INTERNATIONALIZATION MANAGER'S IDENTITY AND AUTHORITY IDENTIFICATION. STAFFING OF THE EXPORT DEPARTMENT IN GREEK INTERNATIONALIZED MANUFACTURING COMPANIES.

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Abstract

The research objective of this paper is to examine the staffing procedure of the internationalization department of the company in reference to the origin of the individuals selected to compose it. Subsequently, we endeavour to outline the identity of the individual at the head of internationalization, where a special department doesn't exist. Additionally, we attempt to recognize the overall responsibilities and authority spaces of the internationalization manager.

Results implied the preference of individuals experienced in matters of internationalization, for the staffing of the department. Most times the owner/co-owner undertakes internationalization responsibilities, where an internationalization department is absent, fact that was negatively correlated with the size of the company. Moreover, we observed that along with internationalization issues, such as international sales, internationalization managers mainly have to deal with the domain of domestic sales as well.

Results presented in this paper, concern small, medium and large size companies of various industry sectors.

Keywords: Internationalization Department's Staffing, Internationalization Managers' Identity, Internationalization Managers' Authority

Topic Groups: International Business, Human Resources Management and Career Development

INTRODUCTION

The term "internationalization" has been widely used to describe the outward movement in a firm's international operations (Turnbull, 1987). Firm's internationalization has been subject to widespread research attention and empirical investigation (Katsikea, Morgan, 2003).

We define the "internationalized enterprise" as the firm that has extended its business activity far from the limits of the national market, through its involvement in any kind of business action (exports, franchising, production, joint ventures etc).

A vast body of theoretical and empirical work emphasizes to the role of human capital -defined as the knowledge, competencies, and skills embodied in people - in

international competitiveness and export performance (Andersson & Johansson, 2010).

The primary thought and in consequence the primary decision-making regarding the expansion of the business activity beyond the domestic market boarders, usually derive as a result of inter-organisational and environmental incentives. Literature and many empirical studies that concentrate on internal factors influencing the primary export decision, focus mainly on the decision-maker(s) of the firms, export manager(s) or not, their personal characteristics, motives, objectives and aspirations as well as their attitudes towards exporting (Aaby et al, 1988; Andersen et al, 1994; Cavusgil, 1984, 1987; and many more).

The effective organization and management of the internationalization/ export department are of utmost importance for a firm's export success. Firm organizational characteristics have an important impact on export activity (Reid, 1980, Cavusgil and Nevin, 1981, and Brasch, 1981) (Erdener, Wellington, 1993).

Surprisingly, few empirical studies attempted to examine the forms of organizational structure and management in internationalized/ export sales organizations, regarding the undertaking and management of internationalized activity and the export human resources recruited to support such activities.

This paper is based on an empirical study designed to relate a comprehensive set of firm and management characteristics to internationalization activity and seeks to identify those firm and management characteristics associated with the internationalized activity of manufacturing firms.

In particular, we seek to find out what kinds of individuals are selected by Greek internationalized manufacturing companies to staff their internationalization/ export department. Also, we attempt to outline the identity of the individual in charge of internationalization activities (decision and action), where a special department does not exist. Furthermore, we try to recognize the overall responsibilities and authority spaces of the internationalization/export manager, whether a special internationalization/ export department is maintained or not.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Starting from a review of previous literature we will test the potential of some directly observable structural characteristics. Recent research suggests that there may be some specific and measurable characteristics common to many organizations which can provide a more complete understanding of why firms export or fail to export (Cavusgil, 1987).

Organizational characteristics can successfully distinguish more active exporters from passive ones (Cavusgil, 1984). Four of the most frequently studied properties of organizational structure are size, configuration (number of hierarchical levels), formalization, and centralization (James and Jones, 1976) (Oldman, Hackman, 1981).

Many tasks associated with exporting are new to the firm and involve a commitment of additional financial and human resources. Some of these tasks are: gathering foreign market information; hiring and training additional staff; learning about export tasks such as documentation and export financing; and foreign market visits.

As Bauer, 2004, supports, in the past two decades, most advanced industrialized countries have witnessed an increase in the relative demand for skilled labour, as evident in rising earnings inequality in the US and the UK and an increase in the relative unemployment rates of unskilled labour in continental Europe.

Top management's reluctance to allocate sufficient resources for such activities, especially those related to building the exporting infrastructure, is a significant deterrent (Cavusgil, 1987).

The effect of managers and strategies on firm's performance is central to the study of strategic management (Child, 1972; Hambrick and Mason, 1984) (Amason et al., 2006).

To conduct business successfully, internationalization/ export managers must be aware of and conversant in such diverse subjects as geography, culture, technology and legal systems, while concurrently understanding mundane topics like currency exchange, international travel expenses and changing time zones. Consequently, such individuals must be multi-skilled, especially in the context of the small- and medium-sized firm sector, given that they are responsible for sales activities in markets well beyond their domestic base (Deeter-Schmelz et al, 2002; Man, Chan, 2002) (Katsikea, Morgan, 2003). Export executives perform important sales management activities: They assign export sales managers to export ventures; they allocate selling effort to existing foreign customers and prospects; and they influence export sales effectiveness through the role of monitoring, directing and coordinating export sales managers (Theodosiou, 2007).

Many theoretical models view technological and organizational change as a process of creative destruction involving the reallocation of jobs and workers across and within firms (Aghion and Howitt, 1992; Kremer and Maskin, 1996; Mortensen and Pissarides, 1998, 1999a; Thesmar and Thoenig, 2000), (Bauer, 2004).

Available empirical evidence indicates that the relationships among the key sales management constructs are consistent between different sales management levels (Babakus et al. 1996). Such an important distinction has been made to a limited extent in the (domestic) sales management literature (Deeter-Schmelz et al. 2002), but it is largely absent from the international sales context. Thus, there is a dearth of knowledge about the specific export sales management activities in selling directly to export markets (Katsikea et al, 2007).

The way in which many firms, and mainly the small and medium sized, approach export sales departs greatly from sales management in domestic sales organizations and large exporting firms. Particularly, domestic sales organizations are structured around field sales managers, who are responsible for supervising, directing, and controlling field salespeople. Between the field sales manager and the top sales manager, several managerial levels may be present (Theodosiou, 2007). Specifically, export sales in these firms are organized around one individual per export venture who has prime responsibility for not only managing export sales but also simultaneously engaging in export sales activities per se. An export venture is defined as the exporting of a specific product/product line to a certain export market (Cavusgil and Zou, 1994). These employees are based in the home country and travel to export markets to perform personal selling activities. Parallel with the domestic sales management context, these personnel resemble field salespeople (Theodosiou, 2007).

Consequently, the way most companies approach export sales is likely to depart greatly from sales management in large firms. The export sales manager not only was typically responsible for the export venture but also was the person who executed the export selling activities overseas (Katsikea et al, 2007).

RESEARCH METHOD

The survey instrument used for this study was developed through a comprehensive review of the organizational structure, change and management of internationalized companies literature and 12 personal interviews obtained from export directors, employed by 12 major Greek manufacturing companies, representing various sectors.

It takes the form of a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire survey lasted from May to November 2010.

For our research we used data collected from internationalized companies from all over Greece. We used a multi-industry sampling design to broaden the generalize ability of the findings. Sample sectors include food products, mineral and ores products, chemical and allied products, rubber and plastic products, machinery, and electrical, textile and mill products, medicines etc. These industry sectors represent a major volume of the Greek export activity. We excluded all companies belonging to the services sector.

We randomly selected 750 exporting firms from the Hellenic Foreign Trade Board's (HEPO) directory. This directory encounters about 1400 Greek manufacturing internationalized enterprises. Our sample of 157 companies corresponds to 11,21% of the total population.

We used a mail survey methodology for data collection, along with personal visits to the targeted firms. The key informant in our study is the ''export sales manager/ director''. We sent about 750 questionnaires addressed to each company along with a cover letter that explained the purpose and objectives of the study, after a first personal telephone contact with them. Recipients were then instructed to pass on the questionnaire to the individual that holds the position of export manager/ director in their company/ to the individual that is in charge of the internationalized activity of the firm.

We received 157 usable responses. An effective response rate of 20.93% was attained.

FINDINGS

Findings presented in this paper, concern small, medium and large size companies of various industry sectors. Our research goal was the identification of the origin of human resources employed in the export department in Greek internationalized manufacturing companies, the export manager's identity where a special export department does not exist, as well as the recognition of the responsibilities- authority spaces of the individual in charge of internationalization activities.

Table 1: Existence of a special internationalization/ export department.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	90	57,3	57,3	57,3
	No	67	42,7	42,7	100,0
	Total	157	100,0	100,0	

As we note in table 1, 90 out of the 157 companies (57,3%), maintain a special internationalization/ export department. In 42,7% of the Greek internationalized manufacturing enterprises of the sample, such a department does not exist.

Table 2: How export department was staffed

		Frequ.	%	Valid %	Cum. %
Valid	With employees from other departments relevant with PR, Sales, IR.	13	8,3	14,4	14,4
	With employees from other departments with no relevance to internationalization issues.	6	3,8	6,6	21,0
	Both cases 1 and 2.	14	8,9	15,5	36,5
	New employees were hired, specialized in internationalization.	23	14,6	25,6	62,2
	New employees were hired and other employees were transferred from other departments of the company.	34	21,7	37,8	100,0
	Total	90	57,32	100,0	
Missing	Absence of export department	67	42,68		
Total		157	100,0		

Out of the 90 companies that maintained an export department, 14,4% of them staffed this special department with employees from another department relevant with public relations, sales, international relations etc. These occupations have given them some kind of experience in internationalization matters. Only 6,6% of the firms of the sample answered that they staffed their export department with employees from another department of the company with no relevance to internationalization issues. 15,5% of the companies have chosen both the above ways to staff their export department. 14,6% of the companies declared that they recruited new manpower, specialized in internationalization. The majority of the companies (21,7%) chose a mixed type of staffing their export department. They recruited new personnel, specialized in exports and, at the same time, they transferred employees from other departments of the company.

If we run to the cumulative percentage of the partially or holistically "internationalization-relevant" staffing of the department, we ascertain that almost every company (93,4%) chose to staff the export department with persons experienced on the subject (internally or externally coming). That fact indicates that the success of the department and its activities is important for the company.

In sequence, we endeavor to identify who manages internationalization/ export activities, where a special internationalization/ export department is absent.

Table 3: Who undertakes exports (absence of export department)

Who undertakes exports?	**Frequency**	**Percent**
The owner/ co-owner	18	24,32
The C.E.O.	07	09,46
The Marketing Department	05	06,76
The communication & Public Relations Department	02	02,70
The production department	01	01,35
The department of finance	10	13,51
The logistics department	06	08,11
Other senior manager	07	09,45
Other junior manager	08	10,82
An employee	02	02,70
Other	08	10,82
Total	**74**	**100,00**

Table 1 showed us that 90 (57,3%) of the internationalized companies maintained an export department, while 67 (42,7%) of them did not. So, the question that automatically rises at this point is "who undertakes the responsibility of putting through internalization activities in the company who does not occupy an export department"? The answers to this question are presented in table 3. The individual that filled in the questionnaire had the opportunity to choose more than one answers for this particular question. The number of total answers we received is 74.

As we observe in table 3, there is no trend that prevails on the matter of undertaking exports activities. The most chosen answer (frequency: 18, percentage: 24,32%) was the first one, e.g. that the owner /co-owner undertakes the obligations of internationalization. We may assume that, in a small sized enterprise, or in one in an early stage of internationalization, the most adequate person to perform all the necessary actions in the internationalizations' field is the owner/ co-owner. This is a possible connection that we have to explore whether exists or not.

The rest possible choices took more or less, the same percentage of answers, fluctuating from 1,36% to 10,82%. For the 13,51% of the companies without an export department, exports undertake the department of finance.

No correlation was found between the years of internationalization and the undertaking of internationalization activities by the owner/ co-owner. Chi square (χ^2) correlation test was used (χ^2=7,788, sig= 0,125>0,05).

We proceed now to the examination of the possible relationship between the undertaking of internationalization activities by the owner/ co-owner and the size of the company. In order to determine the size of the enterprises of the sample, we use the number of permanent employees that the company occupies. We divide the companies into 4 categories. Super Small companies occupying 1-9 employees, Small companies occupying 10-49 employees, Medium companies occupying 50-249 employees and Large companies occupying 250+ employees.

We are dealing with two qualitative categorical variables, so we use crosstabs and chi-square (x^2) test.

Table 4: Company Size * owner responsible for internationalization. Crosstabulation

			Owners Responsibility		Total
			Yes	No	
Size of the company	SS (1-9)	Count	7	5	12
		% of Total	10,4%	7,5%	17,9%
	Small (10-49)	Count	6	20	26
		% of Total	9,0%	29,9%	38,8%
	Medium (50-249)	Count	5	16	21
		% of Total	7,5%	23,9%	31,3%
	Large (250+)	Count	0	8	8
		% of Total	,0%	11,9%	11,9%
Total		Count	18	49	67
		% of Total	26,9%	73,1%	100,0%

In crosstabulation table 4, we observe that as the size of the company increases, the number of observations on the owners' responsibility over exports decreases. At the last size level, (large (250+employees)) we encounter 0 observations.

Table 5: Chi-Square Tests

				Monte Carlo Sig. (2-sided)			Monte Carlo Sig. (1-sided)		
					99% Confidence Interval			99% Confidence Interval	
	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Pearson Chi-Square	9,276[a]	3	,026	,022[b]	,019	,026			
Likelihood Ratio	10,533	3	,015	,022[b]	,018	,026			
Fisher's Exact Test	8,373			,031[b]	,027	,036			
Linear-by-Linear Association	6,842[c]	1	,009	,010[b]	,008	,013	,006[b]	,004	,008
N of Valid Cases	67								

a. 2 cells (25,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 2,15.

b. Based on 10000 sampled tables with starting seed 92208573.

c. The standardized statistic is 2,616.

Table 5 shows that 2 cells (25,0%) have expected count less than 5. That's why we use the Fisher Exact Test. Level of significance given in table 11 = 0,031<0,05. So, we discern a correlation between the size of the company and the undertaking of internationalization activities by the owner/ co-owner. The direction of the correlation is probably negative, as table 4 implies, because as years of internationalization increase the undertaking of exports management by the owner decreases.

Continuing our examination on the organizational structure of Greek internationalized companies, regarding the internationalization/ exports domain, we proceed to the authority identification of the individual responsible for internationalization activities in the company. This person may be at the head of the special export department, if such a department exists, or it may just deal with internationalization issues/ exports management.

In order to do so, we examine whether the exports manager, export department may exist or not, is responsible for other sectors of the company as well, or not.

Table 6. Existence of authority of the person at head of internationalization activities in other sectors of the company

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Yes	102	65,0	65,0	65,0
	No	55	35,0	35,0	100,0
	Total	157	100,0	100,0	

As shown in table 6, the vast majority (102/157, 65%) of the persons at head of internationalization processes and activities had to deal with other domains of responsibility as well. It makes sense to wonder if there is a correlation between the existence of a special export department and the inclusive dealing with internationalization matters of the person that is at head of it. Results are presented in tables 7 and 8.

Table 7. Existence of export department * Existence of authority in other sectors of the company Crosstabulation

			Existence of authority of the person at head of internationalization activities in other business sectors		Total
			Yes	No	
Existence of export department	Yes	Count	45	45	90
		% of Total	28,7%	28,7%	57,3%
	No	Count	57	10	67
		% of Total	36,3%	6,4%	42,7%
Total		Count	102	55	157
		% of Total	65,0%	35,0%	100,0%

As we observe in table 11, half of the companies that maintained an export department, declared that the person at head of it, has to deal with other activities with no relevance to internationalization as well. So, at first glance, a special correlation between the two variables is not suggested. On the other hand, the companies that had not formed an export department declared that the vast majority (57/67, 85,07%) of their internationalization managers, had to deal also with other business aspects. Results are verified in table 8.

Table 8. Symmetric Measures

		Value	Approx. Sig.
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	-,364	,000
	Cramer's V	,364	,000
N of Valid Cases		157	

Variables are both dichotomous. In order to ascertain the existence or the absence of correlation between them, we use the phi (φ) coefficient.

Table 8 presents the value of the phi coefficient (-0,364). Given that the coefficient belongs to [-1,1], the correlation between the existence of an export department and the existence of authority of the person at head of internationalization activities in other sectors of the company is slightly negative. The column “approx.sig” of the table, shows that the correlation between the two variables is statistically important (sig=0,000<0,05). In combination with data given in table 7, we may assume that the absence of an export department indicates the presence of multiple sectors of authority and action for the individual at head of internationalization activities.

The fact that the mass majority of internationalization managers are involved in other business activities makes us wonder about the kind of activities they have to put through. Results follow in table 9.

Table 9. Other responsibilities of the person at head of internalization activities - Frequencies

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Domestic Sales	39	24,8	38,2	38,2
	Finance - Accounting	12	7,6	11,8	50,0
	Marketing	12	7,6	11,8	61,8
	General Director or C.E.O.	9	5,7	8,8	70,6
	Production - Logistics	11	7,0	10,8	81,4
	Everything	9	5,7	8,8	90,2
	Supplies - Purchases	6	3,8	5,9	96,1
	Public Relations-Communication	4	2,5	3,9	100,0
	Total	102	65,0	100,0	
Missing	No other occupation	55	35,0		
Total		157	100,0		

Table 9 implies the prevalence of a trend that connects people who are employed in internationalization activities/ exports, and they are also up to other sectors of the company, with the domain of domestic sales. The percentages of the other occupation fields are relatively close. We conducted a correlation (χ^2) test between the domain of responsibility and the size of the company and it doesn't appear to be any significant correlation between them. (χ^2=21,608, sig=0,272>0,05).

DISCUSSION

Few empirical studies attempted to examine the forms of organizational structure and management in internationalized/ export sales organizations, regarding the undertaking and management of internationalized activity and the export human resources. Trying to bridge the gap, we investigated on the below organizational characteristics.

As suggested, there may be some specific and measurable characteristics common to many organizations following an internationalized activity (Cavusgil, 1987). One of them could be an organisational change occurring due to the internationalized activity of the firm, such as the creation of a special department responsible for the design and the implementation of internationalization strategy/ activities. Our results shown that more than half of the companies of the sample, had formed and maintained a special internationalization/ export department, a fact that occurred as a result of their entrance into the "international" market.

The effective organization and management of export sales department are of utmost importance for a firm's export success. As pointed out very clearly in literature, the management of internationalization issues has to do with many special tasks that are new to the firm and involve a commitment of additional financial and human resources (Cavusgil, 1987). Such activities (which involve gathering foreign market

information; hiring and training additional staff; learning about export tasks such as documentation and export financing; foreign market visits and more) should be carried out by multi-skilled individuals, given that they are responsible for business activities in markets well beyond their domestic base (Deeter-Schmelz et al, 2002; Man, Chan, 2002) (Katsikea, Morgan, 2003). As Bauer (2004) claims, during the past two decades most advanced industrialized countries have witnessed an increase in the relative demand for skilled labour, as evident in rising earnings inequality in the US and the UK and an increase in the relative unemployment rates of unskilled labour in continental Europe. Simpson & Kujawa (1974) and Pavord & Bogard (1975) drew much the same conclusion. Managers in firms with heavy emphasis on exporting tend to be more internationally oriented than managers of the other firms. Our empirical results shown that Greek internationalized manufacturing companies are well aware of the importance that the staffing procedure of the internationalization department has, as the persons who compose it play a very crucial role towards the success of the internationalization efforts of the company. They prove it by choosing to staff their relevant departments with people experienced or relevant with internationalization issues (internally or externally coming) and also verify the point that follow many theoretical models, that view technological and organizational change as a process of creative destruction involving the reallocation of jobs and workers across and within firms (Aghion and Howitt, 1992; Kremer and Maskin, 1996; Mortensen and Pissarides, 1998, 1999a; Thesmar and Thoenig, 2000). (Bauer, 2004)

It's also argued that the effect of managers and strategies on firm performance is central to the study of strategic management (Child, 1972; Hambrick and Mason, 1984) (Amason et al., 2006). The majority of literature refers to the role of the export department and its workforce. There is a relative absence of research on the identity of the export manager and the role that has to play in the company, where an export department is absent. As we noted in our research, in most companies without a special exports department, the owner /co-owner undertakes the obligations of internationalization and becomes the exports manager. No correlation was found between the years of internationalization and the undertaking of internationalization activities by the owner/ co-owner. On the contrary, a negative correlation was observed between the size of the company and the undertaking of internationalization activities by the owner/ co-owner.

Available empirical evidence indicates that the relationships among the key sales management constructs are consistent between different sales management levels (Babakus et al. 1996). Such an important distinction has been made to a limited extent in the (domestic) sales management literature (Deeter- Schmelz et al. 2002), but it is largely absent from the international sales context. Thus, there is a luck of knowledge about the specific export sales management activities in selling directly to export markets (Katsikea et al, 2007).

In our research we noticed a connection between the undertaking of domestic and international sales from the same individual. Worth mentioning that for only 35% of export managers, export activities are their sole occupation. The rest 65%, is engaged with many different activities, such as finance, marketing, production, public relations. About 6% of the internationalization/ export managers of the companies of the sample answered that their occupation includes everything in the company.

Further research could be directed toward the correlation of the above findings with factors such as the size of the company, the sector it belongs, its export performance, its level of internationalization and the kind of its involvement in the international market.

CONCLUSION

Although the critical role human capital plays towards international competitiveness and export performance of internationalized firms is well recognised by a significant body of the literature, few empirical studies attempted to examine the forms of organizational structure and management in internationalized/ export sales organizations, regarding the undertaking and management of internationalized activity and export human resources.

This paper, based on an empirical study designed to relate a comprehensive set of firm and management characteristics to internationalization activity; attempts to identify those firm and management characteristics associated with that activity. Specifically, goal of the survey was to recognize the staffing procedure of the export department of the internationalized company, in reference to the human resources selected to compose it. In cases that such department wasn't maintained, we tried to outline the export manager's identity. Finally, the endeavoured to define the responsibilities-authority spaces of the internationalization manager, independently of the existence of the relevant department.

The results that arose from the survey concern small, medium and large enterprises, in all stages of their internationalization procedure.

Findings showed that more than half of firms had created and maintained a special export department, in order to support their internationalization activities.

Almost every company chose to staff its export department with individuals with experience on the subject (internally or externally coming), a point that underlines the fact that the success of the export department is of great importance for the company.

As far for the identity of the exports manager, where a special internationalization/ export department is absent, we found that almost every department in the company is considered to be capable of putting through the obligation that the export activity entails. The only trend that slightly prevailed is the undertaking of the export management by the owner/ co-owner of the organization. A probably negative correlation between the years of international activity and the exports management undertaking by the owner/ co-owner was observed, while no correlation was found between the undertaking of the exports management by the owner/ co-owner and the size of the enterprise.

We also noted that the mass majority (65%) of the exports managers had to deal with other domains of responsibility, except exports. In fact, phi correlation test showed that the absence of an export department indicates the presence of multiple sectors of authority and activity for the exports manager. Along with internationalization issues, such as international sales, exports managers mainly have to deal with the domain of domestic sales as well. This is the prevailing trend. Other business sectors also appear in all fields of the enterprise, at almost similar percentages. No correlation between the domain of activity and responsibility, except internationalization, of the exports manager and the size of the company was observed.

Business sectors, firm's internationalization strategy and export performance, level of internationalization are some factors that their impact could be examined in future research.

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