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Contribution to the Study of the Relationship between Organizational Capital and Export Performance: The Case of Agri-Food SME Managers in Morocco

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Abstract: In the current context of global markets and growing exports, companies are forced to compete in many different environments. Some of them, including large companies and multinationals, are able to develop the necessary reflexes to detect changes in the environment and adapt their competitive strategies. Others, such as SMEs and micro-enterprises, do not always have the opportunity to internationalize easily because of many obstacles due to the lack of resources. This empirical study is based on conceptual and theoretical foundations that are the basis of our conceptual model of the research. Indeed, after having treated the theoretical and conceptual framework related to the problem, we developed a conceptual model of the research that was the subject of the empirical test through the administration of a questionnaire whose data were the subject of a treatment and an analysis of the results.

Keywords : Organizational capital, Manager, Export performance, SMEs, Agri-food.

INTRODUCTION

Several studies and research have affirmed that the characteristics of a leader's profile have a positive impact on business performance. Indeed, each dimension reinforces the commitment to innovation, leading to the creation of new products and services, and the search for new markets and outlets (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996 ; Miller, 1983 ; Alvarez and Busenitz, 2001 ; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005). This notion has been shaped by the Schumpeterian vision stipulating that innovative firms have outstanding performance and can be considered as drivers of economic development in countries (Schumpeter, 1934).

This work aims to examine the causal link between one of the determinants of the leader's profile, namely organizational capital, and the export performance of SMEs. To do this, we will address the conceptual and theoretical framework related to the contribution of organizational capital to business success, and then we will present the methodological framework of the research and finally move on to the empirical study.

1. **The SME manager**

The dimensions of the leader's profile have a continuous positive impact on business performance, Regardless of its size or the sector of activity in which the company operates, the company's strategic decisions are influenced by a set of internal and external elements. As we have already seen, the great specificity of the SME is indeed the person of its owner-manager who plays a crucial role in the entire operation of his SME, particularly when it comes to making à strategic decision.

According to Paturel. R (1997), there are mainly three dimensions that condition the SME's strategy and its strategic decisions : the owner-manager, the environment and the organizational characteristics. Detecting these internal and external factors requires a strategic diagnosis. It is thanks to this diagnosis that the choice of strategy can be made, in other words, the strategic diagnosis is an essential prerequisite for managerial decision-making (strategic, tactical and operational) and for the implementation of effective strategies, which aim to optimize the performance of existing activities or to successfully develop new activities (Franck Brulhart, 2009).

While SMEs are distinguished by their diversity, they nevertheless share an essential characteristic : the existence of a key player, Manager to whom an essential role is devolved, he is the basis, the foundation of the company and the condition of its existence, its survival and its growth (Wtterwulghe. R, 2008). In addition, he is the sculptor of his organization's strategy, and the individual who assumes responsibility for strategic decisions (Varraut. N, 1998).

The manager can be defined as having responsibility for an organization or one of its units (Mintzberg. H, 2005). For his part, Marchesnay. M (2004) defines the entrepreneur, or even the owner-manager, as "the person who is able to make strategic decisions. In addition, when we speak of the manager of an SME, we generally refer to the one who has responsibility for an organization or a company, and often, he is the owner."

The manager's person is described by Filion. J (1997) as an "imaginative person, characterized by an ability to set and achieve goals, who maintains a high level of sensitivity to detect business opportunities, and makes moderately risky decisions that aim to innovate".

In this sense, the owner-manager conceives, develops and realizes his visions based on his experience, intuitions, learnings and cognition in order to discern the market variables that he identifies as success or threat factors.

Talking about the characteristics of the SME manager means determining the personality traits of the manager, his skills, his experiences, his know-how in the daily management of his company, as well as his personal and strategic objectives set in advance.

2. The leader's organizational capital

Structural capital is described as internal knowledge that is specific to the company. This knowledge remains within the organization, whether in its structure, processes, or culture, even when employees leave (Bontis, Chua, and Richardson, 2000 ; Camisón Zornosa et al. 2000; Petrash, 1996, 2001) and which, for this reason, is the property of the company (Edvinsson, 1997). In addition, it is in possible to include this dimension all the non-human intangible assets of the organization, which means that they can be taken into account in structural capital.

Structural capital has been described as the backbone of the organization (Burr and Girardi, 2002). It is the knowledge that does not go home at night ; it belongs to the organization as a whole. It can be reproduced and shared through technologies, inventions, data, publications, strategy and culture, structures and systems, organizational routines and procedures (Bukh et al. 2001), which shows that it plays an essential role in knowledge creation and management (Chang and Birkett, 2004).

Hsu and Fang (2009) define structural capital as including process capital and innovation capital, while Martinez-Torres (2006) defines structural capital as the property of the organization, such as processes and information contained in a database.

Chang and Birkett (2004) suggest that it refers to the combinations of formal and informal structures that support the use of human capital in an organization. It is this that conditions and therefore defines how human capital is deployed, codifying the residues of past uses as organizational knowledge.

Structural capital represents the structures and cultures developed to support the use and development of human and relational capital, so it is the reference to the general system and procedures of the organization for problem solving.

Organizational capital is defined as the structural capacity of a company to translate innovation into human capital and energy for the ownership of the company. This innovation allows wealth to be created. Structural capital is described as a general problem-solving system and procedure. It produces values in an organization, including book value and turnover rate of accumulated capital (Chu et al. 2006). Structural capital is the support infrastructure for human capital (Chen, 2009). A company with strong structural capital will create favorable conditions for the use of human capital and allow human capital to realize its full potential, then stimulate its innovation capital and customer capital. Structural capital can be classified into corporate culture, organizational structure, organizational learning, operational processes and information systems (Ramezan, 2011).

For Edvinsson and Malone (1999), Roos, et al. (2001), organizational capital can be decomposed into three other dimensions that contribute to shaping the non-thinking part of intellectual capital and that remain in the organization when the worker is no longer there. These dimensions are organizational capital, renewal and development capital, and relational capital.

On the one hand, organizational capital is that which includes the value generated by the company's internal structure and the way in which the operations and processes that take place there are developed. It is understood that internal processes, organizational forms, information flows or the company's own culture are part of this dimension. On the other hand, renewal and development capital refers to any aspect of the company that can generate future value through improvement, which can be reflected in intellectual or financial capital.

Sveiby (2000) calls this perspective an internal component and integrates patents, ideas, operational structures, administrative and IT organization into it.... Elements that are the property of the company. It represents the aforementioned ownership of remaining at the time of employee departure. It has the characteristic of being able to be created within the company or acquired abroad.

For the definition of organizational capital given by the Intelect model (Euroforum, 1998), it is useful to mention that it includes the systematized, explicit and internalized knowledge of the organization, thus including information and management systems, patents or available technology.

Kaplan and Norton (1997) integrate this perspective into two of its dimensions, in the internal process dimension (Human Resources Network, 2002) and partly in the training and growth perspective, since, as mentioned above, this perspective also includes aspects related to human capital, the first one identifies the critical processes in which the company must be excellent. In this analysis, by its very nature, it is interesting to include the resources and capabilities that the company must improve, thus some indicators linked to this perspective can be manufacturing time, the number of defective products, the kilograms of waste generated or the number of customer complaints.

Structural capital is placed by Brooking (1997) in two dimensions : that of intellectual property assets and that of infrastructure assets. The former arise from the legal protection that the organization exercises over assets that have a special value for it; among which are know-how, trade secrets, copyright, patents, design rights and trademarks and services. The latter refer to assets such as order, security, fairness and quality in the organization and the context in which employees operate, as is the case, for example, with the technologies, methodologies and processes that allow the organization to function, the corporate culture, risk assessment methods or information databases and information systems (Bontis, et al. 2000).

Table 1 : Définitions of Structural Capital

Références	Definitions
Martinez-Torres, 2006	Structural capital is "the sum of all the assets owned by the company that make the organization's creative capacity possible. The company's vision, management philosophy, organizational culture, strategies, processes, work systems and information technologies can be mentioned among these assets."
Rudez and Mihalic, 2007	Structural capital "is constituted by the philosophy, management, culture, business processes and information technologies in the organization".
Ramezan, 2011	Structural capital is "the combination of explicit and implicit, formal and informal knowledge in an effective and efficient way to structure and develop the organization's business activity, which includes culture, implicit and informal knowledge, explicit and formal knowledge and implicit organizational learning and explicit, formal and informal knowledge renewal processes".
Chu et al. 2006	The term structural capital refers to the "general system and procedures of the organization for problem solving and innovation, it includes the evaluation of the value of stored knowledge, the cycle of its capitalization as well as the accounting of administrative expenses".
Bozbura and Beskese, 2007	Structural capital is "the sum of all the assets that make the organization's creative capacity possible".
Joia, 2007	The components of structural capital "refer to the culture, routines and organizational practices or intellectual property".
Beattie and Thomson, 2007	Structural capital is "the knowledge that remains within the company at the end of the working day. Includes organizational routines, procedures, systems, cultures, databases, etc.

Source : Manzari, M., Kazemi, M., Nazemi, S., and Pooya, A. (2012). Intellectual capital : Concepts, components and indicators : A literature review. Management Science Letters, 2(7), 2255-2270. P 12

3. Export performance

Performance in general remains a polysemic concept, since it always presents a methodological problem for its evaluation. Many attempts have been made at the theoretical and empirical level to explain and define the concept of "performance", but its meaning and measurement remain a problem for the academic and scientific sphere (Goodman et al. 1983).

The concept of performance is sometimes linked to notions such as performance, productivity, economies of scale, efficiency, and effectiveness (more common notions). However, other notions are associated with performance (success, excellence, success, etc.) which makes the meaning of the concept more complex and can sometimes be justified by the choice of criteria retained by different stakeholders of the organization due to the role, status and expectations of individuals within it.

The export performance of a company is linked to the specific behavior of the company through the exploitation of its resources and capabilities in an international context at a given time. The export performance of companies is considered one of the key indicators of the success of a company's export operations. As such, many studies have been conducted in order to better understand the factors (internal to the company or to the environment) and behaviors (export strategy, characteristics of the manager's profile, etc.) that impact the company's export results.

Export performance is defined as the composite result of a company's international sales, including three sub-dimensions : export sales, export profitability and export growth (Soham, 1998 cited by Maurel 2010). This performance therefore reflects the result of a company's export activity.

According to Deshpandeet al. (1993) and Alami (2013), three considerations for choosing export performance dimensions are essential :

- Export performance is multidimensional, according to theoretical and empirical contributions, this variety gives rise to objective and subjective measurement criteria.
- Export performance measures are the results of the strategic behavior of any company, therefore the object of measuring export performance remains without consensus.
- Export market structures affect export conditions, which in turn affect export performance.

In the literature, two types of indicators are used to evaluate export performance, namely objective and subjective indicators (Sousa et al. 2008). Objective measures refer to indicators that are mainly based on absolute values, such as export intensity, export sales volume and export market share. Conversely, subjective indicators measure perceived or behavioral performance, such as export success and perceived satisfaction with export sales (Sousa et al. 2008).

For our work, we have chosen as export performance indicators the variables measuring the perception of the performance of the managers of agri-food SMEs, exporters in Morocco.

4. Organizational capital of the manager and export performance

Theoretically, the resource dependence theory (RBV) is deployed to explain the competitive advantage of a company. In this sense, export research has also benefited from this theoretical framework, seeking to identify the company's specific resources as drivers of competitive advantages that can help explain differences in export performance between companies (Dhanaraj and Beamish, 2003 ; Ferreira and Simoes, 2016).

Holton and Yamkovenko (2008) suggest that structural capital is considered a knowledge repository accessible by various sources. This allows for knowledge sharing and knowledge creation among members of the organization. Organizational capital is the support mechanism that allows employees to optimize their work performance and the overall performance of the organization (Liu, 2010).

It has been argued that organizational culture is a valuable asset for a business entity. A strong organizational culture plays an important role in customer service and has a positive effect on organizational performance (Andreeva and Garanina, 2016, Saleim et al. 2014).

In the same vein and in relation to structural capital, Bader Yousef Obeidat et al (2017) deal with the mechanisms and structures of the organization that ultimately influence organizational innovation. In addition, they have indicated that structural capital is used to retain the human capital of organizations. This is because structural capital acts as a support infrastructure for human capital at the level of value creation for the organization and impacts its performance so that individuals invest their human capital and knowledge for the benefit of the company.

Martín-de-Castro et al. (2006) note that when the components of organizational capital involve specificity and complexity and complement each other. They can be transformed into difficult, imitable and transferable assets allowing the company to retain its competitive advantage. Organizational capital is the only element capable of directly manipulating the company's performance, without being influenced by the industry (Bontis et al.2000 ; Jardon and Martos, 2009).

Ordonez de Pablos (2004) cited by (Shujaat Mubarik et al, 2019) studied the strategic implications of the structural architecture of human resource management (HRM) systems. The author concluded that structural capital has a much greater impact on performance than relational or human capital. In a similar study, Yang and Lin, (2009) showed the power of

structural capital considered twice as high as the other dimensions of intellectual capital that impact the company's competitiveness.

Much research on organizational capital has agreed that the concept well explains the contribution to the organization's productivity, especially in research on the endogenous growth of companies. Organizational capital can better explain the company's competitive advantage and growth.

In a study, Hui Wang (2016) noted that the value of a company essentially depends on its ability to create value in the future. This value creation for the company is based on external resources. But its own endogenous capacity is also becoming increasingly important, it is thanks to organizational capital that we can assess the company's core competitive capacity and the growth of the company's value, which offers a new vision of the analysis of the endogenous growth of the company as well as its performance. Therefore, the impact of the company's structural capital on its performance is significant.

Research on organizational capital is closely linked to and inspired by the resource-based view (Sadowski and Ludewig (2004), Schneider (2008)). This view indicates that strategic resources that generate sustainable competitive advantage must be rare, difficult to imitate, and difficult to replace.

Attempts to identify organizational capital should be closely linked to its effects on profit, value added and performance. Thus, Oliver Ludewig and Dieter Sadowski (2009), through a study, examined the importance of organizational capital within the company. They concluded the existence of a significant relationship between structural capital and the acquisition of a sustainable competitive advantage for the company with its knock-on effects on performance.

Vincenzo Scafarto et al (2016) in an article studied the relationship between intellectual capital and the performance of companies in the agri-food industry. This study focuses on a sample of international agri-food companies observed over a period of five years. The article uses correlation and multiple regression analysis to test the existence of a positive relationship between each component of intellectual capital and export performance measures. The empirical results corroborate the hypotheses that relational capital and organizational capital have a positive impact on company performance. However, these results could not confirm the hypothesis that human capital directly and positively affects performance.

Applied to foreign markets and operations, organizational capital can be a determining factor in a company's export performance. (Johanson and Vahlne, 2009). As suggested by the resource-based approach, organizational capital generates organizational resources that help strengthen export performance (Laureano and Marques, 2009).

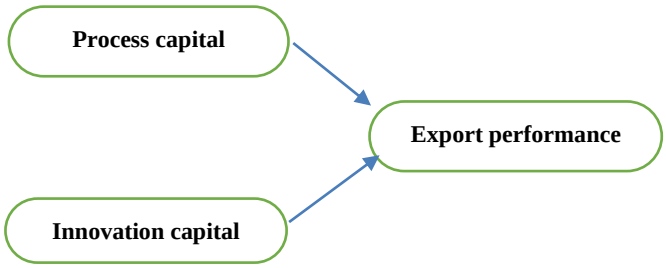
Based on this literature, we can affirm that most studies have highlighted that managers' organizational capital is a variable that positively affects the performance of companies. From this observation, we will retain two research hypotheses to test in the context of Moroccan exporting SMEs. These are mainly the explanatory hypotheses of export performance through two dimensions of organizational capital following the definition given by Hsu and Fang (2009) which stipulates that structural capital includes process capital and innovation capital.

H1 : Process capital has a positive impact on export performance.

H2 : Innovation capital has a positive impact on export performance.

Based on these hypotheses, we can present the conceptual model of the research :

Figure 1 : The conceptual model of research



5. Research Methodology

To carry out our study, we followed a hypothetico-deductive approach, after having identified the model variables and research hypotheses.

We developed and administered a questionnaire to 120 managers of agri-food SMEs in Morocco (from October 2020 to March 2021).

For data processing, we used descriptive analyzes to characterize the companies forming the sample and factorial analyzes to verify the unidimensionality of each construct and refine the measurement scales (Igalens and Roussel, 1998), the method of multiple linear regression was used to test the research hypotheses.

For reasons of analysis and performance measurement, in our sample, we selected agri-food SMEs that have more than three years of export experience. The basis of our sample is the Kerix-export which is a database of exporting companies in Morocco, our choice of the agri-food sector is justified by the predominance of the sector in Morocco as a country of agricultural and rural tradition, as well as the importance given to the sector by public authorities and its contribution to GDP.

For the measurement of the variables and concerning the components of the manager's organizational capital, which represent the independent variables, we used a five-degree Likert scale (ranging from totally disagree "1" to totally agree "5").

Inspired by the definition proposed by Hsu and Fang (2009), we retained two dimensions of organizational capital, namely process capital and innovation capital.

For the items of each component of organizational capital, we opted for those retained by Bontis (1998), Roos et al (1998), Roos, Dragonetti and Edvinsson, 1998), Sveiby (1997) and for the items of export performance we chose the subjective criteria of measurement (Lages and Lages, 2004). Our position is part of a perspective that the SME manager sets his export objectives based on his satisfaction as a reliable indicator of the determination of export performance. Indeed, the review of the literature in international marketing reveals the use of a wide range of performance measurement tools such as objective, subjective and composite measures of export performance (Zou and Stan, 1998 ; Sapienza, Smith and Gannon, 1988 ; Gauzente, 2002 ; Lages and Jap, 2003). In the same context, Sousa (2004) stipulates that export performance is essentially measured by three major dimensions such as economic, strategic and subjective performance.

For our study, we based ourselves on the work of Madsen (1998), Lages and Lages (2004) who propose the STEP scale which is designed to measure the perception of the improvement of export performance in the short term. This scale is purely subjective and dynamic and revolves around the dimensions "Satisfaction with the improvement of short-term performance", "improvement of the intensity of short-term export activity" and "expected improvement of short-term performance".

6. Presentation and analysis of results

According to the results of the empirical study, it appears that most of the SMEs in our sample are located in the two regions of Morocco (Souss-Massa and Greater Casablanca), their legal form is mainly the SARL or 98%. The dominant branch of activity is vegetables, fruits and seafood, while the preferred export mode for SMEs is direct export.

For the factorial analysis, the variable "process capital" is measured using eight items. The correlation analysis highlights results concerning the crossing of the different variables of our research model. In order to judge the relevance of the results of our empirical investigation, the KMO index is 0.86 which can be qualified as excellent or meritorious. It tells us that the correlations between the items are of good quality. For the result of Bartlett's sphericity test, it is significant ($p < 0.05$). We can therefore reject the null hypothesis that our data come from a population for which the matrix would be an identity matrix.

The measurement scale that we mobilized in the empirical study presents good statistical stability, since the Cronbach's alpha level is equal to (0.915), reflecting a better psychometric quality of the construct. In other words, the internal consistency is well specified in the context of the variable "process capital", and that the measurement scale deployed to measure it is clearly effective.

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For the variable "innovation capital" measured by three items, the Kaiser–Meyer–Olkinou KMO criterion is equal to 0.724, which indicates the good quality of the factorization of the data collected for the variable in question. However, Bartlett's sphericity test is significant at the 1% level, ensuring the factorization of the data.

With regard to the company's export performance, which is measured using the ten items, the inter-item correlations measuring the export performance of agri-food SMEs are positive.

The exploratory factor analysis carried out for this scale shows that the items are well factorable (KMO = 0.824), the Bartlett test is significant ($0.000<0.05$). The scale is unidimensional, since a single factor explains 76.63% of the total variance of the ten items

forming the export performance scale of agri-food SMEs.

Similarly, the scale has good statistical stability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.971), reflecting good psychometric quality of the construct.

With regard to the results of the regression analyses, we recall that our model includes three explanatory variables (skills, attitudes and intellectual agility) and one explained variable (export performance).

Table 2. Quality of fit of the regression model

Model	R	R-squared	Adjusted R-squared	Standard error of the estimate
1	,872a	,760	,753	4,236610801800885
a. Predictors : (Constant), proccap, inovcap				

In summary, the obtained model shows that :

The adjusted coefficient of determination is equal to 0.753, which means that 75% of the export performance variable is explained by the two independent variables. In other words, the manager's organizational capital can be considered as one of the determinants of the export performance of agri-food SMEs in Morocco.

After testing the significance and reliability of our analysis model, we move on to the analysis of variance (ANOVA) step to test the research hypotheses.

Table 3. ANOVA Results

Model		**Sum of Squares**	**Df**	**Mean Square**	**F**	**Sig.**
1	Régression	6575,792	3	2191,931	122,121	,000[b]
	Résidual	2082,069	116	17,949		
	Total	8657,861	119			
a. Dependent variable : expper						
b. Predictors : (Constant), proccap, inovcap						

The table above shows a Ficher statistic equal to 122.121 and the F quantum (p, n-p, α) = F(3,116) = 2.69. Therefore, systematically the obtained value is largely higher than the value of the Fisher Table (F = 121 ,121 > F = 2.69). Therefore, we can assume that our regression model is well specified since the Fisher statistic is significant at the 1% level.

Table 4. Regression Test Results

Modèl		unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	Standard Error	**Bêta**		
1	(Constant)	-13,027	2,430		-5,361	,000
	proccap	,368	,104	,291	3,529	,001
	innovcap	,548	,122	,302	4,499	000
a. Dependent variable : expper						

As for the analysis of confirmation or invalidation of the two hypotheses from our conceptual research model, the following main findings emerge from the results of the statistical tests :

The manager's process capital and export performance : The calculated Student's t-statistic is (3.529), a level that far exceeds the Student's t-statistic of the Student's table (2.69) and the Beta coefficient is 0.291. These results show that the process capital of the SME manager strongly explains export performance. These results confirm the first research hypothesis which states that the process capital of the manager of the agri-food SME has a positive and significant impact on the company's export performance.

The manager's innovation capital and export performance : The calculated Student's t which is equal to 4.499, or a level higher than the standard t of the Student's table (2.69). In addition, the standardized Beta coefficient which measures the intensity of the relationship between the two variables, innovation capital and export performance, is equal to 0.302. These results attest that the manager's innovation capital explains the export performance of his company. In other words, the relationship between the innovation capital of the SME manager and export performance is significant, which confirms our second research hypothesis. Thus, we can conclude that the innovation capital of the manager of the agri-food SME has a positive influence on export performance.

Conclusion

Through this study, we have sought to verify and analyze the impact of the components of organizational or structural capital, namely process capital and the innovation capital of managers on export performance in the context of agri-food SMEs in Morocco. This research is a contribution to the literature on the determinants of export performance in an emerging country like Morocco where research on export performance themes remains in its infancy.

From a managerial point of view, the results of this research show the importance of the company's structure from a process and innovation point of view as determining factors of export performance. Thus, managers are invited to improve their organizational capital to contribute to the improvement of their own managerial practices in order to exploit them more effectively and face competition on the international market.

The results of our study indicate the existence of a positive relationship between the characteristics of the manager's structural capital, mainly on the one hand, and the export performance of agri-food SMEs in Morocco on the other. Indeed, the study showed that the quality of managers of agri-food SMEs in Morocco and the importance given to innovation and the organizational process which significantly affect their competitiveness and export performance.

Despite the importance of the results obtained, this research presents certain limitations, linked to the choice of variables, the structure of the causal model, the characteristics of the sample as well as the field of investigation. For the two explanatory variables retained in our research model, they represent a choice that does not reflect the overall profile of the SME manager. Similarly for the export performance variable, it must be measured both by subjective and other objective criteria. Another limitation lies in the level of external validity of the study which stipulates that it is necessary to test on a large and more representative sample.

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