

ABSTRACT

An Examination of the Determinants of Export Performance in a Small Developing Country Context

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In small developing countries, particularly those in the Caribbean, export performance is of particular interest to both the government and business managers. It is a critical component in stimulating economic growth and for management it is a tool to boost corporate growth, increase capacity utilization, improve financial performance, strengthen competitive edge, and ensure company survival in a highly globalized marketplace.

This thesis examines the predictive relationship between firm characteristics, managerial motivations, international marketing strategies, the external environment, and export performance of Trinidad and Tobago manufacturing export firms. The central purpose of the study is to contribute to an understanding of the factors which impact on firms' export performance and their relative importance in a small developing country context.

Multiple regression analysis revealed the key finding that marketing/distribution capability has a strong and direct impact on export performance. This supports the contention that success in export market ventures is within the reach of management.

The commitment of Top Management to the export venture and price competitiveness were also seen to be important contributing factors. Therefore, companies have much to gain if they allocate sufficient resources to fully capitalize on export market opportunities and use competitive pricing to maintain an advantageous position in the export market.

There was a lack of significance in the relationship between firm size and export performance. This means that small size is not an inhibitor to the attainment of satisfactory performance in overseas markets. This is important as most Caribbean firms are small by world standards.

Similarly, a lack of significance in the relationship between product/promotion adaptation and export performance confirms that it is appropriate to use standardization when a firm is marketing to countries that are similar to the home market (e.g. CARICOM countries).

Finally, fortuitous occurrences and external environmental dimensions were also found to be important in explaining exporting success.

Keywords: Joni Marie Jacob; export performance; export venture; developing country.