Assessing the Effects of Marketing Resources on Export Performance (Case Study: Iranian Tile and Ceramic Industry)

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Abstract: The objective of this research is to assess the effect of marketing resources on the export performance in Iranian tile and ceramic industry (with a resource- based approach). In this respect, first the available approaches in the field of export performance determinants were identified including business interactions network approach and resources- based approach. Using resources- based approach, in this research we are going to study the relationship between the components of marketing resources, differentiation competitive strategy, and export performance, all of which are the main constructs of this study. The research is mainly seeks to realize how marketing resources lead to higher levels of performance, directly or indirectly (through differentiation competitive strategy). Conceptual model of the research combines three main elements of strategic marketing to each other. These main elements include marketing resources (market- orientation and entrepreneurship- orientation), differentiation competitive strategy, and performance. In this regard, 123 questionnaires were distributed among which 91 questionnaires were analyzable. In this research, the obtained model is studied on the basis of differentiation strategy. Additionally, questionnaire data analysis of the research was done and revised using the techniques of factor analyses and structured equations modeling; then the questionnaire was confirmed and finalized. According to obtained results, the hypotheses were tested and market- orientation gained the highest direct effect (0.45) and indirect effect (0.68) on the export performance among all components of marketing resources.
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1. Introduction

Exports are among the most vital economic parts of any country. Exporting the commodities and services is the most important source of exchange income of the countries that shows the active and fresh economic pulse of the world. If we accept that non-oil export is the most effective and important way of organizing Iranian economic situation, then the Iranian government will have to adopt a suitable plan and follow the way of the countries that have successfully passed the path of development. Since the Iranian oil sources are limited and according to the official reports of Iranian Oil Ministry, Iranian oil sources will finish till 2295, thus there is no other choice than developing non-oil exports and interacting with global markets to improve and develop economic growth and employment in Iran. Accordingly we have to know the effective factors on these goals so that the policy makers can attempt to improve and develop them where needed. Hence in this research we are going to show what elements have to be emphasized in improving and developing of one of back-full industries of Iran in order to reach

a more desirable use of that industry. It is for several years that the Iranian governors present the official perspective on increasing non- oil exports. Although the Iranian government has always tried to fulfill such a perspective, but a simple comparison between the statistics of Iranian non- oil exports and non-oil exports of other countries show that the attempts of Iranian government have not been successful, and it is necessary to have more plans and programs to be regulated and implemented (Khalili, 2010, 10).
 Increase in the exports of the country will lead to use the empty capacity of many industries. These uses can lead to increase in employment apart from the growth and development of the industries. These issues can lead in turn to the increase in the interests of private and foreign investments (Khalili, 2010, 10). In Iranian Perspective Document 2014, exportation is introduced as one of the most important and most strategic issues in fulfilling the development visions of Iran. Many experts believe that exportation is the only solution for single-product oil- related economies. Currently, exportation is just considered as a subsidiary product of national

economy, a surplus of national production, or a result of normal tendency of production for consumption that nothing will happen if exportation misses (Nahavandian, 1999, 218). Exportation mutation that is a different category of export development or growth means to write a strategy that encompasses all section of the country. Exportation mutation affects all industrial and agricultural decisions and fiscal, exchange, and financial policies of the country (ibid, 219). In export jump strategy, relative advantages are emphasized. These advantages can be placed in different industrial, agricultural, mineral, or services sections (Ghorbani, 2000, 3). For example, one of these mineral materials is the stone, and Iran is very capable in producing façade stones (ibid, 364). In respect to absolute mines of complement stones Iran stands in second position and in respect of the diversity of stones, Iran stands in the first position in the world (Fahimifar, 1997, 5). Additionally, tiles and ceramic is accounted as mineral materials and due to huge size of mineral sources in Iran, Iranian tile and ceramic industry is not an exception and has considerable advantages in production and exportation (ibid, 6).

Regarding the added value of tiles and ceramic industry, its development has to be considered in planning and policies more seriously. Having several advantages including accessible raw materials, fuel, energy, human resources, etc, this industry have got importance in recent years and have assigned a significant growth to itself in the group of mineral products. Thus most products of this industry are economically well justifiable. At the other hand, lack of specific exportation plan and lack of a plan for consuming such products are among the most important problems of this industry in Iran (Production Cooperation Office, Cooperation Ministry, 2012, 5). Due to the wide use of time and ceramic industry in other industries, the development of this industry is so that the revolution next to electronic revolution worldwide is the revolution of ceramic industry (Production Cooperation Office, Iranian Cooperation Ministry, 2012, 1). Nevertheless, the exportation of this industry has been always weak in Iran, and the researcher is going to detect the reasons of the weakness of exportation of this industry, emphasizing on the main variables of the research model and finally found those internal factors that have the highest effect on the exportation of the products in tile and ceramic industry. Table 1 shows the indices that have the highest potential to promote the production and exportation of the products in the subjected industry and thus have to be paid special attention.

Table 1. Global indices of tile and ceramic industry (values per million m2)							
Year	Global production	Global exports	export ratio of global production	Iranian production	Iranian exports	Ratio of Iranian exports	Iranian exports ratio to global exports
2011	8515	1735	20.4%	350	40	11.5%	2.3%

Source: Production Cooperation Office, Iranian Cooperation Ministry, 2012, 6

According to information of 2011, the ratio of Iranian tile and ceramic industry production is 4.2% of the global production. In Asia, Iran is the third country in exporting this industry's products next to China and India, while the ratio of Iranian exports of this industry's products globally is just 2.3% (Production Cooperation Office, Iranian Cooperation Ministry, 2012, 6). But regarding the macro indices of economy and industry and the relative advantages of this industry, an important question to be asked is that what is the reason of Iran' weakness in exporting the products of tile and ceramic industry? In other words, why Iranian tile and ceramic do not have competitive advantage? Main variables of this research include marketing resources (market orientation and entrepreneurship orientation), competitive strategy, complexity of the environment of target market, export performance. Using resource approach and literature review on this approach, the researcher considered marketing resources as the most important an effective source on export performance of tile and ceramic industry. These resources are divided into two general groups: market- oriented resources and entrepreneurship-oriented resources (Liu, et al, 2005).

2.   Literature review

The successfulness of any company in exportation can be evaluated by the exportation performance of that country. To assess the exportation performance, there are three different criteria: financial criteria, non-financial criteria, and mixed criteria. Financial criteria include some criteria like sale, benefit, and growth; non-financial criteria include criteria such as successfulness, satisfaction, and achieving the goals. Moreover, mixed criteria are built upon different types of performance criteria. There are several researches about the effective factors on export performance in the literature. Each of these researches has focused on different variables that in the eyes of their researchers have a direct or indirect effect on the export performance. The total number of these studied variables has been relatively

high. This diversity of the variables has caused some contradictions and vagueness in the conclusions. The primary concern of these researches on exportation has been to distinguish between the exporters from non-exporters, i.e. most researches have focused on the process of internationalization of the companies. Then some other researches approached the external factors on the export behavior like rewarding programs. At the third group of researches, the researchers studied the factors relating to the behavior of the companies in accordance to the exports and its results. The fourth group of the researchers studied the factors that have an effect on the export performance or successfulness. For example, Katsikeas, Piercy and Ionnidis (1996) presented a model to study the effects of three factors: concrete characteristics of the company, variables relating to export realization (export size and experience, export motivation, export problems, competitive advantages), and exports commitments (separate part of the export, entering in foreign markets, and criteria of selecting the customers, continuous visit from the export markets, programming, and export control) on the export performance in European countries. White, Griffith, and Ryans (1998) analyzed some of assessment methods of exports performance in services sector. In Australia, Valos and Baker (1996) presented a model for effective variables on the export performance. In their study, they divided the variables into two intangible (variables (tendency, skill, knowledge) and tangible variables (distribution, product, relation with the customer, control, and suppliers). In yet another research, Thirkell and Ramadni (1998) studied the effect of the qualifications (technology, export and market knowledge, and quality), marketing tendency, characteristics of the company, strategy and environment on the export performance of the companies. In their presented model, the characteristics of the company affect the export performance through the effectiveness on the strategy. Moreover, Shoham and Kropp (1998) studied the effect of marketing mix variables on the export performance. In the same year, Zou and Stone reviewed the literature and offered a 2x2 framework to classify the effective factors on export performance. This framework classifies the effective factors on export performance in two dimensions: controllability (in contrast to uncontrollability) and inter- organizational dimension (in contrast to extra-organizational dimension). Combining these dimensions will give four cells to divide the effective factors on export performance. In 2000, Deal, Menguch & Myers, studied the effects of characteristics of the company (size of the company, rate of input barriers, and number of company's

occupation in business), company's qualification (export experience), and export marketing strategies (focus on the market in contrast to being diverse, and being active in contrast to being passive) on the export performance. At the same year, Baldauf, Cravens, and Wagner (2000) presented a model to study the relationship between environmental characteristics (social, cultural and political characteristics), company's characteristics (demographic features and management motivations), and business strategies (differentiation or minimum completed price) with the export performance. In 2002, Shoham et al classified exporter companies into three groups: proponents, analyzers, and seekers. Then they introduced different variables in each of these types of companies that have an effect on the export performance. They concluded that in analyzer type of companies, there is a significant relationship between producing new commodity, production management, market tendency, and control strategies on one hand and export performance on the other hand. At the same year, Roze and Shoham studied the effect of existing market tendency in the company on the export sale and benefit. Beside, in 2002, Leonidou, Katsakeas and Samiee conducted a duplicated analysis on previous researches and presented a model in which the effective variables are divided in 5 groups (management characteristics, organizational factors, environmental pressures, exportation targeting, and the elements of export marketing strategy). Three former variables affect the export performance by affecting two latter variables. But in relation to the subject of the present research there are limited studies as are mentioned in following. Regarding the resource oriented approach, Ibeh and Wheeler (2005) assessed the effectiveness of management, physical, and organizational resources (as the internal environment) and relational resources (as the external environment) on the export performance. They showed that the role of those organizational resources including aptitudes and capabilities of the company, general export strategy, export organization, compatibility of the product and its price, competitiveness of the price, compatibility of the promotions and advertisements with the foreign markets, and the strategy of selecting the market have been most important variables. European Central Bank (2005) in its journal assessed the effect of price and non-price competitiveness on the export performance and mentioned the compatibility and standardization as the methods of gaining competitive advantage. Nasution, Grany, and Mavondo (2007) studied the effect of market oriented assts on the business performance in form of two variables: special value of the brand and the value for the customer. In another research, Morgan et al

(2006) studied the effect of financial, human, and cultural, relational, informational, and intangible resources on the export performance of the companies regarding the inimitable, and irreplaceable role of the resources. Moreover, Kaleka (2002) explained the motivating capabilities and resources of competitive advantage in export market. In his research he considers like physical, financial, experimental, and operational resources and capabilities like creating relationship with the suppliers and customers, developing the products, and informational capabilities and emphasizes that such resources and capabilities can lead to competitive advantage in costs, products, and services. Looking at the previous researches in the literature shows that the defined relationships in this research cannot be found in previous studies in the literature. Thus the researcher is going to test these relationships.

3.   Conceptual model/ research hypotheses

Any research is based on a special research model, which should be based on literature review's data and researcher's knowledge and should be tested. The applied method in this research is based on two qualitative and quantitative research methods. At the first step we try to design research method using qualified research method and review of the literature. This model had been designed by combination and analysis of literature review's data and field data (through interview). In this part the research method which is the result of the first step is being explained. Researcher investigates competitive strategies and performance which is the main construct of the research, using performance based on resources and relation between marketing resources. This study is going to find how resources are resulting into higher levels of performance directly and indirectly (applying competitive strategies). The conceptual model of this research is actually merging four main elements in strategic management, i.e. the complexity of external environment, internal environment (marketing resources), competitive strategy and performance. The model is representing the relationship between in these four elements. This is the industries construct which determines the behavior of a company, based on Industrial Organization (IO)'s theory. The external environment has considerable effects on the strategy and any company's performance. Competitive resources inside the company could be the origin of the competitive advantage, according to resources point of view, and also proper and effective use of these resources would improve the organization competitiveness resources. Therefore adaption of internal competitive resources to external environment results to providing competitive
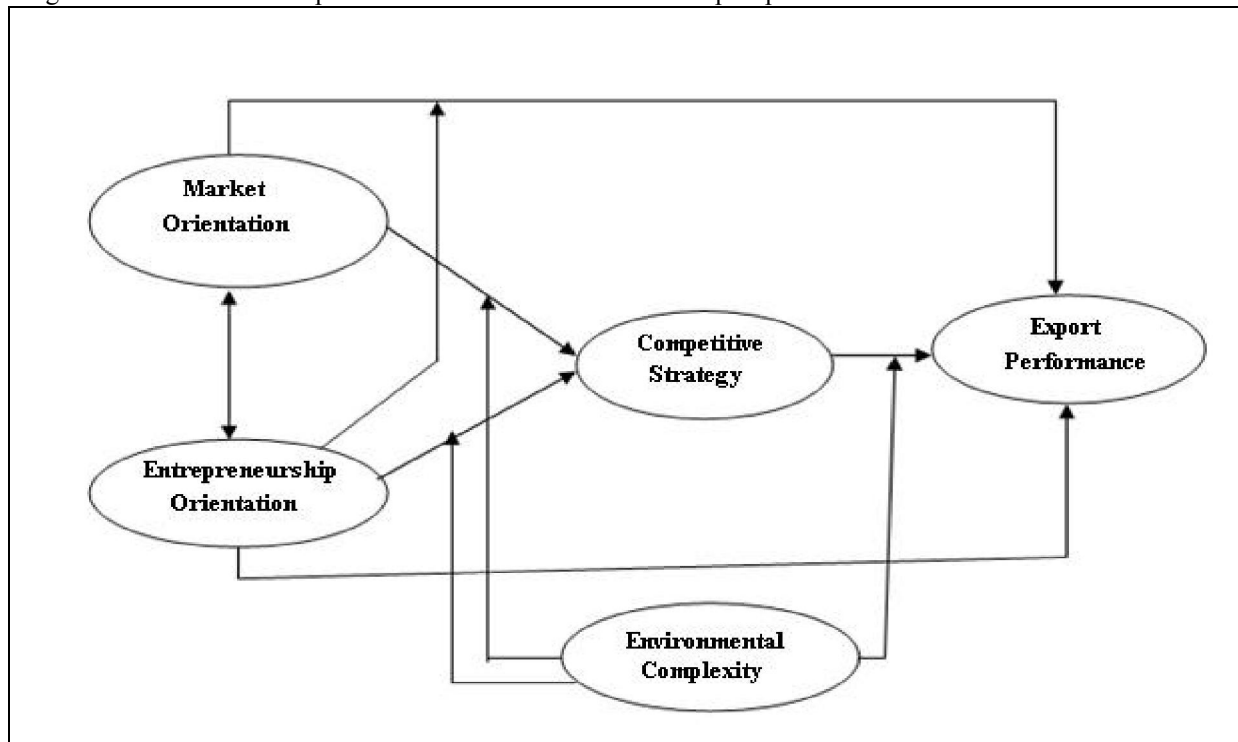
strategies, which would also result into desirable performance for organization. Competitive resources sometimes, directly leads to desirable performance, since companies are not able to distinguish these resources in order to improve competitive strategies. In some other times when there exist some resources in company, company's managers are being informed of the results of the performance, in order to improve competitive strategies and in some cases desirable performance may be the result of prosperity period of some industry. So it is essential for companies to analysis different views and revise their strategies according to some special time scheduled program (Pres and Robinson, 2005; Sharman et al., 2006).

Competitive resources can affect the performance of the company. Almost all of such resources are under the control of the company. According to Barney Principle (1991), competitive resource has to be valuable, rare, inimitable, and irreplaceable, and can contain a wide range of the resources. But it does not contain all resources. According to analysis of environment and competitive resources, related strategies have to be developed in order to implement the activities of the company. Competitive strategies are indeed a group of organizational strategies that are compatible to complex competitive environment as mentioned before. To increase and improve the equity of the shareholders of the companies, it is necessary for such companies to reach the desirable performance (like maximum benefit) in the competitive environment. Thus it can be concluded that the performance of any company is a very important index for assessing the effectiveness of suitable competitive strategy. Usually, any suitable competitive strategy in a given desirable environment leads to a satisfactory performance. Otherwise, the companies have to revise their strategic management process and correct the issues related to regulate, implement, and control their strategy. The companies have to note that no strategy can lead to their successfulness forever. The companies have to evaluate and revise their strategy and strategic management process in order to assure on achieving their goals, especially in dynamic environments. Conceptual model of the research provides a framework for the administrative managers and researchers so that they can understand the competitive strategy of the companies in a dynamic environment. The performance of any company depends on identification and exact definition of suitable competitive strategies. Regulating such strategies is the result of analyzing the competitive resources and environment. Conceptual model of the research is presented in figure 1. It is to be mentioned that in the mentioned model, to assess the export

performance we have used valid criteria from the resources- based approach. In this section, we turn to present the conceptual model on the basis scientific findings. All constructs of the research and their mutual relationship were clearly extracted by combining the results of literature review and other conceptual model in the field of export performance on the basis of resources approach and regarding conducted interviews with the managers of the tile and ceramic industry about the effective criteria and indices on export performance. Then the extracted constructs of the research were completely confirmed. In order to maximize the precise and accuracy of the offered model on the basis of extracted constructs the researcher has used the opinions of academic experts of the field. Combining the extracted results and the modeling procedure, independent relationships of different researches that were coordinated with each other and were confirmed or relatively confirmed were combined and a conceptual and scientific model was obtained. Since the objective of this section is to identify the requirements and effective factors on the export performance, thus in the scientific and conceptual model of figure 1, we have identified the effective constructs on the their scientific and primary relationship on the basis of scientific findings of the research and interview with the managers of tile and

ceramic industry to show the constructs of the research. We can say in short that all effective constructs on the export performance were identified by combining the results of literature review, available surveys, and other conceptual models in the field of export performance on the basis of resources approach in order to improve the export performance, and their relationship were confirmed by the administered researches globally, and their precise and accuracy were confirmed through interviewing with academic experts of the field. In this approach, most resources- based models were used as the basis of the designed conceptual model of the research. In this process we have used structural model and the results of surveys and extracting effective constructs (operational factors and criteria) on the basis of export performance construct with regard to resources approach (marketing resources in particular) and offered conceptual models in other countries and extracting their main constructs and combining the results of interviews with academic experts, following scientific model was extracted. This model is presented to complete the "approach- strategy- performance" paradigm with regard to all elements and components of resources- based approach.

Fig. 1. Scientific and conceptual model of effective factors on export performance

In conceptual model (Fig. 1), all relationships between the concepts, dimensions, components, and indices are defined in simple regression and multiple regression models in form of measurement relationships. Here, all hypotheses of the conceptual model are defined in correlation form due to having a measurement nature. Thus, the goal of this research is to design and explain a model for identification of effective factors on export performance on the basis of differentiation strategy in Iranian tile and ceramic industry using resources- based approach.

This model is tested based on the opinions of top managers of available companies. With respect to the main question of the research that seeks to identify the dimensions, components, and indices of the pattern of export performance with special emphasis on gaining competitive advantage, explaining the relationship between the components of the research model, and studying the possibility of generalizing the model into tile and ceramic industry, hypotheses of the research can be defined as follow:

There is s a positive relationship between entrepreneurship- orientation and market- orientation.

Entrepreneurship- orientation has positive effect on export performance.

Market- orientation has positive effect on export performance.

Entrepreneurship- orientation has positive effect on differentiation strategy.

Market- orientation has positive effect on differentiation strategy.

differentiation strategy may effect on export performance.

Entrepreneurship- orientation has positive effect on export performance via differentiation strategy.

Market- orientation has positive effect on export performance via differentiation strategy.

Environment would moderate the relation between entrepreneurship- orientation and strategy.

Environment would moderate the relation between market- orientation and strategy.

Environment would moderate the relation between differentiation strategy and export performance.

Entrepreneurship- orientation would moderate the relation between market- orientation and export performance.

4. Methodology (research plan, data gathering method and instrument, validity and reliability of the instrument, data analysis method, statistical population, sample size and sampling method)

4.1. Research plan

Regarding the objective of the research, this research is an applied- developmental one. It is applied because such a research is conducted toward the practical application of the science and its results in solving the problems; and it is developmental because it seeks to discover the truths and realizing the phenomena and develop the borders of human knowledge (Bazargan, et al, 2004, 79). From data gathering point of view, this research is descriptive and it is classified in group of descriptive- analytical researches. In particular, it is a correlation research whose type of correlation is the structural equations. Any descriptive research includes data gathering in order to test the hypotheses or to answer a question about the current situation of the subjected research. Descriptive information is usually gathered through questionnaire, interview, or observation. Such information cannot be manipulated and thus (due to the rate of researcher's intervention in the research) it is a passive one (studying things as they are). In correlation researches, the main goal of the research is to specify whether there is any relationship between two or more quantitative (assessable and measurable) variables; and if there is such a relationship, how much and large is such a relationship. Correlation study can aim to make a relationship or its lack and using the relationship in doing the predictions. Correlation studies assess those variables that are believed to be related to the problem (Bazargan, et al, 2004, 79).

From the data point of view (measurement and section) this research is a quantitative one. It is quantitative because the data are extracted from the questionnaire in form og numbers and digits. Besides, the data analysis is quantitative as well. Regarding the approach and nature of the problem and research goal, this research is explanative because it seeks to explain the effective factors on export performance (Bazargan, et al, 2004, 79). Finally, regarding the type of dealing with the theory, this research is placed in the group of theory testing researches. In testing each theory we use that theory to conduct our observations. Here we move from the general toward the specific, and the observations have to be the test for determining the theory. Explaining the relationship between the variables, this research is going to develop the knowledge about scientific rules and principles of the research subject in which we evaluate the effects of marketing resources on the export performance of Iranian tiles and ceramic industry, using path analysis.

4.2. Data gathering method and instrument

In this research, to collect the secondary data we have used library method including studying international management journal, scientific management internet websites, international database for the theses and dissertations, documents and reports of the governmental and private organizations, and reports and documents of the

companies who export the products of tile and ceramic industry. To gather the primary data of the research we have used a 30- items questionnaire and a 42-question questionnaire.

4.3.   Validity and reliability

In this research, validity of questionnaire was obtained by two methods of content validity and factor validity. Content validity of the research was reviewed by the supervisor and advisors of the project along with 5 academic members and 10 experts of tile and ceramic industry and consequently, their mentioned corrections were applied in the questionnaire. Moreover, we used factor validity (discovering factor analysis) to determine the validity of the research structure. Additionally, we used Cronbach's alpha method to determine the reliability of the measurement instrument. Reliability coefficient is defined in an interval between 0 (unreliable) to 1 (completely reliable) (Hosseini, 2010, 75). To do this, regarding the final sample which included 91 questionnaires from the exporter companies of tile and ceramic industry, the questionnaires were collected and then using obtained data from the questionnaire and SPSS software, the rate of reliability coefficient was calculated by Cronbach's alpha as shown in table 2.

Table 2. Results of Cronbach's alpha test

Construct (subjected variable)	Alpha value
Market orientation	0.832
Entrepreneurship orientation	0.814
Environmental complexity	0.715
Differentiation competitive strategy	0.913
export performance	0.964

Obtained numbers for the reliability coefficient of each variable of this pretest (all numbers are higher than 0.7) implies that the questionnaire of the research is reliable. In other words, the questionnaire has the suitable reliability to be distributed in statistical population.

4.4.   Data analysis method

To test the hypotheses, we have used factor analysis test of first and second rank along with the path analysis. Data analysis was done using LISREL 8.53 and SPSS.

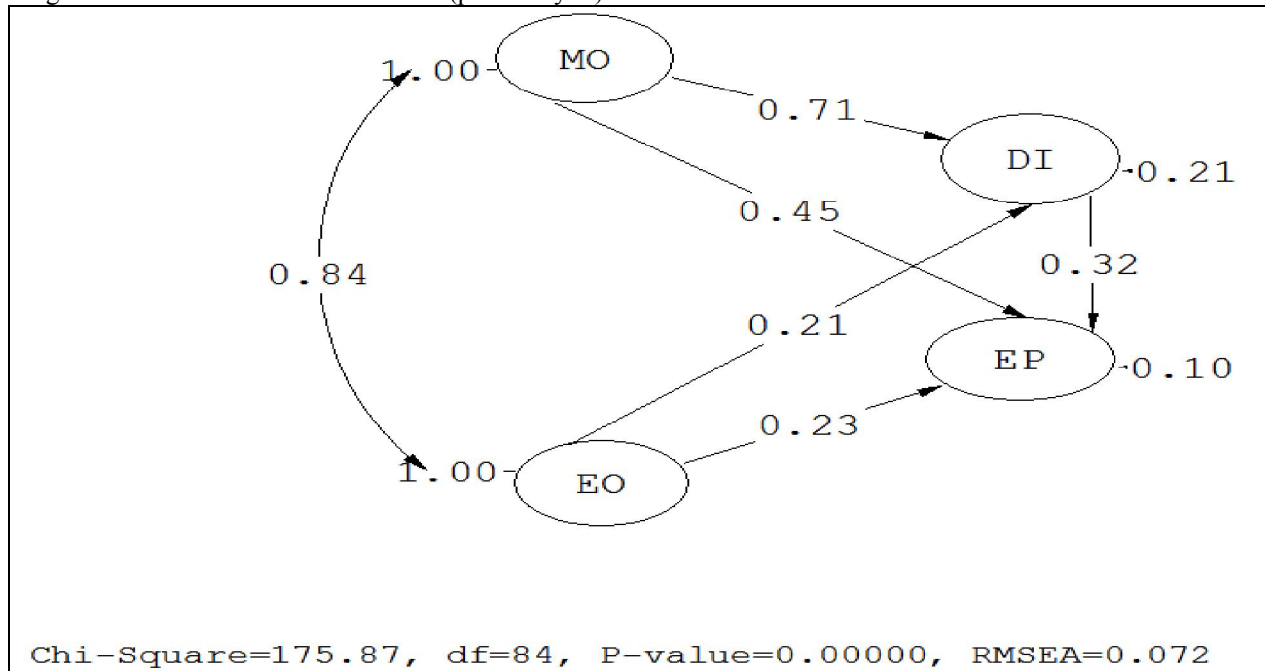**4.5.   Statistical population, sample size, and sampling method**

Statistical population of the research includes all companies that export the products of Iranian tile and ceramic industry in a time interval of conducting this research who have referred to the central office of the companies. In this research we have used the whole statistical population as follow. At the first step, we prepared a list of all exporter companies of the industry. Then we referred to their headquarters. At the second step, they filled the questionnaires. The total number of the companies who are active in exporting Iranian tile and ceramic products were 123 companies according to the official report of Iranian Mines and Industries Ministry. Totally 91 questionnaires were identified as analyzable.

5.   Data analysis (demographic description of the sample, results of data analysis)

5.1.   Demographic description of the sample

Descriptive analysis of demographic variables of the research was done in two parts: individual part (5 questions) and company part (4 questions). In part of individual specifications of the respondents, 73.3% were male and 29.7% were female. Educationally, most respondents (52.7%) had MSc degree. Obtained results about the work experience of the respondents show that 15.4% of the respondents have less than 5 years of work experience, 19.8% have between 5 to 10 years of work experience, 30.8% have 10 to 15 years of work experience, and 34.1% have a work experience more than 15 years. Organizational position of most respondents of the research was exportation manager (40.7%). The highest frequency of the respondents' age has been more than 45 years old (38.5%). In part of company specification of the studied companies, most companies of the research (54.9%) have had more than 15 years of experience in export and international marketing. This rate shows that most companies of the research have had enough experience in exportation. Additionally, 57.1% of the studied companies consider 5 to 10 target market in tile and ceramic industry. Then, 22% of the companies consider 10 to 15 countries for their export operation. Finally, among the export method of the research, foreign sale through internal sale organization has had the highest application (28.6%) and establishing a branch in target country has had the lowest application (5.5%).

Fig. 2. Structural model of the research (path analysis) with the indices in standard estimation mode

Chi-Square=175.87, df=84, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.072

5.2.   Results of research data analyses

Testing the relationship between the tangible subjected variables was done using LISREL 8.53 software. Available coefficients in reflective indices (coefficient between variable and factor such as market orientation and customer orientation), factor load, and available coefficients in formative indices (between variables like market orientation and differentiation strategy) are considered as weights (Bazargan, et al, 2004, 289). The results of first and second ranks of factor analysis on the basis of competitive strategy show that from market orientation (MO) point of view, inter-sectional coordination (95%), competitor orientation (89%), and customer orientation (82%) have the highest rate of explanation in market orientation dimension respectively.   Moreover, the results of first and second factor analysis show that from entrepreneurship orientation (EO) point of view, pioneering (94%), innovation (85%), and risk- taking (67%) have the highest rate of explanation in entrepreneurship orientation dimension respectively. Additionally, in dimension of environmental complexity of target market, competition density (70%) has the highest rate of explanation and governmental rules and regulations (54%) and market complexity (53%) have the highest rate in environmental complexity respectively. In figures 2 and 3, research models are presented in two cases of standard estimation and significance. Figure 2 shows the structural model of the research in the mode of standard estimation mode on the basis of

differentiation strategy (DI). In this figure, fitness indices of the model can be offered as mentioned in following:

Value of calculated X2 equals to 175.87 and df value is equal to 84, thus the value of χ^2/df is less than 3 and shows the suitability of the structural model of the research.

Value of RMSEA index is equal to 0.072 that is less than 0.08. This index shows the suitability of structural model of the research as well.

Value of NFI index is equal to 0.79, value of GFI index is equal to 0.93, and the value of AGFI index is equal to 0.84; all of which imply the suitability of the structural model of the research.

Figure 3 shows the significance level (t-value) of the calculated coefficients and parameters of the structural model of the research with indices, in which all obtained coefficients are significant because the value of significance test (t- value) of each of them is bigger than 1.96. The significance of these values shows the significance of the model. In other words, location each of the indices and variables in a total model is significant.

The results of the path analysis in figure 2 show that using differentiation strategy of market orientation dimension has a higher contribution and weight than the other dimensions in shaping differentiation strategy, so that the effectiveness rate of market orientation dimension on the differentiation strategy is equal to 0.71, while such effectiveness is 0.21 for entrepreneurship orientation. But regarding

the effect of marketing resources components on the export performance (EP) on the basis of differentiation strategy, the effectiveness rate of market orientation on export performance is equal to 0.67 while this rate for entrepreneurship orientation is extracted as 0.23. Management conclusion of this topic is that if we apply the differentiation strategy, then market orientation will have more effect on shaping the company's strategy, and marketing resources in the environment of target market will have a higher effect on the export performance of the companies that are active in international market. Besides, figure 3 that showed the path analysis model in significance coefficients mode shows that all defined relationship (except the effect of entrepreneurship on the differentiation strategy) have been significant in the hypotheses and thus all hypotheses are confirmed. Table 3 shows the direct and indirect effects between the variables of the research.

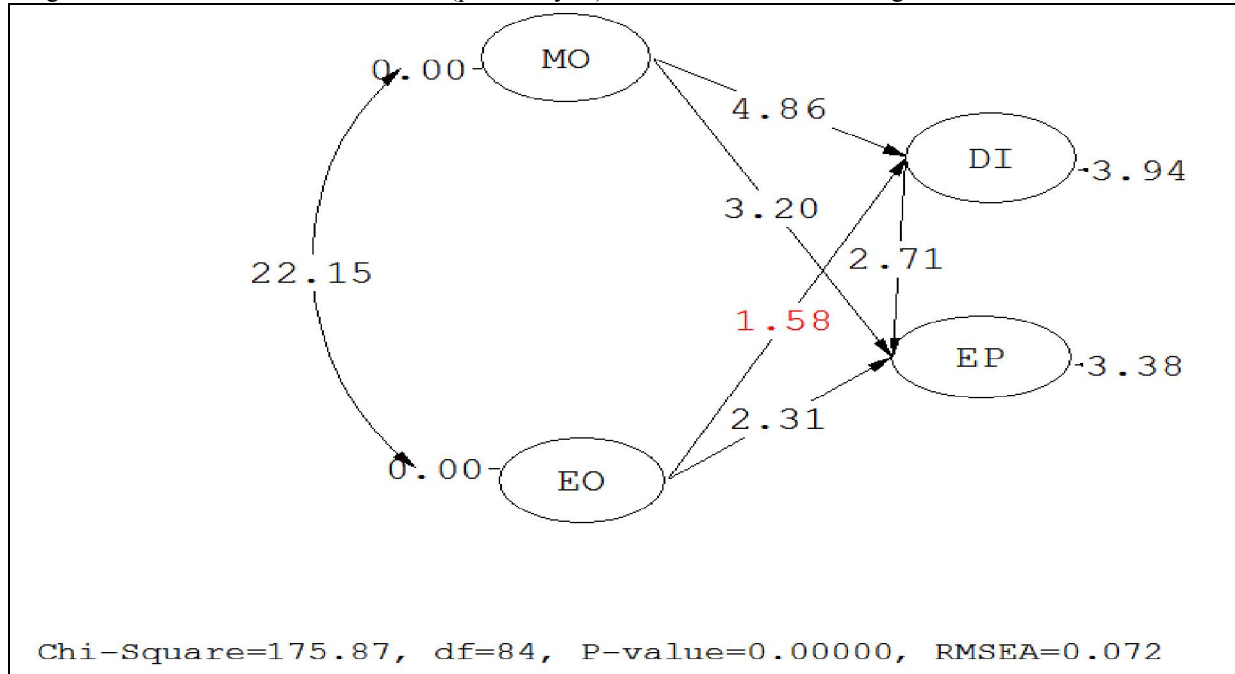Fig. 2. Structural model of the research (path analysis) with indices in numbers significance mode

Chi-Square=175.87, df=84, P-value=0.00000, RMSEA=0.072

Table 3. Results of direct and indirect effects and all variables of the research in differentiation strategy

Hypothesis	Indirect effect	Direct effect	Total effect
There is s a positive relationship between entrepreneurship- orientation and market- orientation.	0.84	-	0.84 (22.15)
Entrepreneurship- orientation has positive effect on export performance.	0.23	-	0.23 (2.31)
Market- orientation has positive effect on export performance.	0.45	-	0.45 (3.20)
Entrepreneurship- orientation has positive effect on differentiation strategy.	0.21	-	0.21 (1.58)
Market- orientation has positive effect on differentiation strategy.	0.71	-	0.71 (4.86)
Differentiation strategy is effective on export performance.	0.32	-	0.32 (2.71)
Entrepreneurship- orientation has positive effect on export performance via differentiation strategy.	0.23	0.07	0.30 (2.31)
Market- orientation has positive effect on export performance via differentiation strategy.	0.45	0.23	0.68 (3.20)

6.   Discussion and Conclusion

The main goal of this research was to present a model for assessing the effects of marketing resources on export performance in Iranian tile and ceramic industry (using resources based approach) on the basis of competitive differentiation strategy. A review on the available literature on the export performance we can realize that this research is the first one which studies the relationship between the components of marketing resources and export performance on the basis of competitive differentiation strategy and offers a conceptual model for evaluating these relationships. The results of the research show the importance of marketing resources, especially market orientation in determining the export performance of the selected companies. Moreover, the dimension of market orientation has a higher weight than the dimension of entrepreneurship orientation in shaping the concept of marketing resources. The results of this research are compatible with the results of other researches. The studies have shown that there is a positive significant relationship between the dimension of market orientation and the dimension of entrepreneurship orientation (Kohly and Javorsky, 1990; Narver and Slater, 1990; Lou, et al, 2003). Parhald and Hammel (1900), Grant (1996), and Hunger and Wheelen (2009) have modeled the existence of a positive significant relationship between market orientation and entrepreneurship orientation (Kim –Man, 2010). In above mentioned researches, there is no reference to the application of this type of strategies. Additionally, the studies done by Dahyadegari (2004), Bani Hani and Alhavari (2009) and Kadogan (2003) have confirmed the significant relationship between differentiation strategy and performance. At the other hand, studies by Kim-Man and Azizi Vafa (2009), Kalka et al (2002), Kim-Man (2010), Danaraj and Bimish (2003), and Bani Hani and Alhavari (2009) have shown the existence of a positive significant relationship between the components of resources-based approach (resources and competitive capabilities) and differentiation strategy, all of which are compatible with the results of current research. Cavusgil and Zou (1994), Baldauf and Croner (2000), and Chatty and Hamilton (1993) have concluded that the components of the resources- based approach (resources and strategic capabilities of the organization) significantly affect the performance of active companies in different industries. A look at the results of this research and their comparison with the results of previous studies brings us to the conclusion that the result of this research is compatible with the results of most available researches in the literature.

Scientifically, besides the time and budget limitations of the research, data gathering method is another limitation of this research. Unfortunately, due to the lack of any database related to the variables of the research in the subjected companies of the study, gathering the data of the research was just possible through distributing the questionnaire except for the performance information available in Iranian Customs Organization and Iranian Mines and Industries Ministry. Thus the most parts of the needed information of the research were collected sporadically. Although the researchers did their best attempt to standardized the questionnaire, but any questionnaire, apart from its level of standardization, will contain some degrees of the respondents' orientation and if the respondents give distorted answers, the researcher will not have any concrete criteria to assess the received answers, thus the way of evaluating the validity of the results is to apply them in other industries and to compare the final results. Theoretically, from the marketing science point of view, the important and effective variables on the performance of the companies include community, customers, and company (known as 3C). One of the other limitations of this research relates to studying a group of factors (at company level) and missing other factors. At the other hand, the components of resources- based approach not only affect the financial performance of the companies, but also affect non- financial performance (such as satisfaction, commitment, and employees and customers loyalty); but this research has not paid attention to this latter group of factors.

Another limitation of this research is lack of paying attention to other approaches like requirement approach and relational approach in the research model, although including these entire approaches can brings us to a more realistic results in explaining the changes of export performance of the active companies in related industry. Regarding the results of the current research, following suggestions can be offered:

Conducting more researches with the same approach on other industries of the country;

Studying the way of mutual effectiveness of the model components in an integrated way;

Studying the way of effectiveness of other approaches and comparing their results with the effectiveness of resources- based approach in the tile and ceramic industry;

Identifying the effects of the components of resources- based approach on the non- financial performance of the companies at a macro level (non-financial variables like satisfaction, commitment, customers loyalty, and employees' loyalty);

Comparing the export performance of tile and ceramic industry with the performance of the same industry in competitor countries.

Comparing the export performance of tile and ceramic industry with the export performance of other industries in the country;

Considering richness of the model and paying attention to more variables in the model by applying qualitative research methods such as data-based theory.

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