

*Original Research*

# Designing a Model to Identify the Factors Affecting the Export Performance of Companies in Business Environment Transformations Based on Grounded Theory

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## Abstract

This research was conducted to design a model to influence the strategic orientation and management of export market orientation on export performance in business environment transformations. The method of this research is Grounded theory. For this purpose, the topic was investigated by interviewing experts who were selected by a purposeful method of judgment from the managers and marketing experts of 52 sample exporting companies in Isfahan province in 2020. The validity of the interview questions was assessed with the Binominal test and the reliability was assessed with the Cronbach's alpha test. The research results indicate that; Strategic export orientation, export market orientation, and export performance are the three main pillars of exports in the trans formatives. To direct an effective export strategy in the current situation, six key factors of information systems strategy, customer-oriented engineering strategy, increasing innovation strategy, Competitive orientation strategy, learning orientation strategy, and cost control strategy must be included. Moreover, the results of the analysis aimed at extracting four components for export market orientation, including; Virtual marketing, distribution through capillary networks, video branding, and health brand led. Furthermore, the results of content analysis for export performance include 2 components financial and operational. Examining the export performance in transformations should be considered as the contribution of the article in the management of knowledge in the field.

**Keywords:** Business environment, Export performance, Grounded theory Transformations.

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## Introduction

A basic assumption is that almost all business environments are in a continuous state of change. Transformations have spread in all fields, having great implications for companies. There are various criteria such as economic factors, geographical factors, technological factors, political environment, cultural environment, and foreign trade policy about the selection of foreign markets (Miecinskiene et al., 2014). effective marketing decisions for corporations (Ngai & Wu, 2022) especially for exporting companies, should be considered to be able to compete and maintain or increase their market share against these transformations and the reactions to them, and the needs of society in these conditions along with its impact on export performance (Bodlaj & Čater, 2022). Success in export activity depends on contingent factors such as those associated with the external environment of the organization (Cadogan et al., 2012).

These environmental transformations are the upward trends in resource depletion (Sivarajah et al., 2017), pollution, and the inequitable distribution of resources (Olson, 2022) actions and responses to natural disasters (Nawaz et al., 2023) as well as the ongoing climate crisis (Klößner et al., 2023) attention to environmental issues (Hsu & Nguyen, 2023) and consequences of pandemics (Sharma et al., 2021).

Cultural-social changes such as an increase in people's awareness, market attention towards senior citizens, reduction of the mass market and the growth of corner or sub-markets, acceleration of life through mobile phones, telecommunications and internet marketing, and single person families without children, increased the diversity of markets and workforce (Grant, 2021; Jiang & Yin, 2021). Also socio-politically, there is a growing backlash against globalization and growing concerns about the social and economic sustainability of g Global Value Chains (Clarke & Boersma, 2017; Nxele, 2017). Economically, the rise of industry 4.0 (Gölgeci et al., 2023; Ing et al., 2019; Rießmann et al., 2015) new business models, new types of products/services, new distribution and promotion channels, and new types of customer experiences and behaviors (Caliskan et al., 2021; Nambisan et al., 2019), the rapid growth, and remarkable change of emerging market (Bıçakcıoğlu-Peynirci, 2023) are too among the aforementioned environmental transformations.

Another contemporary issue is the escalating expansion of the digital economy. Digitalization has been recognized as one of the most important events of the current decades (Amankwah-Amoah et al., 2021; Parviainen et al., 2017). Therefore, companies need to transform to succeed in the emerging digital world (Bharadwaj et al., 2013; Cuesta-Valino et al., 2023; Trenkle, 2019). And exporters, in such a changing situation, should look for suitable solutions that can fill their competence gaps, overcome their shortcomings in the service process, and the myriad of barriers that prevent them from reaching overseas markets (Brache et al., 2022; Khan & Khan, 2021).

So, in today's world, which is constantly changing with the business environment becoming more and more complex, export performance is a necessary guide for any company that operates in international markets (Daniels et al., 2019; Sousa et al., 2008). The important point is that companies need to have an acceptable export performance for

their survival in the international markets, because a poor export performance not only leads to the loss of market share, but also causes the organization's resources and investments made in this area to be wasted in the long run. Therefore, it is very necessary for every organization to identify the factors affecting its export performance and pay special attention to them (Anil et al., 2016; Sui & Baum, 2014).

Exporters face significant challenges (examples of which were mentioned above) in designing effective knowledge management processes in their export markets (Hoque, Ahammad, et al., 2022; Martin & Javalgi, 2019; Villar et al., 2014). High levels of uncertainty, risks, and inter-market institutional differences drive the complexities and challenges that characterize today's export environment (Hoque, Nath, et al., 2022; Murray et al., 2011). In addition, exporters need to monitor the frequent changes in consumer demands and preferences (Matanda & Freeman, 2009), and continuously comply with any new guidelines imposed on product design or manufacturing processes by the regulators in both their home and target countries (Hoque, Nath, et al., 2022; Lages et al., 2009; Maskus et al., 2000).

This article aims to create a framework of marketing insights and strategies that enhance understanding of transformative marketing. It also aims to support exporters in preparing for, navigating through, and recovering from significant changes arising from transformations. Through conducting extensive interviews with experts, the article identifies the factors that impact export performance and presents a model illustrating these factors.

To this end, this article seeks to resolve the existing theoretical gap regarding export performance in the current highly transformed environment of international trade, while answering the following questions:

1. What are the solutions according to performance in business environment transformations?
2. What is the export performance model in international markets in business environment transformations?

## **Theoretical Framework**

### *Research literature*

#### **Business environment transformations**

Global phenomena such as megatrends large-scale social, economic, political conditions and shifting cultural environment, rapid technological changes, de-carbonization, digitization, natural disasters, pandemics, may discontinuously create profound and lasting influences. (Becker, 1998; Mouzas, 2022; Śliwiński & Puślecki, 2021). Researchers suggest that companies need to adapt to these changes and pursue their performance according to these transformations (Hanelt et al., 2021; Meyer et al., 1990). These transformations, initially help the agile of organizations (Stettina & Heijstek, 2011), and, compete more effectively (Lin et al., 2020; Patel-Campillo, 2011), become more efficient (Hanelt et al., 2017), also, create a wholesale strategic pivot (Co-pivoting

et al., 2023). Of course, in this process, should not the role of the workforce as a key factor in the implementation transformations was neglected (Fuchs & Prouska, 2014).

Researchers believe that because the level of complexity related to environment transformations, organizations are often unable to complete change be processed successfully (Hasan et al., 2020; Seo et al., 2012). And that's exactly why it's said that almost 70% of organizations have it experienced some kind of failure in their transformational change initiatives (Beer & Nohria, 2000).

The urgency of transformations may take years, but the starting point is the need to accelerate the available support of transformations (Altenburg & Pegels, 2017). To master the transformation, companies must strive to shift towards agility (Porter & Heppelmann, 2015; Rogers, 2016). Agility is the ability to optimizing and automating in a competitive environment under conditions of uncertainty and unpredictable change (Goldman et al., 1995). It is usually an ongoing effort, enabling companies to react and respond to an environment that is insidious or constantly pressures the company to change while satisfying customers achieving business is considered to be agile (Ramesh & Devadasan, 2007; Yauch, 2011). Therefore, agility transformation is to provide higher value services and offerings to the market needs.

### Export performance

Exporting is the predominant method that firms use to facilitate their trading within foreign markets (Leonidou, 2004; Morgan et al., 2012). The success or failure of a company in exporting a product or service to a foreign market through strategic planning and execution is referred to as export performance (Chugan & Singh, 2015). Therefore, firms' ability to enhance their international competitiveness is intrinsically linked to their better comprehension of the external factors that can influence export performance (Katsikeas et al., 1996; Muller & Kolk, 2010; Pyper et al., 2022). In the new international situation caused by the coronavirus outbreak, companies using organizational learning should be able to make decisions in situations of uncertainty while identifying opportunities and threats knowing that marketing research and export performance in international markets is a main topic.

Today's international business environment is dynamic and unpredictable, and organizations operating in the international arena must be vigorous in order to gain advantage and succeed. Export is beyond the common form of globalization and the study of export performance is the most important issue in this field (Efrat et al., 2018; Papadopoulos & Martín, 2010). The strategic and economic goals of a company regarding the export of a product to a foreign market that are achieved through the strategic planning and implementation of export marketing are called 'export performance' (Filipe Lages & Montgomery, 2004; Morgan et al., 2012; Obadia & Vida, 2023). Export performance is a guide for analyzing the company's success at both domestic and international levels (Luiz et al., 2017). Export performance of the company is considered as a key indicator in the success of the company's export operations. For companies, the success of export performance indicates the company's achievement of economic and non-economic goals in the international field. Although a large number of variables have been used to measure export success, several measurement criteria are used significantly more than others, such as export intensity (the ratio of exports to total sales) export sales growth, export profitability, Export market share, and satisfaction with overall performance in the face of limitations in obtaining financial information from companies, especially small and medium-sized companies. Some researchers use non-economic/non-financial measures of export performance. This approach uses perceptual/attitudinal

measurements, such as: achieving export success, achieving export goals, and satisfaction with export performance (Šimić et al., 2019).

### *Research background*

According to the main goal of the research, which is to identify the influencing factors on the management of export performance in the conditions of the Corona crisis, two categories of research are examined here;

#### Research related to factors affecting export performance

The findings of Negeri and Ji (2023) study suggests that adequate export knowledge, export commitment and product matching can increase export performance. For this purpose, this research continues based on three main axes: it explains how export knowledge and export commitment are used to improve export performance. Then, by examining the mediating role of product compatibility, it adds knowledge to the existing export performance literature. It also provides evidence from a less studied developing country like Ethiopia. And finally, this study provides strategic suggestions based on empirical evidence. At the end of this article, it is concluded that in order to improve export performance, management and other employees of a company must have sufficient knowledge of export procedures and commit to their duties and responsibilities. In addition, export companies should pursue product compatibility strategies to meet customer needs.

The research results of Brache et al. (2022) indicated that although cooperation with a foreign partner in marketing and prototyping has a positive effect on export performance, indirectly, interfirm cooperation with an international partner for research and development has an effect on the likelihood of conversion. Not to an exporter. Unexpectedly, they found that most local cooperation agreements have a negative effect on export performance. However, R&D contracts with local partners have a positive effect on export performance.

Sharma et al. (2021), while exploring the differences in the effect of political communication on the performance of Chinese exporting and non-exporting companies among three types of companies (Privately Owned (POE), Local State-Owned (LSOE) and Central State-Owned (CSOE)) using three sales performance indicators. Using three indicators of export sales, ratio of exports to total sales, and return on assets, they concluded that political connections have significant positive effects on Chinese firms' decisions to enter export markets and on their subsequent export performance.

Rasouli Ghahroudi and Azar (2019), by examining the effect of special corporate factors on the export performance of manufacturing businesses in Iran, concluded that smaller and privately owned manufacturing companies have better export performance. The findings of his research showed the impact of employees' skills and their level of education, research and development, and product diversity on the successful export performance of manufacturing companies

Research by Chen et al. (2016) was conducted in order to measure the effect of recent studies on the determinants of export performance. In this research, 124 articles published between 2006 and 2014 have been reviewed to evaluate the determinants of export performance. The results indicate that much attention has been paid to export performance in recent decades. While combining the findings of recent studies on export performance, they found the need for attention in two theoretical and methodological areas.

## Methodology

The present study is Interpretative in terms of philosophical foundation, with applied research orientation, and logically inductive. The nature of the research is an example of a mixed qualitative methodology, with consecutive combination strategy and exploratory purpose. Purposeful judgment-based interview is chosen due to the type of field research and data collection method, and according to the research questions, the research strategy is Grounded theory.

When Grounded theory is used, we need a general theory or explanation of a process. Grounded theory produces a theory when existing theories do not address the problem in question or the participants in the process and program (Creswell & Creswell, 2017). The method of Grounded theory analysis is defining concepts, categories and achieving the theory through coding (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2014).

For this purpose, the statistical population of the study, using Judgmental purposeful sampling method, have been selected from managers and marketing experts of 52 sample exporting companies in Isfahan province in 2020 based on the list of "Isfahan Chamber of Commerce". The Grounded theory uses targeted sampling of individuals for interviews to produce theories (Rowshanali et al., 2022). The criterion for judging the time to stop theoretical sampling is the "theoretical saturation" of the categories or theory, and it means that no new proofs and documents will be obtained from the new data if the sampling process continues. In other words, complete verification of the data has been done (Zhou et al., 2013). The researchers reached theoretical saturation after 22 interviews.

Content validity refers to the relevance and representativeness of the data collected within the research process. Specifically, it pertains to the thoroughness of the data collected and its alignment with the concepts being explored. Content validity has been examined in two ways by reviewing the research literature, and the validity of the content of the questions done by obtaining the opinion of experts. Binomial Test was also used in this study to assess validity. For this purpose, criteria and options were evaluated using the questionnaire. For each index,  $H_0$  and  $H_1$  were formed at 95% confidence level. The criteria were examined by Binomial Test and the equality hypothesis was rejected due to the significant amount. To evaluate the reliability, Cronbach's alpha test was used, which is higher than 0.8, for an acceptable reliability.

## Findings

At this stage, according to the Grounded theory, the data obtained from the interviews are presented in the form of open, axial and selective coding. Each of these three coding is described below;

**Open coding:** "It is an analytical process through which concepts are identified and their features and dimensions are discovered in data" (Lee, 2001, p. 49; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 71). In this study, in order to openly codify, the interviews to find the main categories, categories and subcategories were examined.

**Axial coding:** "The process of linking categories to subcategories and linking categories is at the level of features and dimensions" (Lee, 2001, p. 49; Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 133). In fact, at this stage, the codes and categories that are created in open coding are compared with each other, and when merging similar codes, the categories that are related to each other are placed around a common axis.

**Selective coding:** In this stage of coding, the basic data theorist writes a theory of relationships between the categories in the axial coding model. On a main level, this theory provides an abstract description for the process that is studied in research (Holton, 2007).

While analyzing the data derived from interviews, the present study performs coding in three categories of strategic orientation, export market orientation and export performance, according to Table 1.

Table 1. Encoding data from interviews

Selective coding	Axial coding	Open coding
Strategic Orientation	Information systems strategy	Creating the basis for effective and timely use of market information
		The possibility of integrated exchanges and coordination in the supply chain
		Expansion of export markets through the acquisition of information and communication
		Providing quality information in order to increase mental engagement and increase the click rate of online ads
		Increasing the accuracy, flexibility and speed of responding to customer orders
		Creation of integrated computer production systems, product design
		The possibility of providing a product simulation sample to the customer and testing the product concept with a virtual space approach
		The field of creating direct computer communication with the customer
	Customer-centric engineering strategy	Investigating consumer behavior (target country) in cyberspace and create superior value for them
		Focusing on the needs of current customers
		Customer presence and participation in the final design of new products and services

Selective coding	Axial coding	Open coding
	Incremental innovation strategy	Changing the specifications of existing products for new customers and markets and providing diverse products based on the original product
		Provision of intermediate products and services
		Focusing on brand new technologies
		Adopting a global approach in designing and developing new products and services
		Apply open innovation
		Bricolage or "creative combination of available resources"
	Competitor orientation strategy	Discover the strengths and weaknesses of competitors
		Discover competitors' long-term strategies and capabilities
		Appropriate competitive reaction
		Taking pre-emptive initiatives to gain an advantage over competitors
	Learning Orientation Strategy	Positive and continuous improvements in performance
		Quality improvement in strategic planning process
		The main success factor in the development of new, unique, quality industrial products
	Cost Control strategy	Firm emphasis on efficiency of all sectors of value chain
		Reducing unnecessary expenses
	Export Market Orientation	Virtual Marketing
Designing a professional website and encouraging and sending the required information		
Advertising on highly follower networks		
Creating a positive shopping experience in cyberspace		
Developing trust-based interactive communication with customers in cyberspace		



Selective coding	Axial coding	Open coding	
		Providing specialized services about goods to customers such as online training	
	Distribution through capillary networks	Emphasizing distribution through capillary networks by paying attention to retail stores	
	Video branding	Using videos to carry out the process of personal and business branding	
	Health Brand		Supplying products with a reputable brand
			Standard packaging of products
			Inserting the title of health brand on packaging
			obtaining health licenses for food and food industries from national and international institutions
			transportation of food and food products with refrigerated containers
	Export Performance	Financial	Increasing the annual profit growth rate through better compatibility, better planning and closer contacts with international markets
			Elimination of products that are unprofitable or incompatible with a macro strategy.
Avoiding the abuse of crisis to gain short-term profits in line with social marketing			
Discount to the customer in case of cash purchase with the aim of increasing the liquidity level of the business			
Operational		Promoting entrepreneurial tendencies to respond to environmental competitions	
		Increasing the relative share of the global market for current products in new markets	
		Influence the international market by increasing the number of purchases, attracting competitors'	

Selective coding	Axial coding	Open coding
		customers, and encouraging new consumers to buy
		Focusing on demand management and supply and production planning based on it
		Forming a supply chain joint action team to deal with the crisis

### *Strategic direction*

Experts consider choosing the right country of destination for export as a strategic decision because entering any new market can be risky and take resources that could be spent on strategic investments elsewhere. Therefore, while recognizing opportunities and strengths, threats must be faced and weaknesses should be strengthened. The strategic orientation of exports in the conditions of transforming in the look of the interviewees is as follows:

**Information systems strategy:** According to experts' view, well-designed integrated information systems can be the basis for gaining a competitive advantage. These systems allow the organization to expand export markets through the acquisition of information and communication, and provide the conditions to apply more efficient cost management compared to competitors with the effective and timely use of market information, as well as integrated exchanges in accordance with the supply chain. The creation of integrated computerized production systems, product design, and production plans that are directly connected to each other, provides several possibilities for companies. One is increasing the accuracy, flexibility and speed of responding to customer orders, and another is by providing the background to offer quality information in order to increase mental engagement and increase the click rate of online ads. Also, it could provide information that can be used in developing future customer communication plans as well. Companies can similarly use the virtual reality approach to test the product concepts. In this approach, the company designs a virtual sample of the product with the help of a computer, special software or hardware while show in it to the customer as a simulation.

**Customer-oriented engineering strategy:** experts believe that companies should follow customer-oriented engineering strategy for new product development. For this purpose, the consumer behavior in the target country must first be examined to determine the factors affecting the change of consumer behavior in the conditions of the virus outbreak on the one hand and consumer behavior in cyberspace on the other hand. currently, it is necessary to focus on the needs of the current market, with the aim of increasing the power of customer choice. With the presence and participation of the customer in the final design of new products and services, the product could be designed and produced in an improved manner.

**Incremental innovation strategy:** Most experts believe that one of the important factors in gaining a competitive advantage, especially in critical situations, is the incremental innovation strategy. In this strategy, companies slightly change the

characteristics of existing products for customers and new markets. They design and market various products based on the main product and provide intermediate products and services to solve the problems of different industries. On the other hand, newest companies focus on completely new technologies. In this strategy, new companies try to drastically reduce their prices with the help of new technologies and change the competitive environment of the market. Additionally, new products designed exclusively for domestic markets will not be successful products. However, new products designed for the whole world or at least for a few neighboring countries will succeed and gain a significant market share. Therefore, companies should have a global approach in designing and developing new products and services. Open innovation (free) is another solution suggested by experts, for this purpose, many companies today are looking for ideas from people outside the organization to design, produce new products, and offer other Bricolage or "creative combination of available resources".

**Competitors Orientation Strategy:** In several interviews, it was pointed out that in order to successfully orient the export strategy in the context of the Covid-19 crisis, while identifying the strengths and weaknesses of competitors, discovering their strategies and long-term capabilities, an appropriate response should be and took preemptive initiatives to gain an advantage over competitors in the market.

**Learning Orientation Strategy:** Business scholars agree that a strong learning orientation helps organizations achieve competitive advantage (Wang, 2008).

"A learning orientation affords firms the ability to unlearn the conventional wisdom about markets, customers and competitors that has become obsolete, allowing firms to avoid competency traps and to address decision-making in a more proactive manner. Learning orientation is consistently linked in the literature to innovation success and positive improvements in absolute and relative performance" (Baker et al., 2022, p. 864).

According to experts, the tendency to learn improves the quality in the strategic planning process, indicating that the main factor for the success of the development of new industrial products is a unique and high-quality product.

**Cost Control Strategy:** Firms' emphasis on the efficiency of all parts of the value chain in order to control costs in a strategic direction was the only factor raised in the interviews.

### *Export market orientation*

#### Virtual Marketing

Considering the speed of developments and the need for quick reaction, the interviewees believed that, since one of the success factors in export market orientation in Conditions of transformation is marketing in cyberspace. It is necessary to have a professional website with internet branding, the most important component of which in the digital space. While advertising extensively in popular networks, the brand should be introduced and recognized. As virtual shopping is not based on a real purchase experience, advertising in cyberspace should emphasize the apparent characteristics of

the product such as product's image, price and qualitative information. In order to create a positive experience of shopping in cyberspace, which is followed by repetition of purchase, it should be considered to create and develop an interactive relationship based on trust with customers in cyberspace.

### Distribution through capillary networks

One of the interviewees emphasized on the capillary distribution channels in transformation conditions and stated that instead of just looking for export, we should distribute goods through the capillary networks of stores, and essentially don't lose attention to retail, because this capillary mode provides access to local areas.

### Video branding

According to experts, in the conditions of rapid developments, such as the Covid-19 crisis, using videos for personal and business branding is one of the ways that can be used. Considering the growth and popularity of using videos in the last few years, this method is considered one of the most productive methods for effective and strong branding.

### Health Brand

According to the respondents, one of the major weaknesses of products in international markets is the inability to compete with top brands. Due to the fear of the spread and the risk of contamination, the sensitivity of consumers towards the product brand, especially in the pandemic circumstances, has increased. That's why companies in the field of exports will be successful in understanding this concern of consumers and taking action to build trust. Therefore, as a prerequisite for export, companies should focus on creating brands that will ensure the confidence of customers, so the suggestion of experts is to introduce a brand with a specific brand name, which guarantees the health of the consumer. The health brand is the best title for introducing and presenting products in the conditions of the contagious diseases outbreak. Although health brand products should have characteristics which is listed in Table 2.

### *Export Performance*

The extent to which the company's goals in the field of exporting products to international markets are achieved is called export performance. Experts categorized the export performance in the transforming conditions around two axes: financial and operational.

**Financial performance:** In the interviews, it appeared that increasing annual profit rates from product sales is made possible through better compatibility, better planning, and closer contacts with international markets, eliminating products that are not profitable or out of line with macro-leadership.

**Operational Performance:** The interviewees' opinion on improving export performance in transformations consisted of three components; 1- Promoting entrepreneurial tendencies to respond to environmental competition. 2- Increasing the relative share of the global market for current products in new markets, and 3- Influencing

the international market by increasing the number of purchases, attracting competitors, and persuading new buyers to buy.

## Conclusion and discussion

### *Data analysis process*

At this point, the theorist of Grounded theory selects a category of the coding step, places it at the center of the process he is examining (as a "central phenomenon"), and then relates the other categories to it. These other categories include "causal conditions", "strategies", "contextual and intervening conditions" and "consequences". This step involves drawing a diagram called a "coding pattern". The coding pattern shows relationships between causal conditions, strategies, contextual and intervening conditions, and consequences (Cresswell, 2012; Farhangi et al., 2018; Hematabadi et al., 2024; Moeinfar et al., 2023).

**core category:** The central phenomenon in Grounded theory is a phenomenon that has been the main goal of the research. Therefore, in the present study, the central phenomenon is "Export performance in transformations".

**Causal conditions:** The categories that affect the central category constitute the causal conditions. According to experts, the causal conditions affecting successful export performance in transformations is export market orientation, which provides the conditions for successful export performance.

**Strategies:** Since the strategies are specific actions or interactions that result from the central phenomenon, the interviewees considered export performance strategies in the conditions of transformation to include the following factors: information systems strategy, customer-oriented engineering strategy, increasing innovation strategy, Competitive orientation strategy, learning orientation strategy and cost control strategy.

**Context conditions:** Context conditions are appropriate conditions that affect strategies. It was concluded from the interviews that economic, social, cultural, political, and military developments provide a context that will be different on the selected strategies according to the type, intensity and speed of the developments.

**Intervening conditions:** There are general background factors that slow down or accelerate strategies. The experts considered the reason for the restrictions and obstacles to export in changing conditions to have an interventionist role. The interviewees believed that export restrictions are a factor that can indirectly affect the export performance of companies as an intervening variable. Export restrictions can be defined as company level, operating environment, domestic market environment, and international marketing environment.

**Consequences:** Consequences are the output of strategies. From the interviewees' point of view, the following factors are the results of applying strategies in transformations; 1- Maintaining the mental position of the company and the product in

the minds of consumers, 2- Inducing the message of power and market leadership and stabilizing the competitive mental position, 3- Maintaining the position and increasing the market share, 4- Competing in the international market in corona and post-corona conditions, and 5- Increasing the annual profit growth rate of product sales. In summary, the results of applying the model will be successful export performance in both financial and operational areas.

*Elements and relationships of conceptual model variables*

Figure 1. shows a diagram model of factors affecting export performance under changes.

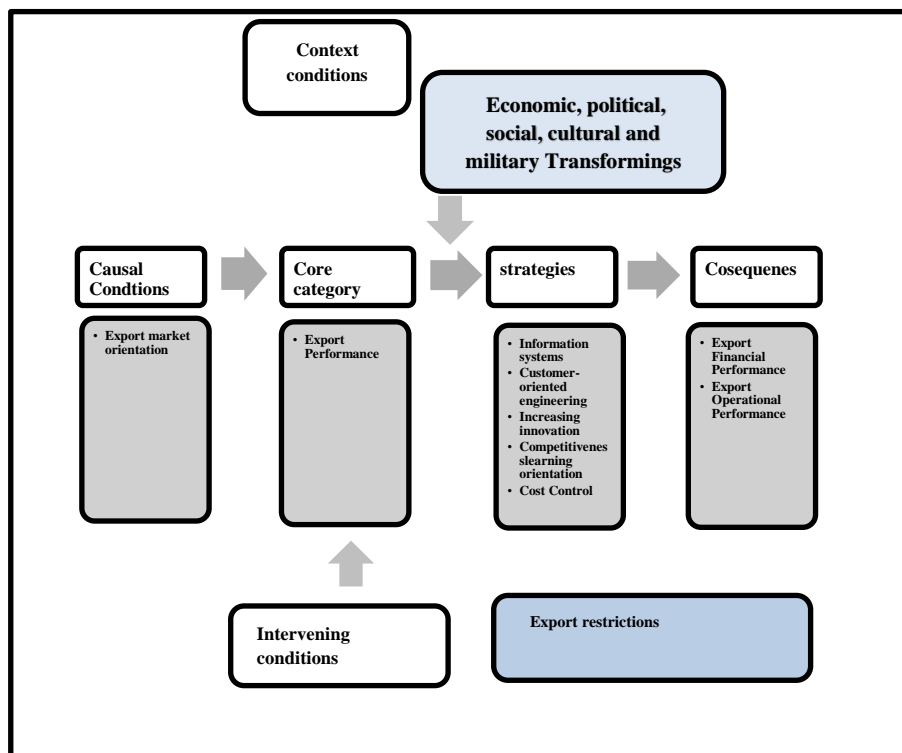


Figure 1. Axial coding of the model of the effect on export performance in business environment transformations

**Results**

The aim of this study is identifying solutions related to export performance in transformations and providing a model in this regard. For this purpose, while interviewing experts, data was collected, and according to the questions and the research strategy, Grounded theory was chosen. The presentation of the model based on Grounded theory has three key steps; "Open coding", "Axial coding" and "Selective coding". The results of the research are as follows: In two stages of open and axial coding, interviews were examined for identification, categories, and subcategories (data in Table 2). In the selective coding stage, the main categories were found in addition to examining the relationships between the categories in the axial coding model. Strategies related to export performance in the transforming conditions, which were obtained from the main

questions of this research in this step are strategic orientation, export market orientation, and export performance.

To compare the research findings with past researches, strategic orientation is one of the main factors in export performance in Conditions of transformations. While conducting their research, Mosleh et al. (2017) concluded that export companies can take an effective step to advance export goals by changing their strategic orientation. Cheng and Huizingh (2014) also emphasized on the positive effect of active strategic orientation on export success.

Data obtained from pivotal extraction for strategic movement includes six factors of information systems strategy, customer-oriented engineering strategy, increasing innovation strategy, Competitive orientation strategy, learning orientation strategy, and cost control strategy. Hajipour et al. (2015) concluded in their study that customer orientation and cost orientation, have a positive and significant effect on operational performance in the process, while the tendency to competitors and the tendency to innovation did not have an effect on performance. The findings of Verhees and Meulenbergh (2004) suggested that product innovation has a positive effect on market orientation and performance, as well.

The second factor influencing export performance in transformations, according to the research findings, is export market orientation. The results of study's Acikdilli et al. (2022) study showed that export market orientation and marketing capability have direct positive effects on export performance.

Moreover, the studies of Mohammadian et al. (2013), Theodosiou et al. (2012), and Vorhies and Morgan (2005) indicated results that are in line with the current study. Additionally, the interviews to identify the effective factors in export market orientation included four categories of virtual marketing, Distribution via capillary network, video branding, and health brand. Study's madadkhani et al. (2021), while analyzing the theme of export market orientation, identified four central components including, the author branding, exhibition marketing, virtual marketing, and export marketing strategy. Therefore, it can be concluded that the three factors of virtual marketing, data-driven marketing and health brand are effective on export market orientation in transformations. According to the results of the research, the third factor affecting the export performance in the transforming is the export performance of companies, which has two categories that affect it: Financial performance and Operational performance.

The answer to the second question of the research was given by presenting a model of the effect of strategic orientation and export market management on export performance in the transforming conditions. (Figure 1). The following is a brief description of this model; In the data analysis process stage, based on experts' opinion, export performance in the transforming conditions was selected as a pivotal phenomenon. Furthermore, export market orientation was identified as a causal condition affecting the central phenomenon (export performance). The use of virtual marketing as a sub-component of export marketing, according to its capacities, provides causal conditions for the success of export performance. However, companies need to improve their production performance purposefully through customer orientation, competitor orientation,

innovation orientation, and cost control orientation to achieve the central phenomenon (export performance) in the transforming conditions. From the point of view of the experts participating in the research, export restrictions are a factor that can indirectly affect the export performance of companies as an intervening variable. Export restrictions can include different levels such as company level, operating environment level, domestic market environment level, and international marketing environment level. Among the limitations at the company level are lack of competent personnel in the field of export, lack of comprehensive marketing research from the market, failure to provide an adjusted marketing mix for foreign markets, inability to brand and gain brand reputation, lack of effective access to capital, management inefficiency, lack of strategy in the field of production and operations, lack of research and development strategy, lack of use or incomplete use of information systems, lack of internal marketing in the company, etc. The limitations at the operating environment level include lack of effective communication with customers, lack of competitiveness, lack of control or partnership with manufacturers, suppliers and distributors, lack of access to the capital market, inability to receive credit from the financial and credit network, and lack of communication with local communities. As for the limitations in the level of the domestic market environment, companies face limitations such as; lack of sufficient government support for production and export; instability in macroeconomic variables such as interest rate shock, inflation rate, exchange rate, and tax rate; production stagnation; unemployment rate; lack of mastery of economic logic on the business environment; not using the capacities of economic diplomacy; failure to establish customs laws with the approach of encouraging exports; lack of financial aid to export companies and support for the private sector; and failure to create and develop reliable markets in the export of goods and services. At the foreign market environment level, companies encounter restrictions like economic restrictions (e.g., quota, embargo, industrial structure, means to distribute income, customs barriers, non-tariff barriers, etc.) technological, political-legal (e.g., attitude towards foreign companies, foreign trade regulations, tax laws, and terrorism and environmental protection laws), and sociocultural (changes in lifestyle, increasing people's awareness, market attention towards senior citizens, reduction of mass market and the growth of corner or sub-markets, the acceleration of life through mobile phones, telecommunications and Internet marketing, single-person and childless families, and increasing the diversity of markets and labor force). Thus, based on the research results, the encountered export restrictions are among the intervening variables affecting the export performance process.

The implementation of the whole process and the application of strategies lead to successful export performance in transformations, which from the interviewees' point of view includes two categories of performance; Financial performance and operational performance. Financial performance increases the annual profit growth rate, and operational performance leads to maintaining the mental position of the company and the product in the minds of consumers, suggesting a message of power and market leadership. It consolidates a competitive mental position, maintains position and increases market share, and competes internationally in the transforming conditions.

### **Recommendations**

According to the research findings, it is suggested that: export companies, by



examining the current status of the brand and the subjective image of the company and its products, in addition to changing the lifestyle and behavior of foreign consumers in transformations, should formulate a commercial market for online sales and, if necessary, by reviewing, changing and repositioning, improve the subjective position of the company and products. by reproducing the brand, export companies can conquer the necessary positions and work on the mind of the consumer. In this regard, the existence of a satisfied consumer who has a stable and powerful identity of the company in his mind, while word-of-mouth marketing, emphasizing and focusing on social interactions through; Fairness in pricing, paying attention to mutual expectations, sharing cognitive-emotional experiences, developing and improving cooperation and interaction between customers and sellers, creating sales campaigns can guarantee the company's performance. Because he has somehow taken on the role of an unofficial marketer. Of course, in the meantime, the impact of relational marketing should not be neglected, which strengthens the power of commitment between the parties in relational marketing. social presence; It is also another means of promoting exports, which can be achieved through interaction with sellers, social presence on the web, building trust and network relationships, and developing social capital. Trust building is another requirement in the field of export, which can be improved by increasing the quality of products or services, refining members' opinions and validating opinions, realistic branding, using experienced and trained sellers. Companies should also pay great attention to the privacy and security of customer information and establish strict rules in this regard in order to increase the trust of their customers. Also, with 24-hour support from their sites, they can answer customers' questions quickly and accurately. Also, companies should increase the variety of export products while investing in research and development, specialized manpower and emphasizing on low-cost price and high added value of export products, in such a way as to provide a complete package of necessities needed by the customers of the destination country. to be and finally, the government should act by amending export laws to support the export performance of companies in order to solve economic and structural challenges and facilitate exports.

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