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The impact of marketing communication on performance with mediation role of competitive strategy and moderator effect of technological turbulence

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ABSTRACT

With the emergence of the value of knowledge and the role of innovation, increasing changes and major developments in the field of market competition and uncertainty of environmental conditions have occurred, which led to structural changes in organizations. Therefore, the present study examines the effect of marketing communications on export performance with the mediating role of competitive strategy and moderating technological turbulence. The aim of this study is to determine the effect of marketing communications on export performance with the mediating role of competitive strategy and moderating technological turbulence. The type of the present study is a descriptive survey and the statistical population of this study is food exporting companies in Tehran. For this purpose, 52 questionnaires were distributed and collected among the managers of food exporting companies in Tehran, which were selected by census method. The data collection tool of the present study is a questionnaire and its reliability was measured by calculating Cronbach's alpha coefficient. The validity of the research tool was also confirmed by conducting confirmatory factor analysis technique. Also, structural equation modeling method has been used to analyze the data. The software used in the descriptive part is SPSS and in the structural equation part is Smart-PLS. The results of the present study showed that marketing communications have a significant effect on export performance and competitive strategies of the company. Also, competitive strategy has a mediating role between the effect of marketing communications on export performance. Technological disruption also has a moderating role between the effect of marketing communications on competitive strategy.
Keywords: marketing communications, export performance, competitive strategy, technological turbulence

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1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, since the 1960s, with the emergence of the value of knowledge and the role of innovation, there have been increasing changes and major developments in the field of market competition and uncertainty of environmental conditions, which have led to structural changes in large organizations. However, these organizations with complex structures were able to make few changes in their methods and structures. Therefore, small companies with high flexibility, speed and innovation, advanced technology and ultimately taking advantage of international trade opportunities have acquired higher competitiveness and entrepreneurship in the economy. In the meantime, new international investments are small and medium-sized enterprises that are seeking to gain a significant competitive advantage from the use of resources and the establishment of capabilities for international sales of products from the very beginning. Researchers believe that the new generation of enterprises responds to environmental changes through

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rapid internationalization. Therefore, it is necessary to study international new ventures in countries with emerging economies, given the difficulty of accessing information from SMEs, while many analytical studies are limited to multinational companies (Martin et al., 2020).

Although studies show that marketing capabilities play a major role in explaining the performance of international new ventures, the understanding of the interplay between marketing capabilities and other factors to respond to competitive demands is limited. Marketing capabilities are created to gain competitive advantage, they are characterized by the ability to develop and deliver superior value to customers by combining its available resources. While the marketing literature supports marketing capabilities as a factor of value creation, there has been less research on how international new ventures, which have limited resources, can enhance marketing capabilities that are more resource-rich. Hence, these gaps in the international entrepreneurship literature indicate a lack of support for international new venture managers to decide how to increase the level of marketing capabilities to enhance performance (Martin et al., 2020).

Furthermore, with recent advances in new media and computer technologies, communication is more important than ever for understanding the foreign marketing environment, as communication plays a key role in attracting and retaining customers. Little is known about the interaction between marketing communications and the marketing capabilities required by firms. Analysis of external factors shows that competing abroad is challenging for new international ventures. These firms are constantly improving their strategies and honing their inputs to compete in regional and global markets. One such challenge is the rate of technological change in the market, especially for new international ventures located in resource-constrained emerging markets. Technological turbulence can be a threat to firm performance because it creates unstable environments that ultimately contribute to a decline in firm performance. While some research suggests that unstable conditions can make international new ventures vulnerable, other studies suggest that technological disruption can have a positive impact on the performance of international new ventures. However, how technological disruption can positively affect international new ventures is still unclear (Martin et al., 2020).

Research on marketing capabilities has increasingly played an important role in the survival and success of international new ventures in international markets. However, the focus on the impact of external factors, such as technological disruption, on international new ventures is limited. The present study demonstrates how marketing communications affect the relationship between marketing capabilities and competitive strategy, thus providing a working theory for international entrepreneurship theory (Martin et al., 2020).

In this study, the moderating effect of technological disruption, an external factor in food production, moderates the impact between marketing communications and competitive strategy on international new ventures of food exporting firms. This study can provide advice and suggestions to managers of these companies' new international ventures on resource allocation decisions. Because the choice to increase the level of marketing capabilities requires a significant investment in resources, managers must ensure that their investments will benefit from appropriate rewards. Because the impact of marketing capabilities performance on new international ventures has received minimal empirical attention (Martin et al., 2020). The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of marketing communications on the export performance of food exporting companies by mediating competitive strategy and moderating technological disruption.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In today's turbulent and unpredictable environments, achieving competitive advantage increasingly depends on the ability of firms to deliver greater long-term customer value. From a resource-based perspective, it is stated that a firm's unique set of valuable, scarce, unavoidable, and non-substitutable resources and capabilities form the basis of difficult-to-copy value-creating strategies that can provide a firm with competitive advantage or above-average returns (Santos-Vijande et al., 2012). On the other hand, globalization and rapid advances in information and communication technologies, as well as international trade agreements in services, have improved the position of service industries in the global economy. As a result, an increasing number of service firms are operating in foreign markets (Lajperas, 2019). In the meantime, the firm with a strategic perspective seeks solutions to help change in order to provide a long-term framework as a competitive advantage, and the success of the firm's business performance in the long term (Swarova and Verchota, 2014).

2.1 Marketing communications

The main purpose of marketing communications is to convey a message between the sender and the receiver (Fallet and Holubic, 2017). Marketing communications are a specific feature of the firm, which is defined as communication to understand the external marketing environment and, with new media and computer technology, plays an important role and is embedded in the daily organizational processes and practices (Martin et al., 2020). Marketing learns from business results. Therefore, it is necessary to understand the financial indicators, i.e. the economic aspects and results of marketing communications in the context of the company's activities. Marketing is part of a management process. The result of this process is knowledge management, forecasting and influencing customers in an efficient manner and ensuring the achievement of company goals (Falát and Holubčík, 2017). The most common forms of marketing communications are: advertising, sales support, public relations, personal selling, direct marketing and event marketing. All these forms of marketing communications of a company create corporate marketing. Evidence from previous research suggests that marketing communications, as a tool for shaping customer perceptions, influence the link between value perceptions and future behavioral intentions (Hänninen and Karjaluoto, 2017). In addition, they examine the market and identify its wants and personality, investigate and test market responses, focus on and communicate with specific customer segments. The task of marketing in a market environment (where competitors offer similar or identical products) is to present the product (or service) in an efficient way relative to competitors. The marketing of the company has to manage the market in such a way that it can establish and maintain a relationship with the customer that is beneficial to both parties (Falát and Holubčík, 2017).

Marketing communications is considered a specific capability for the company, since its underlying processes may be deeply embedded in everyday work and organizational practices. According to the resource-based perspective, a capability does not mean doing something in a stand-out way. A capability is defined as performing some function at an acceptable level that provides benefits (Martin et al., 2020). Marketing communications that meet specific needs of the recipient increase value and loyalty in business relationships. Customer engagement in supplier interactions may increase customer active loyalty, and positive communications about a brand may be reinforced through communication (Hänninen and Karjaluoto, 2017).

Evidence from the consumer framework suggests that marketing communications play a mediating role in linking attitudes and behavior. Research has shown that customer perceived value influences customer evaluation of supplier marketing communications. Marketing communications are defined as creating favorable customer attitudes that lead to increased information seeking and, in turn, influence purchase behavior. Research suggests that the criteria for good communication may vary across customers (Hänninen and Karjaluoto, 2017). Researchers propose a model of marketing communication effectiveness, suggesting that customer attitudes toward evaluations and evaluations about a brand influence how communications are structured for further marketing communications with the same brand. A key point about the interaction of perceived value and marketing communications is that those buyers who evaluate a supplier more positively also seek out more information and engage in more influence efforts, making supplier communication efforts more effective (Hänninen and Karjaluoto, 2017).

2.2 Competitive strategy

In today's globalized world, it is increasingly difficult for companies to maintain their competitive advantage. The ability of a company to advance rapidly and appropriately is based on a competitive strategy that allows the company to decide which strategy to choose to achieve superior export performance (Martin et al., 2020). Competitiveness is a complex, multidimensional, multifaceted, relative and very confusing concept. There are countless definitions and models for this term, but there is still no universally accepted or widely agreed upon definition, and there is no universal model for competitiveness. Since the early 1990s to the present, different authors, depending on the breadth and aspect of their research, have offered different definitions of competitiveness and have continuously expanded their models for destination competitiveness. Therefore, there are definitions of international competitiveness from the perspective of economics, management, history, politics and cultures, as well as definitions of international competitiveness from a national perspective.

Švárová and Vrchota (2014) explain that when defining international competitiveness from a national perspective, emphasis is placed on business prosperity as the ultimate outcome of competition and the importance of consumer perception of competition. The generally accepted definition of competitiveness from a national perspective defines competitiveness as: the degree to which a nation can produce goods and services that meet the test of international markets and at the same time maintain or expand. Also, the real income of its citizens. The main goal of strategic management is to create competitive advantage as the most important condition for business success. All the potential of the company to achieve this goal is prepared by daily operational decisions based on a long-term strategy.

These competitive strategies have traditionally been understood in an exclusive way, which is why the set of resources and organizational arrangements required to carry them out are fundamentally incompatible (Gómez et al., 2019). Many previous studies have focused on developing definitions and terminology of competitive strategy. Many of them are based on Porter's seminal work in 1980, which suggested two general strategies that a firm can adopt to achieve above-average performance: cost leadership and differentiation. Firms that focus on a pure strategy may be less responsive to market changes and more agile and flexible in offering products that combine costs and product features. Therefore, integrated or hybrid strategies combining cost leadership and differentiation have been proposed in order to counter competition (Laari et al., 2017).

2.3 Technological turbulence

Technological turbulence is a threat to the operations of firms that creates unstable environments and ultimately reduces the performance of firms. Technological turbulence causes frequent changes that force firms to constantly adapt to technological trends (Martin et al., 2020). Technological turbulence causes frequent changes that force firms to constantly adapt to technological trends. Technological turbulence can be considered a threat to the operations of firms because it is disruptive and creates unstable environments. Accordingly, technological turbulence contributes to a sense of uncertainty (Martin et al., 2020). Technological turbulence is defined as "the rate of technological change in an industry". A rapidly changing technological environment is characterized by "short product development cycles and rapid technological obsolescence", which may create opportunities for firms (Wu et al., 2017). The technological turbulence of the firm's environment either facilitates or hinders the adoption of supply chain technology, which seems to be an important issue for firms that conduct cognitive assessments of existing knowledge resources and current technology resources (Autry et al., 2010). A changing technological environment creates new opportunities for product development that firms can use to appeal to and expand their customer bases. It also creates challenges that may prompt firms to change or update their products to maintain competitive advantages. Firms must overcome challenges and seize opportunities by creating new, advanced products, otherwise they will be left out of the market (Martin et al., 2020). Firms in technologically turbulent environments are also likely to adopt supply chain technologies that are easy to adopt to gain market advantage (Autry et al., 2010).

2.4 Export investment performance

Export performance is crucial for decision-making in the international arena (O'Cass and Julian, 2003). Export investment performance in this research is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct at the export investment level in terms of three dimensions: 1) effectiveness, the extent to which organizational goals and objectives are achieved, 2) efficiency, the relationship between the financial results of performance and the inputs required to achieve them, and 3) the adaptability of operational ability in response to environmental changes (Martin et al., 2020). The research literature shows that export performance has been more productive than non-exporters (Oura et al., 2016). Firms targeting foreign markets tend to have better support from their foreign distributors and exchange information that is crucial for the success of their operations abroad. These firms also provide complementary services, mainly after-sales services. This situation can lead to greater loyalty in target markets and have a positive impact on achieving competitive advantages in different markets of the country in which the organization operates, resulting in a positive development in the firm's sales. Abroad and manager satisfaction with export performance in addition, export commitments affect the speed of international expansion and the organization's export propensity (Navarro et al., 2016).

Researchers believe that the employment and income situation, the coordination of export activities and innovations in export-active firms have been more favorable than in non-exporting firms. Therefore, it is important to pay attention to the entry of international processes and entry into the export market. Export performance is a variable that is fundamentally related to export activity or the first stage of the internationalization process (Oura et al., 2016).

Export performance, from a general perspective, includes strategic and operational elements, export commitments are described as a strategic determinant in the allocation of assets to the company's foreign trade operations and as an important element for continuous development and expansion in foreign markets. This characteristic can be a condition for managers' willingness to enhance the company's marketing forces to achieve the company's international goals (O'Cass and Julian, 2003).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research is of applied research in terms of purpose. Also, in terms of the method of inference regarding the research hypotheses, it is classified as descriptive research because it describes the conditions, which is inductive reasoning in terms of reasoning. The statistical population of this research includes 52 food exporting companies. The questionnaire was sent and collected via email.

Descriptive and inferential tests were used to analyze the data of this research. In the descriptive section, percentage, mean and standard deviation were used, and in the inferential section, structural equations were used using the partial least squares (Smart-PLS) method. The Martin et al. (2020) questionnaire was used to measure the research variables.

4. FINDINGS

Descriptive study

The description of variables is important because the results of testing the research hypotheses are extracted based on the indicators of these variables. The descriptive results are shown in Table (1).

Table (1): Descriptive statistics

Variables	Minimum	Maximum	Average	Standard Deviation
Marketing communications	1	5	3.66	0.87
Competitive Strategy	1.33	4.56	3.75	0.67
Delivery differentiation	1	5	3.73	0.84
Marketing differentiation	1	5	3.74	0.81
Cost leadership	1.67	5	3.78	0.67
Technological turbulence	1	5	3.70	0.71
Export performance	1	4.71	3.81	0.65

Table (2) shows the values of Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability coefficient. As can be seen, all calculated values (both alpha coefficients and composite reliability coefficients) were greater than the minimum acceptable value of 0.7, which allows us to conclude that the research questionnaire had adequate reliability in all stages of data collection.

Table (2) Cronbach's alpha coefficients and composite reliability by variables

Variables	Cronbach's alpha coefficient	Composite reliability coefficient
Marketing communications	0.83	0.90
Competitive Strategy	0.89	0.87
Delivery differentiation	0.81	0.88
Marketing differentiation	0.84	0.72
Cost leadership	0.80	0.64
Technological turbulence	0.84	0.74
Export performance	0.86	0.82

Inferential analysis of findings

Construct validity

Construct validity is for us to determine whether the data collection method or tool is well representative of the theoretical construct or common underlying theories of the variable under investigation and is consistent with it. Table (3) shows the factor analysis coefficients. All factor loadings of the questionnaire items are greater than 0.4 and are desirable.

Table (3) Confirmatory factor analysis results

Items	Measurement indicators	Factor loadings
	Marketing communications	
MC1	Have marketing communications skills and processes	0.844
MC2	Have proficiency in using marketing communications	0.921
MC3	Develop effective export promotions	0.836
	Competitive strategy	
	Delivery differentiation	
DD1	Delivery Time Guarantee in Exports	0.850
DD2	Fast Delivery and Response to Distributor Orders	0.844
DD3	Providing Extensive Services to the End Customer	0.859
	Marketing differentiation	
MD1	Investing in Creating Brand Awareness in Marketing Communications	0.726
MD2	Providing New Products for Export Investment	0.865
MD3	Providing Distinctive Products in Exports	0.821
	Cost leadership	
CL1	Having the Lowest Cost of Offering to the Export Market	0.782
CL2	Providing in the Export Market to Customers at a Lower Price than Competitors	0.886
CL3	Controlling Sales Costs and Promoting Export Investment	0.620
	Export performance	
EP1	Positive changes in the company's market share in the past three years	0.797
EP2	Success in achieving financial goals of export investment in the past three years	0.752

EP3	Growth in sales revenue in the past three years	0.748
EP4	Growth in market share in the past three years	0.720
EP5	Success in responding to competitor product changes in the past three years	0.827
EP6	Providing the number of successful new export products in the past three years	0.502
EP7	Adhering to the timing of new product launches for export investment	0.460
	Technological turbulence	
TT1	High rate of change in the industry and technology used	0.755
TT2	Creating great opportunities with technological developments in the industry	0.840
TT3	Possibility of providing a large number of new product ideas through technological advances in the industry	0.825

Convergent validity and internal consistency

The average extracted variance examines the degree of correlation of each construct with its questions (indicators) and is used to measure convergent validity, which indicates the average variance shared between each construct and its indicators. This average extracted variance must be higher than 0.4 to confirm convergent validity. The composite reliability must also be 0.7 or higher, which indicates sufficient internal consistency. The validation results are shown in Table (4).

Table (4): Convergent validity, internal consistency, and model fit indices

Variables	AVE	CR	R^2	Redundancy	$\sqrt{\overline{AVE}}$	$\sqrt{\overline{R^2}}$	GOF
Marketing communications	0.75	0.90	-	-			
Competitive strategy	0.50	0.89	0.62	0.24			
Delivery differentiation	0.72	0.88	0.75	0.54			
Marketing differentiation	0.64	0.84	0.84	0.54	0.79	0.83	0.65
Cost leadership	0.58	0.80	0.71	0.40			
Technological turbulence	0.65	0.84	-	0			
Export performance	0.48	0.86	0.49	0.06			

Convergent validity means that the indicators of each construct ultimately provide appropriate separation in terms of measurement from other constructs in the model. In other words, each indicator measures only its own construct and their combination is such that all constructs are well separated from each other. With the help of the extracted mean variance index, it was determined that all the studied constructs have an extracted mean variance higher than 0.4. The composite reliability index (internal consistency) was used to examine the reliability of the questionnaire, and all of these coefficients are higher than 0.7, indicating the reliability of the measurement tool.

Redundancy criterion

The redundancy index of the model is the most famous index for measuring the quality of the "structural" model. In this test, we select only endogenous variables. This criterion indicates the amount of variability of the indicators of an endogenous structure that is affected by one or more exogenous structures. There is no numerical value stated for the criterion value for this index, and the average redundancy index is a general measure of the quality of the structural model that is used for all endogenous structures. In this index, values above zero indicate the desired ability of the structural model to predict, and values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, respectively, indicate the weak, medium, and strong predictive power of the structural model. The values obtained from this index and the results obtained indicate that the redundancy index of the endogenous variables of the model (research and development, innovation capacity, innovation performance) and the structural quality of the research model were appropriate.

Goodness of Fit (GOF) Index

This index shows the compromise between the quality of the structural model and the measured model and is equal to:

$$GOF = \sqrt{\overline{AVE}} \times \sqrt{\overline{R^2}}$$

Where $\overline{AVE}$ and $\overline{R^2}$ is the average of AVE and R2. The GOF value index being higher than 0.4 indicates the model fit. The value of the fit index is 0.65 and is greater than 0.4, indicating a proper fit of the model. In simpler terms, the data of this study have a proper fit with the factor structure and theoretical foundation of the study, and this indicates that the questions are aligned with the theoretical constructs.

Correlation coefficient

A type of latent variable relationship in the structural equation model is based on correlation. Correlation is a relationship between two variables in the model, but it is non-directional. The table below shows the Pearson correlation coefficients for examining the relationship between latent variables in a pairwise manner. The number one is located on the main diagonal of this matrix, so that each variable is perfectly correlated with itself. In addition to examining the correlation coefficients, divergent validity has also been addressed. To detect this, first the AVE square root of the latent variables is calculated and then the result is compared with the correlation values that this latent variable has with other latent variables, and the resulting AVE square root must be greater than the correlation values. The results of the divergent and correlation validity are given in Table (5):

Table (5): Correlation coefficients

Variables	Marketing communications	Delivery differentiation	Marketing differentiation	Cost leadership	Competitive strategy	Export performance	Technological turbulence	$\sqrt{AVE}$
Marketing communications	1							
Delivery differentiation	0.68	1						
Marketing differentiation	0.62	0.68	1					
Cost leadership	0.54	0.56	0.72	1				
Competitive strategy	0.70	0.87	0.91	0.84	1			
Export performance	0.55	0.56	0.65	0.62	0.70	1		
Technological turbulence	0.31	0.52	0.48	0.46	0.56	0.72	1	

The results of Pearson's correlation coefficients also show that there is a significant relationship between the research variables (all correlation coefficients are significant), so that export performance has the greatest relationship with the competitive strategy variable. The results of divergent validity also show that the value of the square root of the average variance explained index for most variables is greater than the correlation of that variable with other variables.

Validation of structural models

After validating the measurement models, it is time to examine the structural or internal model of the research. In Table (6), the results of structural equations are presented in order to examine the research hypotheses:

Table (6): Results of structural equations to examine the research hypotheses

Hypothesis	B coefficient	t	R^2
The impact of marketing communications on export performance	0.32	5.66	0.10
The impact of marketing communications on competitive strategy	0.59	12.32	0.35
The impact of competitive strategy on export performance	0.61	7.27	0.37
The mediating role of competitive strategy between the impact of marketing communications on export performance	0.36	5.45	0.13
The moderating role of technological disruption in the impact of marketing communications on competitive strategy	0.83	4.49	0.69

$|t|>1.96$ Significant at $P<0.05$, $|t|>2.58$ Significant at $P<0.01$

Based on the results obtained from the structural equation coefficients, the t value for all research hypotheses has been estimated according to the five percent error rule in the area of rejection of the null hypothesis for values outside the range (1.96 to -1.96). Therefore, it can be stated that the research hypotheses are confirmed with 95 percent confidence. In general, according to the results obtained from the path analysis, as is clear, marketing communications, technological disruption, and competitive strategy together determine (coefficient of determination: 62 percent) the changes in export performance.

5. CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study is to determine the impact of marketing communications on the export performance of food exporting companies by mediating competitive strategy and moderating technological disruption. As the economy continues to globalize, market competition is increasing sharply. Now, enterprises are focused on exporting and expanding their business around the world. Exporting creates huge opportunities such as spreading business risks across different markets and investments. Improving the standards of technology, quality and service in the organization generates more income and funds for reinvestment and further growth. Utilizing idle operational capacity and improving production efficiency, and attracting and rewarding shareholders and employees by creating a larger profit base. Due to the rapid growth of world exports, trade barriers are now falling and local producers are finding it difficult to separate themselves from international competition and foreign markets. Local enterprises have realized that exporting is no longer an optional activity, as it is the only way to survive in the market. Small and medium-sized enterprises have also realized that, regardless of industry, size and origin, they must now engage in export activities.

In a turbulent business environment that is undergoing a global trend and the tendency to innovate is increasing, the number of small and medium-sized enterprises that are willing to invest and access global markets and market research is increasing day by day. This has led to more attention being paid to export performance and the role of innovation. Market conditions are changing, which forces businesses to adapt to environmental conditions and constantly update and review their technology and technologies. Developing marketing communication capabilities is likely to be achieved through better actions, which in turn leads to improved company performance. Given the competitive challenges that most companies face, managers must quickly identify and respond to competition and growth opportunities by strategically building and maintaining marketing communication capabilities and directly linking them to company objectives. Despite much conceptual work on defining marketing communications, little research has been conducted to demonstrate its value as a capability. To address this issue, the present study is based on a resource-based perspective and considers marketing communications as a capability that facilitates the translation of a firm’s marketing capabilities into competitive advantages. The international marketing literature also emphasizes that marketing capabilities play a critical role in effectively activating marketing strategy in export venture activities. Marketing capabilities are important sources of superior performance in export ventures and affect the performance of firms in foreign markets. Marketing capabilities are the process of integrating a firm’s knowledge, skills, and resources for market-related needs. Marketing capabilities enable a new international venture firm to add value to its products and meet competitive demands, and play a key role in deploying market-related resources to respond to a changing environment.

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