

Export New Product Success: The Impact of Market and Technology Orientation

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Abstract

The extant literature implies that export companies attempt to improve export new product performance in order to reach superior and sustainable business performance and thus remain competitive. However, the degree to which companies must focus either on market or technological issues as the factors involved in new product performance has been a problem they often encounter. The current research aims at investigating the impact of those orientations on export new product performance. Surveying export chemical manufacturing companies, partial least squares indicate that although both orientations have significant positive impacts on export new product success, the impact of technology orientation is higher. After the conclusions are drawn, the limitations and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Market orientation, Technology orientation, Export new product success, Market dynamism; Competitive intensity

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Introduction and background

New product-based performance is at the heart of many companies' strategies. In order to reach superior performance in increasingly competitive business environments, companies attempt to develop successful new products, by using resources and capabilities (Reid and Brady, 2012). Beyond that, new product development has become

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an important determinant of sustainable performance (Ernst, 2002) and preserved market position (Griffin and Albert, 1996). In addition, researchers commonly believe that export is a vital economic activity for a business and a nation's success (Boso et al, 2012a). Therefore, study on new product performance in export markets is deemed to be of much importance.

Researchers have so far identified numerous determinants of new product success including strategic orientations of a firm (Gatignon and Xuereb, 1997). Studies repeatedly report that only one strategic orientation would not be sufficient for achieving superior performance. For instance, having focused on customers, companies may lose their innovative capabilities. Since customers are not often aware of market and technological trends, exporters who solely concentrate on customers might miss technological opportunities. Contrariwise, an extreme concentration on technology would lead to unsuccessful innovation (Hortinha et al, 2011).

The purpose of the current research is to find the influence of market and technology orientation on export new product performance. The results will show the extent to which export companies must focus on market and technological issues in order to improve their export new product performance. The relationships will also be studied considering moderating roles for intensity of competition.

Conceptualization and theoretical development

New (export) product success

Based on the degree of newness to the firm and the market, new products would fall somewhere on the spectrum between the two extremes of new-to-the-world products (which is new to both the market and the firm) and product modifications. However, since determining whether a product is new would be a rather complex issue, there does not exist much consent on the measurement of the product newness. So far, many empirical studies have been directed to measure new product performance (e.g., Atuahene-Gima, 1995; Atuahene-Gima et al, 2005; Augusto & Coelho, 2007; Cooper 1983, 1994; Wong & Tong, 2012). Having reviewed the past literature, Product Development Management Association (PDMA) identifies five categories of success/failure measures of new product applied to 61 different research projects. However, generally one could not ignore any factor that has been considered non-effective, nor take into consideration all the relevant factors (Ernst, 2002).

Several studies have investigated the impact of various strategic orientations on new product performance, with market orientation and more specifically, customer orientation having a dominant presence in them (e.g. Gatignon & Xuereb, 1997; Yang et al., 2012) As a matter of fact, the majority of the studies on the strategic orientation-new product success relationship have not systematically taken into consideration whether the activity domain of the firms under study is domestic or international; hence, national or international nature of the business entity operations were not much highlighted. Nonetheless, it should be noted that before these studies, Cadogan et al (2009) examined the market orientation-performance relationship for international market activities of exporters, in an attempt to distinguish the non-linear nature of the

relationship between export market orientation and export performance, depending on the market dynamism and the exporters' degree of internationalization. Later, Boss et al (2012b) examined the impact of entrepreneurial and market orientation on export product innovation success, under differing levels of market dynamism, among exporters from a developing country. They demonstrated that entrepreneurial and market orientations have a positive and complementary role on the export product innovation success. In the same year, the same research team (Boss et al., 2012a) similarly reported another complementary and positive impact of market and entrepreneurial orientations on export new product success, while financial capital and competitive intensity were introduced as moderators.

(Export) market orientation

Shapiro (1988) stated that only understanding markets and people who decide whether to buy products and services could make a company market-oriented. Narver and Slater (1990) discerned that market orientation consists of three behavioral components: customer orientation, competitor orientation, and interfunctional coordination. The first two were defined as "all the activities involved in acquiring information about the buyers and competitors in the target market and disseminating it throughout the business(es)" (p.21). They assume the third component to be the coordinated activities and the integrated effort of all departments in an organization (not merely the marketing department) to create superior value for customers. Furthermore, in the same year, Kohli and Jaworski (1990) provided a more comprehensive definition of market orientation, assuming it to be composed of three components: intelligence generation, intelligence dissemination, and responsiveness. Intelligence generation - what they referred to as "the building blocks of market orientation"- is a broader concept than customers' verbalized needs and preferences and includes any external factors that may affect those needs and preferences, such as changing conditions in customer industries, competitor actions, and government regulations. Also this definition, takes future needs and preferences of customers into consideration, while current needs and preferences are not ignored. Intelligence dissemination is the flow of the intelligence generated throughout the organization so that all departments can participate in responding effectively to market needs. Finally, responsiveness, as the last component, is the action taken in response to the intelligence generated and disseminated through selecting target markets, designing and offering products and services that satisfy current and also future needs and also producing, distributing, and promoting the products as a customer-desired response. In summary, Kohli and Jaworski's (1990) define market orientation as "the organization-wide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer needs, dissemination of the intelligence across departments, and organization-wide responsiveness to it" (p.6).

Ruekert (1992) borrows different aspects of his definition of market orientation from the past efforts and defines the level of market orientation in a business unit as "the degree to which that business unit obtains and employs information from customers, develops a strategy which will meet customer needs, and implements that strategy by being responsive to customers' needs and wants" (p.228).

Having reviewed the previous definitions, Deshpandé et al (1993) believe that customer orientation and market orientation are synonyms. Although they do not disregard the positive impact of competitor analysis, however, they believe that competitor orientation could be deemed paradoxical to the customer focus assumption. Hence, they developed a more formal definition of customer orientation as "the set of beliefs that puts the customer's interest first, while not excluding those of all other stakeholders such as owners, managers, and employees, in order to develop a long-term profitable enterprise" (p.27). They also indicate that customer orientation is a part of the corporate culture (Deshpandé et al, 1993). Lastly, Day (1994) reviewed the conceptual and empirical studies carried out through the years and came to regard market orientation as the superior skills in understanding and satisfying customers.

Reviewing the existing literature, it may be inferred that the relationship between market orientation and its consequences could be moderated by different cultural variables. Thus, cross-cultural implementation and development of market orientation concept would be an academic and managerial concern (Kirka & Hult, 2009). In this regard, Cadogan et al (1999) developed a set of multiple-item scales for measurement of export market orientation (EMO) to fill the systematic research gap on the impact of market orientation on international business performance. They took advantage of Kohli and Jaworski's (1990) three essential market orientation components (market intelligence generation, market intelligence dissemination, and responsiveness) and a coordinating mechanism adopted from Narver and Slater (1990) in export context.

Many researchers have found diverse results on the impact of market orientation on new product success. Slater and Narver (1994) were the first to consider new product success, as a component of market performance. They also examined the moderating effect of competitive environment on market orientation-performance relationship. The results of their research show that market orientation is positively related to new product success. Baker and Sinkula (1999), Langerak (2001), Pelham and Wilson (1996), Subramanian and Gopalakrishna (2001), and Wong and Tong (2012) are other researchers who found positive and significant correlation between market orientation and new product success. On the contrary, Appiah-Adu and Ranchhold (1998), Greenley (1995), and Wren et al (2000) found no positive significant relationship between the two constructs. However, there are only few studies focusing on export markets activities. Export market orientation behavior consists of orientation towards recognizing and responding to changes in export customers' needs and preferences and export competitors' strategies (Boso et al, 2012a; Kropp et al, 2006). Export market oriented companies constantly learn about their export customers' needs and their obvious and latent preferences and respond to them by superior products and services, so that they can take a more appropriate position in the market, in comparison with their competitors (Cadogan, 2009). In addition, international market orientation affects the success of new product development (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004). Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H2a: Export market orientation has a significant positive relationship with export new product success.

At last, according to Gatignon and Xuereb (1997), in intensely competitive markets a company needs a greater competitor orientation in order to identify the competitors' strengths and weaknesses, develop competitive advantages, and predict competitors' reactions. According to Kohli and Jaworski (1990), the more the competitive intensity in an industry, the more customer-oriented a company would be; mainly because the company should monitor customers' needs and preferences and respond to them, so that, the customers may choose the company's supply instead of its competitors. Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H2b: The significant positive relationship between export market orientation and export new product success is greater when competitive intensity is higher.

Technology orientation

Based on Grinstein (2008), implementing new ideas, products, and processes marks the presence of innovation orientation -which is the same as technology or product orientation- associated with investment in technological leadership and with high quality products (p.118)

Gatignon and Xuereb (1997) are the first who give a clear definition of technology orientation. They define technology orientation as the ability of a firm to create a technical solution for the new needs of its users. They measure technology orientation by items such as the degree to which a company uses sophisticated technologies in developing new products, the company's proactivity in developing new technologies, the degree of new product-related idea generation, and the integration speed of new technologies. They believe that more radical innovations, with the potential for greater competitive advantage, should be resulted by technological orientation. They also found that the firms become technology oriented, in order to keep up with technological turbulence (Jeong et al, 2006).

According to Cooper (1983), highly innovative and technological products that are mechanically and technically complex, have a strong impact on customer use behavior and feature several differential advantages (p.248). Cooper (1985) indicates that "technological and market dimensions strongly shape overall performance. The most critical strategic dimensions are technological sophistication, orientation, and innovativeness." (p.116).

The relationship between technology orientation or the so-called innovation orientation, and new product performance has been the subject of study for several years. Cooper (1985), Gatignon and Xuereb (1997), Jeong et al, (2006), and Yang et al (2012) are examples of the researchers who devoted part of their research career to this phenomenon and found a significant positive relationship between the two constructs. Moreover, empirical findings confirm that strong orientation towards R&D or application of sophisticated technologies in the new product development can result in new product success (Cooper, 1979, 1984; Gatignon & Xuereb, 1997; Yang et al, 2012). Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H1a: Technology orientation has a significant positive relationship with export new product success.

According to Cooper and Benette (1985), Houston (1986), and Yang (2012), in intensely competitive markets, acquiring technology-related information from inside and outside of the industry is of great importance. Hence, technology orientation through focusing on research and development, innovation, and quality, probably has a special effect on the new product success within such environment. Accordingly, we hypothesize that:

H1b: The significant positive relationship between technology orientation and export new product success is greater when competitive intensity is higher.

Theoretical framework and hypotheses

Figure 1 illustrates the hypothesized relationships between the constructs.

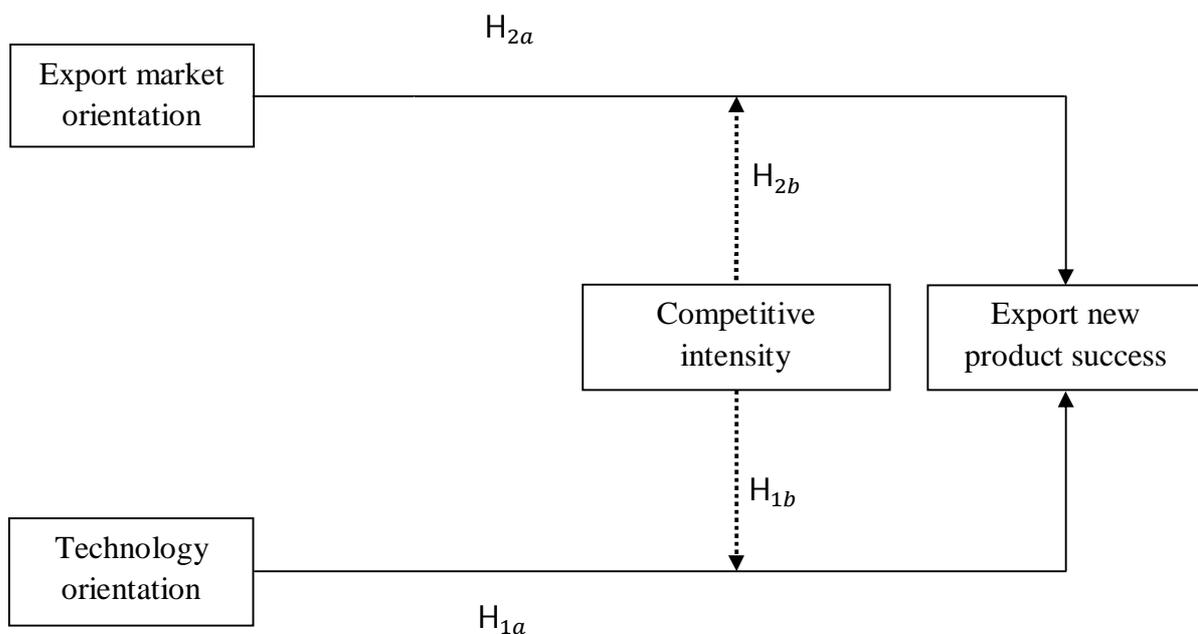


Figure 1 The hypothesized relationships between the constructs under study

Research methodology

Sampling and data collection

For the goals of the current research, contact information of 112 chemical manufacturing export companies in Tehran province was extracted from the export database of the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Commerce. Then, using the random number table, a sample of 186 firms was selected and the senior export managers of them were contacted via e-mail to which a questionnaire was attached. After the e-mails were sent, the managers were given a call to ensure the email delivery and encourage

their response. In most cases, the respondents were called several times to make sure no problems were left. Only in 3 cases the respondents had some problems with the questions, and fortunately all problems were ironed out. In order to avoid inaccurate responses and to make sure not to interrupt the managers' daily business activities, we stretched the deadline and gave them approximately a one month span to fill in the questionnaires.

The research questionnaire contained 4 demographic questions about the companies and 36 Likert scale questions for measuring the model. Table 2 shows the questionnaire items. The frequency distribution of the research sample based on the production type of their company is demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1 Frequency distribution of the respondents

No	Production type	No. of respondents	% of respondents
1	Chemicals minus dung and nitrates	37	19.9
2	Dung and nitrates	6	3.2
3	Plastic and artificial plastic	26	14
4	Pesticides and other chemicals used in farming	4	2.2
5	Paint and dye	20	10.8
6	Drugs and pharmaceutical chemicals	19	10.2
7	Hygiene chemicals	22	11.8
8	Human-made texture	11	5.9
9	Any uncategorized chemicals	41	22
Total		186	100

As it is demonstrated in Table 1, the bulk share of the respondents goes to the firms producing "uncategorized chemicals", while "dung and nitrates producers" makes up the lowest share. It must also be noted that in order to ensure that the new products have been exported by the sample companies, full details of the new products were inquired to check with the Ministry of Industry, Mine and Commerce export database.

Measures

Table 2 displays details of the measures used in the current study. Export market orientation is a multi-dimensional construct (Boso et al, 2012a; Cadogan et al, 2002, 2009). Its three dimensions are intelligence generation, dissemination, and responsiveness. The dimensions were measured by five, four and three items respectively, all items adopted from Boso et al (2012b), Cadogan et al (2002), and Cadogan et al (2009). Technology orientation was measured by nine items that were all adopted from Gatignon and Xuereb (1997). In order to study competitive intensity, three items were used to measure the degree of competition in the firms' export market. The items were adopted from Jambulingam et al (2005).

Lastly, consistent with Atuahene-Gima et al (2005) and Boso et al (2012b), four items were used to measure export new product success.

Data analysis

Measurement model assessment

Using partial least squares and Smart PLS v.2 software, the measurement model was assessed in four steps: 1) model fit assessment; 2) composite reliability assessment; 3) convergent validity assessment; and 4) discriminant validity assessment.

Based on the formula for assessing model fit suggested by Tenenhaus et al (2005), it is concluded that the goodness of our model fit is 0.78. This amount exceeds 0.36 recommended by Fornell and Larcker (1981) for data-model fit. Also, using LISREL v.8.80, other model fit tests ($\chi^2/d.f. = 1.55$; RMSEA = 0.02; NFI = 0.95; CFI = 0.99) show a good model fit for the data.

The assessments show that composite reliability coefficient exceeds 0.7 for all latent variables. According to Hulland (1999), this means that all constructs are reliable. Table 2 shows standardized factor loadings, reliability tests, and CFA results.

Table 2 Standardized factor loadings, reliability tests, and CFA results

Item Description	Factor Loading	CR	Mean	SD
Export market orientation (Boso et al, 2012a; Cadogan et al, 2002, 2009)		0.91	3.20	1.07
We review the likely effect of changes in our export environment periodically (e.g. regulations, technology).	0.83			
We constantly monitor our level of commitment and orientation to serving export customer needs.	0.81			
We generate lots of information concerning the factors affecting our export customers' needs and preferences.	0.82			
We are fast to detect fundamental shifts in our export environment (e.g. regulation, technology, economy).	0.83			
We generate lots of information concerning trends (e.g. regulations, technological developments, political, economic) in our export markets.	0.80			
Information concerning trends (e.g. regulations, technological developments, political, economic) in our export markets is often discarded in the communication chain.	0.89			
Information that can influence the way we serve our export customers takes forever to reach the export personnel.	0.90			
Important information about our export customers is often 'lost in the system.'	0.88			
Information about our export competitors' activities often reaches relevant personnel too late to be of any use.	0.82			

Item Description	Factor Loading	CR	Mean	SD
If a major competitor were to launch an intensive campaign targeted at our foreign customers, we would implement a response immediately.	0.76			
We are quick to respond to significant changes in our competitors' price structures in foreign markets.	0.87			
We rapidly respond to competitive actions that threaten us in our export markets.	0.82			
Technology orientation (Gatignon & Xuereb, 1997)		0.92	3.02	1.32
Our firm uses sophisticated technologies in its new product development.	0.91			
Our new products are always at the state of the art of the technology.	0.90			
Our firm is very proactive in the development of new technologies.	0.91			
Our firm has the will and the capacity to build and to market a technological breakthrough.	0.83			
Our firm has built a large and strong network of relationships with suppliers of technological equipment.	0.77			
Our firm has an aggressive technological patent strategy.	0.86			
Our firm has better industrial methods than the competition.	0.83			
We have a better competitive knowledge than our competitors.	0.87			
Relative to our competitors, our new products are more ambitious.	0.89			
Our firm is very proactive in the construction of new technical solutions to answer users' needs.	0.89			
Our firm is always the last one to use a new technology for its new product development.	0.91			
Export new product success (Atuahene-Gima et al, 2005, Boso et al, 2012a)		0.91	3.02	1.16
Revenue from new products or services	0.90			
Growth in revenue from new products or services	0.91			
Export profitability of new products or services	0.82			
Growth in export sales of new products or services	0.90			
Competitive intensity (Boso et al, 2012b; Jambulingam et al, 2005)		0.88	3.68	1.21
Our export markets are noted for competition between companies.	0.77			
There is a substantial competition among companies in our export markets.	0.85			
Competition among companies in our export markets is intense.	0.89			

In order to assess convergent validity, the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of the latent variables was calculated. As it is illustrated in Table 3 the AVE of all latent variables exceeds the recommended standard of 0.5, suggested by Chin (1998). Therefore, convergent validity is achieved.

Table 3 Convergent validity assessment results

No.	Latent variable	Caption in the model	AVE
1	Export market orientation	EMO	0.73
2	Technology Orientation	TO	0.72
3	Competitive Intensity	CI	0.74
4	Export new product success	NPS	0.88

Using discriminant validity method to assess divergent validity, second root of each latent variable's AVE was compared with the absolute correlation value of the same latent variable and other latent variables. The results are shown in Table 4.

Table 4 Discriminant reliability test results

Latent Variable	R ²	Export market orientation	Technology orientation	Competitive intensity	Export new product success
Export market orientation	23%	0.85			
Technology orientation	32%	0.03	0.85		
Competitive intensity	N/A	0.026	0.1	0.86	
Export new product success	62%	0.48	0.56	0.037	0.94

As it is illustrated in Table 4, the second root of each latent variable's AVE is greater than the absolute correlation between the same latent variable and other latent variables. According to Hulland (1999), it could be interpreted from this fact that the divergent validity of the constructs is acceptable.

Structural model assessment

The collinearity diagnostics shows that independent variables are not linear combination of each other. Therefore, the model gives valid results about individual predictors. Table 5 shows the collinearity assessment results.

Table 5 Discriminant reliability test results

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	-.154	.347		-.444	.658		
	EMO	.465	.077	.456	6.008	.000	1.000	1.000
	TO	.556	.077	.550	7.236	.000	1.000	1.000

a. dependent variable: export new product success

As it is evident in Table 5, both variance inflation factor and the tolerance obtained equal 1. It means that there is no correlation between the two independent constructs. Therefore, there is no reason to concern about unstable estimation of model parameters.

Results

According to the T-test results and path coefficients demonstrated in Table 6, all hypotheses are accepted. Based on the data from Table 6, all T-statistics are greater than 1.96. Therefore, as it was expected the results reveal a significant positive relationship among technology orientation and export new product success ($\gamma = 0.522$) (see Table 6). With reference to the R squared column in Table 6, technology orientation explains 32% of the variance in export new product success. Also, the results show that the relationship between technology orientation and export new product success is significantly and positively moderated by the level of competitive intensity (see Table 4).

Moreover, the results signify a positive relationship between export market orientation and export new product success ($\gamma = 0.433$) (see Table 5). In addition, with reference to the R squared column in Table 6, export market orientation explains 23% of the variance in export new product success.

Table 6 T Statistics, path coefficients, and hypothesis test

No	H	Hypothesis	Path Coefficient (γ)	T Statistics	Result
1	H1a	Technology orientation has a significant positive effect on export new product success.	0.522	9.684	Supported
2	H1b	Technology orientation-export new product success relationship is positively moderated by the level of competitive intensity.	0.130	2.265	Supported
3	H2a	Export market orientation has a significant positive effect on export new product success.	0.433	7.9	Supported

No	H	Hypothesis	Path Coefficient (γ)	T Statistics	Result
4	H2b	Export market orientation-export new product success relationship is positively moderated by the level of competitive intensity.	0.173	2.882	Supported

Critical t-value (5% two-tailed) = 1.96

Based on the path coefficients, it can be concluded that the effect of the technology orientation on export new product success is stronger than the effect of export market orientation. It means that chemical manufacturing companies should highly develop their technology-oriented behavior, while keeping their focus on export market orientation behavior, especially those who export to more competitive markets.

Conclusion and Discussion

The aim of this research was to examine the effect of export market orientation and technology orientation on export new product success so that companies understand to what extent they should focus on technology-oriented and market-oriented behaviors. Findings from surveying export chemical manufacturers showed that both criteria have significant positive impacts on the export new product performance. Beyond that, both relationships are positively moderated by the intensity level of competition in the export market. In addition, in the same level of competitive intensity, the impact of technology orientation on export new product success would be more than the impact of export market orientation. However, based on the degree of moderating effect of competitive intensity on both relationships, the higher the level of competitive intensity, the higher the impact of export market orientation will be.

Limitations and suggestions for future research

This research is faced with several limitations and drawbacks. One of the limitations addressed in this research is that only one respondent in each company filled in the questionnaire. Hence, the ability to recognize the biases is weakened (Phillips, 1981). The data collected in the current research was limited to the chemical manufacturing export companies in Tehran province. One of the suggestions for future research is to test the model in other industries and/or geographical areas. Another limitation relates to the data gathering tool, i.e. questionnaire. Access to the financial data of Iranian companies is optimistically very difficult, if not impossible. Therefore implementing questionnaires in order to evaluate export new product performance might have corrupted the results attained. One of our suggestions for future research could be testing the model using financial data of export manufacturing companies, wherever they are available to access. Also studying new combinations of strategic orientations in different features of business environments including access to financial capital, technological turbulence, market dynamism, and competitive intensity is deemed to be effective. Finally, the complementary effect of the two strategic orientations studied in the current research is neglected in the present paper. It is highly suggested to do so in the future research.

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