



EFFECT OF EXPORT LEARNING CAPABILITY AND MANAGEMENT EXPERIENCE ON EXPORT PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- All firms strive for a competitive advantage in their domestic and international markets, and they are constantly looking for new methods to differentiate themselves from competitors. Exports can be viewed as a strategic activity at the firm, industry, and national levels. However, some tactics are required to be successful in exporting. The goal of this study was to see how export learning capability and management experience affected export performance in Iranian handmade carpet enterprises, with the chaotic environment acting as a moderator and internal export barriers acting as a mediating factor.

Methodology- This study's statistical population includes 129 managers from Iranian handmade carpet export enterprises. The questionnaire was distributed to all managers, and 124 questionnaires were distributed. During the pre-test, the questionnaire's validity and reliability were assessed.

Findings- Data analysis by using PLS software and research findings demonstrate that export learning capability and management experience have an impact on export performance, with the turbulent environment moderating and internal export barriers mediating.

Conclusion- Exporting is a critical initial step for firms to develop and invest in in order to reach global markets and extend their international activities.

Keywords: Export performance, export learning capability, management experience, internal export barriers, export environmental turbulence

JEL Codes: E30, F20, M10

1. INTRODUCTION

All firms seek competitive advantages in their domestic and international markets, as well as new solutions to separate themselves from their competition. The export learning capability ensures a close contact between the corporation and its clients, which improves business success (Narver and Slater, 1990; Kirca et al., 2005). Export learning qualities, such as the willingness to understand customer wants and demands, monitoring competing actions, and efforts to develop synergy between organizational units, have been proved empirically to improve export performance (Cadogan et al., 1999; Kwon and Hu, 2000).

Export learning capability is critical because, in comparison to domestic markets, export environmental turbulence is more turbulent and more influenced by external factors (Cadogan et al., 1999). The ability of a corporation to acquire and distribute export information throughout its operational units, leading to a grasp of the opportunities and difficulties of the export environment, is referred to as learning capability. According to organizational learning theory, the process of learning about export markets provides the organization with abilities and perspectives that lead to organizational capacities (Jiménez-Jiménez and Cegarra-Navarro, 2007). It enables businesses to convert precious, scarce, unique, and volatile talents into positive export performance. As a result, it is believed that export learning capability influences export performance.

Business environment turbulence, on the other hand, involves changes in the export market that are outside the exporting company's control and can appear as consumer turbulence or rival turbulence (Johnson et al., 2003; Hanvanich et al., 2006).

The dynamic character of client requests over time is referred to as customer turbulence (Jaworski and Kohli, 1993; Helfat et al., 2007). Customer turbulence is generated by the presence of new customers who have different wants than present customers or is the result of ongoing changes in current customers' likes and preferences (Hanvanich et al., 2006). To flourish in such contexts, and to meet customer expectations, firms must employ strategies that lead to the change and adjustment of methods of production and distribution of products to customers (Moorman and Miner, 1997). As a result, the relationship between the export learning process and export performance will be stronger in high-turbulence export environments than in low-turbulence export environments (Hanvanich et al., 2006; Olabode et al., 2018). Competitor turbulence, or the amount of rivalry in the export market, can have an impact on the organization's export profitability (Kohli and Jaworski, 1990). Organizational action in competitive export markets necessitates an effective export learning process in order to gather knowledge of the advantages and possibilities that competitors provide customers for similar products and services. By researching competitors' plans and activities, as well as changing client demands, export learning capability assists organizations in developing new ideas and competitive advantages. As a result, it is believed that the impact of export learning capability on a company's export success is larger in competitive export environments than in others (Olabode et al., 2018). As a result, it is argued that the volatile export environment moderates the effect of export learning aptitude on export performance.

Meanwhile, the management modify and influence the company's marketing approach. Managers with international market experience can evaluate complex markets in order to establish and implement relevant strategies (Cavusgil and Zou, 1994). International management experience broadens managers' perspectives, resulting in the formation of wide cognitive bases (Lages et al., 2008) and an increased capacity to sell internationally. As a result of its management experience, the company is able to smooth its export path and boost its export performance. As a result, it is believed that management experience influences export performance.

Management experience improves fundamental management skills. Researchers have demonstrated the significance of managerial expertise for organizations in expanding markets (Christensen and Da Rocha, 1994). According to several research, competent managers can detect and capitalize on opportunities while avoiding risks (Lages et al., 2008). The company's export activities are hampered by a lack of management experience (Ibeh, 2004). Export barriers are greater for enterprises with limited expertise in international trading than for other companies. This is due to their unfamiliarity with the specific features and procedures of export processes (Madsen, 1987). As a result, an increase in management expertise can be linked to a reduction in internal barriers to export. Meanwhile, export restrictions have an impact on the firm's export performance (Aaby and Slater, 1989; Zou and Stan, 1998).

Internal export obstacles are features of a corporation that are usually related to available organizational resources and export marketing tactics. Internal obstacles might be company-related or product-related. Internal barriers are associated with insufficient marketing organizational resources (Zou and Stan, 1998), and various research have found that management's perception of export barriers influences export performance (Aaby and Slater, 1989; Zou and Stan, 1998). According to empirical studies, there is an inverse link between management's grasp of export hurdles and export performance (Madsen, 1998). As a result, internal export barriers are thought to play a mediating role in the effect of management experience on export performance. As a result, the key study issue is what effect export learning capacity and management experience have on export performance, with the chaotic environment acting as a moderator and internal hurdles to export for Iranian handwoven carpet enterprises acting as a mediating factor. In this research, the effect of export learning ability and management experience on export performance with the moderating role of the turbulent environment and the mediating role of internal export barriers in Iranian handwoven carpet companies is evaluated.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Export Performance

Positive corporate growth is achieved through performance. Exporting can be viewed as a strategic activity at the corporate, industrial, and national levels. Companies should seek out new market prospects, and by anticipating future market wants and opportunities, participating in emerging markets, creating the environment, and introducing new products and brands, they can stay ahead of their competitors (Harrington, 2006).

Performance is the qualitative or quantitative evaluation of all planned efforts and results to meet the specified goals (Albaum et al., 2015). Export performance is a strategic aim that is attained through the planning and design of export marketing strategies (Olabode et al., 2018). In fact, one of the most essential ways to join international markets is through export performance. In fact, the extent to which the company's economic and strategic goals in export are realized reveals the export performance (Ortigueira-Sanchez et al., 2022).

2.2. Export Learning Capability

The export learning capability ensures a close contact between the corporation and its clients, which improves business success (Kirca et al., 2005). Learning is an important human attribute; employees of the company acquire knowledge before and during their service; this knowledge remains after they enter the organization in a specialized form, as do the skills required to carry out the activities.

While obtaining information and practical knowledge, information is also created, shared, amended, interpreted, and kept in the organization, which is referred to as organizational knowledge. The application of organizational learning to this process of transferring learning to develop and improve the organization is owing to the fact that this sort of learning is essentially an organizational phenomenon.

This sort of learning is used to adapt the organization to its surroundings and to update employees' and eventually the organization's knowledge in order to attain effectiveness (Templeton et al., 2002). According to Argyris and Schon (1978), organizational learning is a method for solving issues, discovering, and improving the organization's line. Organizational learning can be defined as a set of procedures that result in the improvement of actions by incorporating shared knowledge into individuals' and organizations' beliefs and assumptions (Graham et al., 2006). As a result, the following is hypothesized.

H₁: Export learning capability has a significant effect on export performance.

2.3. Export Environmental Turbulence

Turbulence in the business environment refers to developments in the export market that are beyond the exporting company's control and can appear as customer or competition turbulence (Hanvanich et al., 2006). Increasing global competition has prompted more businesses to explore chances in overseas markets in order to achieve their objectives and ensure their market position and survival. Exporting has long been the most popular strategy for small and medium-sized businesses to reach the worldwide market. Exporting, in its most basic form, involves minimum financial and human resources, as well as other necessary resources, which includes less investment and financial risks and allows for greater structural and strategic market flexibility. However, winning the export market is not a simple task, due to the multiple, different, and unique nature of the foreign environment (Papadopoulos and Martín 2010).

Environmental changes have a significant and unmistakable impact on any organization's strategy and success or failure. Many organizations that had been profitable and successful for years have faced insolvency and death as a result of changing environmental coordinates and simply failing to keep up with these changes and advances. In other words, how to cope with the environment and environmental changes (turbulences) is a significant and effective component of the organization's orientation (strategy) (Stanleigh, 2008). Environmental turbulence encompasses both market and technological volatility. Environmental turbulence comprises market preference and demand heterogeneity and fluctuation, as well as the company's ability to respond to them. Technological turbulence, on the other hand, demonstrates both the instability of technology and the rapidity of innovation, causing businesses to adapt their methods to deal with it. If nothing changed, managers' jobs would be very basic, and planning would be straightforward (Stanleigh, 2008). Change is an organizational reality, and dealing with it is one of managers' responsibilities. Experts describe the contemporary management environment as turbulent, and they feel that employees should be able to easily adjust to the modern work environment's constant changes and turbulences. Despite the efforts of organizational managers to generate transformation and change, recent polls suggest that more than 75% of organizational change attempts have failed or did not result in the expected outcome (Stanleigh, 2008). Environmental turbulence depends on a firm's health and risk level (Escandon-Barbosa et al., 2019). Export environmental turbulence is a contingency factor that is outside of the company's control, according to Khan Niazi et al. (2019). They claimed that rapid changes in competition and technology define environmental turbulence. According to Leemput (2021), factors that affect export performance include high levels of corruption, high tax rates, distance from the destination country, and the language of the destination country. Financial, product, administrative, human capital, and cultural export barriers are also described by researchers (Mataveli et al., 2022). Noreen and Mahmood (2022) drew attention to the difficulties in transporting export goods. These obstacles may include a nation's percentage of the global fleet, the size density of its roads and railways, the flow of containers through its ports, the volume of freight carried by air, the number of fixed and mobile phone subscribers, traveler approval levels, electric power consumption, and aircraft departures. As a result, the following is hypothesized.

H₂: An Export environmental turbulence moderates the effect of export learning capability on export performance

2.4. Management Experience

Experience refers to all of the abilities and knowledge about some phenomena and subjects that result from interacting with that subject and engaging with that phenomenon over a period of time. Management experience improves basic

management skills, and experienced managers can identify and capitalize on opportunities while avoiding risks (Lages et al., 2008). As a result, the following is hypothesized. As a result, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H₃: Management experience has a significant effect on export performance.

H₄: Management experience has a significant role on internal export barriers.

2.5. Internal Export Barriers

Internal export obstacles are part of a company's internal characteristics and are typically tied to accessible organizational resources and export marketing tactics (Leonidou, 2004). Internal obstacles might be company-related or product-related (Tesfom and Clemens, 2006). Internal barriers are caused by a lack of marketing resources within the organization (Zou and Stan, 1998).

There are numerous structural, procedural, operational, and behavioral constraints that prevent producers from exporting, developing, and maintaining their export capability. Some corporate export restrictions have internal roots, while others are caused by the company's external environment. Obstacles, on the other hand, might be classified as subjective or objective. In this instance, there will be four types of obstacles: objective internal, subjective internal, objective external, and subjective external. However, the form of these hurdles, as well as their frequency, importance, intensity, and weakness, can alter in each step of the company's export activity. Solving export hurdles is critical for companies in the early phases of exporting because if enterprises cannot respond to these barriers in the early stages, they will cease export activities entirely. Of course, various companies in the same stage may perceive different hurdles. One of the most critical issues preventing exports is a lack of awareness of possible markets for the development of export activities, as well as a lack of sufficient financial resources and overseas markets. As a result, the following hypotheses are proposed.

H₅: Internal export barriers have a significant impact on export performance.

H₆: Internal export barriers mediate the effect of management experience on export performance.

The classifications of internal and external export barriers presented as follows.

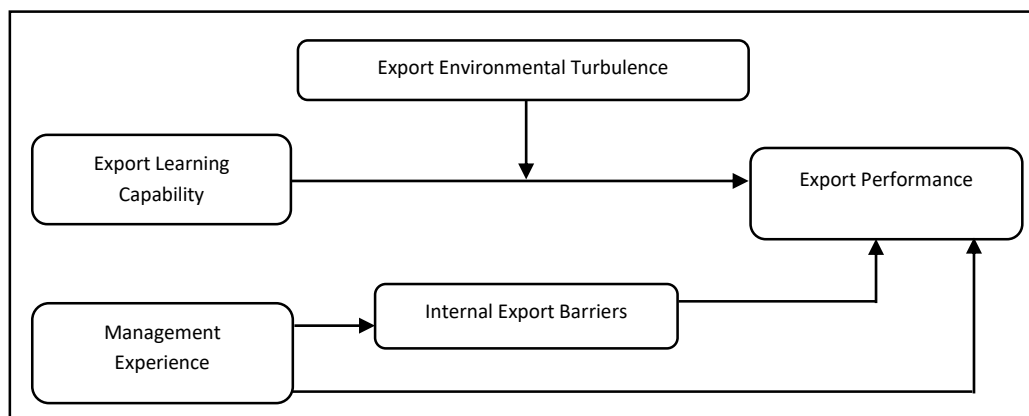
Table 1: Internal and External Eexport Barriers

Barriers		
Internal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of adequate and appropriate training of export department employees • Insufficient production capacity • Lack of management staff • Lack of capital and financial problems to finance exports • Limited information for foreign market presence and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Administrative affairs in carrying out export procedures • Lack of incentives or government support
External	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide and different standards for the product • Lack of sufficient access and presence of representatives • Risks and high sales costs • Inability to offer competitive prices • Inability to provide technical and after-sales services • Absence or insufficiency of external distribution channels • High cost of transportation with and access 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Different habits and behaviors of foreign consumers • Lack of understanding of foreign trade procedures • Having language and communication problems • Imposing tariff and non-tariff barriers • Intense competition in foreign markets • Exchange rate fluctuation • Restrictions due to laws and regulations

3. METHOD

Based on the previous research and the mentioned research literature, the following conceptual model (Figure 1) is presented.

Figure 1: Research model



This study's statistical population includes managers from 129 Iranian enterprises involved in the export of handwoven carpets. All of the companies were chosen as the sample size based on the statistical population, and the questionnaire was circulated and collected in the form of a census among all of the managers of the handwoven carpet exporting companies. A questionnaire is also employed in this study to acquire the relevant data regarding research variables and test hypotheses.

Descriptive statistical methods such as frequency table, mean, percentage, graph, correlation coefficient from SPSS, Excel, and Smart PLS were used to evaluate and interpret the data acquired from the questionnaires and answer the study hypotheses. The survey items in this study were scored on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). The things on the scales are listed in the Table (2).

Table 2: Scales Items

Scale	Scale Items	References
Export Learning Capability	Meeting with potential export buyers Examination of the requirements of export customers Customers as a source of export market information Inquiring about customers' wants Sharing client information in order to gain access	(Olabode et al., 2018)
Export environmental turbulence	Priorities of export customers in respect to changing products The product choices of export consumers differ greatly Export competitive environment dynamics There have been numerous developments in the export market	(Olabode et al., 2018)
Management Experience	The level of professional experience of export managers Managers' international work and personal experience The condition of international business education Managers' ability to follow commercial paths in significant importing markets	(Adu-Gyamfi and Korneliussen, 2013)
Internal Export Barriers	The number of people working in the export department. Hiring individuals and contracting with suitable firms to complete certain tasks Enough time to manage export affairs Extensive obligations when it comes to exports	(Adu-Gyamfi and Korneliussen, 2013)
Export Performance	The state of export sales volume in relation to the desired performance indicators The status of export sales growth in relation to key performance factors The status of export profitability in relation to key performance parameters The state of the export profit margin in relation to the key performance parameters	(Adu-Gyamfi and Korneliussen, 2013)

4. RESULTS

In this research, 129 questionnaires were distributed and 124 questionnaires were collected. The findings of this study were presented in this section

4.1. Demographics of Participants

This section briefed the gender and level of education of respondent.

Gender of respondents as shown in the table below, 95 (76.6%) of the respondents to the research questionnaires were male and 27 of them (23.4%) were female.

Table 3: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Gender

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
male	95	76.6
female	27	23.4
Total	124	100

As shown in the table below, 39.52% of the respondents have a bachelor's degree, 16.93% of the respondents have a master's degree and above, 29.83% of the respondents have a postgraduate degree and 13.7% of the respondents have a diploma or lower.

Table 4: Frequency Distribution of Respondents Based on Education

Gender	Frequency	Percentage
diploma or lower	17	13.7
postgraduate degree	37	29.83
bachelor's degree	49	39.52
master's degree and above	21	16.93
Total	124	100

4.2. Analysis

The factor loading for the questionnaire questions are displayed in the following table (5) as weight values. As observed in the table below, all questions have factor loading weights that are more than the lowest value for factor loading allowed by the Smart-PLS program, which is 0.7. This leads to the conclusion that the questions chosen to test each variable have an appropriate weight to measure that variable.

Table 5: Factor Loading Test

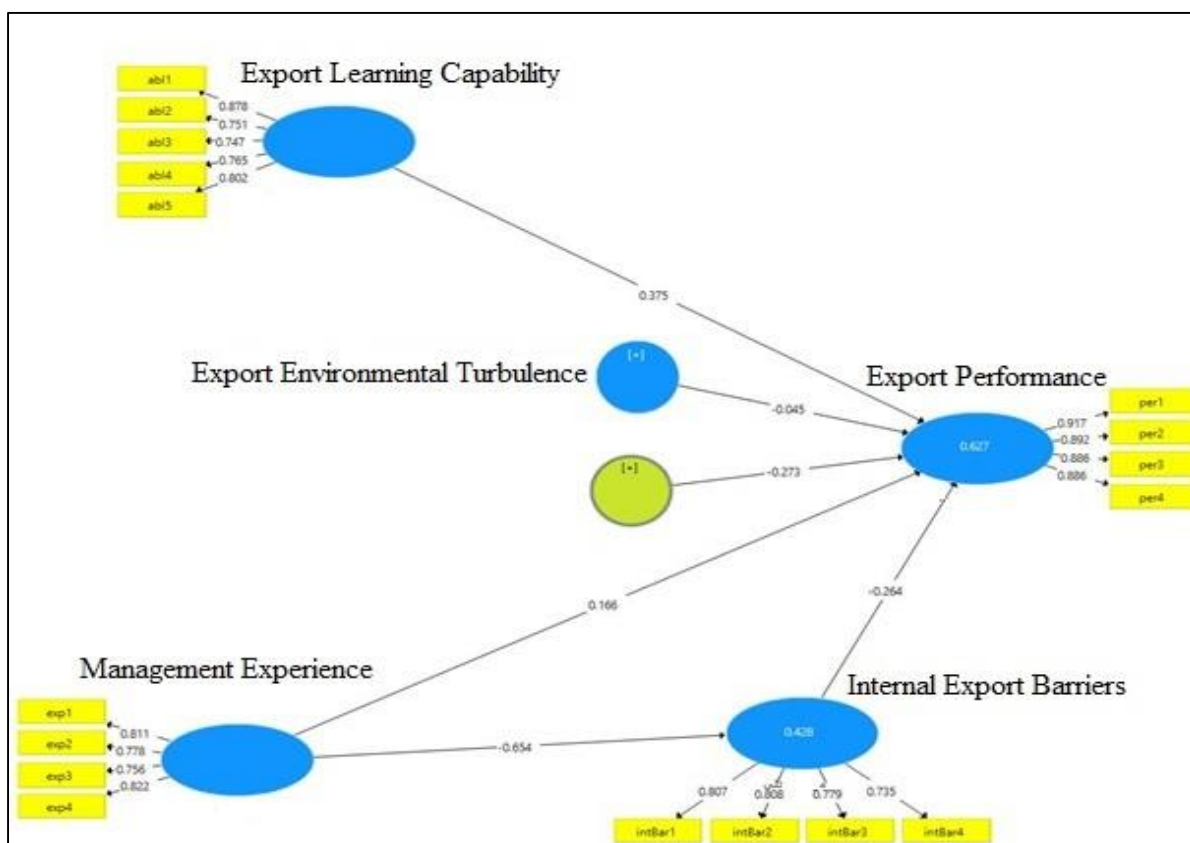
Items	Management Experience	Export Performance	Export Learning Capability	Export environmental turbulence	Internal Export Barriers
abl1			0.88		
abl2			0.75		
abl3			0.75		
abl4			0.77		
abl5			0.80		
exp1	0.81				
exp2	0.79				
exp3	0.76				
exp4	0.82				
expoEnv1				0.91	
expoEnv2				0.88	
expoEnv3				0.93	
expoEnv4				0.91	
intBar1					0.81

Items	Management Experience	Export Performance	Export Learning Capability	Export environmental turbulence	Internal Export Barriers
intBar2					0.81
intBar3					0.78
intBar4					0.74
per1		0.92			
per2		0.89			
per3		0.89			
per4		0.89			

The Figure 2 shows calculating path coefficients which were tested in two stages using the partial least squares method and with the aid of Smart-PLS software.

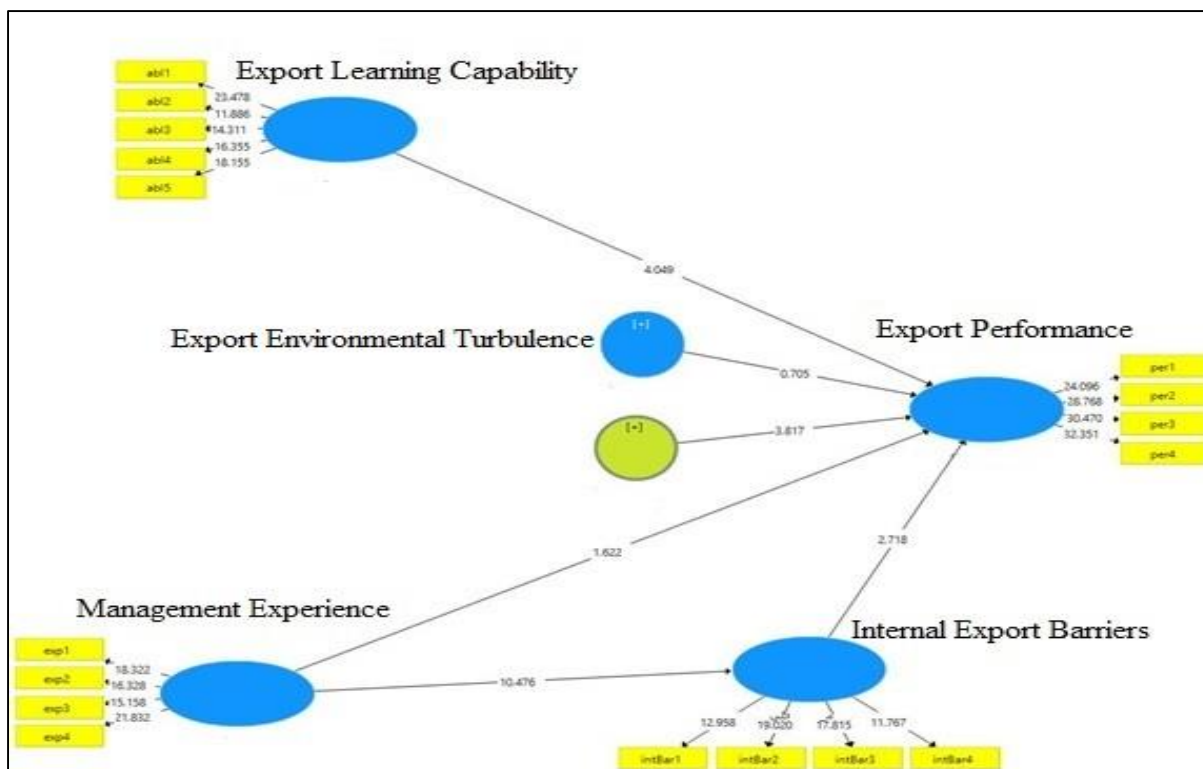
The coefficient of determination (R^2) values for export performance variables and internal export barriers are displayed in the following table. Given that export performance is the last dependent variable in the research model, the coefficient of determination for this variable shows how well other model factors predict changes in this variable. Given that the export performance variable's coefficient of determination is roughly 0.63, it can be inferred that other research variables like management experience, internal export barriers, and export learning capability account for nearly 63 percent of the changes in the export performance variable of handwoven carpet companies.

Figure 2: The Tested Model in the Path Coefficients Display Mode



The Figure 3 shows significant coefficients (t-statistics) which were tested in two stages using the partial least squares method and with the aid of Smart-PLS software. The t statistic was used to test research hypotheses, and its value was used to determine whether a hypothesis should be accepted or rejected. If the t statistic's absolute value is higher than 1.96, the hypothesis is accepted.

Figure 3: The Tested Model in t-Statistics Display Mode



The study model's global overall fit (GOF) is predicted to be 0.61. For fitting the structural model, three values of 0.1, 0.25, and 0.36 are regarded as weak, medium, and strong values. The model is sturdy and well-fitted as a result.

The validation or denial of the current research's hypothesis is reported as follows in table based on the model tested in the Smart-PLS software and the model test results.

Table 6: Test of Research Hypotheses

Hypotheses	Standard path coefficient	t Statistics	Result
H ₁ : Export learning capability has a significant effect on export performance.	0.37	4.05	Accepted
H ₂ : An Export environmental turbulence moderates the effect of export learning capability on export performance.	-0.27	3.82	Accepted
H ₃ : Management experience has a significant effect on export performance.	0.17	1.62	Rejected
H ₄ : Management experience has a significant role on internal export barriers.	-0.65	10.48	Accepted
H ₅ : Internal export barriers have a significant impact on export performance.	-0.26	2.71	Accepted
H ₆ : Internal export barriers mediate the effect of management experience on export performance.	0.34	Direct 1.62 Indirect 2.73	Accepted Complete mediation role

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Exporting is a critical initial step for firms to develop and invest in in order to reach global markets and extend their international activities. Given the country's economic circumstances and Iran's sanctions in the fields of oil and international trade, the country's need to develop exports and reach additional global markets has grown in recent years, necessitating the development of non-oil exports.

This section presents practical advice based on the hypotheses' outcomes. Meeting and researching the demands of export consumers should be treated as a rich source of information to attain performance indicators and profitability of exports through opinion polls, interviews, and assessing customer needs in order to increase the effectiveness of learning. Furthermore, in order to better and cope with export environmental turbulence that is beyond the control of carpet exporting enterprises, the gathering of export market intelligence, market changes, and changes connected to rivals' products should be examined deeper. According to these findings, managers should design and implement export marketing strategies, as well as use managers with expertise and knowledge in the field of carpet export, in order to identify and capitalize on possibilities and prevent risks in a competitive market. In addition, the number of staff in the export department and spending enough time managing export issues were evaluated in order to improve and overcome intra-organizational difficulties related international trade training of managers. To increase export performance, greater attention should be paid to the volume and scope of the export sector's activities in the market in relation to the company's resources and features.

Given that management experience does not directly affect the export performance of handwoven carpet companies, but can only affect the company's export performance by reducing the reverse change in the variable of the company's internal export barriers, it is suggested that company managers be aware of the internal export barriers. Pay attention to the mechanisms in organizational resources and the provision of marketing and export resources as an influencing variable on management experience and export performance.

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Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

The survey items in this study were scored on a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Export Learning Capability

Meeting and talking with export customers.
Studies of the needs of export customers are carried out.
Customers are considered as a source of export market information.
The needs of customers are asked and evaluated.
Customer information is shared for access.

Export environmental turbulence

The priorities of the export customers are examined in relation to the products that have changes.
The priorities of export customers in relation to the products have a lot of movement and are examined.
The competitive export environment is dynamic and variable.
There are many changes in the export market.

Management experience

There is an appropriate level of professional experience in export management.
There is international work and life experience in exporting.
Education in international business is continuous.
Management is able to follow business routes in important importing markets.

Internal Export Barriers

The number of employees in the export department is appropriate.
Employees are hired and qualified organizations are employed to perform specific tasks.
There is enough time to manage export affairs.
There are extensive obligations in carrying out exports.

Export performance

The situation of the sales volume in export is suitable compared to the performance indicators of the target.
The situation of sales growth in exports is appropriate compared to the performance indicators of the target.
The profitability situation in exports is appropriate compared to the performance indicators of the target.
The situation of the profit margin in exports is appropriate compared to the target performance indicators
