

Investigating the impact of strategic flexibility on the export performance of companies in Khorasan Science and Technology Park; examining the mediating role of international marketing capability and the moderating role of adaptation to digital tech

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the effect of strategic flexibility on the export performance of companies in Khorasan Science and Technology Park through international marketing capability. It also examines whether the adoption of digital technology by these companies moderates the effect of strategic flexibility on international marketing capability. This study is applicable in terms of its purpose, and survey in terms of its implementation method. The statistical population of the present study is all managers of companies in Khorasan Science and Technology Park, as many as 160 people; among whom 141 samples were selected using non-random sampling method. The data collection tool was the standard questionnaire of Zohur and Liu (2023) with 19 items. The experts' point of view, convergent and divergent validity, and factor analysis were used to assess face validity. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were used to measure reliability. Data analysis was performed using structural equation modeling and SmartPLS 3 software. The results showed that strategic flexibility has a significant effect on international marketing capabilities and export performance of knowledge-based companies. Also, strategic flexibility has a significant effect directly and indirectly, through the mediating role of international marketing capabilities, on export performance of knowledge-based companies. The moderating role of adaptation to digital technologies in the effect of strategic flexibility on international marketing capabilities was not confirmed.

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Introduction

Strategic flexibility acts as an organization's agility in identifying and adapting to sudden and significant environmental changes (Vorhies et al., 2009). These changes include events in the organization's environment that have a significant impact on its performance. Any organization that has more diversity in its resources and programs will be more flexible compared to the environment in which it operates. This flexibility is important for organizations as a competitive advantage, along with factors such as cost, quality, and innovation (Khodami et al., 2012). Flexible organizations can use environmental changes as an opportunity for progress. Flexibility management is a delicate skill that balances the allocation of resources necessary for timely decisions and avoiding risky investments (Vorhies et al., 2005). In international marketing, the suitability of decisions with the cultural criteria of societies is the key to success. In fact, these criteria are considered the criteria for accepting or rejecting marketing strategies in each country (Faiz et al., 2012). Despite its numerous advantages, strategic management also has disadvantages; it reduces the organization's flexibility: focusing on strategy can prevent the organization from reacting quickly to environmental changes (Ravichandran & Lertwongsatein, 2015). Given Iran's shared borders with its neighbors and the size of its neighbors' populations, there will be a very high potential for companies active in the field of producing goods or services to achieve the expected figures in exports. The expansion of knowledge-based companies active in the field of exports, in addition to earning foreign exchange for the country, will lead to the growth of manufacturing companies, increase the gross domestic product, and also significantly increase the country's employment rate. Therefore, in this study, the aim is to clarify the effect of strategic flexibility on export performance through the mediating role of international marketing capabilities and the moderating role of adapting to digital technologies in knowledge-based companies in the Khorasan Science and Technology Park. Therefore, the above points clarify the importance and necessity of the upcoming research.

Theoretical Framework

Strategic Flexibility

Strategic flexibility is an arsenal of capabilities that gives firms the power to adapt and change. This ability helps and empowers firms against environmental changes and enables them to adapt to changes in large competitive markets. The power of international strategy lies in its flexibility, which allows companies to take advantage of environmental uncertainties, exchange rate fluctuations, government policies, and competitors' actions (Protogerou et al., 2018). Analyzing strategic flexibility is of great importance in the process of company internationalization (Xu et al., 2018).

Firm Export Performance

The global growth of markets and the increasing participation of organizations in the global arena over the past years have created a significant trend in recent research to study the export performance of firms (Di Fatta et al., 2019). The purpose of export performance is to determine the extent to which the company was able to achieve its desired goals in the field of exports and international trade and to what extent it achieved the predicted outlook (Alteren & Tudoran, 2016).

International Marketing Capability

In today's interconnected world, a thorough understanding of each country's issues and challenges is essential for successful entry into global markets. Adopting strategies tailored to each country's and market's conditions and taking specific actions in high-risk environments will be the key to success in international trade (Vorhies & Morgan, 2013). In order to survive

and outperform competitors, organizations have no choice but to equip themselves with an arsenal of powerful marketing tools. Marketing capabilities serve as a roadmap for developing effective business strategies and play a vital role in the performance and success of businesses. These capabilities act as catalysts that bring about appropriate behaviors to improve marketing performance (Morgan et al., 2018).

Digital Technologies

Information and communication technologies are recognized as one of the main fields of entrepreneurship in today's world (Del Giudice et al., 2019). In addition to transforming structures and procedures, these technologies have enabled companies to achieve economic growth (Rashidi et al., 2023). Digital technology with a social media approach can play a role in guiding various factors and areas to create new businesses. To achieve efficient entrepreneurship in this field, we must carefully consider all the environmental threads that affect our work, like a skilled weaver, and delicately weave them into the threads of our ideas and creativity (Salamzadeh et al., 2019).

Research Methodology

The present study is applicable in terms of purpose, and survey in terms of implementation method. The statistical population of the present study is all managers of companies in Khorasan Science and Technology Park; 160 persons among whom 141 samples were selected using non-random sampling method. The data collection tool was the standard questionnaire of Zohoor and Liu (2023) with 19 items.

Research findings

Data analysis was performed using the structural equation modeling method and SmartPLS 3 software. The results showed that strategic flexibility has a significant effect on international marketing capabilities and export performance of knowledge-based companies. Also, strategic flexibility has a significant effect directly and indirectly, through the mediating role of international marketing capabilities, on the export performance of knowledge-based companies. The moderating role of adaptation to digital technologies in the effect of strategic flexibility on international marketing capabilities was not confirmed.

Conclusion

The first objective of this study was to investigate the effect of strategic flexibility on the international marketing capabilities of export companies in Khorasan Science and Technology Park. The results confirm the significance of this effect. The second objective of this study was to investigate the effect of strategic flexibility on the export performance of export companies in Khorasan Science and Technology Park. Accordingly, the results indicate that this effect is significant and the second hypothesis is confirmed. The third objective of this study was to investigate the effect of international marketing capability on the export performance of exporting companies in Khorasan Science and Technology Park. The results confirm the significance of this effect. The fourth objective of this study was to investigate the effect of strategic flexibility on export performance through the mediating role of international marketing capabilities in exporting companies in Khorasan Science and Technology Park. Accordingly, the results confirm the significance of this effect. The fifth objective of this study was to investigate the moderating role of adaptation to digital technologies in the effect of strategic flexibility on the digital marketing capabilities of companies in Khorasan Science and Technology Park. It can be concluded that the adaptation to digital technologies variable does not moderate (strengthen or weaken) the relationship

between strategic flexibility and international marketing capabilities. These results were in line with the results of Sharafi & Mombeyni (2023), Behboodi et al., (2022), Amooamooha & Yazdani (2021), bashir khodaparasti et al., (2020), Nowrozi & Masum (2018), Evanthi & Azhar (2023), Navarro-Garcia et al., (2024), Zahoor & Lew (2023), Ling-Yee & Ogunmokon (2014), and (Joseph (2020).

According to the research results, the following suggestions were made:

Managers of Khorasan Science and Technology Park companies should pay attention to the tastes of consumers in the destination market and the quality of products in order to improve international marketing capabilities.

Managers of Khorasan Science and Technology Park companies, with the help of government organizations (such as the Export Development Center), should form a committee or union to conduct marketing research and exchange information.

Managers should reflect more on decisions about the marketing mix in the field of exports and examine target markets more and better.

Managers of Khorasan Science and Technology Park companies should consider the differences in their company's communication infrastructure, marketing, and legal systems with the target market.

Managers of Khorasan Science and Technology Park companies should invest in adopting digital technologies that can provide timely access to information and identify market opportunities.