A Study of The Impact of The Quality of The Relationship between Exporting Firms and Foreign Buyers on The Firm Export Performance (Case Study: Exporting Manufacturing Firms in Gilan Province)

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Abstract

Today, the relationship between export activities and performance has become a highly important issue in the development and implementation of strategies and also the international trade arena for firms. One of the major instruments that measure the export performance is consideration of strategic results of exports. In this view, achievement of strategic goals including: improvement of the competitive status and increase of the market share must be taken into account as an important part of export performance. Furthermore, one of the factors that affect the firm export performance is the relationship between the firms and foreign customers and meanwhile the issue of the quality of communications has a highly important status as it determines the intensity and strength of a relationship. The dimensions of the quality of communications include: information sharing, long-term relationships and satisfaction with communication. This study is aimed at investigating the impact of the quality of relationships with customers on the firm export performance. The population of this study is the staff and managers of exporting manufacturing firms of Gilan Province, which consists of 800 individuals, and a sample of 200 individuals has been selected from among them for distribution of the questionnaire. The sampling method is random sampling. The method of the present study is descriptive-analytic. The method of data collection is field studies and the instrument for data collection is the questionnaire. Data analysis is also conducted in the two descriptive and inferential methods. Hypothesis testing has been conducted through the regression testing method and by means of SPSS18 software. The results of the studies conducted show that the quality of the relationships with customers has had a great impact on the export performance of exporting manufacturing firms of Gilan Province, and from among the dimensions of the quality of communications, the variable of satisfaction with communication has the most impact on the export performance.

Keywords: quality of communications, information sharing, long-term relationships, satisfaction with communication, export performance
Introduction

Today, increase of competition on the world scale has led to the increase of the number of firms that seize the opportunities in international markets in order to reach their goals and maintain their markets and survive (Doayi & Hossaini Rebat, 2010). Globalization is the stepwise process for international trade development due to which a firm becomes increasingly involved in international trade operations through special products in the selected markets (Kalafsky, 2009). Meanwhile, export can be considered as a starting point for globalization (Rahimnya & Sadeqian, 2011). Export is defined as the relationship and collaboration with professional markets and market professionals on the borders (Kalafsky, 2009) and over the past two decades, in tandem with global economic growth, it has been taken into consideration as one of the economic activities that has higher growth than other activities. In fact, export is considered as an essential commercial activity for national economy. Export in the firm is also considered as an opportunity for higher sales, higher profitability, using the economies of scale for reduction of product development costs, increase of the standard of living for clients and improvement of the quality of working life of employees (Lee and Habte-Giorgis, 2004). Export causes the levels of employment, industrial development and national welfare to increase. Also, it leads to the improvement of performance of companies, increase of profitability, increase of sales volume and expansion of the market share for them (Koksal, 2008).

Due to the growing importance of export in today's turbulent world, most companies have started to think of exporting their goods outside the domestic markets and also the relationship between export activities and performance has become a highly important issue in the development and implementation of strategies and also the arena of international trade for companies (Oral, 2009). In fact, the scale on which the company has achieved its export goals, is called its export performance and this scale includes: the rate and volume of sales, profits from exports, sales growth and entry into new markets (Vazifehdoust & Zarinnegar, 2008).

On the other hand, one of the factors that affect the firm export performance, is the relationship between companies and their foreign customers. Integration of the philosophy of communications and marketing in the modern marketing approach clearly highlights the growing importance of communications in the marketing process. In order to achieve successful trade and marketing, management, development and evaluation of communications is highly necessary. In the literature related to communications, the reciprocity of motivation for communication is one of the most important factors effective in communication (Crosby et al., 1990) and the quality of these communications shows a kind of evaluation of the intensity and type of relationship, needs and expectations of those involved in the relationship from each other and the aforementioned evaluation will be conducted based on previous successful and unsuccessful encounters and events (Larson & Rogers, 1998). The concept of the quality of communications has a highly important status since it determines the intensity and strength of a relationship. Unlike the communications in a domestic market, development of relationships in foreign markets is...
influenced by many factors such as: heterogeneous culture, different economic factors and other major environmental factors. Determination of the relationship between exporters and their foreign buyers is highly necessary since business activities are conducted by the communication between the two parties (Oral, 2009). In fact, the main problem of the present study is that the exporting manufacturing firms of Gilan Province have not managed to achieve all their potentials for information sharing and maintenance of long-term relationships to attain their strategic goals that consist of improvement of the competitive status and increase of the market share. This paper intends to show how the people involved in the commercial relationship (exporters and foreign buyer companies) operate in mutual communications. Therefore, the main question of the present study is: "Does the quality of the relations between exporters and their foreign buyers affect the firm export performance?" Therefore, the present study is aimed at assessing the impact of information sharing, attention to long-term relationships and satisfaction with communication with foreign buyers on the export performance of exporting companies.

2. Theoretical Foundations

Success of export is stated by different titles of export performance, export intensity, etc. and is also calculated in different methods. Different criteria have been considered for export performance in different studies which include the level of export, export growth and export earnings. In general, there are three main ways for measurement of export performance which include:

- The economic perspective includes: the ratio of export sales and the volume of export sales

- The non-economic perspective includes: new export markets, the export share for development of products

- The overall perspective includes: status of the perceived exports and satisfaction with the overall export performance (Haahti et al., 2005).

In the literature related to the research topic, different factors have been stated as the factors effective in the success of export. In a division, these factors can be divided into internal determinants and external determinants. Internal or controllable determinants refer to factors that exist inside the company and can be controlled by the company managers, whereas external determinants exist in the environment of the company and can't be controlled. Some of the internal determinants of export performance include: characteristics of the company, management, technology resources, communication with customers and intermediaries, decision-making characteristics and determinants related to the strategy of export and external determinants of performance include: company and industry environment. In fact, the type of
relationship between the exporters and other trading partners such as customers, intermediaries, etc., can be effective in improvement of the export performance (Jacqueline and Shapiro, 2002).

The theories that are about internalization and export performance, indicate that the firm export performance is related to the attitude of the exports toward their international activities, commitment, knowledge and communication skills (Vazifehdoust & Zarinnegar, 2009). Researchers have classified the factors effective in successful export performance into five groups. These factors include:

- Management factors, including: personal, experience, attitude, behavioral and the characteristics related to decision-makers in exporting companies

- Organizational factors, including: the elements related to characteristics, operations, resources and goals of the organization

- Environmental factors, including: factors that shape the operational and major environment of exporting companies

- Targeting of export markets, including: identification and selection of international target markets

- Marketing mix variables, including: production strategy and product design, pricing, distribution and promotion (Hosseini et al., 2010).

The export performance is mostly measured by two methods. These measurement methods of export performance are related to different conceptual structures. The most common conceptualization of the export performance is concentration on the financial results of export. The basic belief is that export is one of the marketing programs of the company. Therefore, the investment performance for export must be investigated and evaluated exactly in the same way that other trading activities of the company are calculated. Many studies showed that the export performance is mostly measured through indicators such as: export sales, growth of export sales, export earnings and the inclination for export. One of the other major tools that measure the export performance is consideration of strategic export results. The main point of this method is that most companies have a set of strategic targets regarding export. In this attitude, attainment of strategic targets such as: improvement of the competitive status and increase of the market share, must be considered as an important part of the export performance. According to what has been mentioned above, export performance is measured through different views. For this purpose, the export performance is defined as the financial and strategic performance, and in the present study the researcher has taken into account only the strategic aspect of export performance (Oral1, 2009); this means that the export performance in the present study will be measured through the following factors:
- Improvement of the company's competitive position

- Increase of the company's market share

One of the factors that affect the firm export performance is their method of communication with the customers. Today, the relationship with the customers is an important issue of high priority for many companies. In many competitive markets, merchants and business owners have spent a lot of costs on the long-term and continuous communication with the customers (Bohling et al., 2006). The relationship of the customers with the company is conducted through different ways such as web, telephone, sales centers, distributors and partner networks. The main duty of the company managers is the facility in the communication of the customers with the organization (in any way they are inclined to) without any limitation of time, place and nationality; such that customers could feel they are in touch with an organization which knows them, values them and meets their needs immediately and by the easiest method of communication (Colgate and Danaher, 2000).

The continuous and long-term communication with customers and satisfying them will have some advantages for the company as follows:

Increase of customer loyalty: the company can communicate with its customers in an individual and unique way. The instrument through which a company can cause customer loyalty is the valuation of the customer.

Effective marketing: having the information related to the customer allows the company to predict various types of products that the customer is interested to buy. This information helps the company to apply its marketing and sales activity with higher efficiency and impact in order to cause customer satisfaction.

Higher efficiency and reduction of costs: collection of the data related to each customer within a database allows all the elements inside the company (marketing team, sales forces, etc.) to be able to divide their data and tasks. Among the other advantages of this method, feedback, development of current services and products, reduction of advertising costs, quick response to the customer requests and increase of marketing and sales opportunities can be mentioned (Boulding et al., 2005).

In export, the quality of communications refers to the fact that communications are developed beyond the boundaries of nations. The quality of communications involves different factors in communications which reflect the power and overall intensity of the relationship. The quality of communications shows the level of tendency for information sharing, the attitude toward the long-term relationships and satisfaction with the communication between the exporters and their
foreign customers (Lages et al., 2004). The dimensions of the quality of communications include:

- Information sharing
- Long-term relationships
- Satisfaction with communication

As a result, the variables of the present study, according to the issue under study and the question proposed in it, include:

The dependent variable: it is the variable that the researcher intends to describe and which represents the explanation or prediction of variability in it. The dependent variable in this study is the firm export performance.

The independent variable: it is the variable that explains the changes of the dependent variable; the independent variable in the present study is the quality of relationships between the exporters and their foreign buyers.

According to the issues raised, the conceptual model of research will be as follows:

Fig. (1)- Conceptual model of research; source: Oral, 2008

Based on the issues stated in the theoretical framework of research and the conceptual model of research, the research hypotheses will be as follows:
H1: The quality of communications between exporters and foreign buyers has an impact on the firm export performance.

H2: The level of information sharing between the exporters and foreign buyers has an impact on the firm export performance.

H3: Attention to long-term relationships between the exporters and foreign buyers has an impact on the firm export performance.

H4: Satisfaction with the communication between exporters and foreign buyers has an impact on the firm export performance.

The impact of the quality of communications on the export performance was investigated by Oral3 in 2009 in a study of the impacts of the quality of communications between the exporters and the buyers on the performance of exporting companies. The results of the study showed that information sharing, satisfaction with communication and attention to long-term relationships will have a positive impact on financial and marketing performance of the company.

A study was conducted entitled "the regulatory impact of the quality of commendations in the relationship between the company and the customers" by Wangd1 et al. in 2007, with the goal of determining a model to connect the customer relationship and financial results of the service sector, and meanwhile the quality of services has been considered as the predictor of the long-term and bilateral results. The results of research showed that there is a significant relationship between the quality of communications, information sharing and financial performance of service companies. Also, a study was conducted entitled "strategic orientation and success of exporting companies" in 2011 by Rahimnya & Sadeqian, which was aimed at investigating the impact of active strategic orientation on the performance of exporting companies. The results of the data analysis showed that active strategic orientation has a positive and significant impact on the success of export and expectations of the future success of export.

3. Research Methodology

The present study is the systematic search for the data and information on analysis and investigation of the impact of the quality of the relationship between exporting companies and external buyers on the firm export performance. In terms of goal, the present study is applied. These studies are used by means of the cognitive context and the information that is provided by basic research in order to meet the needs (Sakaran, 2009). Furthermore, in terms of the nature and method of research, this study is descriptive and survey. In these studies, the researcher describes the nature of the problem of research, which is investigation of the impact of the quality of the relationship between exporting companies and external buyers with the dimensions (information sharing, attention to long-term relationships and satisfaction with communication) within the framework of the independent variable on the export performance with dimensions.
(improvement of the competitive status of the company and increase of the company's market share) within the framework of the dependent variable. As this study is engaged in the impact of the quality of the relationship between exporting companies and foreign buyers on the firm export performance, it is descriptive (non-experimental) in terms of the nature and method of research. This study is non-experimental as the research variables in it are not manipulated. In terms of location, the present study has the features of library and field studies. Performance of this study requires the poll of managers and personnel of exporting manufacturing firms of Gilan Province and therefore the method is survey. In order to investigate the literature and research background, library studies have been conducted. In the field, administrative and operational stage, for collection of the required data, the researcher-made questionnaire was developed and distributed. In other words, the present study is applied in terms of goal and descriptive (non-experimental) in terms of the nature and method of data collection and sectional in terms of survey, since the data collection regarding one or a few attributes has been carried out in 2013 through sampling of the population.

The population in this study is manages and experts of exporting manufacturing firms of Gilan Province. The total number of the aforementioned companies in Gilan Province is 52 individuals and the total number of employed managers and experts is 800 individuals. Also, the non-probability convenience sampling method has been used and due to the limited population members, the Maurice Morgan table has been used which equals 250 individuals.

The research data collection method is field studies since in this method, the information is collected by means of the questionnaire in the presence of the researcher. In the end, from among the 250 questionnaires sent, 200 questionnaires answered can be used and analysis is done based on the responses received.

After developing the preliminary questionnaire, it was attempted to determine the validity and reliability of the questionnaire. In order to determine the reliability and validity of the questionnaire in this study, the content validity method has been used. In order to make sure of the content validity, when constructing the instruments, the constituent questions of the measurement instrument must represent the different parts of the selected content. As this questionnaire is researcher-made and the method of determination of the dimensions of the model within the framework of components and designing of indicators or questions for each of the constructed components was used, the validity of the questionnaire had to be investigated in terms of writing and content. In this study, for the instrument validity, the study of the theoretical foundations, the studies conducted and specialized books on research studies and also views of the advisor and the other professors were used. As a result, some suggestions were proposed for amendment and after the concerned amendments, the final questionnaire was developed.

In order to determine the reliability of the test, Cronbach's alpha method was used. This method is used for calculation of the internal consistency of measurement instruments that measure
different features. Alpha's coefficient is ranged from zero to one. A level of 0.6 or less is usually considered as unsatisfactory (S. Tal & Hawkins, 2009). To calculate the Cronbach's alpha coefficient, firstly the variance scores of each of the sub-questions of the questionnaire and the total variance must be calculated. Subsequently, by means of the following formula, we will calculate the level of alpha coefficient.

\[
r_\alpha = \frac{J}{J-1} \left(1 - \frac{\sum_{j=1}^{n} s_{j}^2}{S^2} \right)
\]

J=the number of sub-questions of the questionnaire or the test; SJ2=variance of the jth sub-test; S2=total variance of the questionnaire or the test

For this purpose, a primary sample including 30 questionnaires was pre-tested and then by means of the data obtained from these questionnaires and by means of the SPSS software, the level of confidence coefficient was calculated by the method of Cronbach's alpha and for the whole questions, 75.8% was obtained. This number shows that the questionnaire used has the required reliability. The results have been shown as below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cronbach's alpha percentage</th>
<th>Name of the variable</th>
<th>Dimensions of the independent variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>83.2%</td>
<td>Quality of communications</td>
<td>Independent variable:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77.1%</td>
<td>Information sharing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>79.5%</td>
<td>Long-term relationships</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80.9%</td>
<td>Satisfaction with communication</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>84.3%</td>
<td>Expert performance</td>
<td>The dependent variable</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4-Findings

4-1. Description of the Demographic Variables of the Responders

The results of description of the demographic variables obtained show that in this study, 164 individuals or 82% of the responders are male and 36 individuals or 18% of the responders are female. Also, in terms of age, 22 individuals or 11% of the responders are between 20 and 30 years, 58 individuals or 29% are between 31 and 40 years, 90 individuals or 45% are between 41 and 51 years, 20 individuals or 10% are more than 50 years and also 0.4% have not responded to this question. In terms of the level of education, 16 individuals or 8% of the responders have a diploma, 18 individuals or 9% have a post-diploma, 106 individuals or 53% have a BA/BS, 60 individuals or 3% are have an MA/MS. In terms of the years of experience, 30 individuals or
15% of the responders are less than 5 years, 39 individuals or 19.5% of the responders are between 5 and 10 years, 78 individuals or 39% of the responders are between 10 and 15 years, 34 individuals or 17% of the responders are between 15 and 20, 19 individuals or 9.5% of the responders are more than 20 years. Also, in terms of the type of employment, only 1 individual or 0.5% of the responders are contracting and 199 individuals or 99.5% of the responders are contractual.

4-2. Description of Research Variables

In table (2), description of the research variables has been presented and as can be seen, the mean of all variables is more than the expected mean; thus, it can be said that all the variables of the study in the concerned population are in good conditions.

Table (1)-Description of the variable of the quality of communications

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variance</th>
<th>Standard deviation</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Least</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Descriptive statistic of the variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.109</td>
<td>0.33063</td>
<td>3.3834</td>
<td>4.53</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Quality of communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.290</td>
<td>0.53843</td>
<td>3.1967</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>1.4</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Information sharing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.177</td>
<td>0.42099</td>
<td>4.1517</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.33</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Long-term relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.203</td>
<td>0.45071</td>
<td>4.0880</td>
<td>4.88</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Satisfaction with communication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.210</td>
<td>0.45820</td>
<td>4.2647</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Export performance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.336</td>
<td>0.57927</td>
<td>4.2337</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1.8</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Improvement of the competitive situation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.241</td>
<td>0.49084</td>
<td>4.3035</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2.5</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>Increase of the market share</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4-3: The Results of the Research Hypothesis Testing

H1: The quality of communications between the exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance.

Table (3)-The regression test between the quality of communications and export performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of significance</th>
<th>Beta coefficient</th>
<th>Coefficient of determination (R2)</th>
<th>R value</th>
<th>Quality of communications and export performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td>0.319</td>
<td>0.563</td>
<td>Quality of communications and export performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
According to table (3), it is observed that the level of significance obtained is less than 5% (Sig=0.000<0.05). Due to this, the variable of the quality of communications between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance. Also, based on this table, it can be said that the impact of the variable of the quality of communications between exporters and foreign buyers on the firm export performance is 56.3%. Based on the beta sign, this impact is direct (positive). Also, the coefficient of determination between the two variables of quality of communications and export performance is equal to 0.319 which shows that the variable of the quality of communications (the independent variable) can predict the variable of firm export performance (the dependent variable) by 31.9%.

H2: Level of information sharing between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance.

Table (4)-Regression test of information sharing and export performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of significance</th>
<th>Beta coefficient</th>
<th>Coefficient of determination (R2)</th>
<th>R value</th>
<th>Information sharing and export performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.001</td>
<td>0.247</td>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>0.247</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on table (4), it is observed that the level of significance obtained is less than 5% (Sig=0.001<0.05). For this reason, the variable of information sharing between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance. Also, based on this table, it can be said that the intensity of impact of the variable of information sharing between exporters and foreign buyers on the firm export performance is 24.7%. Based on the beta sign, this impact is direct and also the coefficient of determination between the two variables of information sharing and performance export performance is equal to 0.051% which shows that the variable of information sharing can predict the variable of the firm export performance by 5.1%.

H3: Attention to long-term communications between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance.

Table (5)-Regression test between long-term relationships and export performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of significance</th>
<th>Beta coefficient</th>
<th>Coefficient of determination (R2)</th>
<th>R value</th>
<th>Long-term relationships and export performance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td>0.714</td>
<td>0.392</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on table (5), it is observed that the level of significance obtained is less than 5%. For this reason, the variable of long-term relationships between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance. Also, based on this table, it can be said that the intensity of impact of the variable of long-term relationships between exporters and foreign buyers on the firm export performance is 39.2%. Based on the beta sign, this impact is direct and also the coefficient of determination between the two variables of long-term relationships and export performance is equal to 0.174, which shows that the variable of long-term relationships can predict the variable of the firm export performance by 17.4%.

H4: Satisfaction with the communication between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance.

Table (6)- Regression test between satisfaction with communication and export performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of significance</th>
<th>Beta coefficient</th>
<th>Coefficient of determination (R^2)</th>
<th>R value</th>
<th>Variable</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.000</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>0.521</td>
<td>Satisfaction with communication and export performance</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on table (6), it is observed that the level of significance obtained is less than 5%. For this reason, the variable of satisfaction with the communication between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance. Also, based on this table, it can be said that the intensity of impact of the variable of satisfaction with the communication between exporters and foreign buyers on the firm export performance is 52.1%. Based on the beta sign, this impact is direct and also the coefficient of determination between the two variables of satisfaction with communication and export performance is equal to 0.306, which shows that the variable of satisfaction with communication can predict the variable of the firm export performance by 30.6%.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

In this study, the researcher is aimed at investigating the impact of the quality of communications between exporting companies and foreign buyers on the export performance. The quality of communications plays the role of the independent variable in this study, which includes: creation of information sharing, long-term relationships and satisfaction with communication. The firm export performance also acts as the dependent variable. The reason for the importance of investigation of this is that export has become known as one of the activities that precipitate economic growth. Export plays a key role, for companies, in achievement of the competitive
advantage in today's turbulent market. Furthermore, the relationship between exporting activities and performance has become a highly important issue in development and implementation of strategies and also arena of international trade for companies. In fact, the scale on which the company has reached its export targets, is called its export performance. One of the major instruments that measure the export performance is consideration of strategic results of export.

Based on the results of the regression test of the first research hypothesis, it is seen that the variable of the quality of communications between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance. Also, it can be stated that the intensity of impact of the variable of the quality of communications between exporters and foreign buyers on the firm export performance is 56.3%. The aforementioned result is aligned with the results of the studies by Oral (2008) and also Wang (2007) and in their studies, they concluded that the quality of communications between customers and vendors is effective in the firm performance.

With respect to the first minor hypothesis, it is seen that the variable of information sharing between the exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance. Also, it can be said that the intensity of impact of the variable of information sharing between exporters and foreign buyers on the firm export performance is 24.7%. The aforementioned result is aligned with the results of the studies by Oral (2008). In his studies, he concluded that information sharing between customers and vendors will have a positive and significant impact on the firm performance.

With regard to the second minor hypothesis, it is seen that the variable of long-term relationships between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance. Also, it can be stated that the intensity of impact of the variable of long-term relationships between exporters and foreign buyers on the firm export performance is 39.2%. The aforementioned result is in line with the results obtained from the studies by Oral (2008). In his studies, he concluded that long-term relationships with customers will have a positive and significant impact on the firm performance.

With regard to the third minor hypothesis, it is seen that the variable of satisfaction with communication between exporters and foreign buyers is effective in the firm export performance. Also, it can be said that the intensity of impact of the variable of satisfaction with the communication between exporters and foreign buyers on the firm export performance is 52.1%. The aforementioned result is aligned with the results of the studies by Oral (2008). In his studies, he concluded that satisfaction with the communication between customers and vendors will have a positive and significant impact on the firm performance.

In table (7), the impact of dimensions of quality of relationship with customers of manufacturing exporting manufacturing firms of Gilan Province on the firm export performance is compared.
Table (7)-Comparison of the impact of dimensions of quality of communications on the firm export performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level of coefficient of determination</th>
<th>Dimensions of quality of communications</th>
<th>Row</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0.306</td>
<td>Satisfaction with communication</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.174</td>
<td>Long-term relationship</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0.051</td>
<td>Information sharing</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As shown in table (7), the variable of satisfaction with communication, with the coefficient of determination of 0.306, has had the highest impact on the firm export performance; the variable of the long-term relationship with, the coefficient of determination of 0.174, comes second and finally also, the variable of information sharing, with the coefficient of determination of 0.051, has shown the least impact on the export performance.

6-The Research Suggestions

As the quality of communications with the customers, as a basic and intervening variable, has a highly important impact on organizational performance, it is therefore suggested that:

- Managers of exporting manufacturing firms of Gilan Province, by training the human resources and motivating them through material and spiritual rewards, attempt to provide a reciprocal and stable relationship between the companies and the customers.

- The organizational structure be designed in such a flexible manner so that achievement of the customer demands is provided in the least time possible.

- As the increase and improvement of the quality of communications with the customers requires the organizational commitment of employees, it is therefore suggested that the managers of exporting manufacturing firms of Gilan Province, by letting the employees participate in determining the firm targets and decision-making, increase their organizational commitment and thereby improve the quality of their relationship with the customers.

- Managers that seek for the development of the quality of communication with their customers, try to improve the customer-oriented culture in the organization and among their employees as well. Development of the customer-oriented culture facilitates the process of improvement of the quality of communications with the customer.

- By development of a charter of organizational ethics, the firms feel responsible for the customer demands and by presentation of proper reports, respond to the customer demands.
-Holding educational courses for employees in order to familiarize them with the components effective in the quality of communications with customers and emphasis of the managers of companies on the importance of attention of employees to customer satisfaction and increase of the quality of communications with them, are suggested for achievement of organizational goals.

-Managers sometimes hold informal meetings between employees and managers and hold question and answer sessions and inform the employees of the proceedings of the organization's information on organizational goals and pay attention to the employees' suggestions regarding the improvement of the methods for the encounter and interaction with customers and their satisfaction.

7. References


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