors for providing the questionnaires/measures of the constructs involved in their investigations

* measures available in the paper; ** measures supplied directly by the authors, X: 'previously presented on the table'

DETERMINANTS OF EXPORT PERFORMANCE

This section is divided into three parts which, based on the existing literature in the field, will look at export performance as a dependent variable. Firstly, investigations that have looked at the impact of internal factors on export performance will be discussed. Secondly, the impact of external factors on export performance will be covered. In the third part, studies that have looked at the impact of the degree of programme adaptation on export performance will be presented.

Impact of internal factors on export performance

While the external factors influencing export performance have been studied extensively (Diamantopoulos & Inglis, 1988; Rao, 1989), internal factors have been ignored (Aaby & Slater, 1989; Cavusgil & Nevin, 1981; Donthu & Kim, 1993). Further, as Zou and Stan (1998) recently pointed out, there is confusion over the impact of internal factors on export performance.

This section reviews key conceptual and empirical studies that have analysed the impact of internal factors on export performance. This section is divided into four parts, where the impact of the following factors on export performance will be discussed: (1) firm characteristics, (2) management characteristics, (3) management attitudes and perceptions, and (4) product characteristics (Zou & Stan, 1998). In Table III (p:9), the divergent findings concerning the impact of internal factors on export performance are summarised. These findings can also be used to develop hypotheses concerning this specific relationship, as well as, to help operationalise the model.

Firm's characteristics and competencies

Cavusgil and Zou's (1994) investigation of American exporters found that a firm's international competence influences export performance. According to their study, a firm's international competence is a composite of several factors: (1) the number of full-time employees, (2) sales volume, (3) the amount of international experience of a firm, (4) the number of years for which a firm has been involved in international business, (5) the number of foreign markets in which it regularly operates and (6) the amount of resources for export development. However, most of the time, when these issues have been analysed individually, there have been conflicting findings. Firm size is one area of greater controversy. According to Cavusgil and Kirpalani's (1993) investigation of American, Canadian and Japanese exporters, small firms are more successful than medium or larger firms for several reasons. Firstly, they are usually more committed to exporting. Secondly, they are concentrated more in specific market niches, avoiding to compete with larger exporters. However, while some empirical studies support the finding that smaller companies have a better export performance (Cooper & Kleinschmidt, 1985; Das, 1994), others have established a positive relationship between firm size and export performance (Cavusgil & Naor, 1987; Culpan, 1989; Christensen, da Rocha, and Gertner, 1987). Controversially, several studies (Axinn, Noordewier, and Sinkula, 1996; Bilkey & Tesar, 1977; Bonaccorsi, 1992; Diamantopoulos & Inglis, 1988; Fenwich & Amine, 1979; Kammath, Rosson, Patton, and Brooks, 1987; Sriram & Manu, 1995) indicate that export performance is independent of the size of the firm.

Table III: Impact of internal factors on export performance

Hyp	Measurement units - Independent variables	Impact	Relevant literature
Firm's characteristics and competencies			
a)	International competence	+	Cavusgil and Zou, 1994
b)	Size	+	Cavusgil and Naor, 1987; Culpán, 1989; Christensen, da Rocha, and Gertner, 1987
		-	Cavusgil and Kirpalani, 1993; Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 1985; Das, 1994
c)	Firm's age/experience	+	Seifert and Ford, 1989
		-	Ursic and Czinkota, 1984
d)	Technological strengths	+	Reid, 1986
e)	Type of ownership	+	Das, 1994
Management characteristics			
a)	Management skills	+	Kammath et al., 1987
c)	Training in international business	+	Koh, 1986; De Luz, 1993
d)	Knowledge of international languages	+	Bilkey and Tesar, 1977
e)	Foreign/export experience	+	Da Rocha, Christensen, and Cunha, 1990; Das, 1994; Madsen, 1989
Management attitudes and perceptions			
a)	Export commitment/support	+	Bilkey, 1982; Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993; Cavusgil and Nevin, 1981b; Cavusgil and Zou, 1994; Donthu and Kim, 1993; Gomez-Mejia, 1988; Gronhaug and Lorenzen, 1982; Reid, 1981; Tookey, 1964
b)	Number of staff in exporting	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993
c)	% time devoted to export	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993
d)	Employees: export to total	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993
e)	Managerial attitudes	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993; Bilkey and Tesar, 1977; Czinkota and Tesar, 1982; Donthu and Kim, 1993; Tookey, 1964
		-	Axinn, Noordewier, and Sinkula, 1996
Product characteristics			
a)	Product technology	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993
		-	De Luz, 1993
b)	Product line extension in the foreign market	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993; Christensen, da Rocha, and Gertner, 1987
		-	Kirpalani and MacIntosh, 1980
c)	Product uniqueness / special features	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan 1993; McGuinness and Little, 1981
e)	Product competitive advantage	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993; Johanson and Nonaka, 1983
f)	Level of customer service/warranties	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993; Gomez-Mejia, 1988; Tookey, 1964; Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997
g)	Customer service standardisation	-	Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997
h)	Product design	+	Cunnigham and Spigel, 1971
i)	Quality	+	Cunnigham and Spigel, 1971
j)	Patent / brand ownership	+	Koh, 1991

With regard to a firm's age, contradictory findings have also been found. While Ursic and Czinkota (1984) found that the newer the firm, the better its export performance, Seifert and Ford (1989) found a positive relationship between firm age/experience and export performance. According to their findings, overall satisfaction with export performance increases with (1) a firm's export experience of the product line and (2) its overall export experience.

Other firm characteristics that influence export performance include technological strengths and type of ownership. Aaby and Slater's (1989) review asserts that most empirical studies establish a positive relationship between technological strengths and the propensity to export. However, there are also findings that reveal that *no* (Christensen, da Rocha, and Gertner, 1987) or only a *small* relationship (Reid, 1986) exists. Concerning ownership type, the interviews conducted by Das (1994) with 58 Indian exporters indicate that privately owned companies tend to have a better performance than public owned companies.

Management characteristics

Management characteristics have also been correlated with export performance. Kammath et al.'s (1987) investigation of Canadian exporters asserts that while the skills of top managers are a key factor in terms of export performance, managerial background is not significant. Koh's (1991) study of American exporters presents a similar view. According to his findings, a significant relationship between perceived export profitability and the formal educational background (in international business) of the principal export executive does not exist. Several other studies also suggest that export performance is influenced by the training of managers in international business (Koh, 1986; De Luz, 1993) and their knowledge of foreign languages (Bilkey & Tesar, 1977). While both Koh (1986) and De Luz (1993) establish a relationship with export sales growth, Bilkey and Tesar's (1977) investigation looks at the impact of knowledge of foreign languages on export success and export involvement. With regard to the level of export experience, some divergent findings have also been presented. In contrast to Bilkey's (1982) findings, most empirical investigations (Da Rocha, Christensen, and Cunha, 1990; Das, 1994; Madsen, 1989) reveal a positive relationship between exporting experience and export performance. For example, a study in the Brazilian furniture industry (Da Rocha, Christensen, and Cunha, 1990) indicates that managerial experience abroad also influences export success and export involvement. Similarly, Das (1994) advances that the level of foreign experience influences both export intensity and sales growth.

Management attitudes and perceptions

Management attitudes and perceptions have been correlated with both export and domestic barriers to exporting. Managers have different perceptions about the level of importance of exporting barriers (Cavusgil, 1984b). Management attitudes towards exporting are usually associated with the perception of the number of barriers to exporting (Donthu & Kim, 1993; Pavord & Bogart, 1978). Indeed, companies that perceive fewer risks and barriers in exporting usually have a positive attitude towards it, and as a consequence, this is reflected in their export performance (Donthu & Kim, 1993).

Only a few studies (Beamish, Craig, and McLellan, 1993; Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Wiedersheim-Paul, Olson, and Welch, 1978) look at commitment as a predictor of export performance. However, the suggestion that export performance is influenced by export commitment/support can be traced back to Tookey's (1964) work. According to his investigation of British clothing manufacturers, at that time, some of the management commitment to export was due to government and public pressure. Many empirical studies have confirmed this positive relationship in the 1980s (Bilkey, 1982; Cavusgil & Nevin, 1981b; Gomez-Mejia, 1988; Gronhaug & Lorenzen, 1982; Reid, 1981) and 1990s (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Donthu & Kim, 1993). However, despite the large number of studies supporting this positive relationship, Koh's (1991) investigation did not find a significant relationship between export commitment (i.e., measured in terms of effort in exporting) and export profitability. According to his findings, perceived export profitability was similar for 'sustained' and 'sporadic' exporters.

A wide range of views have been used to operationalise export commitment. For example, while Cavusgil and Zou (1994) looked at export commitment/support along three dimensions (extent of planning for the export venture, extent of management commitment, and extent of resource/non-managerial commitment), another investigation of American exporters (Donthu & Kim, 1993) used only two dimensions (i.e., financial and manpower).

Beamish, Craig, and McLellan's (1993) survey of 197 British and Canadian exporters is a typical example of divergent findings being produced when different variables are used. This study looked at export commitment along three dimensions: (1) number of staff primarily involved in exporting, (2) proportion of time devoted to export, and (3) proportion of export employees to total employees. Two performance measures were also used: a) export sales intensity and b) domestic versus export profits. With regard to sales performance, a positive relationship was established for the three dimensions for both Canadian and British exporters. However, concerning export profits performance, different findings were revealed. With regard to the first dimension, a non-significant relationship was found for both. For the second and third dimensions, while a positive relationship was brought out for Canadian exporters, a non-significant relationship was established for British exporters. The overall findings suggest that while a positive relationship exists for Canadian exporters in terms of the overall export performance, for British exporters, it exists only as a positive relationship in terms of export sales.

Some studies (Bilkey & Tesar, 1977; Czinkota & Tesar, 1982; Tookey, 1964) have also revealed that managerial attitudes towards exporting influence export performance. However, divergent findings also exist (Axinn, Noordewier, and Sinkula, 1996; Beamish, Craig, and McLellan, 1993). For example, a recent survey of 75 American exporters, Axinn, Noordewier, and Sinkula, (1996) found a negative relationship between export intention (i.e., intention to export for new markets, introduce new products in foreign markets, increase the proportion of export sales) and export performance. Another empirical investigation (Beamish, Craig, and McLellan, 1993), looking at export performance in terms of export intensity, found a positive relationship for British exporters and a non-significant relationship for Canadian exporters. When looking at export performance in terms of export profit, a non-significant relationship was found for both countries.

Other studies did not find a significant relationship between export motivation and export profitability (Beamish, Craig, and McLellan, 1993; Koh, 1991) or export sales growth (De Luz, 1993; Donthu & Kim, 1993). According to Koh's (1991) findings, perceived export profitability is similar in 'reactive', 'sustaining' and 'proactive' firms.

Product characteristics

The impact of product characteristics on export performance is one of the areas where more divergent findings are encountered (see Table III). For example, Beamish, Craig, and McLellan's (1993) investigation found that product technology influences export intensity only in the case of Canadian exporters. However, no association exists between export profits and product technology for either British or Canadian exporters. In contrast, De Luz's (1993) investigation revealed a negative relationship between export sales growth and product technology. Concerning the extension of a product line in the foreign market, Christensen, da Rocha and Gertner (1987) found that successful exporters have a wide diversified product line. Beamish, Craig, and McLellan's (1993) study established a positive relationship with export intensity and a non significant relationship with export profits. On the other hand, Kirpalani and MacIntosh (1980), investigating small firms, discovered that a wide product line diffuses export resources, and as a consequence, decreases export performance.

McGuinness and Little's (1981) investigation of new industrial products suggests that the differential advantages associated with any product are linked to export performance. However, most studies reveal different findings to this. For example, according to De Luz (1993), special features are not correlated with export sales growth. A similar opinion is expressed in Bilkey (1982) and Koh's (1991) works. While according to Bilkey (1982), perceived product uniqueness is not correlated with overall export performance, for Koh (1991), this issue is not associated with the perceived relative profitability of exporting. Similarly, according to Beamish, Craig and McLellan (1993), no correlation exists between export profits and product uniqueness for both British and Canadian exporters. Nevertheless, their investigation indicates that product uniqueness influences export intensity (for Canadian exporters only).

Johannson and Nonaka's (1983) study concluded that successful Japanese firms offer products that provide a differential competitive advantage over alternative products, while providing the customer with 'good value for money'. However, according to Beamish, Craig and McLellan (1993) no association exists between export profits and product competitive advantage for either British or Canadian exporters. Nevertheless, their investigation indicates that product uniqueness influences export intensity for Canadian exporters. A non-significant relationship was found for British exporters.

Most studies (Beamish, Craig, and McLellan, 1993; Gomez-Mejia, 1988; Tookey, 1964; Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997) revealed a positive relationship between customer service and export performance. In fact, customer service was the only characteristic associated with a product for which Beamish, Craig, and McLellan's (1993) investigation could establish a positive relationship for both countries and for both export intensity and export sales. On the other hand, Zou, Andrus and Norvell (1997) found a negative relationship between the level of customer service standardisation and export intensity. However, some exceptions exist. In

contrast with these findings, De Luz's (1993) investigation of Brazilian manufacturers did not find any relationship between service/special warrantees and export sales growth.

Other product characteristics include product design, quality and patent/brand. Cunningham and Spigel's (1971) empirical study shows that the design of a product is a key factor in terms of export performance. With respect to product quality, while Cunningham and Spigel (1971) argue that quality is a also key factor in terms of export performance, De Luz (1993) does not find a significant relationship with export growth. With regard to product patent/brand, while Bilkey (1982) asserts that there is no correlation with export performance, Koh (1991) reveals that 'own brand names' have a poorer performance than 'not own brand names'.

IMPACT OF EXTERNAL FACTORS ON EXPORT PERFORMANCE

Divergent findings were also presented on the impact of external factors on export performance. Zou and Stan (1998) recently drew attention to the existence of divergent findings as well as to the existing confusion in the export marketing literature on this specific issue. They suggest that a possible way to clarify this phenomenon could be to look at the level of impact on export performance. The previous section presented several studies that examined the impact of internal factors on export performance. This section will review both the conceptual and empirical studies that have dealt with analysis of the impact of external factors on export performance. It will be divided into three parts which will examine the impact of various external factors: (1) industry, (2) foreign market, and (3) domestic market characteristics on export performance (Bilkey, 1987; Zou & Stan, 1998). In Table IV (p:14), the divergent findings are summarised. Based on the literature, this model can be operationalised while using the indicators suggested in this table.

Industry characteristics

Over the last decade, many empirical studies (Holzmuller & Stottinger, 1996; Lim, Sharkey, and Kim, 1996; Naidu, 1994) have investigated issues around industry characteristics in an exporting context. However, very few studies have looked at the impact of industry characteristics on export performance. An industry's technological intensity is usually referred to as one of its key characteristics in terms of export performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Holzmuller & Kasper, 1991). Nevertheless, many other variables have also been discussed. These include the industry's stability level, predictable changes, speed of change, seasonal/cyclical fluctuations, riskness level, competition level and number of new competitors (Das, 1994).

Holzmuller and Kasper (1991), when referring to the industry's technological intensity, introduced the concept of 'line of industry'. By this, the authors mean the 'manufacturing complexity' of the industry or the technical know-how involved with products. Examples they present indicate that the level of technological intensity is higher in metal goods and machinery industry, and sector textiles. Lower complexity may be found in the food industries, followed by wood and furniture. 'Middle' industries include chemicals, oil, rubber, leather, paper, printing and miscellaneous industries. According to Holzmuller and Kasper's (1991:65) findings, the higher the manufacturing complexity of Austrian firms, the better their export performance.

Table IV: Impact of external factors on export performance

Hyp	Measurement units - Independent variables	Impact on export performance	Relevant literature
Industry characteristics			
a)	Industry's technological intensity /line of industry	+	Cavusgil and Zou, 1994; Holzmuller and Kasper, 1991
		+ / -	Cavusgil and Kirpalani, 1993
Foreign market characteristics			
a)	Development level	-	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993; Sriram and Manu, 1995
b)	Geographical proximity	-	Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 1985
c)	Export market attractiveness	+	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993
d)	Export market competitiveness	-	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993; Bilkey, 1982
Domestic market characteristics			
a)	Level of development of firm's based-country	+	Das, 1994
b)	Level of domestic demand	-	Nayyar, 1976
c)	Government support	+	Colaiacono, 1982; Nayyar, 1976
d)	Domestic market attractiveness	+	Cooper and Kleinschmidt, 1985
		-	Madsen, 1989

Divergent findings were presented by Cavusgil and Kirpalani's (1993) investigation of US, Canadian and Japanese firms. When looking at the level of technological intensity, their study grouped the smaller firms into three categories: (1) old-line, (2) medium line and (3) hi-tech. According to their findings, the most successful exporters by far were those that belonged to the second category, followed than by the third and first groups respectively.

Foreign market characteristics

An analysis of the findings concerning the impact of foreign market characteristics on export performance revealed the existence of some confusion. The existence of a negative impact for some of these variables is quite common (see Table IV). For example, when comparing the performance of companies exporting to developed and developing countries, divergent findings were presented. According to De Luz's (1993) investigation, there is no correlation between export performance and whether an export market is developed or developing. However, according to Sriram and Manu's (1995) empirical investigation, firms exporting to developing countries have a better performance than firms exporting to developed countries. According to them, this might be explained by the existence of less competition in developing countries. With regard to Canadian companies, Beamish, Craig and McLellan's (1993) investigation revealed a positive relationship between exporting to Less Developed Countries (LDCs) and export profit, and a non-significant relationship between exporting to LDCs and export intensity. In contrast, for British exporters, a positive relationship

between exporting to LDCs and export intensity, and a non-significant relationship concerning export profit was found.

Comparative studies have also focused on firms exporting world-wide and firms that export only to neighbouring countries. Despite the advantages associated with near geographical proximity (i.e., reduced distribution costs, and sometimes more similar culture and language), Cooper and Kleinschmidt (1985) found that companies exporting world-wide had better performance than firms exporting only to neighbouring countries.

The importance of the existence of complementary products in the export market was expressed by Beamish, Craig and McLellan's (1993) investigation. Interestingly, their findings about Canadian exporters revealed the existence of a positive relationship with export performance for the measures used (i.e., export profit and domestic versus export profit). However, for British exporters, a non-significant relationship was discovered.

According to Bilkey (1982), export market competitiveness is negatively correlated with export performance. Nonetheless, Beamish, Craig, and McLellan's (1993) investigation did not find any relationship with export profit for either British or Canadian exporters. However, a negative relationship with export sales growth was revealed for the Canadian exporters.

Domestic market characteristics

Recent literature in the field (Das, 1994; Zou & Stan, 1998) claims that a few investigations exist concerning the impact of domestic characteristics on export performance for firms based on developed countries (Zou & Stan, 1998). Most of the existing works in this area have looked at the importance of domestic characteristics to export performance for firms based in LDCs (Colaiacovo, 1982; Das, 1994; Kinsey, 1988; Nayyar, 1976). For example, for manufacturers based in LDC countries, attempts to export have not always been successful (Das, 1994). According to Das (1994:28), 'lower economies of scale, higher raw materials costs and less sophisticated manufacturing and marketing practices' associated with lower quality, may mean that they receive a lower price for their products in the export market. The rising domestic demand may also lead the export market for second place (Nayyar, 1976). Similarly, politico-legal issues in the domestic market, such as changes in export policies and the lack or non-existence of governmental agencies that support export activities (Colaiacovo, 1982; Nayyar, 1976), are key issues. According to Tookey (1964), the type of competition faced by a firm (in both domestic and foreign market) also affects its interest in exporting. Nevertheless, divergent findings have been also advanced. For example, while Madsen's (1989) survey reports a negative relationship between the attractiveness of the domestic market and export growth, Cooper and Kleinschmidt's (1985) findings reveal that domestic market attractiveness (i.e., domestic market potential and domestic market growth) influences export intensity.

IMPACT OF THE DEGREE OF MARKETING PROGRAMME ADAPTATION ON EXPORT PERFORMANCE

The degree of marketing programme adaptation at the international level 'involves the manipulation of the marketing mix components (product, promotion, price and distribution)' (Omer, 1986: 52). Thus, this section will discuss the studies that have looked at the impact of the degree of programme adaptation on export performance from the traditional 4Ps perspective, as this 'paradigm' is 'time-tested', being as valuable for today's academics and managers as it was in 1960 (Anderson & Taylor, 1995:9). Based on the existing literature in the field, the divergent findings concerning this relationship are presented in Table V (p:17). This table also shows some indicators that can be used to operationalise this issue as well as some research hypotheses.

Product adaptation

A wide range of divergent opinions exists concerning the appropriate degree of product adaptation. In fact, this issue has received most of the attention in the standardisation literature. As with promotion, product adaptation has been researched much more than price and distribution (Rosenbloom, Larsen, and Mehta, 1997; Jain, 1989).

Axinn, Noordewier and Sinkula's (1996) survey, using a product-market approach, revealed that American firms that adapt their products to 'many countries' (i.e., firms that export to five or more countries) have similar export profits and export intensity to those who do not. However, with regard to the firms that export to a 'few countries' (i.e., less than five countries), while export profit is better for adapters, export intensity is better for non-adapters. Another investigation of American exporters (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994:17) argues that export performance is influenced by the degree of product adaptation, that is, the 'degree of initial product adaptation', 'degree of product adaptation subsequent to entry' and the 'extent to which the product label is in local language'. On the other hand, Beamish, Craig and McLellan's (1993:130) survey indicates that while there is no relation between 'little product adaptation' (i.e., much product standardisation) and export profits for British exporters, this factor influences export profits in the case of Canadian exporters. This investigation draws attention to the fact that while Canadian firms are usually more focused, the British firms have a broad range of complementary products with which to approach the export market. Incomprehensibly, this study suggests that Canadian exporters should acquire the ability to adapt products for foreign markets in order to achieve a better performance. According to Beamish, Craig and McMellan (1993:135), the investigation 'suggests that Canadian firms would be more rewarded by adopting the broader, more international approach used by UK firms'. However, their empirical findings indicate the opposite.

Most studies that have investigated the impact of the degree of marketing adaptation in terms of 'core product' found similar results. Most studies indicate that the degree of core product adaptation is negatively associated with export performance. For example, a study of Brazilian exporting firms (Christensen, da Rocha, and Gertner, 1987) reveals that export performance is influenced by product standardisation. These findings are confirmed by De Luz's (1993) investigation which establishes a positive relationship between the degree of

standardisation of primary products and export sales growth. In addition, this study points out that 80 per cent of the Brazilian exporting firms involved in the survey sell their export product in ‘the same form’ as in the domestic market. Similarly, Zou, Andrus and Norvell’s (1997) survey of 51 Colombian exporters found that the level of standardisation influences export intensity. This study, similar to Walters and Toyne’s (1989) recommendation that product peripherals must be tailored to the idiosyncrasies of foreign markets, also found a negative correlation with product peripherals standardisation.

Table V: Impact of the degree of 4Ps adaptation on export performance

Hyp	Measurement units - Independent variables	Impact on export performance	Relevant literature
Degree of product adaptation			
a)	Core product	-	Christensen, da Rocha, and Gertner, 1987; De Luz, 1993; Zou, Andrus and Norvell, 1997
b)	Product peripherals	+	Zou, Andrus and Norvell, 1997
c)	Product line	+	Koh, 1991
		+ / -	Shoham, 1996
d)	Overall product	+	Cavusgil and Zou, 1994
		-	Beamish, Craig, and McMellan, 1993
		+ / -	Axinn, Noordewier, and Sinkula, 1996
Degree of promotion adaptation			
a)	Promotional spending/budget	+ / -	Shoham, 1996
b)	Promotional contents	+	Shoham, 1996
c)	Overall promotion adaptation	-	Sriram and Manu, 1995
Degree of distribution adaptation			
a)	Distribution channel	+	Beamish, Craig and McMellan, 1993
b)	Sales force management	+	Shoham, 1996
Degree of price adaptation			
a)	Price level in the foreign market	+	Bilkey, 1982, 1985, 1987
b)	Overall price adaptation	+	Das, 1994; Shoham, 1996; Koh, 1991
		-	Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997
c)	Credit terms	+	Shoham, 1996
d)	Price competitiveness	+	Kirpalani and MacIntosh, 1980; Madsen, 1989
e)	Overall price adaptation	+	Das, 1994; Shoham, 1996; Koh, 1991
		-	Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997

Koh’s (1991) investigation of American exporters found that they modify their domestic product line for the export market in order to achieve a higher (perceived) profitability level than those who use the same domestic product line for export markets. On the other hand, another survey (Shoham, 1996) of American

exporters points out that adaptation of the number of items in the product line harms export sales, export sales growth and export profit growth. However, according to Shoham (1996), the adaptation of the number of product lines improves sales and profits margins. Nevertheless, no correlation was found between export profit margins and the number of items, or between the number of product lines and growth in either export sales and export profit margins. Other variables have also been empirically discussed in the exporting field, when looking at the product adaptation/standardisation debate. These include product quality, service, policy, brand name, packaging, styling, appeal, warranty, colour, features and design (Donthu & Kim, 1993; Seifert & Ford, 1989; Shoham, 1996)

Promotion adaptation

Jain (1989) draws attention to the fact that both promotion and product are aspects of the marketing programme that have received more attention than others. According to Jain (1989), nearly half of the studies in the standardisation field are concerned with promotion issues, and in particular, with advertising. Concerning the impact of the degree of promotion on export performance, many divergent findings have also been revealed. For example, promotional spending/budget has been one of the most discussed and contradictory issues in this field. Shoham's (1996) work found that the degree of adaptation of promotion/advertising budget is negatively correlated with export profit, export sales margins and export sales growth. Conversely, Seifert and Ford's (1989) survey of 65 American exporters argues that satisfaction levels, in terms of overall performance, are higher for those firms that spend more in advertising, sales promotion, overall promotion, personal selling and publicity/public relations respectively. When using a "marketing x size x experience" approach, they discovered that the majority of the exporting companies had a much lower promotional budget for the foreign market than for the domestic market. With regard to the degree of adaptation of promotion/advertising contents, Shoham's (1996) investigation suggests that this influences (1) export sales margin, (2) export sales growth, (3) export profits margins and (4) export profit growth. Another survey of American exporters (Sriram & Manu, 1995) claims that overall promotion/advertising standardisation strategy influences market share. On the other hand, Zou, Andrus and Norvell (1997) did not find a significant relationship between export intensity and overall promotion adaptation (operationalised as a composite degree of standardisation of advertising, publicity, sales display, spending on advertising and selling technique). Similarly, when looking at overall promotion as a composite of three measures (i.e., promotional strategy, product positioning strategy and packaging), Cavusgil and Zou (1994) did not report any significant correlation with export performance.

Distribution adaptation

Cavusgil and Nevin (1981: 203) state that 'research dealing with distribution decisions for international marketing has been very limited'. Two decades later, research related to international distribution is still very limited (Baalbaki & Malhotra, 1993; Rosenbloom, Larsen, and Mehta, 1997), and the particular case of the standardisation controversy has been particularly more neglected (Myers & Cavusgil, 1996; Rosenbloom, Larsen, and Mehta, 1997). As Rosenbloom, Larsen, and Mehta (1997:50) state, 'a review of the literature

reveals [...that...] relative to other areas of marketing, channels of distribution are given short shrift in the standardisation versus adaptation debate'. Distribution is one of the "Ps" where less research has been conducted. Regarding the impact of the degree of distribution adaptation on export performance, there is little research (Zou & Stan, 1998). Beamish, Craig, and McLellan (1993) and Shoham's (1996) investigations are two works that examine this phenomenon.

Beamish, Craig and McLellan (1993) argue two possible different distribution strategies that can be used in the foreign market. The first suggests the adaptation of the distribution system to the development stage of the foreign market. The second suggests the selection of the distribution system based on domestic experience. Their findings revealed that Canadian exporters that select a different distribution channel from that used for the domestic market had a better export profit. However, the same investigation also pointed out that no significant correlation was found for British exporters. Shoham's (1996) study also indicates that there is a positive relationship between the degree of adaptation of sales force management and export performance (i.e. sales, profit margins and profit growth). However, with regard to the degree of adaptation of the distribution channels, no significant relationship was found.

Price adaptation

As with distribution, price has received little research attention in the field of international marketing (Baalbaki & Malhotra, 1993; Cavusgil & Nevin, 1981; Myers & Cavusgil, 1996). As Myers and Cavusgil (1996) point out, the impact of export pricing strategies in export success is a neglected area of research. Furthermore, as there is little research on pricing at both the international and exporting levels, specific issues in the price area, such as price adaptation/standardisation, have received even less attention. Recent studies (Myers & Cavusgil, 1996; Rosenbloom, Larsen, and Mehta, 1997) claim that the issue of price adaptation/standardisation has been ignored in relation to the other elements of the marketing mix in recent times. Two recent articles (Myers & Cavusgil, 1996; Rosenbloom, Larsen, and Mehta, 1997) show that this lack of investigation persists, and in particular, with regard to the standardisation controversy. According to Myers and Cavusgil (1996), the reasons for the neglect of pricing strategies and practices at the international level can be attributed to the complexity of pricing issues, as well as to the reluctance of managers to discuss their pricing strategies.

Bilkey's (e.g., Bilkey 1982, 1985, 1987b) work supports the fact that export price level influences export performance. For example, Bilkey's (1987b) investigation of 156 American exporters indicates that export profitability increases (for industrial, consumer and intermediate firms) as their products prices are raised in the foreign market. Fifty-eight interviews conducted by Das (1994), across industrial and consumer Indian exporters, indicate that while there is not a significant relation between price adaptation and export sales growth, overall price adaptation influences export intensity. Koh (1991) presents similar findings. While he points out that the level of overall price influences (perceived) export profitability, a non-significant relationship was found concerning currency strategy and determination of the pricing strategy. While Shoham (1996) did not find a significant relationship between the degree of price adaptation and export sales and export sales growth, another study (Zou, Andrus, and Norvell, 1997) discovered that pricing standardisation

influences export sales intensity. Similarly, Shoham's (1996) investigation advance a positive relation between price and credit terms, and export profit margins and profit growth. Other empirical studies (Kirpalani & MacIntosh, 1980; Madsen, 1989) have also drawn attention to the fact that having competitive prices in the foreign markets has a positive impact on export performance.

A CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Based on a review of the literature, this section presents a conceptual model of the determinants of export performance. It systematises the influencing factors as well as the relationship between marketing programme adaptation and export performance. Recent work in both the standardisation (Wang, 1996) and the exporting literature (Katsikeas, Bell, and Morgan, 1998; Zou & Stan, 1998) refers to the need for the development of new frameworks, both at the conceptual and empirical levels. When commenting on the standardisation/adaptation debate, Wang (1996) notes that the complexity of global markets demands the creation of international business frameworks. Indeed, 'a richer understanding of export marketing', as well as the improvement of these frameworks, may be achieved through the use of contingent elements (Katsikeas, Bell, and Morgan, 1998).

In the previous sections, several hypotheses (see Table V) concerning the direct impact of marketing strategy on export performance were presented. Similarly, other hypotheses concerning the direct impact of both internal and external factors on export performance were given (see Tables III and IV). This section will now expand on the discussion of indirect relationships. Research in export marketing should attempt to determine the causal effects of the simultaneous links between internal and external characteristics, export marketing strategy and export performance (Koh, 1991). By the end of this decade, there still exist few investigations on the issue, and existing works (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Koh, 1991; Hoang, 1998) have only looked partially at this issue.

Most studies in this field assert that export performance is directly affected by internal factors (e.g., Donthu & Kim, 1993; Holzmuller & Kasper, 1991; Louter, Ouwerkerk, and Bakker, 1991; Madsen, 1989). However, according to some empirical studies (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Hoang, 1998), there are at *least* some internal factors that have an indirect effect on export performance. These investigations show that there is a significant relationship between export performance and export marketing strategy which, in turn, is determined by some internal factors.

Cavusgil and Zou's (1994) investigation reveals that while a *small direct* relationship between commitment to venture and export performance exists, there is a *significant indirect* relationship. On the other hand, while there is a *direct* relationship between international competence and export performance, there is no *indirect* relationship. Hoang's (1998) investigation of New Zealand manufacturing exporters also points out that, depending on the nature of the factors, export performance may be affected directly and indirectly. Hoang's findings revealed that export performance is influenced *indirectly*, rather than directly, by some internal factors (i.e., size, level of business experience, marketing research and planning). However, with regard to a specific factor (i.e., the intensity of international involvement) a *direct* relationship can be established.

In addition to the analysis of possible direct relationships (as undertaken by most researchers in this field), this conceptual model will involve an analysis of the indirect impact of internal factors on export performance, looking at the moderating effects of degree of programme adaptation.

Building on earlier investigations in the export field, the following hypotheses are raised:

H1: Depending on the nature of the internal factors, export performance might be directly or indirectly affected by these factors (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Hoang, 1998).

H1a: Internal factors directly affect export performance⁴ (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Donthu & Kim, 1993; Hoang, 1998; Holzmuller & Kasper, 1991; Louter, Ouwerkerk, and Bakker, 1991; Madsen, 1989).

H1b: Internal factors indirectly affect export performance through their influence on marketing strategy (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Hoang, 1998), and in particular, their influence on the degree of marketing programme adaptation.

Most empirical studies also show that export performance is affected directly by external factors (Donthu & Kim, 1993; Holzmuller & Kasper, 1991; Louter, Ouwerkerk, and Bakker, 1991; Madsen, 1989). Another empirical study (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994) points out that export performance is affected *only* indirectly by external factors. That is, the external factors have *only* an indirect effect on export performance through their impact on export marketing strategy. Therefore, while some external factors might directly affect export performance, some might affect it indirectly. The degree and type of impact depends on the nature of the factors. In addition to the analysis of possible direct relationships (as undertaken by most investigators), this conceptual model also suggests the analysis of the indirect impact of external factors on export performance, through their influence on the degree of programme adaptation. This leads us to the following hypotheses:

H2: Depending on the nature of the external factors, export performance might be directly or indirectly affected by these factors (Donthu & Kim, 1993).

H2a: External factors directly affect export performance³ (Donthu & Kim, 1993; Holzmuller & Kasper, 1991; Louter, Ouwerkerk, and Bakker, 1991; Madsen, 1989).

H2b: External factors indirectly affect export performance through their influence on marketing strategy (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Donthu & Kim, 1993), in particular, on the degree of marketing programme adaptation.

In the field of export marketing, further research is also required when analysing the impact of export performance on export marketing strategy. Indeed, with regard to the relationship between the degree of marketing programme adaptation and export performance, to our knowledge, export performance has never been used as an independent variable. Nevertheless, a qualitative investigation of Portuguese wine exporters, in which a grounded framework was developed (Lages, 1998), indicates that export performance also influences export marketing strategy.

As argued by Katsikeas, Bell and Morgan (1998: 324, 325), at the exporting level, there is an ‘absence of grounded conceptual frameworks’. However, despite the fact that these frameworks provide ‘a richer understanding of our subject matter [...] all too often the scope of research studies fail to take such elements

⁴ Depending on the nature of the factors this impact may be positive or negative (see Table III and Table IV for possible hypothesis).

into account'. Thus, as suggested by Katsikeas, Bell and Morgan (1998), the present study will take into account the elements provided by this grounded conceptual framework (Lages, 1998:96). Further, taking these findings as a basis, this conceptual model suggests the investigation of whether the 4Ps can be used as dependent and/or independent variables. We propose to study the impact of export performance on the degree of marketing programme adaptation, rather than, as traditionally suggested by the literature, to look at the 4Ps as variables exclusively influencing the level of export performance. These issues lead to the following hypotheses:

H3: The impact of export performance on marketing strategy adaptation (3a) is higher than the impact of marketing strategy adaptation on export performance (3b).

H3a: Lower levels of export performance in a previous year have a stronger positive effect on the degree of marketing programme adaptation (Lages, 1998).

H3b: Higher levels of marketing programme adaptation in a previous year has a positive impact on export performance (see Table V).

H4: There is a relationship between export performance levels in the previous year (Y-1) and export performance on the current year (Y).

H4a: Export performance from Y-1 directly affects export performance on Y.

H4b: Export performance from Y-1 indirectly affects export performance on Y, through its influence on the degree of marketing mix adaptation.

- **Lower level of export performance on Y-1 has a stronger positive effect on export performance on Y, under a higher degree of marketing programme adaptation, and a weaker outcome under the use of more standardised strategies.**

All the previous hypotheses are systematised on Model I (p:23).

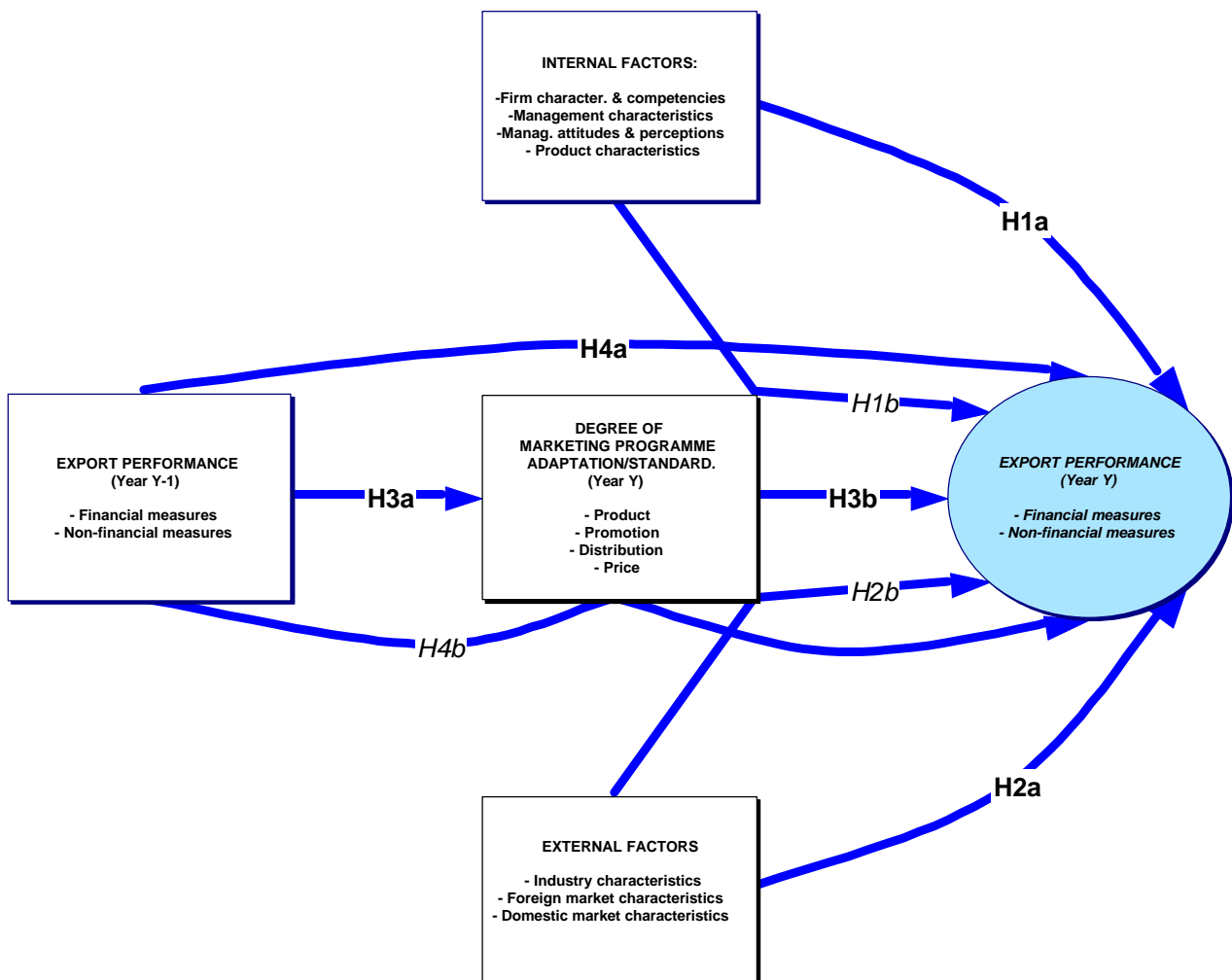
CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

Recent articles indicate that the field of export marketing has much potential for further research. We believe that this model allows a systematic approach to this complex phenomenon, contributing for further research at different levels. Firstly, as suggested by recent articles (Katsikeas, Bell, and Morgan, 1998; Zou & Stan, 1998), the analysis of the relationships between internal and external uncontrollable factors, export marketing strategy and export performance is still an under-researched area. In addition to the analysis of possible direct relationships, as traditionally suggested by the literature, this conceptual model also suggests a need for the analysis of the indirect impact of internal and external factors on export performance, through its influence on the degree of marketing adaptation. The rationale for this approach is that the appropriate degree of adaptation of an export marketing strategy is dependent upon a variety of internal and external factors. Therefore, it suggests that future export performance research should be analysed as a function of the fit between the firm's environment and the selected export marketing strategy.

Secondly, a non-traditional approach to the field of export performance and the standardisation controversy were presented. Taking into account recent grounded findings in the field of export marketing, the

model suggests that the degree of adaptation *also* depends on the level of export performance achieved in the preceding year. Indeed, this is an issue worthy of further investigation.

Model I: Determinants of export performance and moderating effects of marketing programme adaptation



Thirdly, since most of the studies in the field of export marketing have been mainly descriptive or exploratory in nature, for future research we propose to empirically test the research propositions (Tables III, IV, V) in different contexts, and provide explanatory reasons to support the discovered relationships. Finally, there is a potential area for further research when comparing the impact of marketing strategy on export performance, and vice-versa. Indeed, it would be also very interesting to find out and discuss in which situations the level of impact of export performance on marketing strategy might be higher than the opposite relation.

This review also indicates that evaluating export performance is a very complex task. One of the main reasons concerns the absence of agreement over conceptual and operational definitions of export performance. Two main approaches in looking at export performance include using financial and non-financial measures. Both financial and non-financial measures can be operationalised when using either objective or subjective terms. A review of the literature also indicates that there are supporters of both approaches. While the use of both objective and financial variables is common in the domestic and export marketing literature, the use of non-financial as well as subjective variables is unusual, particularly at the international level. As any type of approach has its advantages and disadvantages, recent empirical works in the exporting field suggest that the most advisable method is to use a set of variables (i.e., financial and non-financial as well as objective and subjective measures) in order to measure export performance. Thus, based on this review, we propose the use of both financial (export sales intensity and export profit intensity) and non-financial variables (export goals and export satisfaction) to measure firms' export performance. Indeed, to date, there have been few attempts to validate both financial and non-financial variables (i.e., export sales intensity, export profit intensity, export goals and export satisfaction) with the degree of standardisation of the 4Ps (please refer to Table II).

Despite the significant progress that has occurred in recent years in terms of the standardisation controversy, there is still a lack of empirical evidence to support the various theories associated with this controversy. The subject of standardisation has been ambiguous and not conclusively researched, particularly with regard to the topic of the present investigation. As recently stated by Zou, Andrus and Norvell (1997:108), 'standardization with respect to the finer dimensions within the marketing programme of the 4-Ps have not [yet] been investigated'. Instead of treating the 4Ps standardisation/adaptation as an unidimensional construct, various measurement units of each component of the marketing mix were discussed. The review revealed that both product and promotion are aspects of marketing programme that have received more attention. Both distribution and price have been avoided in studies in the international marketing literature. Similarly, with regard to the standardisation controversy, both issues have been relative ignored compared with other areas of international marketing. Much empirical research is required in both fields.

Finally, several directions and measures have been presented in order to operationalise and empirically test this conceptual framework. Thus, we suggest that a fruitful direction for further research would be to test this model, or a particular relationship presented on it, across different industries, countries, regions and with different units and statistical methods of analysis. Managers may also be able to apply this theoretical framework to improve their firm's export performance.

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