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# The effect of export market intelligence on export market performance considering the role of sales strategies

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### Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to investigate the effect of export market intelligence on export market performance, considering the role of sales strategies. This research is practical in terms of classification based on the purpose, and in terms of classification based on the method, it is a descriptive survey research. The statistical population of the present study; There are 160 managers and senior experts of Kale company in the export sector. The sampling of this research is simple random method. The minimum required sample size according to Cochran's formula is 114 people. The data collection tools in this research were standard questionnaires whose validity was confirmed through face and content validity and their reliability was confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient and composite reliability. The collected data were analyzed through spss and Smart-PLS software, and research hypotheses were investigated with the help of structural equation modeling. The results of the research showed that export market intelligence has an effect on export market performance by considering the role of sales strategies.

Keywords: export market intelligence, export market performance, sales strategies.



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### 1. Introduction

Nowadays, providing the best intelligence and performance in the field of marketing has become the main concern of managers of export companies, and managers try to achieve superior performance by using different techniques, and in this regard, export marketing capabilities are one of the effective factors. They are considered superior for companies in achieving sales strategy and performance [6]. Achieving higher performance is a goal that organizations take various measures to achieve. Export market intelligence plays an important role in creating a competitive advantage for organizations, and among these capabilities, it is possible to mention the improvement of export market performance [3]. Export intelligence is a complex set of knowledge, skills and abilities embedded in business processes at various levels [7].Business intelligence is an integrated process in which companies use tangible and intangible resources to understand the complexity of specific customer needs, achieve a relative differentiation in products for competitive advantage, and ultimately achieve a brand quality [9].In today's complex, dynamic and highly variable environment, companies need to design and adopt strategies for sales that can help them improve their performance more and more [5].Because in such a competitive environment, companies are able to survive that are not left out of the cycle of competition and synchronize themselves with the changing and dynamic conditions of the competitive market. In other words, company managers will observe the results of their decisions in the form of strategy selection in the mirror of performance criteria. Analyzing and comparing the observed performance with past trends, competitors, or the industry average, provides appropriate feedback for decision-making and future activities. For this reason, one of the most important goals of all companies over time has been the continuous improvement of performance, especially export performance. Recent approaches have usually focused on export business intelligence and sales strategies as marketing capabilities [11].

In addition, researchers in the field of export marketing research have observed that export marketing activities help to improve the company's performance. [12]. In previous research, various export marketing activities (for example, using export information and export market behavior) and its effects on export performance [8]. And the conditions where export marketing capabilities are more or less beneficial for the success of industrial organizations in the export market receive more scientific attention [14]. These studies have not addressed the question of how industrial exporting organizations in less developed markets may benefit from the expansion of export marketing capabilities. This ignorance is troubling, as although business transactions are growing in less developed markets, these markets experience greater heterogeneity in institutional and infrastructure performance [15]. The theoretical arguments and experimental evidences that exist to explain the export marketing capabilities of companies active in developed economic markets are insufficient in explaining or predicting the results of the export marketing performance of industrial organizations in less developed markets. The literature of strategic management shows that, after considering environmental trends, managers compile sales strategies for the organization. Therefore, how managers perceive and interpret competitive forces, market conditions shape the nature and intensity of competition and influence the dynamics of the industry.

Kale Company is considered as one of the leading companies in the country's food industry, where domestic and foreign marketing activities are widely followed. This company exports a large volume of its products to foreign countries and is considered one of the leading companies even in the Middle East. Despite the relative success of this company in terms of export performance and marketing capabilities, we still see some problems and limitations for this organization. One of the issues that this company is facing in order to introduce its new products is that there is no extensive marketing discussion for its products, because the company management's view is that every product the company produce will be sold in the domestic and foreign target markets. Therefore, many domestic and foreign customers and consumers are not even familiar with many of the company's products. In fact, this company has not been able to enter foreign markets on a large scale yet, and this factor can be examined in the discussion of the lack of business intelligence of the company in the export sector to identify the needs of foreign customers. In this research, we argue that export market responsiveness of Kale Company, as combined with product innovation, will helps its superior export performance. Therefore, the main question of this research is, what is the effect of export market intelligence on export market performance considering the role of sales strategies in Kale Company? For this conference, the files must be in MS Word



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### 2. Literature and research background

### 2.1. Export market intelligence

Export market intelligence (export market orientation behavior) is one of the newest concepts in the international market. Because in previous studies, this orientation was in the field of domestic markets. Export market orientation behavior means marketing, and this is an organizational culture that deals with providing superior value to customers and should be clear in the company's products and processes [2].

Market orientation includes a set of beliefs and convictions that put customers in the center of attention to provide long-term profitability of the company. Also, market orientation emphasizes the creation of effective and efficient business to create the highest value for the customer and competitive advantage [17].

Market orientation is the creation of intelligence throughout the organization in relation to the current and future needs of the customer, the dissemination of intelligence among the departments of the organization, and the nationwide response to that intelligence. Also, market oriented behavior of exports increases business performance in the domestic and foreign markets [16]. According to [16]. definition of market orientation, in order to measure export market intelligence (export market orientation behavior), the three dimensions of creating intelligence in exports, distributing intelligence in exports, and responding to intelligence in exports have been used. These dimensions have also been considered as export market orientation dimensions in other studies [6].

Creating intelligence, intelligence towards the market; That is, it is possible to identify the customer's needs and desires as soon as possible in comparison with competitors [2].

The distribution of intelligence is an effective response to market needs, requires the participation of all parts of the organization. In order to adapt to market needs, market intelligence must be transferred to all departments and individuals [18].

Responsiveness means responding to the intelligence of the market created and distributed. Responding to the intelligence of the market in the form of choosing the target market, designing and providing products, services in accordance with the current and future needs of customers, producing, distributing and promoting products in a way that is considered by the end consumers. In this context, all units play a role [16].

#### 2.2. Export market performance

Export performance is the degree to which the company's goals (including strategic goals and economic goals) for exporting a product are becoming through the planning and implementation of export marketing strategies [20]. Export performance is a sign of the company's success in exporting. Good export performance is important for companies; because it ensures the stability of the company in the long term. Export performance is defined as the output of the company's activities for selling abroad in different organizational and environmental conditions [21].

Export performance has various dimensions that cannot be explained by one index or one factor. Export performance is measured based on the degree or scale that the company has achieved its export goals. These scales include financial, strategic and competitiveness performance. Financial performance refers to sales, revenue and profit growth. Strategic performance includes achieving market share, satisfaction of entering the



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export market. Competitiveness performance refers to satisfaction with export sales volume, market share compared to competitors [19].

Export performance is a composite result of three dimensions: export sales, export profitability and export growth. Each of these three dimensions includes an objective and a subjective component that are equally important. Research on export performance dates back to the early 1960s, and various studies have focused on factors affecting export performance. These studies emphasize that export performance is determined by internal and external factors [3].

Researchers agree on the definition that export performance is multidimensional in nature; In other words, export performance is measured in three ways depending on the definitions of this construct, firstly, the wealth gained from export sales, export growth, profit and intensity (sales / exports ratio) are used as performance indicators; Secondly, export performance is defined to achieve strategic performance, hence the indicators used include market share, strategic goals, etc. Finally, export performance is defined to obtain the perceptual and attitudinal tendency of the manager towards export. The indicators used include scales of perceived export success and satisfaction with the export process [9].

Export performance has various dimensions that cannot be explained by one index or one factor. Researchers have highlighted three main dimensions of performance. First, the effectiveness of the company products and programs against competitors. Indicators such as sales growth can show effectiveness. The second dimension is efficiency, which focuses on the outputs of the business relative to its inputs. Profitability is the main indicator that shows this dimension. The third dimension is adaptability; That is, how does business respond to changing environmental conditions and opportunities [2].

### The concept of sales strategy

According to Ingram et al. (2002), sales strategy is a functional strategy aimed at maximizing the productivity of limited resources (such as human resources, budget, time) available to sales. The sales strategy is the interpretation of the written marketing strategy at the market level for the customer level [4].

Sales strategy is concerned with how a company should decide to communicate and interact with customers in a market segment to help achieve marketing goals[23].

The scattered literature on sales strategy represents two general perspectives: conceptualizing sales strategy at the "salesperson level" and at the "organizational level". The concept of sales strategy, at the organization level, goes beyond the mere management of the sales force and includes the management of the entire sales function [22]. Sales strategy, in this sense, includes all the company's activities and decisions, with the aim of optimally allocating scarce sales resources (manpower, sales hub efforts, financial budget, etc.) to manage communication with customers, based on the value of each customer for the company. An effective sales strategy may address customer segmentation and prioritization, selection of communication objectives and sales models, and selection of appropriate distribution channel approaches[24].

Marketing and sales managers are jointly responsible for developing the sales strategy; The sales strategy must always evolve in response to changing market conditions, including changes in customer needs and purchasing processes, the competitive environment, the economy, and the entire industry, as well as changes in the company's strategy as it enters new markets and introduces new products. [22].

Sales strategies, at the "customer level", refer to marketing strategies defined at the target market level, which enable the sales function to communicate and interact with distinct groups of customers in various ways. the sales strategy that a sales organization develops is the indicator of the required sales forces, and the processes, activities and technologies of sales and appropriate sales management. As a result, the sales strategy directs the interaction with customers and has a significant impact on the management of the sales organization [11].

Against the importance of sales strategy, there is still no consensus about the elements of sales strategy. But recent studies have come to an agreement that an effective sales strategy should cover issues such as market segmentation, targeting and prioritizing of the customers, determining communication goals and different sales models, and the approach of using multiple sales channels [1].





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In similar concepts, Johnston and Marshall (2009) have identified the elements of sales strategy in the form of customer segmentation and prioritization, determination of communication goals and sales models, and selection of sales channels.

[3] conducted a research under the title of developing the export performance of cultural products. The results of the research showed that; 1) export market orientation has a positive and significant effect on marketing effectiveness; 2) export market orientation has a positive and significant effect on marketing capabilities; 3) marketing capabilities have a positive and significant effect on marketing effectiveness; 4) export market orientation has a positive and significant effect on marketing effectiveness; 4) export market orientation has a positive and significant effect on export performance; 5) marketing effectiveness has a positive and meaningful effect on export performance; 6) Marketing capabilities have a positive effect on export performance [2], also conducted a research entitled the effect of export market orientation on the increase of exports in the dried fruit industry. The results of the research showed that; 1) export market orientation has a positive and significant effect on marketing effectiveness; 2) market-oriented export behavior has a positive and significant effect on export performance; 3) marketing effectiveness has a positive and significant effect on export performance; 3) marketing effectiveness has a positive and significant effect on export performance; 4) export market orientation on the increase of exports have a positive and significant effect on marketing effectiveness; 2) market-oriented export behavior has a positive and significant effect on export performance; 3) marketing effectiveness has a positive and significant effect on export performance; 4) Export market orientation behavior has a positive and meaningful effect on export performance through marketing effectiveness.

In foreign research also, [13] in a research called the interaction between market intelligence measures and sales strategy as performance drivers in foreign markets, developed an effective export sales strategy in order to establish long-term relationships between small and medium-sized companies with foreign customers. The results of this research showed that creating export market intelligence has a positive and significant effect on segmentation, targeting, sales models and communication goals of export customers. Also, distribution of export market intelligence has a positive and significant effect on segmentation, targeting, sales models and communication goals of export customers. Segmentation, targeting and sales models and communication goals of export customers have a positive and significant effect on the performance of the export market [13]. [25] also concluded in his research that export marketing orientation affects export performance directly and indirectly through export strategy. According to the literature review and the background of the research, the conceptual model of the research is given in the form of Figure 1. The opinion model used in this research is taken from the research of [13].



Figure 1-: The conceptual model of the research Source: Katsiki et al., 2019

Considering the conceptual model of the research, the hypotheses of the research are:

First hypothesis: export market intelligence has an effect on sales strategies.

Second hypothesis: export market intelligence has an effect on the performance of export markets.

The third hypothesis: sales strategies have an effect on export market performance.

Fourth hypothesis: export market intelligence has an effect on export market performance by considering the role of sales strategies.



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### 3. Methodology

This research, which is looking for the effect of export market intelligence on export market performance, considering the role of sales strategies in Kale Company, is classified as applied research in terms of purpose, and in terms of classification based on method, this research is a descriptive research of survey type.

The statistical population of the present study; There are 160 managers and senior experts of Kale company in the export sector. The size of the studied community is limited.

Sampling method in this research; Random sampling is simple. The designed questionnaires have been distributed among managers and senior experts who questionnaires has been distributed among managers and seniors experts who have a roll in export activities of KALE company and are familiar with the processes and export activities of the company.

$$n = \frac{\frac{z^2 \times p \times q}{d^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{N}(\frac{z^2 \times p \times q}{d^2} - 1)} \quad n = \frac{\frac{1.96^2 \times .5 \times .5}{.05^2}}{1 + \frac{1}{160}(\frac{1.96^2 \times 05 \times .5}{.05^2} - 1)} = 114$$

Considering the confidence level of 95% and accepting the of 5% error, the required volume is equal to 114 people.

In order to collect data in this research, standard questionnaires were used, whose validity was confirmed with the help of content validity, and their reliability was also checked and confirmed through Cronbach's alpha coefficient and compound reliability.

	Validity	Compound	Corombach\s
	content	reliability	alpha
Export market intelligence	0.530	0.917	0.898
Sales strategies	0.527	0.924	0.908
Export market performance	0.757	0.925	0.890
Export market intelligence creation	0.734	0.917	0.878
Export market intelligence distribution	0.597	0.878	0.822
Customer segmentation	0.581	0.892	0.854
Customer targeting	0.812	0.896	0.769
Sales & targets models	0.639	0.838	0.704

Table 1 shows the validity and reliability indicators for all the research variables. In this research, the reliability of the measurement models was measured by factor loadings, combined reliability and Cronbach's alpha. The obtained factor loadings show that all factor loadings are higher than 0.40 and are significant at the meaningful level of 95%. Combined reliability indices and Cronbach's alpha are used to check the reliability of the questionnaire and it is necessary to confirm the reliability of these indices for being higher than 0.6. All these coefficients are higher than 0.6 and show the reliability of the measurement tool.



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### 4. Data analysis

### **4-1. Descriptive Statistics**

The results of the collected data analysis showed that among the 114 respondents, 61 were male and 36% were female. In terms of marriage, 19% are single and 81% are married. In terms of age, among 114 respondents, 15% are under 30 years old, 20-30 years old; 55% between 31-40 years; 27% were between 41-50 years old and finally 3% were between 51-60 years old. Also, 76% of bachelors; 21% had a master's degree and finally 3% had a doctorate degree. Finally, in terms of income level, among 114 respondents, 19% are less than two million tomans; 52% between 2-3 million tomans; 25% between 3-4 million tomans; And finally, 4% were above 4 million tomans.

### 4-2. Analysis of hypotheses

One of the common methods in the field of causal relationships between variables is the structural equation model or multivariate analysis with latent variables. Therefore, the structural equation model is a comprehensive statistical approach for testing hypotheses about the relationships between observed variables and latent variables. Its main focus is on latent and latent variables that are defined by measurable indicators and obvious or observational variables. Figure 2 and 3 respectively show the coefficients and the effect and meaningful coefficients for checking the research hypotheses.

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Figure 2. Effect coefficients

Figure 3 shows the significance of the path coefficients of the research model.



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Figure 3: Significance of impact coefficients

According to structural models, the results of hypothesis analysis are given in Table 2

hypothesis	Impact factor	Meaningfully	Result
First hypothesis: export market intelligence has an effect on sales strategies.	0.644	9.439	Confirmed
Second hypothesis: export market intelligence has an effect on the performance of export markets.	0.334	2.933	Confirmed
The third hypothesis: sales strategies have an effect on export market performance.	0.312	2.672	Confirmed
Fourth hypothesis: export market intelligence has an effect on export market performance by considering the role of sales strategies.	0.201	2.558	Confirmed



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### 5. Discussion and conclusion

The first hypothesis of the research states that export market intelligence has an effect on sales strategies. The results of the statistical analysis show that the significance coefficient of the test (9.439) is in the critical area, and as a result, the first hypothesis of the research is accepted at a significance level of one percent. The obtained path coefficient is equal to 0.644. The mentioned coefficient means that, from the point of view of the statistical community, if the intelligence of the export market increases by one percent, it can be expected that the sales strategies will increase by 0.644 units and vice versa. The positive and significant effect of export market intelligence on sales strategies means that with the increase of export market intelligence, the sales strategies can be improved and export market intelligence has not yet lost its influence on sales strategies. In line with the result obtained in this hypothesis, [13] showed in their research that the creation of export market intelligence has a positive and significant effect on segmentation, targeting, sales models and communication goals of export customers. Also, distribution of export market intelligence has a positive and significant effect on segmentation, targeting, sales models and communication goals of export customers. The second hypothesis of the research also states that the intelligence of the export market has an effect on the performance of the export market. The results of the statistical analysis show that the significance coefficient of the test (2.933) is in the critical area, and as a result, the second hypothesis of the research is accepted at the significance level of one percent. The obtained path coefficient is equal to 0.334. The mentioned coefficient means that, from the point of view of the statistical society, if the intelligence of the export market increases by one percent, it can be expected that the performance of the export market increases by 0.334 units and vice versa. The positive and significant effect of export market intelligence on export market performance means that by increasing export market intelligence, the export market performance can be improved and export market intelligence has not lost its impact on export market performance. [2] showed that export market behavior has a positive and significant effect on export performance. In another study, Cassiro and Colho (2018) concluded that business intelligence cannot directly affect competitiveness. The results of statistical analysis for the third hypothesis show that the significance coefficient of the test (2.672) is in the critical area, and as a result, the third hypothesis of the research is accepted at a significance level of one percent. The obtained path coefficient is equal to 0.312. The mentioned coefficient means that, from the point of view of the statistical community, if the sales strategies increase by one percent, it can be expected that the performance of the export market will increase by 0.312 units and vice versa. In line with the result obtained in this hypothesis, [13] showed in their research that segmentation, targeting and sales models and communication goals of export customers have a positive and significant effect on the performance of the export market.

Finally, the fourth hypothesis of the research states that export market intelligence has an effect on export market performance by considering the role of sales strategies. The results of the statistical analysis show that the significance coefficient of the test (2.558) is in the critical area, and as a result, the fourth hypothesis of the research is accepted at a significance level of one percent. The obtained path coefficient is equal to 0.201. The mentioned coefficient means that, from the point of view of the statistical community, if the intelligence of the export market increases by one percent, it can be expected that the performance of the export market will eventually increase by 0.201 units, and vice versa. According to the results of the hypotheses, it is possible to improve export performance by setting up and equipping the market research department in the export sector and collecting information about the foreign market environment and providing regular periodic reports. Also, obtaining reports from research companies at the international level about global trends related to the food industry, identifying important distributors in the field of food industry and distributing as many products as possible in the foreign market in order to increase foreign sales and benefit from Information technology approaches, in order to record any information related to marketing and sales in the export sectors that every employee obtain, can be a decisive factor in improving the export performance of companies.



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