

Total Quality Management, Export Market Orientation and Firm Export Performance: A Conceptual Framework

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Abstract

This paper proposed that export market orientation may provide a clear understanding of total quality management and firm export performance relationship. Specifically, the proposed framework links the between total quality management and export market orientation with firm performance in international market. This relationship used to produce the propositions that explained into how total quality management interact with market orientation and effects firm performance in international market.

Keywords: Total Quality Management, Export Market Orientation, Export Performance

Introduction

Exports of the country play a main important role to contributing and stabilizing the country economy (Malhotra & Kumari, 2016). Increased the trade of the country and as well as firm export performance steadily accentuated the importance of total quality management and export market orientation, resulting in some numbers of researcher's contributions involving to this topic. Such contribution has mostly focused on sources of total quality management (Radzi, Junoh, Hussain, Abd, & Aziz, 2015) and export market orientation (Singh & Mahmood, 2013). Recent research has further extended the study of total quality management (Abeykoon & de Alwis, 2015) and export market orientation (Pascucci, Bartoloni, & Gregori, 2016) in the export setting.

Although research on total quality management is widely conducted in domestic context and only few studies conducted in export setting. In fact, most of the studies have investigated the relationship between firm export performance and export market orientation (Abiodun & Mahmood, 2015; Cadogan, Boso, Story, & Adeola, 2016; Pascucci et al., 2016). Some of investigated the relationship between total quality management and export market orientation (Miguel, Heras-Saizarbitoria, & Tarí, 2016; Taleghani, Akhlagh, & Hoseini, 2013; Wang, Chen, &

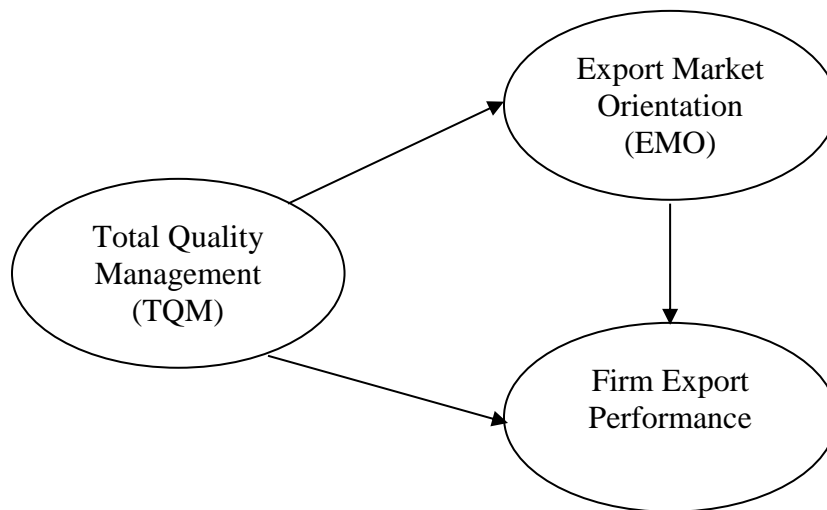
Chen, 2012). Only few studies conducted the research between the relationship of total quality management and firm export performance (Abeykoon & de Alwis, 2015; Lages, Silva, & Styles, 2009). Moreover, according to Chen, Sousa, and He (2016) have introduced the export market orientation as a third variable between firm export performance and their antecedent such as Total Quality Management. The three main points have motivated us to investigate the mediating role of export market orientation between total quality management and firm export performance.

Therefore, an important question that how and why total quality management is utilizing the export market orientation to improve the firm export performance. The main objective of this study is to enhance our understanding regarding the relationship between Total quality management and export performance by introducing the export market orientation as a mediator between two variables. The answers to such questions should provide a deeper understanding of total quality management use, its antecedents and consequences, as well as improve our understanding, how firm utilizing international market information such as export market orientation to improve the firm export performance.

Following a detailed overview of the concept of total quality management, the concept of export market orientation and export performance construct discussed in depth. Next conceptual framework and concepts relationship discussed, and relevant proposition suggested. The paper concludes, and future recommendations proposed.

Conceptual framework:

The proposed framework, shown in figure1, assimilate total quality management (Saraph, Benson, & Schroeder, 1989) with export market orientation (Cadogan, Diamantopoulos, & Mortanges, 1999; Kohli, Jaworski, & Kumar, 1993) and link them to export performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994).



The overall framework suggested the total quality management positive and direct effect on export market orientation and firm export performance, as well as the indirect effect on firm

export performance through export market orientation. Previous researchers suggested that total quality management (Joiner, 2007), export market orientation (Singh & Mahmood, 2013) and firm export performance (Shoham, Brencic, Virant, & Ruvio, 2008) are unidimensional constructs. Furthermore, comprehensive understanding between the above-mentioned constructs relationships are discussed, specifically, suggest the propositions on the behalf of construct relationships, and as well as discussed, the construct dimensions and their relationship. This is because different dimensions of total quality management and export market orientation may have a different influence on different aspects of firm export performance.

Total Quality Management and its dimensions

After the introduction of total quality management, most of the researcher contributed as conceptually and practically in total quality management literature (Garvin, 1988; Juran & Szemere, 1989; Pfau, 1989; Powell, 1995; Saraph et al., 1989). However, conceptually total quality management; there is no universal definition of TQM. For instance, according to Pfau, (1989) TQM has a comprehensive approach to the concentration of organization's objectives and managing the organization through quality, improvement in productivity, meeting customer needs and giving a competitive edge. The main purpose of TQM is to provide the quality product and service to customers and alternatively increased the performance of organization with low-cost (Antony, Fergusson, Warwood, & Hing Yee Tsang, 2004).

Another literature is related to TQM dimensions, several studies have examined the critical success factors of TQM (Black & Porter, 1996; Flynn, Schroeder, & Sakakibara, 1994; Pfau, 1989; Powell, 1995; Saraph et al., 1989; Sila & Ebrahimpour, 2002). These critical success factors divided into two aspects, such as management or soft and technical or hard practices (Green, 2012; Hoang, Igel, & Laosirihongthong, 2010; Ingelsson, Eriksson, & Lilja, 2012). Soft practices are related to management perceptions, human aspects and principals (Dahlgard-Park, 2012; Leavengood, Anderson, & Daim, 2014). They include many practices such as customer focus, employee relations, and leadership. Technical or Hard TQM practices refer to quality tools and techniques, productions, and technical aspects (S.-H. Chen, 2013; Vouzas & Psychogios, 2007). Hard TQM practices include such as quality data and reporting, process management, and product/service design. Moreover, some of the authors investigated the soft TQM practice and some of the authors investigated the hard TQM practice and some of the authors investigated the combined as well. These factors of TQM influenced the directly primary measures such as operational performance and plant performance and as well as well indirectly influence the measure such as organizational performance, financial performance, export performance, business performance, stock price performance and corporate performance.

Furthermore, Samson and Terziovski (1999) employ the total quality management as a multidimensional construct. Although, Douglas and Judge (2001); Choi and Eboch (1998); Joiner (2007); (Agus (2005); Shafiq, Lasrado, and Hafeez (2017)) operationalized the TQM as one-dimensional. Therefore, in this study, TQM is proposing as a unidimensional construct to find out its effect on the firm export performance.

Export Market Orientation and its dimensions

This is a most important topic for research regarding marketing management because it is considered as the basis of important marketing practices (Jiménez-Zarco, Pilar Martínez-Ruiz, & Izquierdo-Yusta, 2011). Market orientation, theoretically and empirically defined by (Kohli and Jaworski (1990); Kohli et al. (1993)) and Narver and Slater (1990). (Kohli and Jaworski (1990); Kohli et al. (1993)) sees MO as behavioural activities and Narver and Slater (1990) sees the MO as an aspect of organizational culture. As the behaviours perspective, MO refers to “the organization-wide generation of market intelligence pertaining to current and future customer need, dissemination of the intelligence across the department, and the organization-wide responsiveness to it” (Kohli & Jaworski, 1990; Kohli et al., 1993). Regarding cultural perspective MO defined by Narver and Slater (1990) on the base of three components, which are (1) Customer orientation (2) Competitor orientation (3) inter-functional coordination. However, if a firm possesses a strong market orientation in its domestic market not mean such firm has a high degree of market orientation in export activity (Cadogan, Paul, Salminen, Puumalainen, & Sundqvist, 2001). According to Cadogan, Kuivalainen, and Sundqvist (2009) market activities of the firms in international markets termed are export market behaviour, which is defined as an export-focused generation, dissemination, and responsiveness to export market intelligence in international markets. Moreover, according to (Cadogan et al. (1999); Rose and Shoham (2002)) export market oriented behaviour is different from domestic market-oriented behaviour due to these reasons, which are, international market stability is more complicated than domestic market and activities of export market orientation required more resources investment than the domestic market. Moreover, the operationalization of export market orientation, used the Kohli et al. (1993) (MARKOR) measurement scale by Cadogan et al. (1999) in export context with some modification. However, many researchers validate Cadogan et al. (1999) scale in exporting studies as unidimensional construct such as (Kayabasi, Kayabasi, Mtetwa, & Mtetwa, 2016; Lin, Huang, & Peng, 2014; Singh & Mahmood, 2013).

Export performance

Export performance is a degree in which firm achieved their strategic and financial objectives when firm export the product in the international market (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). Most of the researcher divided the export performance indicators into objective (quantitative) and subjective (attitudes, perceptions, qualitative) measures. According to (Beleska-Spasova, 2014), EXPERF scale of (Zou, Taylor, & Osland, 1998) is to measure the export performance in multidimensional nature i.e. covered the both measure, financial and non-financial measure of export performance in both objective and subjective terms.

This scale has been empirically validated in the USA and Japanese exporter (Zou & Stan, 1998), as well as validated in the UK and Australia (Styles, 1998); and a study of British exporter (Beleska-Spasova, Glaister, & Stride, 2012) strengthening its value as a valid generalized export performance measure. However, literature inadequately developed the link between total quality management, export market orientation and firm export performance.

Relationship and Proposition

Total Quality Management and Export Market Orientation

Total Quality Management is supporting the development of market orientation culture in the firm (Santos-Vijande & Álvarez-González, 2009). According to Lam, Lee, Ooi, and Phusavat (2012) highlighted the linking of total quality management and market orientation, since both targeted the customer needs, wants and satisfaction. Total quality management and market orientation are important for firm structural designing and value adding activities, as well as for managing the organizational change (Demirbag, Lenny Koh, Tatoglu, & Zaim, 2006). Among the many aspects that management should concentrate on the restructuring of the organizational management, to handle the marketplace demands.

Based on the above literature, we may have proposed that total quality management can influence the export market orientation implementation. Thus, the following proposition suggested:

P1: There is a positive relationship between total quality management and export market orientation of SMEs.

Export Market Orientation and firm export performance

Several studies have associated the export market orientation with firm export performance (Kayabasi et al., 2016; Lin et al., 2014; Singh & Mahmood, 2013). For example, Singh and Mahmood (2013) linked the export market orientation activities improving the firm export performance in terms of profitability, sales volume, market share and new markets. In another study marketing capability enhancing firm competitive advantage and alternatively increased the business performance (Abiodun & Mahmood, 2015). Thus, it is expected that:

P2: There is a positive relationship between export market orientation and firm export performance.

Total quality management and firm export performance

The relationship between total quality management and firm export performance have not yet investigated in depth in exporting literature. However, in management literature, this construct has a strong relationship with firm performance. Such as total quality management influenced firm performance (Corredor & Goñi, 2011); operational performance (Ng & Jee, 2012), quality performance (Mahmood, Mahmood Ahmad Qureshi, & Nisar, 2014; Valmohammadi & Roshanzamir, 2015), innovation performance (Sadikoglu & Olcay, 2014; Yusr, 2016), organizational learning (Yazdani, Attafar, Shahin, & Kheradmandnia, 2016) competitive advantage (Munizu, 2013) and financial performance (Abdollahi, Razm, & Tan, 2014; Jabeen & Mahmood, 2015; Mehralian, Nazari, Zarei, & Rasekh, 2016; Ngambi & Nkemkiafu, 2015).

Ngambi and Nkemkiafu (2015) investigated the total quality management and presented that total quality management influenced the financial performance, corporate social responsibility, cost reduction and employee satisfaction, inventory management performance and innovation performance of the firm. In another study according to Sinha, Garg, and Dhall (2016) that total quality management improved the customer result, process result, and employee result of the firm.

Based on above discussion a positive link between total quality management and firm export performance can be expected. Thus, following proposition proposed:

P3: There is a positive relationship between total quality management (TQM) and export performance of SMEs.

Mediating role of export market orientation between total quality management and firm export performance.

In this study, export market orientation is proposed to serve as a mediating variable between total quality management and firm export performance. For instance, Homburg, Krohmer, and Workman (2004) examined the mediating role of market orientation between organization strategy (i.e. Product development strategy and organizational performance. The study found the mediating effect of market orientation on strategy and firm performance outcome (i.e. customer satisfaction, market share and business profit).

Specifically, in the context of export, Lin et al. (2014) investigated the mediating effect of export market orientation between inter-firm relationship and export performance of the firm. They found a strong meditating effect of export market orientation in their study. Inter-firm relationship stronger due to export market orientation, in fact, export market orientation increased the financial condition, strategic performance, and competitive advantage of the firm in the international market. According to past studies that market orientation meditation can be a good mediator between two variables. That is, it would mediate the relationship between TQM and firm export performance. In this study, we proposed that export market orientation would be a mediator between total quality management and firm export performance. According to Baron and Kenny (1986), a mediation is observed when the third variable (export market orientation) between the predictor variable and the dependent variable, showed the stronger relationship as opposed to the main effect relationship. Thus, the following meditation proposition is proposed:

P4: Export market orientation intervenes the relationship between total quality management and export performance of the firm.

Conclusion

Early in the internationalization process, firms are likely to generate the export market information and according to international market information settle the business strategies such as total quality management. Total quality management and export market orientation are both targeted customer need, wants and their satisfaction. Total quality management and export market orientation are expected to influence the firm export performance.

This article has described the predecessor of firm export performance and their relationship such as total quality management and export market orientation. It has been suggested that total quality management influencing directly to export market orientation and indirectly to firm export performance through market orientation.

Therefore, firm management should consider the total quality management as a main strategy to handle the market demands. Thus, the relationship between export market orientation and

export performance will become stronger and alternatively direct relationship between total quality management and firm export performance may become weaker.

Thus, export market orientation has a key role to implement the total quality management and alternatively can increase the firm export performance as well. Therefore, the firm should understand these factors and their effect on firm export performance. Alternatively, firm will get the comparative export advantages through the proper use of the export market information and total quality management strategy in the export setting.

Future studies should validate this conceptual framework in empirically, especially in the context of exporting SMEs.

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