

THE ROLE OF RELATIONAL EXCHANGE IN EXPORT PERFORMANCE

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ABSTRACT: *Export performance has been studied since 1960s. Up to now there have been many studies examines every aspects of this subject. Review of the literature shows that there have been four major groups of variables often employed to explain the variation of export performance, i.e. environmental variables, organizational variables, managerial variables, and marketing strategy variables, in which marketing strategy variables have been the central focus of recent studies as opposed to the other threes in early stage of the development of the subject. Amongst many, 4Ps (Product, Price, Place, and Promotion) have been the most widely used marketing variables. However, in the marketing literature, relationship marketing, which roots itself in long-term relational exchanges with keys stakeholders (e.g. customers, employees, suppliers, competitors), has been considered a new paradigm. The present paper aims to employ relationship marketing theory to explain export performance. Based on the literature review in export performance and relationship marketing, the conceptual framework to examine export performance is proposed.*

Key work: *Export performance, relationship marketing, and relational exchange*

Introduction

During the past 40 years, there has been a large volume of studies on export performance related issues (see Bilkey 1976; Aaby and Slater 1989; Zou and Stan 1998). This large volume of publications is a strong testimony of not only the importance of the issue but also the legitimacy of inquiry into export marketing (Zou and Stan 1998). Being one of the most widely researched, it is, however, considered least understood and most contentious area of international marketing. This is due to several reasons, e.g. difficulties in conceptualizing and operationalizing, confusion over the exact role, nature, and purpose of exporting, and research bias from ignoring or underestimating the relevancy of business and marketing research to exporting. The literature in this area therefore has been very fragmented (Katsikeas *et al.* 2000). Several considerable attempts to integrate these fragmented literatures into meaningful and comprehensive frameworks have been made, e.g. Bilkey 1976; Aaby and Slater 1989; Zou and Stan 1998, Leonidou *et al.* 1998, and Katsikeas *et al.* 2000. In reviewing these comprehensive frameworks, it is consensus among researchers that there are four major groups of determinants of export performance, i.e. managerial factors, organizational factors, environmental factors, and marketing strategy factors. While managerial, organizational, and environmental factors have been the central focus in the early stage of the literature, marketing strategies have become a dominant determinant of export performance in the last decade. Marketing mix (4Ps), which roots in transactional exchange paradigm, has been the most common marketing variables employed in explaining

export performance (see Leonidou *et al.* 2002b). However, since 1980s recent development trend in the marketing discipline has moved toward relationship marketing, which is based on relational exchange paradigm (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995; Gronroos 1994). Nevertheless, little attention to bring relationship marketing into export performance literature has been made. The major objective of this paper, therefore, is to fill this gap in the literature. The paper first traces major developments in export performance literature. Second, relationship marketing concept and its dimensions are discussed. Finally, the conceptual framework for examining export performance, in which the role of relationship marketing is the focal focus, is proposed.

Literature review

There are two major difficulties in reviewing the export performance literature. First, the number of studies in this field is numerous. Second, the literature is very fragmented. Luckily, as mentioned above, great efforts have been made by researchers to integrate the literature. Therefore, the review in this section is based on those contributions. Seven most well-known literature review studies are reviewed in this section. Table 1 summarizes some important aspects of these seven studies. As showed in table 1, the period of the reviews is from early 1960 to 2001, in which the earliest is Bilkey 1978 and the latest is Leonidou *et al.* 2002. The major focus of all the reviews is of course export performance. While some studies have concentrated on export performance in general (see Zou and Stan 1998; Aaby and Slater 1989; Chetty and Hamilton 1993), the others have paid attention to specific determinants such as the managerial factors (see Leonidou *et al.* 1998b), the measurement of export performance construct (Katsikeas *et al.* 2000), or marketing strategy determinants (see Leonidou *et al.* 2002). All of the studies reviewed by the seven studies were empirical in nature. This confirms the conclusion of Katsikeas *et al.* (2000) on the lack of background theory of most export performance studies. The numbers of studies reviewed are large, ranging from the minimum of 43 to 111 as the maximum, with the average of 62. However, conclusion on the total number of studies in export performance cannot be not implied in this table because of the overlap in the number of studies reviewed among the seven studies. A wide variety of countries has been studied such as US, North American, European, and Asian countries, in which US has accounted for a major portion. However, most of the studies were conducted in the developed countries, whereas only a few were based on the developing countries. Among three studies that reported this statistics, only 5% (8/155) is from developing countries' perspective. There might have been two reasons for this problem. First, most of the reviews have based on studies published in major English publications; therefore other studies published in other language might have been ignored. Lack of research funding, interest, and capabilities can be the second reason. However, either the first or the second reason is true, the discipline needs more studies and evidences from developing countries as the issues and problems facing exporters in the developing countries are likely to be different from those in the developed countries (Das 1994).

Table 1 also provides a summary of major independent variables that have been used to explain export performance. It is clear that there are four major groups of independent variables that have been widely used, i.e. managerial, organizational, environmental, and marketing strategy variables. Managerial factors refer to all those demographic, experiential, attitudinal, behavioral, and other characteristics of the decision maker within an organization, who is potentially, or actually, involved in the export development process.

Table 1: Summary of literature review studies in export performance

Research	Period	Focus	No. of studies	No of countries	LDC*	Major independent variables	Major concluding remarks
Bilkey 1976	1960 - 1976	Export behaviors	43	11	NA	Firm and Management characteristics	Export is a developmental process that can be conceptualized as a learning sequence or export stages. Export performance varies along export development process and is influenced by different IVs.
Aaby & Slater 1989	1978-1988	Impact of managerial controllable factors on export performance	55	8 (30/55 in US)	2/55	Firm competencies, Marketing strategies, Firm characteristics	Firm size is not an important factor unless it is linked to other aspects such as financial strengths. Export experience, high management commitment to export, better management systems and well-prepared export planning leads to better performance. Competencies are much more important than firm characteristics.
Chetty & Hamilton 1993	1978 - 1991	Impact of managerial controllable factors on export performance	111	NA (77/111 in North America)	NA	Firm competencies, Marketing strategies, Firm characteristics	This study confirms the general framework of export performance proposed by Aaby & Slater (1989). The review supports the impacts of firm characteristics, firm competencies, and marketing strategies on export performance
Zou & Stan 1998	1987 - 1997	Export performance	50	21 (26/50 in US)	3/50	Internal uncontrollable, External uncontrollable factors	The most important set of determinants of export performance is internal controllable factors. Evidences to support 4P adaptation as major determinants of export performance are mixed. However, channel relationship, generally expressed as dealer/distributor support, motivation, and involvement, emerges as key determinants of export performance. In addition, Management commitment to export is also another key determinant.
Leonidou <i>et al.</i> 1998	1960 - 1995	Managerial influences on export performance	46	NA (23/46 in US)	3/50	Objective general, subjective general, subjective specific factors	Most widely investigated variables are objective (both general and specific) factors. In which decision maker's educational background has strong impact on export performance. For the others, the results are not strong.
Katsikeas <i>et al.</i> 2000	1990s (70%)	Measurement of export performance	93	NA	NA	Environmental, organizational, managerial, targeting factors, marketing strategy factors.	Export performance studies have lack of sound theory background. Export performance is a multifaceted phenomenon, therefore the use of multiple measures of export performance is necessary.
Leonidou <i>et al.</i> 2002b	1960 - 2001	Marketing strategy determinants on export performance	36	NA (19/36 in North America)	NA	Marketing strategies	In general, there appears to be a strong association between export marketing strategy and export performance measures; therefore, the implementation of a well-designed export marketing strategy can indeed determine export success. In particular, market segmentation, product quality, pricing strategy, dealer support, and advertising are found to positively influence the export performance.

* LDC: studies based on less developed countries

Organizational factors consist of demographic, operating, resource, goals, and objective characteristics of the exporting firm. Environmental factors are forces shaping task environment and macro environment both in home and host markets, which are considered uncontrollable by the firm. Marketing strategy factors includes targeting factors (segmenting and targeting export markets) and marketing functional strategies (product, price, channel of distribution, and promotion) (Leonidou *et al.* 1998). Table 2 summarizes some major managerial, organizational, environmental, and export performance (dependence) variables emerged from the literature.

However, there has been shift in central focus away from managerial, organizational, and environmental variables to marketing strategy variables. In 1960 – 1976, firm (e.g. firm size, product line) and management characteristics (e.g. quality of management, management perceived risk, barriers, motivations to export) were the most powerful explanatory variables (see Bilkey 1976), although environmental variables (e.g. industry’s technology-intensity, market structure) were also discussed. In 1978-1988, several marketing strategy variables have been employed as reported by Aaby and Slater (1989). In addition, the number of marketing variables has been significantly increased since 1989 and marketing variables have become the most importance indicator of export performance as concluded by Zou and Stan (1998). Leonidou *et al.* (2002) conduct a meta-analysis to synthesize the impact of marketing strategies variables on export performance by reviewing 36 related studies since 1960s to 2001. These authors report 38 different marketing strategy variables that have been used by researchers in the field. The 38 variables have been classified into 5 major groups: targeting (3 variables), product (10), price (6), distribution (7), and promotion (6). To note, up to this time, marketing mix variables are most researched in export performance, while the role of relationship marketing has not been addressed. To be precise, distribution channel relationship has been used in several studies (see Zou and Stan 1998). However, it is considered as a component of distribution strategy, rather than a relationship marketing strategy.

Relationship marketing

Emerged from service and industrial marketing since 1980s and widely accepted in 1990s, relationship marketing has been considered a paradigm shift in the marketing discipline (see Gronroos 1994, 1995; Voss 1997; Berry 1995; Gummesson 1996, 1998; O’Malley and Tynan 2000). The core concept of relationship marketing involves establishing, developing, and maintaining the successful long-term relationship with the firm’s key stakeholders, especially with customer, employees, suppliers, distributors, competitors, government, etc. (Morgan and Hunt 1994; Gummesson 1994, Gronroos 1996). Relationship marketing roots itself in relational exchange paradigm as opposed to marketing mix or 4Ps in transactional exchange (Gronroos 1994). Transactional exchange is based on the assumptions that competition and self-interest are the drivers of value creation and that independence of choice among marketing actors creates a more efficient system for creating and distributing marketing value. Relational exchange, in contrast, has challenged these assumptions.

Table 2: Summary of managerial, organizational, marketing, and export performance variables

Independent variable	Illustrative research
Managerial variables	
Perceived barriers and stimuli	Zou & Stan 1998; Katsikeas et al. 1996
Export orientation,	Zou & Stan 1998; Aaby & Slater 1989; Leonidou et al. 1998b; Chetty &

commitment and support	Hamilton 1993; Trimeche 2002; Das 1994; Bijmolt & Zwart 1994
International experience and knowledge	Zou & Stan 1998; Aaby & Slater 1989; Leonidou et al. 1998b; Chetty & Hamilton 1993; Holzmuller & Kasper 1991; Das 1994; Katsikeas et al. 1996
Education level	Zou & Stan 1998; Leonidou et al. 1998b; Holzmuller & Kasper 1991; Das 1994
Language proficiency	Leonidou et al. 1998b; Holzmuller & Kasper 1991; Weaver et al. 1998; Das 1994
Organizational variables	
Firm types, size, age, structure	Zou & Stan 1998; Aaby & Slater 1989; Chetty & Hamilton 1993; Trimeche 2002; Bijmolt & Zwart 1994; Holzmuller & Kasper 1991; Weaver et al. 1998; Katsikeas et al. 1996
Firm technology	Zou & Stan 1998; Aaby & Slater 1989; Chetty & Hamilton 1993
Firm capabilities and competencies	Zou & Stan 1998; Aaby & Slater 1989; Chetty & Hamilton 1993
Product types	Das 1994
Environmental variables	
Industry's technological intensity	Zou & Stan 1998
Industry's level of competitiveness	Porter 1990
Availability and strength of support and related domestic industries.	Porter 1990
Export market attractiveness	Zou & Stan 1998; Aaby & Slater 1989; Chetty & Hamilton 1993; Trimeche 2002; Weaver et al. 1998
Export market competitiveness	Zou & Stan 1998; Aaby & Slater 1989; Chetty & Hamilton 1993; Weaver et al. 1998
Domestic demand	Zou & Stan 1998
Government support for export	Aaby & Slater 1989; Chetty & Hamilton 1993; Gencturk & Kotabe 2001; Pham 2001; Weaver et al. 1998
Psychic distance	Trimeche 2002; Bijmolt & Zwart 1994; Evans et al. 2000; Lee & Lang 1998
Export performance	
Sales	Zou & Stan 1998; Aaby & Slater 1989; Katsikeas et al. 2000; Chetty & Hamilton 1993; ; Gencturk & Kotabe 2001; Shoham 1998
Profit	Zou & Stan 1998; Katsikeas et al. 2000; Bijmolt & Zwart 1994; Gencturk & Kotabe 2001; Shoham 1998
Growth	Zou & Stan 1998; Aaby & Slater 1989; Katsikeas et al. 2000; Chetty & Hamilton 1993; Shoham 1998
Perceived success	Zou & Stan 1998; Katsikeas et al. 2000; Bijmolt & Zwart 1994
Satisfaction	Zou & Stan 1998; Katsikeas et al. 2000; Bijmolt & Zwart 1994
Goal Achievement	Zou & Stan 1998; Katsikeas et al. 2000

It is believed that mutual cooperation, as opposed to competition and conflict leads to higher value creation and that every discrete transaction involves transaction costs which lead to inefficiencies of transactional exchange (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995). It is widely believed among academicians that transactional and relational exchange coexist in the exchange continuum, in which transactional exchange is placed at one extreme and relational exchange at the other and that exchange continuum is a multidimensional concept (Gronroos 1994; Pel 1999; O'Malley and Tynan 2000; Barrienger 1997; Palmer 1995).

There are five major macro-environmental forces that are responsible for the development of relationship marketing: (1) rapid technological advancements, especially in information

technology (Berry 1995; Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995; Aijo 1996), (2) the growth of the service economy (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995; Berry 1995; Aijo 1996), (3) the high level of competitive intensity (Juttner and Wehrli 1994; Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995; Aijo 1996), (4) increasing sophistication of customer's demands (Palmer 1995; Berry 1995; Bitner 1995; Aijo 1996), and (5) changes in organizational practices (Sheth and Parvatiyar 1995). The impact of technological revolution is changing the nature of marketing institutions. With high-tech electronic and computerized communication systems, it is easier for producers and consumers to directly interact and to build close relationships, which benefit both sides. Another force driving the adoption of relationship marketing is the growth of the service economy. Today economies and organizations depend upon the revenues from the services sector, which emphasizes "marketing of a performance rather than an object" (Berry 1995, p.237). Marketing of a performance in its very nature depends on the interaction between the provider and the consumers of the service, which will be strengthened by establishing a close relationship. A high level of competitive intensity characterizes the third force. The trade and investment liberalization, the globalization, the technological innovations, and shorter product life cycles have combined to create a high level of competitive intensity, which forces marketers to turn to keeping customers as opposed to attracting new customers. Fourth, customer's demands are more and more sophisticated because of the improvement in quality of life and fierce competitiveness, which provide them unlimited and better choices. It is argued that customers are not only searching for functional benefits of an offer, but are also looking for social or emotional benefits from a relationally based exchange (Berry 1995; Aijo 1996; Bitner 1995). Finally, several changes in the organization practices have facilitated the growth of relationship marketing. Amongst these the two most significant are total quality movement and changes in organizational purchasing practices. In the adoption of Total Quality Management (TQM), it is necessary to involve suppliers and customers in implementing the program at all activities of the value chain. Therefore, close relationships with customers, suppliers, and other important stakeholders should be developed and maintained. In addition, company are now changing their processes to allow the direct involvement of the users of products and services in the purchasing decisions, which were usually managed by procurement department as a specialized function. This opens an opportunity for direct interaction and cooperative relationship between producers and users.

Relationship marketing and export performance – Past studies

As discussed above, although there have been a major shift in the marketing discipline, marketing mix variables have been still the most dominant variables in export performance studies. However, review of the literature also shows that there are several studies attempted to employ relational variables in explaining export performance. Table 3 summarizes five of these studies. The earliest study in this group was conducted in 1994. This is understandable because mid-1990s is considered the turning point of relationship marketing from discovery to acceptance period (see O'Malley and Tynan 2000). Exporter and importer relationship is the research context of these studies. Five countries have been examined, i.e. India, Australia, Cyprus, UK, and US. Sample sizes range from 58 to 434, with average of 170. The data of all studies have been collected from more than one industry, which consisted of both industrial good industries (e.g. engineering, chemical, technical parts, machine tools, mining, etc.) and consumer goods (e.g. food, beverage, clothing, household durables, etc.). Export managers have been the key informants in all of the studies. Four studies have used data

from small and medium firms. The firm size is often measured by the number of employees of the firm. All of the studies use primary data with mail questionnaires and personal interview as major data collection methods. Advanced statistical techniques such as Structural Equation Modeling, Discriminant Analysis, Principle Component Analysis, Cluster Analysis have been used by researchers. Export performance, export success, export involvement, and types of export relationship have been used as the dependent variables, while cultural distance, transactional specific assets, adaptation, commitment, communication, cooperation, conflict, dependence, distance, satisfaction, trust, understanding, relationship intensity, trust, and commitment have been employed as independent variables. These chosen independent variables are very popular in relationship marketing literature. In general the results are mixed regarding the impact of relationship marketing on export context. Das (1994) aims to distinguish between successful and unsuccessful exporters. The findings, however, do not support the proposed relational variables as significant discriminating variables in the discriminant function. This may be due to the fact that three relational variables (mutual dependence, perceived distance, and conflict) employed in this study do not fully capture the concept of relational exchange and that the sample size was quite small (58) compared with relatively large number of variables (11). Lee and Jang (1998) propose that the degree of relational exchange is positively related to the performance of exporters. Their empirical findings support this hypothesis. These authors, however, do not clearly describe the observed variables they use to measure relational exchange construct. Leonidou and Kaleka (1998) examine the literature and propose 10 relationship dimensions. These authors empirically test the differences of the ten dimensions across export involvement levels (i.e. experimental; transitional, and advanced). The findings reveal that export development is closely linked with greater commitment, more communication, higher level of co-operation, substantial partnership dependence, high level of trust, and stronger feelings of satisfaction. The major contributions of this study are two folds. First, a wide range of relational dimensions have been proposed and tested in the export context. Second, these authors have suggested a very important linkage between relational variables and export involvement stages. In a similar manner, Leonidou *et al.* (2002a) use 10 relational variables (9 are exactly similar to those of Leonidou and Kaleka (1998), and 1 is uncertainty instead of satisfaction) to distinguish between harmonious and problematic export relationships. The findings show that harmonious relationships with overseas customers are distinguished by greater dependence, trust, understanding, commitment, communication, and cooperation, but less distance, uncertainty, and conflict between parties. The findings of this study are quite strong; 9/10 relational variables are significant (t-test) except for adaptation. Styles and Ambler (2000) use the data collected from Australia and UK exporters to test the relationship between relationship commitment and export performance. The findings are mixed.

For UK sample the result significantly supports the positive relationship, while for Australia sample, this relationship is not significant. According to these authors, the lack of support for this hypothesis in Australia sample may reflect cultural differences because it generally takes longer to build close relationship in the Eastern cultures that dominate the Australian sample.

Table 3: Illustrative research in export performance with relational variables

Illustrative Research settings	Country	Industry	N	Informant	Firm size	Techniques*	Relational Variables	Exporting Variables	Major Findings
Das 1994	India	Spices, textiles, hand-loom, handicraft, leather goods, engineering, chemical, and allied goods	58	Export manager	E: 500 (median)	PL, Discriminant	Mutual dependence, Perceived conflict	Export success	Relational variables are not significant discriminating variable in distinguishing successful and unsuccessful exporters.
Lee & Jang 1998	Australia	Agricultural/forestry, technical parts, mining, consumer products and services	60	CEO, General manager	E: 100 (median)	MQ, SEM	Cultural transactional assets, exchange	Export performance	Cultural distance has a negative impact on relational exchange, while transactional specific assets has positive impact on relational exchange, which in turn has positive impact on export performance
Leonidou & Kaleka 1998	Cyprus	Food, agricultural, clothing, wood, chemicals, plastics, mineral, and manufactured goods	100	Export manager	E: 38.67 S: 2.91M	PL, Cluster, PCA, ANOVA	Adaptation, commitment, communication, cooperation, dependence, satisfaction, understanding	Export involvement	Commitment, communication, cooperation, dependence, distance, satisfaction, and trust are significantly connected with export involvement
Styles & Armbler 2000	Australia UK	Industrial consumer products (not reported in details)	434	Export manager	E: 66% < 100	MQ, SEM	Relationship Trust, Relationship Commitment, intensity, Relationship	Export performance	Trust has a positive impact on relationship commitment, which in turn has a mixed result on export performance
Leonidou et al. 2002a	US	Industrial goods (machine supplies, materials) and consumer goods (household durables, foodstuffs, beverage)	201	Export manager, General manager	E: 136 S: 14.6M	MQ, T-test	Adaptation, Commitment, Communication, Cooperation, Dependence, uncertainty, Understanding	Types of business relationship	High dependence, trust, commitment, communication, cooperation and less distance, conflict uncertainty, harmonious relationships.

Note: *: Techniques: data collection and data analysis techniques; NA: not available; N: sample size; E: number of employees; S: annual sales; MQ: Mail questionnaire; Reg: Multiple Regression; SEM: Structural Equation Modeling; PCA: Principle Component Analysis.

In summary, there are evidences supported the positive impact of relational variable on the export performance, especially when multi dimensions were employed to fully capture the relational construct. Leonidou and Kaleka (1998) and Leonidou *et al.* (2002a) have contributed to the literature by using multiple dimensions of relational exchange. These authors, however, do not test the impact of these dimensions on export performance directly. In addition, t-test and one-way ANOVA, the techniques used in these two studies, are not strong statistical techniques to test the relationship among variables. In fact, they only show the difference among group means. Furthermore, 10 relationship dimensions proposed by these two studies are mostly based on exporting literature rather than based on relationship marketing literature. Therefore, an attempt to make a generalization from these studies will be problematic.

Marketing exchange continuum and its dimensions

To fully capture the concept of relationship marketing, it is very important to clearly define its dimensions. It is the purpose of this section to propose 12 major dimensions of relational exchange. The 12 proposed dimensions are based on the review of relationship marketing and exporting literature. Table 4 summarizes the researches in this topic and the 12 dimensions.

Purpose of exchange. The purpose of an exchange varies in its form along the continuum. Bagozzi (1975) classifies three types of exchange purpose, i.e. utilitarian, symbolic, and mixed exchange. In the utilitarian exchange, goods are given in return for money. This is the case of purely transactional exchange (Juttner and Wehrli 1994; Palmer 1995). On the other hand, relational exchange involves symbolic and mixed exchange, where parties transfer not only goods for money but psychological, social, and other intangible values. According to Juttner and Wehrli (1995), this perspective leads to three value dimensions of an exchange: an outcome-related (received products/ objects), experience-related (psychological states associated with the process), and action-related (actions performed by the actors, e.g. cooperation).

Table 4: Summary of researches in exchange continuum

Illustrative research	Type of research	Research context	Exchange dimensions											
			Purpose of exchange	Time orientation	No of exchange partners	Dependency	Trust	Commitment	Communication	Adaptation	Division of benefits & burdens	Cooperation/ competition	Personal relation	Power
Dwyer et al 1987	Conceptual	B-S* in business market	✓	✓						✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Frazier et al. 1988	Conceptual	B-S* in business market Focus on JIT relationship	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	
Gundlach & Murphy 1993	Conceptual	B-S in general	✓	✓							✓	✓	✓	

Gronroos 1994	Conceptual	B-S in general	✓	✓					
Macintosh & Gentry 1995	Empirical	B-S in consumer market	✓				✓		
Sheth & Parvatiyar 1995	Conceptual	B-S in general					✓		✓
Barrieber 1997	Conceptual	B-S in small firms	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	
Fontenot & Wilson 1997	Conceptual	Manufacturer and distributor relationship			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Leonidou & Kaleka 1998	Empirical	Exporter-importer			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Lambe et al. 2000	Conceptual	B-S* in business market Focus on Interimistic	✓		✓	✓			
Day 2000	Conceptual	B-S in general					✓		✓
Pels et al. 2000	Conceptual	B-S in general	✓	✓			✓		✓
Rokkan & Haugland 2002	Empirical	Channel relationship in consumer market	✓		✓				✓
Leonidou et al. 2002a	Empirical	Export-importer			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

*: Buyer-seller relationship

Time orientation. This is one of the most widely used dimensions by researchers. Ganesan (1994) postulates that exchange parties differ in their time-orientation, which influences their choice of the marketing exchange orientation. Firm with short-term orientation relies on the market efficiencies to maximize their profits in a transaction, whereas firms with long-term orientation prefers relational exchanges to maximize their profits over a series of transactions. According to Holmlund and Tornroos (1997), continuation and strength are two components of this dimension. Continuation reflects the continuous and repeated manner of the exchange, while strength refers to the intensity of the relationship over time.

Number of exchange partner. This dimension refers to the number of exchange parties involved in specific type of exchange (e.g. buyer-suppliers). In transactional exchange the number of parties involved are numerous and anonymous to each other, while relational exchange require the limited number of parties and each party is well known to other party.

Dependency. The nature and degree of dependency varies along the exchange continuum. According to Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995b), level of dependency among parties starts from totally independence in transactional exchange to mutual interdependence in relational exchange because it is believed that interdependencies reduce transaction costs and generate higher quality while keeping governance costs lower than transactional exchange.

Trust. Trust is conceptualized as a level of confidence that the other party's expected behavior will result in valued outcomes (Gruen 1995). The level of confidence provides a foundation for the parties to engage in relational exchange. Without confidence there will not be trust. This psychological dimension often is associated with relational exchange and rarely occurs in transactional exchange. Trust is a basic requirement for relational exchange to exist between parties.

Commitment. Morgan and Hunt (1994, p.23) define “relationship commitment as an exchange partner believing that an ongoing relationship with another is so important as to warrant maximum efforts to maintaining it; that is, the committed party believes the relationship is worth working on to ensure that it endures indefinitely”. Similar to trust, commitment is another psychological dimension that is typical in relational exchange. It is believed that high level of trust drive high level of commitment (Morgan and Hunt 1994), which in turn becomes the necessary condition for a long-term relationship. Therefore relational exchange is characterized by high level of trust and commitment.

Communication. Communication facilitates the efficiency of the exchange process. Openness, frequency, formality, and quality of information exchanged are four basic characteristics of communication. In transactional exchange, communication is less open, low frequency, often through formal channel, and limited amount, quality and types of information exchanged. In contrast, relational exchange is characterized by high level of openness, frequency, formal and informal channels, high quality and different types of information exchanged.

Adaptation. Adaptation is key behavioral cursor of relational exchange. It is defined as an investment in adaptations to process, product, or procedures specific to the needs or capabilities of an exchange partner (Cannon and Perreult 1999). This dimension is sometimes referred to as an investment (Gundlach and Murphy 1993) or specialized investment (Frazier *et al.* 1988).

Competition – cooperation. Sheth and Parvatiayr (1995b) argued that the development of relationship marketing led to a significant shift from competition to cooperation. In transactional exchange, competition and self-interest are the driver of value creation, while in relational exchange mutual cooperation leads to higher value creation. Cooperation allows that each partner has their own (but compatible) goal, and that a certain degree of autonomy is given up in favor for a mutual success (Morgan and Hunt 1994). Thus cooperation can be reflected through various activities between firms such as joint planning and collaboration (Fontenot and Wilson 1997; Dwyer *et al.* 1987).

Division of benefits and burdens. In transactional exchange, level of competition is high; therefore there are sharp division of benefits and burdens among parties involved. On the other hand, relational exchange is characterized by high level of cooperation and mutual interdependence; therefore benefits and burdens are shared among parties (Dwyer *et al.* 1987).

Personal relation. Level of personal contact involved in an exchange has a strong impact on the exchange orientation. Sheth and Parvatiyar (1995) and Palmer (1995, 1997) argue that relationship marketing has its root in pre-industrial era, where there were close personal contact between producers and consumers. This is also supported by Dwyer *et al.* (1987) and Pels *et al.* (2000). According to Witkowski and Thibodeau (1999), personal contact helps to lower buyers’ perceived risk, improve the suppliers’ creditability, and help both parties gain knowledge about the market.

Power. Power is the ability to influence the decisions/ actions or impose one’s will on others (Dwyer *et al.* 1987; Fontenot and Wilson 1997). Hunt and Morgan (1994) state “successful marketing relationships involve co-operative partners, not power-conscious adversaries” (Hunt and Morgan 1994, p.24). Pressey and Mathews (2000) propose that power balance is

the major condition for relationship marketing. They also empirically tested this proposition in consumer services context. The findings support their proposition.

Table 5 summarizes major characteristics of 12 dimensions.

Table 5: Marketing exchange continuum

Dimensions	Transactional exchange	Relational exchange
Purpose of exchange	Narrow, Economic	Broad, Economic + Social
Exchange type	Restricted	Generalize → Complex
Time orientation	Short	Long
Number of exchange partners	Many	Limited
Dependency	Independence	Mutual interdependence
Trust	Low	High
Commitment	Low	High
Communication	Low	High
Adaptation	Low	High
Competition - cooperation	Competition	Cooperation
Division of benefits & burden	Sharp division	Shared
Personal relation	Low	High
Power	Unbalance	Balance

Conceptual framework

The above discussion leads to the proposed conceptual framework. Figure 1 visualizes the framework. There are four factors influence the extent of export performance, i.e. managerial factor, organizational factor, environmental factor, and marketing strategy factor. The managerial, organizational, environmental, and export performance factors are presented in Table 2 (above). The dimensions of exchange continuum are presented in table 5.

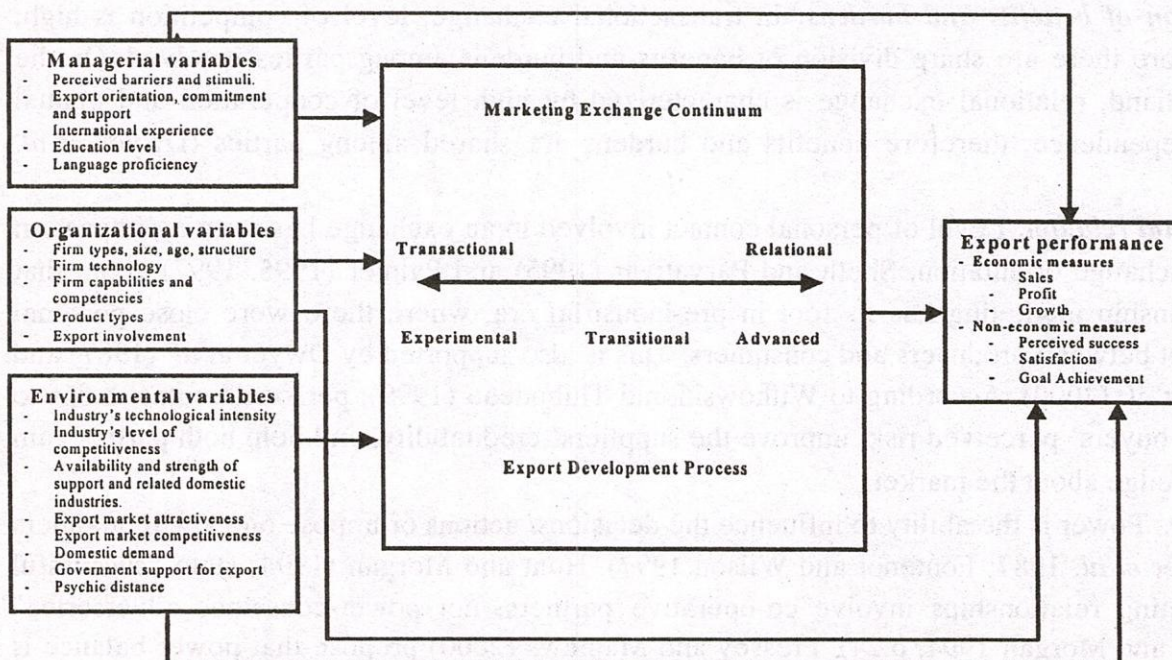


Figure 1: Conceptual framework for examining export performance

The major focus of this framework is the impact of marketing strategy on export performance. It is proposed that transactional and relational exchange coexist in exporting contexts. Transactional marketing is more suitable for early stages of export development process such as experimental and transitional, while relational marketing is more suitable for advanced stage of export development process. This is in line with the findings of Leonidou and Kaleka (1998). As they find the relationship dimensions closely link with the export development process. Experimental and transactional stages are characterized by lower level of commitment, communication, co-operation, dependence, satisfaction, and trust, while in advanced stage all these six dimensions are high. This is also consistence with the major dimensions of marketing exchange proposed in the previous section.

Conclusions

The major contributions of the proposed conceptual framework are twofold. First, for the first time relational exchange theory is integrated in a comprehensive framework to examine the export performance. Second, it is proposed that difference exchange orientations (i.e. transactional and relational exchange) coexist in the exporting contexts and that to maximize the export performance firms at different stages of export development process should rely on different types of exchange.

Empirical study should be conducted to test the proposed framework. The measurement of all the constructs in the framework can be utilized by using the findings from previous studies, especially from those presented in table 1. Finally, as the evidences from developing countries are in an urgent need, it would be very helpful if the framework is tested in developing countries ' settings.

TÁC ĐỘNG CỦA TIẾP THỊ DỰA TRÊN QUAN HỆ ĐỐI VỚI KẾT QUẢ XUẤT KHẨU

Vũ Thế Dũng

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TÓM TẮT: *Xác định các yếu tố ảnh hưởng đến kết quả xuất khẩu đã được nghiên cứu từ thập niên 1960. Cho đến nay đã có rất nhiều nghiên cứu trên thế giới nghiên cứu mảng đề tài này. Khảo sát những nghiên cứu nhóm này cho thấy có bốn nhóm yếu tố chính được sử dụng để đánh giá sự biến động của kết quả xuất khẩu: các yếu tố môi trường kinh doanh, các yếu tố tổ chức, các yếu tố thuộc về nhà quản lý, và các yếu tố thuộc chiến lược tiếp thị. Trong đó, các yếu tố thuộc về chiến lược tiếp thị hiện đang là trọng tâm của các nghiên cứu gần đây. Tiếp thị hỗn hợp hay 4Ps (Sản phẩm, Giá, Phân phối, Chiêu thị) là những yếu tố chính thườngt được sử dụng trong số các yếu tố thuộc chiến lược tiếp thị. Tuy nhiên tiếp thị dựa trên quan hệ được đánh giá là một trào lưu mới trong khoa học tiếp thị. Trào lưu này dựa trên nền tảng xây dựng và duy trì quan hệ dài hạn với các đối tác chính của tổ chức như khách hàng, nhà cung cấp, đối thủ cạnh tranh. Bài báo này đề xuất việc sử dụng các yếu tố của tiếp thị dựa trên quan hệ quan hệ để giải thích sự biến thiên của kết quả xuất khẩu.*

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