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## The Determinants of Relationship Between Marketing Mix Strategy and Drivers of Export Performance in Foreign Markets: An Application on Turkish Clothing Industry

T. Sabri ERDİL<sup>a</sup>, Osman ÖZDEMİR<sup>b\*</sup>

<sup>ab</sup> Marmara University, 34722, Istanbul., Turkey

### Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of firm characteristics and marketing mix strategies on export performance. An integrative approach is used in designing the research model. Firm-specific characteristics and external factors as antecedents of export performance are included in the model as existed in the literature. Their effects on marketing mix strategy and export performance are investigated in Turkish clothing-textile industry. Based on competition strategies theory, marketing mix strategy is added into the model and its mediating effect on export performance is studied. Variables in the proposed research model were measured by scales already existed in the literature. A questionnaire form is used both via e-mail or face-to-face interviews for gathering data in the survey. Data were collected from export based Turkish textile firms operating in clothing sector. Empirical results indicate that firm characteristics, environmental characteristics, international experience and international commitment are linked to higher levels export performance in Turkish clothing export firms. Another finding implies that marketing-mix strategy has a mediating effect on the relationship. The findings can be generalized only for that sector and provide export managers with useful insights. Another limitation is the restriction of antecedents of export performance to external environment and firm-specific internal factors like international commitment and experience. This paper demonstrates a value for its sector-specific findings. In the Turkish clothing industry, financial, strategic, and competitive dimensions of export performance has been evaluated. Internal and external antecedents and marketing-mix strategy effects for the sector have also contribution in the field.

Keywords: Export performance, firm characteristics, environmental characteristics, international commitment, international experience, Turkish clothing export sector

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### Introduction

Recently, declining margins in global markets have hardened the use of a variety of competition instruments, while this situation gave prominence to the implementation of softer strategic plans effectively. In line with this,

\* Corresponding author. Tel. + + 90 212 507 99 25 fax. +90 212 553 95 61  
Email address: [osman.ozdemir@marmara.edu.tr](mailto:osman.ozdemir@marmara.edu.tr)

factors associated with the external environment of the firms are identified as multilateral and bilateral trade agreements, export subsidies, stability of foreign economy, market potential, state of economy in overseas market, disposable income in host country and export market accessibility (Samiee and Walters, 1990; Ford and Leonidou, 1991). In emerging economies, considerable attention is paid to firms' export performance, since the employment and trade balance are considered as vital factors by policy makers. Therefore, there have been a great deal of research about firms' export performance as a prominent factor explaining growth of international trade (Husted and Melvin, 2007). However, firms are more relying on dynamic arrangements rather than traditional instruments like gaining tax advantage and/or reducing factor input costs for improving their export performance. Dynamic arrangements bring countless of benefits at the firm level including opportunities for growth, larger market shares, better margins, diversification of risk and improvements in capacity utilization (Leonidou et al 2010). Nowadays, firm-level micro arrangements including variables such as market and export orientation are more essential than cost-focused macroeconomic arrangements. By focusing on these variables, firms will have the opportunity to learn about markets and overcome entry risks, thus gaining competitive advantage. Due to advantages such as lower risks, flexibility of entry and withdrawal, lower demands on human and financial resources, and the possibility of reaching foreign customers without an actual physical presence, in contrast to foreign direct investment (Murray et al., 2007), firms will gain competitive advantage over their rivals.

Product and service improvements as well as advancing export performance have become the primary goal of marketing strategies. However, there are many difficulties in defining the variables of export performance and usage of these variables by firms. Although there has been much research on export performance, this construct is among the least understood in international marketing research (Katsikeas et al., 2000). A range of variables are indicated for measuring export performance including international commitment, market focus, international experience and environmental characteristics, as existed in a wide range of literature (Lages L.F., Montgomery D. B., 2004; Kahiya E. T., Dean D. L., 2014). These studies intended to measure export performance with similar variables used in both emerging country markets and EU as well as for export performance of small and medium sized enterprises. Although the studies cover different aspects of foreign operations, the measurements are mainly based on strategic export performance. While export success factors are basically determined by strategic advantages, financial outcomes and superiority at competition have been used as export success. In their study, Katsikeas et al., (1997) identified a direct relationship between the level of export development and perception of export success factors. Studies existed in the literature categorized export success factors under three groups: Market policy elements, firm-specific factors, and external factors (Çavuşgil and Zou, 1994). Factors identified as pertaining to marketing policy elements includes export market selection, competitive pricing, payment terms, packaging characteristics, new product development, promotional efforts, after sales service, distribution network and physical distribution accessibility. Further, variables identified as firm-specific include technology intensiveness, export connections, product quality control, and financial strength (Burton and Schlegelmilch, 1987). Export market orientation requires that firms constantly monitor their customers, competitors and market environments in order to develop and sell goods and services perceived as valuable by customers in export markets (Cadogen et al., 2009).

The aim of this study is to investigate the effects of foreign market commitment, environmental factors, firm characteristics and foreign market experience on export performance and to measure mediating effect of marketing mix strategy on the relationship. With the inclusion of marketing mix strategy in the research model, a more holistic view was practised in describing export performance in addition to effects of its antecedents. Marketing mix strategy constitutes both focus and differentiation strategies. A survey was conducted in Turkish ready-made clothing sector in order to analyse the relationships among the variables and export performance. An integrative export performance evaluation is performed in the study by covering the issues from strategic, financial and competitive aspects. Consideration of these three export performance dimensions in the research model constitutes the contribution of the paper. Furthermore, the research findings will provide beneficial information to the managers for adaptation and differentiation strategies in order to improve export performance.

The study begins with an evaluation of previous literature on antecedents of export performance and marketing mix strategies. Hypotheses development is followed by the methodology. We reported the research methodology and our empirical study. Discussion is made upon findings and theoretical and managerial implications are reported.

## 1. Literature review

International companies rely both on standardization and adaptation strategies in order to gain competitive advantage in foreign markets. Adapting marketing mix elements to the local environments, managers have the opportunity to reduce costly mistakes arising from cross-cultural differences. In their study, Calantone et al., (2006)

found that there is a positive link between export performance and product adaptation strategy in all three countries where they conducted their research. Adaptive marketing mix strategy can be explained in terms of contingency theory, which emphasizes cultural differences and foreign market regulations in forming the ultimate strategy (Helm and Gritsch, 2014). Product adaptation strategy is defined as a firm's planned and conscious activities to satisfy and meet local consumers' tastes and preferences (Calantone et al., 2006). International companies use adaptation strategy when local responsiveness is required by the domestic environments, whereby sales growth and profitability are achieved (Cavusgil and Zou, 1994).

Adaptation of pricing to the overseas markets ensures responsiveness to changes in market conditions and competitive situations. By relying on pricing strategy, exporters aim to increase the number of foreign customers for the achievement of scale economies (Leonidou et al., 2002). Distribution and promotion strategies as marketing mix elements have been found to be related with export performance in the previous research (i.e., Leonidou et al., 2002). As with distribution, appropriateness of a particular distribution channel will depend on foreign market conditions domestically exists. Effects of promotion related variables such as advertising, sales promotion, and promotion adaptation on export performance are examined by researchers. In their study, Leonidou et al. (2002) found that promotion adaptation demonstrated a strong positive association with export performance.

Academics have claimed for a long time that differentiation strategy and export performance should be linked (Zaltman et al. 1973, Porter 1985; Chrysochoidis, 2000; Tay 2003; Nadia 2006; Khan et al. 2014). On the other hand, researchers have empirically verified positive effects on export performance resulting from consistency in marketing strategies (Alexander et al., 2007; Albino et al., 2009; Bloemer et al, 2013; Ramli & Iskander, 2014; Badriyah et al, 2015; Love et al., 2015).

Differentiation strategy create brand loyalty and thus provides profitability and low price sensitivity where customers are ready to pay higher prices (Porter, 1985). This strategy reduces price sensitivity, decreases power of suppliers and buyer, creates a powerful entry barrier and reduces threat of substitute products (Zehir et al., 2015). According to Lefebvre et al. (1998), firms can differ from rivals thanks to strong relationship with external partners.

Innovation is an important factor that enables sustainable competitive advantage in the changing environment. It is related to organizations' adoption of a new strategy, product, process, or technology (Zaltman et al. 1973). There is strong positive association between innovation, exporting and export performance (Love et al. 2015). Therefore, firms need unique innovations (Ramli & Iskander, 2014).

Table 1. Dimensions of export performance reviewed in the previous literatue

Source	Year	Assessment	Dimensions/indicators
Venkatraman	1989	Strategic Orientation effects	Proactiveness, strategy, environment
Cavusgil and Zou	1994	Performance of export venture	Sales growth, profitability and perceptions of the attainment of strategic goals
Katsikeas et al.	1997	The influences of firm characteristics and export commitment on export performance	Experience, firm size, competitive advantages and export commitment
Zou et al.	1998	Financial export performance	Financial, strategic and satisfaction with export venture
O'Cass and Weerawardena	2001	The influences of firm and environment characteristics on marketing performance	Uniqueness, performance, experience, marketing capabilities, environment and competitive intensity
Leonidou et al.	2002	Marketing strategy determinants of export performance	Export performance, managerial, organization and environmental factors
Lages et al.	2009	Annual performance of an export venture	Overall performance, product quality, importer's satisfaction, relationship performance with importers and supplier
Papadopoulos and Martin	2010	The influence of internationalization on export	International commitment, international experience and export performance

		performance	
Adu-Gyamfi, Korneliusen	2013	Antecedents of export performance in emerging markets	Resource commitment, experience, firm size, export barriers, export performance
Kaimakoudi	2014	Investigating export performance and competitiveness	Strategies, competitiveness and export marketing
Garcia et al.	2015	Export activity and export performance	Resources, competitive intensity, market distance and export entrepreneurship
Spyropoulou et al.	2015	Brand advantages on export ventures	Export performance, communication capabilities, financial and experimental resources,

## 2. Conceptualization and hypotheses development

In this research; firm characteristic, environmental characteristics, international commitment and international experience are proposed to be related to marketing mix strategy and export performance.

### 2.1 Firm characteristics

Firm characteristics can be predicted from several indicators. The first is firm size. For example, larger company has greater amount of assets and can access to provide funding. Second, firm complexity is associated with business segments. Companies have production lines, departments and marketing strategies. Therefore, if company is large, complexity increases. (Badriyah et al, 2015).

Risk is one of the factors to be considered in the planning and the company's business decisions as it affects the company's performance (Badriyah et al, 2015). The achievement of high-firm performance can contain high firm characteristics.

Innovativeness is important for company' future to reflects willingness to support creativity and experimentation in introducing new products/services, and novelty, technological leadership and research and development (R&D) in developing new processes (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996). Firm characteristics affect the business strategies of firm and informal structures of control authority.

Hypothesis 1: Firm characteristics have a positive effect on export performance

### 2.2. Environmental characteristics

The notion of the managers to approach environmental issues is important for their firm. Stakeholder pressures, efficiency, firm past performance, strategic priority, customer expectations, external uncertainty can be influential on the strategy and export performance. The R&D collaboration with external partners is related with export performance (Lefebvre et al., 1998).

External uncertainty expresses the predictability of activities of the close neighboring external to the firm, the national periphery and the international periphery. As predictability increases, the intentionality of managers to environmental management implementations will be more visible (Bekiroğlu et al., 2011). Therefore, managers have to know peripheries. Environment is changing and dynamic. While companies are working under different conditions and in various countries, managers have to propose solutions for export market selection problems in order to adapt to the conditions of environment. It is often assumed that firms select markets on a rational basis, but many market selection decisions are a non-systematic, essentially belief-driven and strongly personalized (Alexander et al., 2007).

There are some factors in environment characteristics. These factors can help to firms to evaluate the market. Economic factors, geographical factors, technological factors, political climate, cultural environment, foreign trade policy are of great importance as evaluation criteria (Miečinskienė, 2014). On the other hand, there is negative influence of psychic distance on export performance (Virvilaite and Seinauskiene, 2015).

Hypothesis 2: Environmental characteristics have a negative effect on export performance

### **2.3. International commitment**

International commitment refers to the involvement of a firm in the internationalisation process both geographically and culturally while helping the firm build up the knowledge necessary to become more international in scope (Love et al., 2015). The degree of a firm's export commitment is determined by its intention in adapting to the wants, needs and expectations of its foreign intermediaries (Beamish et al., 1993).

Stump (1999) considers commitment from two different perspectives: attitudinal and behavioral. Three different components of commitment are distinguished as affective, calculative and normative commitment. Affective commitment can be conceptualized as a firm's desire to build and maintain relationships with foreign customers (Bloemer et al, 2013). Calculative commitment is the degree of the relationship with foreign customers because of the switching costs associated with leaving those relationships. Normative commitment is reflected in the morale obligation to stay in relationships (Erdil, 2014). Consequently, commitment has a positive impact on economic growth in sectors related to exports (Dritsaki and Stiakakis, 2014).

Hypothesis 3: International commitment has a positive effect on export performance

### **2.4 International experience**

International experience is likely to be positively related to the potential for learning (Johanson & Vahlne, 1977). Firm age on the other hand may be linked to sclerotic thinking, inflexibility and an inability to change strategy and behaviour (Love et al., 2015). International experience plays a role in explaining firm internationalization. Therefore, firm level experience will be positively associated with internationalisation (Clarke et al., 2013). Experience helps firms overcome the difficulties and uncertainties.

International experience can help firms to confront with problems in foreign markets (Kumlu, 2014). On export performance there is a tendency to conflate age and experience (D'Angelo et al., 2013). Especially after many years, firms gain experience in sectors related with foreign customers.

Hypothesis 4: International experience has a positive effect on export performance

## **3. Adaptation and Differentiation strategy**

Many firms treat differently depending on the effect on the integrity of the product and the desired response to the customer. Therefore, there are different points in foreign sectors (Nadia et al., 2006). Heterogeneity is important (Khan et al., 2014) and so nowadays individual products are well-liked.

Competitive differentiation bring a new products on time and within budget. In today's markets, only a few and focused firms have been able to build up and sustain unique product, quality, cost positions and are profitable (Tay, 2003). Therefore resources and competence can be deployed with differentiation.

Resources and capabilities can lead to differentiated innovations in a firm and thus break the traditional competitive cycle. Technological development is required to do differential innovation activities. Firms have to create their heterogeneity and hence may lead to capabilities to exploit these resources to implement innovation strategies (Khan et al., 2014).

Differentiation strategies involve resources, capabilities, R&D, marketing new products and services and promoting brand (Porter, 1985). Therefore firms can become different in the area they want.

Firms must make design changes to their products in order to adapt to international changes in customer requirements, changing technologies, or changes in the environment, as some examples (Nadia et al., 2006). Firms focus on products that provide competitive advantage via differentiation by reason of price, performance, image and so (Swink and Hegarty, 1998).

Firms that want to take a lead in product innovations should also focus on new developments in relevant technologies (Khan et al., 2014). Therefore, with new and differentiated products firms overcome the customer confusion (Chryssochoidis, 2000).

Hypothesis 5: Adaptation of marketing-mix strategy has a positive effect on firm's export performance

Hypothesis 6: Differentiation marketing-mix strategy has a positive effect on firm's export performance

#### 4. Export performance

Trade is positively associated with growth performance. Therefore, exporting could be considered as a strategic activity at firm, industry and country levels (Kaimakoudi, 2014). Companies have to seek new opportunities in the market. Firms can be proactive by anticipating future demands and opportunities in the market, participating in emerging markets, shaping the environment, and introducing new products and brands before their rivals (Venkatraman, 1989). Therefore proactiveness can provide companies to be a financial leader (Zou et al, 1998).

The multiplicity of measures used and the fragmented nature of the findings bring additional need for a fresh look into the construct of export performance from both scholars' and practitioners' perspectives. In their qualitative study, Carneiro and colleagues (2016) found that, there are similarities on practitioners' and scholars' views of export performance, ranging from multi-dimensional conceptualization, preference for economic measures and market measures to infrequent use of learning and behavioral measures.

According to Cavusgil (1976), there are some distinctive financial advantages in relation to export performance such as sizes of firm and foreign market, firms' export marketing activities and firms' distinctive competence in technology. In addition, export performance can be supported by strong foreign partner relationship (Erdil, 2014).

Today, due to the globalization all sectors, companies, institutions and people are facing intense competition. Under this pressure, companies should have appropriate strategies as can be seen in Porter's generic strategies: low cost, differentiation and focus (Porter, 1985)

Competitive performance of firms are influenced by activities of suppliers, customer demands, preferences, market activities of competitors, removing restrictive requirements and globalization, state regulations and policies, business relations, product technologies and information technologies. (Albino et al., 2009)

Internal and external firm factors have been widely studied as antecedents of export performance. In the conceptualization of research, we depend mostly on resource based view (RBV) of firms (Barney et al., 2001). As internal factors, we considered firm-specific characteristics, international experience, international commitment and environmental characteristics as external factor.

### 5. Research design and analysis

#### 5.1. Sample and data collection

A survey was designed to obtain the effects of firm characteristics and marketing mix strategy on export performance. A questionnaire was data for the analysis of developed and applied to a sample of members of İstanbul Textile and Apparel Exporter Associations (ITAEA) it has been operating since 1986 and has more than 14 thousand members in İstanbul. The respondents were chosen among apparel exporters. The questionnaire consisted of questions related to the constructs and measures needed in the study. In order to test the proposed hypotheses, one hundred and eighteen responses from (ITAEA) exporters were obtained gathered through which we used responses 118 top managers from 118 companies. Questionnaires were distributed either on-line or with face to face interviews. All of the participants had either the head officer or the representative officer of the companies. The questionnaire was prepared following an exhaustive literature review and all constructs were measured with existing scales. All items were measured on a five point Likert-type scale where 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree.

#### 5.2. Measures and model

All measures were adopted from the existing literature in the field.

*Firm Characteristics:* Firm Characteristics were measured using four items adapted from Cass A, O' and Julian C. (2002). An example item is "Our products are highly unique in foreign markets".

*Environmental Characteristics:* Environmental Characteristics were measured using four items adopted from Cass A, O' and Julian C. (2002). An example item is "Competition is highly intensive in foreign markets in which we operate".

**International Commitment:** International Commitment were measured by four items adopted from Katsikeas C. S., Piercy N. F. and Ioannidis C., (1995). An example item is “Our company performs regular field visits to exportmarkets”.

**International Experience:** International Experience was measured six items adopted from Katsikeas C. S., Piercy N. F. and Ioannidis C., (1995).An example item is “ Our firm is experienced in foreign operations extensively.”

**Marketing-mix strategy:** Marketing-mix strategy was measured using six items adopted from Porter M. E. (1985) and Helm R. and Gritsch (2014) S., (2014). An example item is “Our firm has the ability of product ataptation in export markets”.

**Export Performance:** Export Performance was measured by four items adopted from Kahiya E. T. and Dean D. L. (2014). An example item is “Our firm’s market share in international markets is satisfactory”.

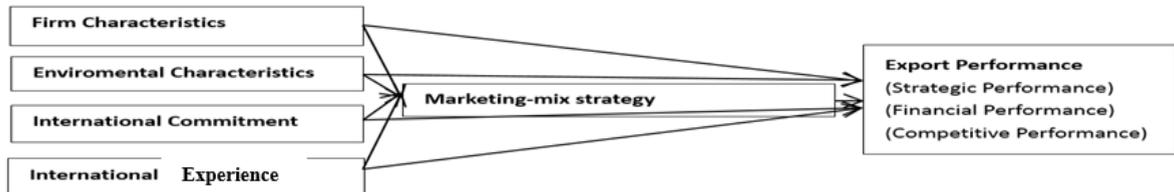


Figure 1: Research model adapted from A. O’Cass, C. Julian (2002)., Kahiya E. T., Dean D. L., (2014) and Adu-Gyamfi N., Korneliusssen T. (2013)

**5.3 Analysis and results**

We used SPSS software for the evaluation of our data. Factor analysis, correlation, reliability tests, the means of the variable and regression analysis were used to analyze the relationships between variables of the research model. Varimax rotational, exploratory factor analysis in SPSS software has been used to evaluate factor structure for the variables. KMO (0,852) and significance value (p=0.00) shows that our sample is suitable for the hypothesis analysis. Since some items were below 0.45 or were having collinearity with more than one factor, and some factors contains one item, it is continued to perform factor analyzing by removing the items one by one till the obtained ideal table. We used the Cronbach’s Alpha to estimate reliability for scales. Each scale had satisfactory reliability with Cronbach’s Alpha above 0.70. Table 2 provides the means, standard deviations and correlations for the variables used in the study. Reliabilities are located along the diagonal of the correlation matrix. According to correlation analysis, all variables are correlated with each other as expected.

Table2: Results of the Standart Deviations, Means, and Correlations

	MEAN	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>1.FC</b>	3,3665	,84522	<b>(,714)</b>						
<b>2.EC</b>	3,8814	,70082	,221	<b>(,491)</b>					
<b>3.IC</b>	3,7903	,93311	,336	-,091	<b>(,871)</b>				
<b>4.IE</b>	3,9534	,98869	,265	-,014	,656	<b>(,978)</b>			
<b>5.AS</b>	3,8877	,87376	,115	-,130	,547	,619	<b>(,763)</b>		
<b>6.DS</b>	2,8644	,97474	,370	-,026	,217	,156	,383	<b>(,950)</b>	
<b>7.EP</b>	<u>2,8254</u>	<u>,79842</u>	<u>,313</u>	<u>-,042</u>	<u>,396</u>	<u>,413</u>	<u>,487</u>	<u>,402</u>	<b>(,637)</b>

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level SD = Standard Deviation ( ) = Cronbach’s alpha

**FC:** Firm Characteristic, **EC:** Environment Characteristic, **IC:** International Commitment, **IE:** International Experience,

**AS:** Adaptation Strategy, **DS:** Differentation Strategy, **EP:** Export performance

To test our hypotheses, we conducted a serious of multiple linear regression models. In order to test the first hypothesis stating that “firm characteristics have a positive effect on export performance” regression analysis is performed. The results of the regression analysis showed that there is a significant effect of firm characteristics on

export performance (beta=,313 Sig=001). Therefore, first hypothesis is supported. For testing the second hypothesis that “environmental characteristics have a negative effect on export performance,” regression analysis is done. Results indicate that there is a significant effect of environmental characteristics on export performance (beta=,042 Sig=,000). Accordingly, second hypothesis is not supported. To test our third hypothesis stating that “international commitment has a positive effect on export performance”, regression analysis is performed. Findings indicate that the relationship between international commitment and export performance is statistically significant (beta=,396,Sig=,000). Therefore, H3 is supported. To test our fourth hypothesis stating that “international experience has a positive effect on export performance”, regression analysis is performed. The results of the analysis showed that there is statistically significant (beta=, 413, Sig=,000) relationship among international experience and export performance. This finding provided evidence to support our fourth hypothesis. To test our fifth hypothesis stating that “adaptation of marketing-mix strategy has a positive effect on firm’s export”, regression analysis is conducted. The results of the analysis showed that (beta=, 478, Sig=,000) the relationship between adaptation of marketing-mix strategy and firm’s export performance is statistically significant. To test our sixth hypothesis stating that “differentiation marketing-mix strategy has a positive effect on firm’s export performance”, we used regression analysis. The results of the analysis showed that (beta=, 402, Sig=,000) there is positive effect among differentiation marketing-mix strategy and firm’s export performance. Therefore, our sixth hypothesis is supported relying upon the evidence.

Table 3: Regression Analyses Results and Result of mediating Effect of Adaptation Strategy and Differentiation Strategy on Export Performance

Independent Variable	Dependent Variable		Mediator Variables			
	Export Performance		Adaptation Strategy		Differantation Strategy	
Firm Characteristic	<b>,313(**)</b>	F: 24,675 DW= 2,301 R <sup>2</sup> : ,211	<b>,115</b>	F: 9,919 DW= -,999 R <sup>2</sup> : ,085	<b>,370(**)</b>	F: 35,698 DW= 3,819 R <sup>2</sup> : ,305
Environment Characteristic	<b>-,042</b>	F: -2,719 DW= -,819 R <sup>2</sup> : -,023	<b>-,130</b>	F: -9,322 DW= -1,119 R <sup>2</sup> : -,080	<b>-,026</b>	F: -2,065 DW= 1,99 R <sup>2</sup> : -,018
International Commitment	<b>,396(**)</b>	F: 34,554 DW= 1,322 R <sup>2</sup> : ,295	<b>,547(**)</b>	F: 52,158 DW= 2,631 R <sup>2</sup> : ,446	<b>,214(*)</b>	F: 22,727 DW= ,649 R <sup>2</sup> : ,194
International Experience	<b>,413(**)</b>	F: 38,190 DW= 2,363 R <sup>2</sup> : ,326	<b>,619(**)</b>	F: 62,570 DW= 4,990 R <sup>2</sup> : ,535	<b>,156</b>	F: 17,588 DW= ,061 R <sup>2</sup> : ,150

Table columns contain standardized beta coefficients. “bold” values are significant. (\*\*p<0.01, \*p<0.05)  
DW:Durbin Watson value

## 6. Conclusions and Limitations

In the study, internal and external factors acting as antecedents of export performance and the mediating effect of marketing mix strategy on the relationship are analysed. Based on resource based view and competition theory, firm specific characteristic, international experience, international commitment and environmental factors have been considered to have effects on export performance. Export performance having been measured with financial, competitive and strategic dimensions is hypothesized to be associated with marketing-mix strategy. Export firms actively involve in foreign operations under fierce competition arising from rivals’ products and brands. Moreover, marketing-mix strategy is developed for targeted markets with contingencies specific to each market. These strategies are classified as focus, differentiation and adaptation strategies.

The survey conducted in Turkish textile ready made apparel industry produced results specific to the sector. Firm characteristic, international commitment and international experience have been found to be related with export performance as consistent with previous literature. Findings in the study reveal that whereas there are stronger relationships between international commitment, international experience and export performance, the link is weaker between firm characteristic, environmental factors and export performance although still significant.

Environmental factors bringing uncertainty to political, legal and competitive environments, will have negative impact on export penetration of firms. Another fact for Turkish export companies is that Turkish brands may have lower reputation than rivals and confront difficulties in terms of confirming regulations and standards. On the other hand, Turkish textile and apparel firms have gained export experience for the last decades putting them at advantage.

Descriptive statistics of the survey indicate that Turkish companies have built a certain level of market share in foreign markets although they could not catch satisfactory levels of profitability as measured in export performance. Similarly, whereas their new sales efforts are well established, new market entry rates are not at desirable levels. Findings also indicate that firms rely more on differentiation and adaptation strategies. Product, price, distribution and promotion strategies are built and implemented according to the features of different domestic markets to gain competitive advantage. In the literature, classification of antecedents of export performance have been widely studied. In some studies strategic and competitive dimensions of export performance is combined since export markets are characterised as highly competitive. Export markets are analysed individually in order to produce more differentiated and adaptive strategies for export performance.

This study has some shortcomings and limitations. The survey was conducted on a limited number of textile firms involving in export business. The sample size could be larger becoming still enough for empirical analysis. The findings can be generalised for textile-apparel clothing reflecting sector specific results. For future research, another set of antecedents of export performance can be included in the research model. Research in different sectors may still produce contribution to the field.

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