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Journal homepage:

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The Impact of Market Orientation, Innovation and Mediating Role of Environmental Factors on Export Performance of Sudanese Exports (fruit and vegetables)

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المستخلص:

هدفت الدراسة الي الوقوف علي الدور الذي يلعبه سوق صادرات الخضار والفاكهة السودانية في تحقيق التنمية الاقتصادية من خلال تطبيق المفاهيم التسويقية وانعكاسها علي اداء الصادرات. اتبعت الدراسة المنهج التحليلي الوصفي الاحصائي حيث تم جمع البيانات الاولية من سوق الخضار والفاكهة بولاية الخرطوم بعد توزيع استبانة علي المتسوقين ، المصدرين ،الموردين كعينة للدراسة . اظهرت النتائج تركيز وكالات صادر الخضار والفاكهة علي تطبيق مفهوم التوجه السوقي والابتكار علي سوق الصادر مما يزيد من ارتفاع اداء الصادر ويفضل ان تضع وكالات الصادر في الاعتبار الدور الوسيط الذي يمكن ان تلعبه العوامل البيئية في الاداء التصديري كما اوصت به الدراسة .

ABSTRACT:

The study aimed at shedding the light on the role of Sudanese export market (fruits and vegetables) in achieving economic development through applying the marketing concepts, besides explaining how these concepts affect the export performance. The study has adopted descriptive, analytical and statistical methods, whereas the primary data have been collected from Vegetable and Fruit markets in Khartoum after distributing a questionnaire to marketers, exporters and importers as individual sample. The study results revealed that the export agencies (vegetables and fruits) focus on applying the concept of market orientation and innovation on export market, which enhance the export performance. It is recommended for export agencies to consider the mediating role that the environmental factors play on export performance.

Keywords: environmental factors, innovation, market orientation, export performance.

Introduction:

Companies always seek to gain more revenue to face the competition of the market, and for the export companies they need more effort to do so. Export has been globally the most valuable income for nations and the window to a flourishing economy. So, more strategies are needed to make sure that the board is directing its investment in the right way. In spite of the high potential and diversification of horticultural products in Sudan, the exported fruit and vegetables are very limited as it contributes around 2% of the total exported food commodities (Horticultural Sector, 2009). The export business started in the early seventies and the amounts exported are still low

(Idris, 2006). Most of the Sudanese vegetable are produced in winter (November – March), which is the best time to fill the seasonal gap demand in European market. Accordingly, the companies and exporters need more efficient strategies to face the competition of the market in terms of market orientation and innovation. Market orientation and innovation play vital role in winning the race of gaining more consumers of fruit and vegetables. Export is one of the significance preliminary steps of enterprise organization towards expanding its international business activities. There is a lack of uniformity in conceptualization definition and measurement of export performance, and difference among countries. Experience has shown that operating abroad involves many differences, such as cultural differences, low and regulation, lack of foreign contacts, and business connecting; all these factors had a negative impact on increasing the volume of exports.

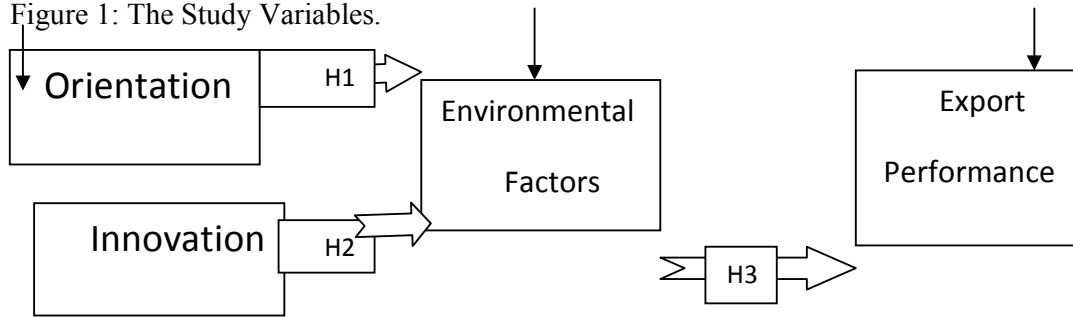
Research Problem:

The new thinking of the modern day in marketing has flourished with vital concepts come from an up normal factors, popular ones are market orientation and innovation. But there is other different variables seek more investigation and analysis, as the study of Nerver & Slatter (1994), Gadogan (2013), and Idris and Momni (2007) claimed. However, the current study slightly differed from the previous aforementioned ones on the following: the current study has investigated the impact of market orientation and innovation on export performance whereas the sample consists of exports, importers and marketers in Khartoum state. Moreover, the study has adopted the analytical descriptive approach. Also, mediating variables which enhanced the relationships between variables directly and indirectly were covered in the current study. The previous studies have focused on marketing mix elements, which was limited to the relationship between the behavioral and cultural orientation with the performance agrees with the previous ones. In Sudan, according to the researcher's knowledge, there is no specific study has been done with regard to the current topic. Based on what was mentioned above the study was conducted to answer the following hypotheses:

- 1- There is a positive relationship between the orientation, innovation and environmental factors.
- 2- There is a positive relationship between environmental factors and export performance.
- 3- There is a positive relationship between innovation, orientation and export performance
- 4- Environment factors mediating the relationship between orientation, market innovation and export performance.

Figure1 shows the study's dependent, mediating and independent variables.

Figure 1: The Study Variables.



Source: literature review of study

Objectives of the study:

- 1-To determine the relationship between the market orientation among Sudanese export performance.
- 2- To test the relationship between the market innovation and export performance.
- 3- To assess the relationship between the environmental factors and export performance.
- 4- To examine the relationship between export market orientation and export performance.

Definition of the Research Major Variables

Innovation:

(Abod, 2007) defined innovation “as the company's ability to reach what is new and adds more value faster than competitors in the market”; while (Drucka, 2007) defined it “as the regulator for abandoning the old”. (Elena, 2009) and (Salavou, 2002) thought that innovation can be reflected in the extent to which a firm can introduce new product, new production process, modify the existing products and exploit new territorial markets and segments within existing markets. Also, (Narver and Slater, 1990) defined market orientation “as the organizational culture that most effectively and efficiently creates the necessary superior performance for the business”. Accordingly, three principal components of market orientation can be identified as follows:

1. Customer orientation: the understanding of a firm’s target buyers in sufficient detail to be able to create superior value for them on an ongoing basis.
2. Competitor orientations: whereby the short- and long-term capabilities and strategies of both current and future potential competitors are understood.
3. Inter-functional coordination: the utilization of company resources is coordinated to focus on creating superior value for target customers.

Export Performance:

We mean by export marketing performance the level of achievements by the firms in their export enterprise, this could be measured according to previous researchers in terms of growth in sales, profit and market share (Ezirim and Machlayton, 2010); or export performance can be divided in two parts, economic and non-economic performance. Moreover, export performance can broadly be defined “as the outcome of firm's activities in export market” (Muhammad and Saleem, 2008).

Environmental factors:

At all times, besides focusing on assessing and satisfying consumer needs and wants, environmental factors such as social, economic, technological, competitive and regulatory factors play an important role in forming an organization's marketing activity (Kerin, Hartley & Rudelius, 2009, PP 35).

Relevant Previous Studies:

(Shahram, et al, 2013): investigated four factors including international experience, foreign language skills, time spent abroad, and international business stimuli. According to the research findings, the following suggestions are offered to improve export performance: to focus on exporting to neighboring countries, attention to consumer preferences and needs of the target market and using it in the quality of the products will increase export, companies with regard to their capabilities and potential can select the appropriate number of markets and with knowledge of competitors situation, marketing mix, rules and regulations, in the markets with a cohesive marketing program enter to these markets, and companies can consider communication factors such as personal interactions and relationships with foreign distributors and maintain positive relationships with the distributors knowledge, perceived export.

(Godwin, Joseph, et al, 2013): investigated the impact of export market orientation, innovation on the export performance of fruit exporting firms in Uganda, surveying (63) export companies. The findings of this study have shown that export market orientation and innovation have a strong and positive relationship on export performance. Firms which are able to acquire, disseminate and act upon the information in the export markets are in greater position to perform better in export markets as they can be able to come up with innovative ideas, processes and products that meet the expectations of their target customers.

The previous two studies indicated the existence of a positive relationship between the export market orientation, innovation and export performance.

Furthermore, (Codogan, et al, 2003) and (Jaworski, 1990), (Akyol and Akehurst, 2003) observed that firms which focus on generating export market information are in good position to perform best in their export markets than the non-market oriented ones because they possess a greater understanding of their customer needs. Also, (Hoq, et al, 2009) and (Kropp, et al (2005) asserted that these firms are likely to devise and adapt their products, services and processes that continue to meet the needs of the evolving market. This is in line with what (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990) observed that the generation of market intelligence for the whole company relative to its clients' current and future needs, dissemination of market intelligence throughout the relevant departments and the company's response to this intelligence are essential activities for the competitiveness and survival of any organization. In support of the above argument, Marisalvo (2010) asserted that the "generation, analysis and dissemination of information about clients, competitors and technology exert a positive influence on company performance".

(Shahram, et al, 2013): investigated the factors that affect export performance of Iranian ceramic tiles industry. One of these factors is technology orientation. In this field companies must adapt themselves to environmental and technological changes and try to cope with changes in technology; besides the usage of best technology to produce and sell goods. Companies should be having creative and new ideas in this field and attempt to improve their products, while taking the advantage of Porter's differentiation strategy and have a competitive advantage to rival companies. In

addition, this study explored the issue of customer orientation that is one of the most important components of any organization; since without it customers cannot create an industry.

(F.A Emmy Ismail, 2009): examined the trade performance for thirteen commodities in the fruit and vegetable industry in selected ASEAN countries including (Philippines, Indonesia, Singapore and Thailand). The study indicated that all commodities in vegetable and food industry have comparative advantage greater than 1.00 for at least one ASEAN country. Malaysia, for example, has comparative advantage in four products and thus, Malaysia needs to determine effective strategy for developing these products and not to depend solely on imports. The country should use high technology applications in growing fruits and vegetable such as hydroponics and other closed systems because of less land available for agriculture. However, the foreign trade sector remains crucial. Taxes on the foreign trade constitute more than 40% of the central government revenue. However, several fundamental reasons can be responsible for slow rate of growth in export earning including the slow growth of production and inappropriate domestic policies; the rapid growth in the demand for the export in the domestic market, and the slow growth in world demand for Sudanese export.

Methodology of Study:

This research follows a descriptive analytical method to determine the performance of the export agencies on Vegetable and Fruit Market in Khartoum state by examining the impact of market-orientation and innovation on the performance of exports. The data was collected through a questionnaire distributed to the study sample for the analysis. The main purpose of this study is to determine the impact of market-orientation and innovation on export performance in the presence of environmental factors as intermediate variables.

Export agencies are considered the original population of study, which consists of seventeen export agencies in Khartoum state. Eleven of the agencies have been chosen as a sample of the study. Questionnaire papers have been distributed to a number of 211 respondents (including exporters, marketers and suppliers). A valid number of 196 were obtained for the analysis with response rate of 92%. The questionnaire consisted of four parts, the first part includes personal information, the second part includes orientation and innovation, the third part deals with the performance, and the last part deals with environmental factors.

To answer the questions, Likert scale was used along with SPSS program (Statistical Package for Social Sciences) for processing the statistical descriptive analysis in the following: percentages and frequencies, Cronbach's alpha coefficient, correlation and regression to test hypotheses.

Reliability and Validity of The study:

Reliabilities less than 0.60 are considered as poor, those in the 0.70 range are acceptable, while those exceeds 0.80 are considered as good. The closer the reliability coefficient gets to 1.00 the better, i.e., the generally agreed upon lower limit for Cronbach's Alpha is 0.70. Table (1) shows the results obtained as the acceptable ones, whereas all the variables are demonstrated in percentages.

Table (1): Reliability Analysis of the instrument

| # | Variables | Cronbach Alpha |
|---|--------------------|----------------|
| 1 | Market orientation | 88% |
| 2 | Market innovation | 90.1% |

| | | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------|-------|
| 3 | Export performance (financial) | 72.4% |
| 4 | Export performance(non- financial) | 71.8% |
| 5 | Environmental factors | 93.4% |
| Total reliability | | 94.8% |

Source: Field study.

Table (2): Respondents Characteristics

| Gender : | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------|---------|
| # | Frequency | Percent |
| Male | 178 | 90.8% |
| Female | 18 | 9.2% |
| Education : | | |
| Secondary | 96 | 49.0% |
| Diploma | 13 | 6.6% |
| Bachelor | 79 | 40.3% |
| Master | 7 | 3.6% |
| Doctorate | 1 | 0.5% |
| Years of Experience: | | |
| Less than 5 years | 49 | 25% |
| 5 to 10 years | 73 | 37.2% |
| 10 to 15 years | 29 | 14.8% |
| 15 to 20 years | 45 | 23% |
| Age : | | |
| 20 to 29 years | 15 | 7.7% |
| 30 to 40 years | 39 | 19.9% |
| 41 to 50 years | 87 | 44.4% |
| More than 50 | 55 | 28.1% |
| Total | 196 | 100% |

Source: Field study.

Table (2) demonstrates the first part of the questionnaire which represents the personal information. First section shows the gender details, and as shown in the table, the percentage of male represents 90.8%, while female's percentage represent 9.2%. The second section that represents the respondents' qualification, five

categories of respondents academic qualification can be identified as follows: secondary education (49.0%), diploma (6.6%), bachelor (40.3%), master (3.6%), and finally doctorate (5%). The third section demonstrates the year of experience, where four classifications can be identified as follows: less than five years (25%), from 5 to 10 years (37.2%), from 10 to 15 years (14.8%), and finally from 15 to 20 years (23%). The last section shows the age and contains four categories, from 20 to 29 years (7.7%), from 30 to 40 years (19.9%), from 41 to 50 years (44.4%) and lastly more than 50 years (28.1%).

Hypotheses Testing:

Correlation and Regression Analysis:

This section discusses the result of the study four hypotheses, whereas the main effects as well as the mediating effect were examined using hierarchical regression analysis.

Hypothesis (1): there is a positive relationship between the orientation, innovation and environmental factors.

Table (3) showed that the innovation and orientation factors (namely improvements and information) were cumulatively contributed with (36.6%) of the variance in environmental factors, the two drivers of market orientation and innovation were positively correlated with environmental factors value amounting to (60.5%), R adjusted value (36.6%), while R² value (36%), the F factor value (55.76). Also, table (3) showed that market innovation and orientation factors significantly influence environmental factors with Beta value for innovation and orientation amounting to (.457), and (.214) respectively.

Table (3): Coefficients and model summary of orientation, innovation and environmental factors.

| There is positive relationship between the orientation, innovation and environmental factors | | | | | | | | |
|--|-------------|---------------------------|-----------|-----------------------------|-------|------|-------|------|
| Model | | standardized coefficients | | Unstandardized coefficients | T | R 2 | F | sign |
| 1 | | B | Std Error | Beta | | | | |
| | Constant | 1.531 | .192 | | 7.991 | .366 | 55.76 | 0.00 |
| | Innovation | .387 | 0.59 | .457 | 6.566 | | | 0.00 |
| | Orientation | .173 | .056 | .214 | 3.078 | | | 0.00 |

Source: questionnaire distributed to export market (fruit and vegetable).

Hypothesis (2): there is a positive relationship between environmental factors and export performance.

Table (4) showed that the environmental factors cumulatively contributed with (.561%) of the variance in export performance, the four drivers of environmental factor were positively correlated with performance amounting to (74.9%), R adjusted (55.2%), F value (60%).

Table (4): Coefficients and model summary of environmental factors to export performance.

| Table (4) coefficients of environmental factors to export performance | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|---|-----|---|------|
| Model | | Unstandardized coefficients | | standardized coefficients | T | R 2 | F | Sign |
| 1 | | B | Std ,error | Beta | | | | |
| | | | | | | | | |

| | | | | | | | |
|-------------|-------|------|-------|-------|------|--------|-------|
| (Constant) | .883 | .164 | | 5.390 | | | 0,00 |
| Legal | .278 | .050 | .391 | 5.553 | | | 0.00 |
| economical | .141 | .055 | .177 | 2.582 | | | 0.01 |
| Technical | -.056 | .045 | -.048 | -.778 | | | 0.437 |
| Social | 0.267 | .066 | .307 | 4.046 | .561 | 60.996 | 0.00 |

Source: questionnaire distributed to export market (fruit and vegetable).

Also, table (4) showed that environmental factors significantly influence export performance with Beta for legal and economic factors value amounting to (.391) and (.177) respectively, while Beta and T value for technical factors amounting to (-.048) and (0.437) respectively, indicating that these factor were not significant at p value (0.5), the Beta and F value for the social factors amounting to (.307) and (60.996) respectively.

Hypothesis (3): there is a positive relationship between innovation, orientation and export performance

Table (5) showed that market innovation and orientation (namely improvements and information) were cumulatively contributed with (63.7%) of the variance in export performance, the two drivers of market orientation and innovation were positively correlated with export performance value amounting to (39.9%), R adjusted value (40.6%), and R2 value (40.6%). Table (5) showed the results of the regression equation testing the influence of market orientation, innovation on export performance. Also, table (5) showed that market innovation and orientation significantly influence environmental factors with Beta value for improvement and information amounting to (.421), and (.296) respectively, while the F factor value (65.850).

Table (5): Coefficients and model summary of market orientation, innovation to export performance

| Table (5) coefficients of (market orientation ,innovation to expert performance | | | | | | | |
|--|-----------------------------|------------|---------------------------|-------|------|--------|------|
| Model | Unstandardized coefficients | | standardized coefficients | T | R 2 | F | Sign |
| 1 | B | Std ,error | Beta | | | | |
| (Constant) | 1.184 | .173 | | 6.858 | | | 0,00 |
| Improvements | .331 | .053 | .421 | 6.236 | | | 0.00 |
| Information | .222 | .051 | .296 | 4.386 | .406 | 65.850 | 0.00 |

Source: questionnaire distributed to export market (fruit and vegetable).

Hypothesis (4): Environment factors mediating the relationship between orientation, market innovation and export performance.

In model 1, the results showed that the strength of association measured by the coefficient of multiple determinations (R2) explained 40.1% of total variation in the dependent variable accounted for by the independent variable, and the R adjusted value 39.8%, with F value 120.99 at (P= 0.00) level of significance .

In model 2, the results showed that the strength of association measured by the coefficient of multiple determination (R2) explained 55.5%of the total variable in dependent variable accounted for by the independent variable and mediator variable, the adjusted R2 value (55.1 %), and F value= 120.451 at (p= 0.00) level of

significance.

Table (6): Coefficients and model summary of environment factors mediating the relationship between orientation, market innovation and export performance.

Table (6) coefficients of (environment factors mediating the relationship between orientation , market innovation and export performance

| 1 | Model | Unstandardized coefficients | | standardized coefficients Beta | T | R2 | F | Sign |
|---|---------------|-----------------------------|------------|-----------------------------------|--------|------|---------|------|
| | | B | Std ,error | | | | | |
| | (Constant) | 1.180 | .173 | | 6.828 | | | 0,00 |
| | Innovation | .549 | .048 | .633 | 11.402 | | | 0.00 |
| | Orientation | | | | | .401 | 129.99 | |
| | (Constant) | .533 | .1699 | | 3.152 | | | 0.00 |
| | Innovation | .318 | .050 | .366 | 6.312 | | | 0.00 |
| | Orientation | | | | | | | |
| | Environmental | .425 | .52 | .475 | 8.174 | .555 | 120.451 | 0.00 |

Source: questionnaire distributed to export market (fruit and vegetable),

Note: level of significant $p < 0.05$, **

Table (6) in model (1), the result showed that market orientation, innovation significantly influence export performance with beta coefficient value= (.633), while in model (2) the extent of export performance significantly changed the variable explained by orientation, innovation, as the beta value coefficient was (.633). Concerning the type of mediation environmental factors effect on the relationship between market orientation, innovation and export performance, the F factor value= (129.99, 120.451), and the results showed that the value of orientation innovation was significantly increased (in model 2), thus indicating that environmental factors fully mediated the relationship between marker orientation, innovation and export performance (even if we omit environmental factors we still get an effect of market orientation, innovation and export performance). Accordingly, the hypothesis which stated that environmental factors mediate the relationship between innovation, orientation and export performance is strongly supported.

Findings:

Based on the hypotheses testing the research obtained the following results:

The claim of the second hypothesis was totally proved, that means there is a great effect of environmental factors on exports performance, therefore, exporting companies must take these factors in consideration. This result coincides with the study of Shahram (2013) in term of the findings, but his study focused on the managerial factors and totally ignored the environmental factors.

The third hypothesis has shown that orientation and innovation factors increase the effectiveness of exports performance, so whenever orientation and innovation are applied there will be good export performance in terms of increasing revenue. This result coincides with the study of (Farely and Webster, 1993, Hoq et al (2009). And Kropp et al (2005).

The fourth hypothesis proved that environmental factors have mediating role in supporting exports performance.

The other part related to the effect of the introduction of mediating factors, the correlation coefficients have changed to a valid degree and that means it increases whenever export agencies apply orientation and innovation through intermediate relationship of environmental factors. To see the impact of that relationship, the beta value has increased with the introduction of intermediate factors. This result coincides

with the study of Codogan (2003); Alhakimi and Baharun Hoq, and Norbani (2009) Majid Mohammed Saleh 2010.

Recommendation

Based on the findings the researchers recommend the following:

- 1- The export companies should pay more attention to the market orientation and innovation; as well as environmental factors due to their significant role in increasing the productivity in fruit and vegetables market in Sudan.
- 2- Also it was observed from the findings that process innovation is more significant in predicting export performance than market innovation. Thus, it is very important that, firms seek to increase their profits, sales, returns and their competitiveness need to start by improving their production processes.

Limitations of the study

This study was conducted on one export segment using one country's export (fruit and vegetables); therefore, it would be difficult to generalize the study findings on different export and to the export activities of other countries. Accordingly, a trade off must be made in any research between generalization and greater power achieved by reducing the noise created by agency affected or differences in activities across countries. However, the approach used and the motivation that comes from demonstrate the effectiveness of this approach in one country.

Suggestions for future studies

Relying on the limitations of study mentioned above, this study provides the following suggestions for future researches:

Future studies can replicate this study using larger sample and dissimilar contexts such as different sectors or dissimilar countries, also, the theoretical framework of this study was limited, thus for further studies the study recommends the introduction of other variables such as mediating variables.

The study covers the orientation and innovation in addition to the mediating role of environmental factors. The orientation factors were discussed from behavioral aspects, so the study recommends conducting a research, which will cover both the behavioral and cultural aspects.

As the study covers the sector of fruit and vegetable exports, this limits the view of the study in particular way, hence, future studies should look into other different sectors than fruit and vegetable.

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