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Article

Does market oriented environmental sustainability determine the export performance? A study of leather products manufacturing SMEs in India

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Does market oriented environmental sustainability determine the export performance? A study of leather products manufacturing SMEs in India

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ABSTRACT

Market-oriented environmental sustainability (MES), which is part of an organization's orientation towards the export market and its impact on the export resources and competencies of firms was analyzed in this study. Further, this research also examines the influence of export resources and competencies on export strategy of marketing and export performance of organizations. To accomplish this objective, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used. Data was gathered from 194 manufacturing export enterprises. The results indicate that MES positively impacts resources and competencies connected to green export. Furthermore, only resources indirectly affect eco-friendly export marketing strategy through capabilities, but green export-related competencies directly affect it. The findings also demonstrate how an eco-friendly export marketing approach improves a company's export success. By analyzing business orientation and its impact on eco-friendly export marketing strategy and export performance, this research contributes the field of sustainability and exporting. This study has significant managerial implications, it explicitly opens up significant decision-making channels for Indian SMEs engaged in exporting to various markets. First, it advises businesses that their acquisition of resources and eventual development of skills will be influenced by their orientation, i.e. preference for green values, norms, and behaviors. The study's findings also demonstrate that businesses must put effort into developing capabilities rather than just investing in resources alone.

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1. Introduction

Humans are constantly pursuing their individual and collective goals, paying less attention to how their actions and behaviors affect nature and their surroundings. Frequent climate change, global warming, acid rain, and biodiversity are just a few consequences of irresponsible human behaviors (Bager & Lambin, 2020). Eco-literate and eco-conscious organizations urge the business community to make efforts to mitigate such consequences. In response, eco-friendly behaviors emerge among people and businesses, and sustainability issues come to the forefront of all business activities (Chiarvesio et al., 2015; Leonidou et al., 2013b). Managers consider environmental factors while designing, developing, and manufacturing products (de Guimarães et al., 2018; Katsikeas et al., 2016).

The Indian leather industry boasts its existence to 3000 BC which started establishing its dominion as an organized industrial sector much before the commencement of Indian independence struggle. Central Leather Research Institute, Chennai was the first significant development post Indian independence for this sector. The national strategy of restricting the manufacturing of leather products exclusively for the small and medium scale enterprises distinguishes it from other industry sectors. Being a priority export

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sector, it has consistently been a foreign exchange earner for India, besides being an apex jobs creator ((Bechtsis et al., 2018). Having almost 1/3rd of global cattle population (cow, buffalo, sheep, and goat) and being fifth largest global exporter of leather products, India fetched \$4.87 billion from export market during 2021–2022 (Ozkan et al., 2022).

The availability of advanced technology, trained as well as blue-collar workers, auxiliary industries, and evolving government regulations, raised and differential environmental compliance expectations in domestic and international markets, and government promotional efforts have created a bundle of opportunities as well as accompanying challenges (Kumar & Joji, 2023). For instance, this industry is still a labor-intensive industry that helps the national economy in huge employment generation, which contributes to national prosperity. Like many other industries and their products, the leather industry as well as its products produced using eco-friendly means also contribute to a favorable brand image in the market, which ultimately yields socioeconomic benefits in the long run (Karuppiyah et al., 2020; Paul et al., 2023) Thus, leather-manufacturing SMEs are increasingly adopting green practices (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Kanagaraj et al., 2015). The idea is to ensure the eco-friendliness of all processes that add value to the finished product being delivered for consumption in the domestic and/or international market and resumption for recovery and proper disposal.

Exporting firms, particularly small and medium enterprises (SMEs) dealing with leather products, find it more challenging to address environmental concerns and implement green marketing plans (Garg, 2015). The acquisition, movement, and processing including tanning, storage, and usage bring sorts of pollutants to the environment; air, water, and soil pollution are the key. Even if these practices offer a competitive edge, a method to stand out from the competition, and a way to control costs, their worldwide application increases in complexity for various reasons (Fakheri et al., 2022). Leather quality or price sensitivity of masses, size and design specifications, distribution channel preferences, mode of payments, and terms of sales, such as warranty, returns, and refund, are just a few to mention.

An extensive review of the extant literature reveals that most research on green business strategy focuses on large companies in the domestic context, ignoring the global scenario (Hasan et al., 2019). In SMEs and international contexts, specifically in export settings (for exceptions, see (Leonidou et al., 2013b; Leonidou et al., 2015), there is little research on the causes and outcomes of sustainable marketing strategies (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Karuppiyah et al., 2020; Paul et al., 2023), particularly in the context of leather product manufacturing companies (Garg, 2015). Researchers who have examined the individual dimensions of sustainability have focused more on the economic or social pillars of sustainability, exploring environmental dimensions insufficiently. However, sustainable environmental strategies and practices have proved to be sources of firms' sustainable competitive advantage and export performance (Crittenden et al., 2011; Hult, 2011).

The existing literature also indicates a gap in understanding the relationship between market-oriented environmental sustainability and export performance, particularly among small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in the leather industry (Dwivedi et al., 2019; Karuppiyah et al., 2020; Podsakoff et al., 2003). Additionally, there is a dearth of research on how SMEs implement sustainable marketing strategies and their impact on export performance (Leonidou et al., 2015; 2017; Verhoef et al., 2003), especially in an international context. Existing studies on green business strategies often focus on large companies, overlooking the specific challenges and opportunities faced by SMEs (Bıçakcıoğlu, 2018; Bıçakcıoğlu et al., 2019; Chen et al., 2023; Martín-Tapia et al., 2010; Morgan et al., 2004; Quintás et al., 2018; Santra et al., 2021; Silva et al., 2023; Zamir & Mujahid, 2022). While prior research mentions the potential benefits of sustainable practices, it does not thoroughly examine how these practices translate to export performance for SMEs in the leather product sector (Bıçakcıoğlu, 2018).

The research proposes a novel approach by investigating the influence of market-oriented environmental sustainability (MES) on the development of resources and capabilities for green exporting practices among SMEs in the leather industry. It aims to explore how these green export capabilities affect the development and implementation of eco-friendly export marketing strategies by SMEs. Focusing on SMEs in the leather product industry, the research offers a specific and under-researched perspective on green marketing and export performance. Utilizing the Resource-Based View (RBV) framework, the research examines how SMEs can develop green export-related resources and capabilities, providing valuable insights into how these businesses can establish a competitive edge in the global market.

Thus, based on the resource-based view (RBV) of firms (Kraaijenbrink et al., 2010), this study assumes that an organization's orientation and resources are sources of sustainable competitive advantage. In fact, it is a pool of resources and capabilities that aids an organization in securing superior performance. As per RBV, organizations possessing the valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resource-capability mix may exploit it to gain competitive edge in distinctive aspects (Newbert, 2008). Of late, scholars and researchers have used 'organization' instead of 'non-substitutability'. By 'organization,' they mean how the firm organizes itself to exploit its valuable, rare, and inimitable resource-capabilities mix. The RBV seeks to explore how various resources relate to each other and how they may be combined to gain and maintain a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 2001). The resources required to attain a sustainable competitive advantage depend on how well a firm is positioned in relation to the environment and society.

Specifically, this study examines how MES has impacted exporting firms' green export-related resources and capabilities. Furthermore, it investigates whether these resources and competencies affect eco-friendly export-marketing strategies and firms' export performance.

The remainder of this paper is organized as follows. The first section briefly introduces the main research idea, followed by the background of the research, concept and hypothesis development, materials and methods, and empirical findings in the subsequent sections. The final section presents the study's contributions, implications, and limitations.

2. Literature review and hypotheses development

2.1. RBV theory

RBV emphasizes the firm's internal resources and capabilities as the foundation for achieving a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). This aligns well with research on export performance, where specific resources and capabilities are crucial for success in international markets (Morgan et al., 2004). RBV highlights the importance of resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable (VRIN) for creating a competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). This perspective is relevant when examining green marketing strategies as effective strategies can be a source of VRIN resources, leading to improved export performance (Verhoef et al., 2003).

RBV suggests that firms develop specific capabilities to utilize their resources effectively [Barney, 1991]. In the context of green marketing, these capabilities could involve expertise in eco-design, sustainable supply chain management, or green communication strategies. These capabilities can then be leveraged to implement effective green marketing strategies, potentially leading to superior export performance (Morgan et al., 2004).

Building on the VRIN concept, RBV suggests that firms with resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable can achieve a sustainable competitive advantage (Barney, 1991). Effective green marketing strategies, if they meet the VRIN criteria, can be a source of competitive advantage, leading to improved export performance metrics like increased market share or profitability (Morgan et al., 2004). The theory also examines how this tactic affects exports, as shown in Figure 1.

2.2. Market oriented environmental sustainability (MES)

In the context of exporting firms, their environmental orientation becomes more vital as it drives exporting resources, competencies, export marketing strategies, and export performance of organizations (Barney, 1991; Bıçakcıoğlu et al., 2019; Crittenden et al., 2011). According to (Crittenden et al., 2011), the definition of market-oriented environmental sustainability (MES) orientation is similar to "the organizational philosophy and culture that supports common values, norms, and behaviors that support environmental activities." (Hult, 2011) extended this definition of market orientation by considering a firm's potential to strategically align its interests with those of various stakeholders to gain a distinct and competitive market position. Although the extant literature emphasizes the relevance of MES, very few studies have probed its impact on green business strategies and export performance (Bıçakcıoğlu et al., 2019). Although sustainability is generally regarded as a vital aspect of business organizations, it is categorically more important for organizations working across the globe with limited resources (Chiarvesio et al., 2015).



Figure 1. Conceptual framework.

2.3. Eco friendly export resources and capabilities (ERR and ERC)

Eco-friendly export resources support green export marketing strategies (Li et al., 2017). Still, in order to fully reap the benefits of resources—more especially, material, monetary, and experiential resources—in export strategy and green practises, they have to be used to build capacity (Barney, 2001). According to the RBV School of Thinking, having appropriate resources may be a necessary but inadequate need for value delivery. The company's resources, how it uses them, and the capabilities it develops all have an impact on its strategy (Leonidou et al., 2013a). Capabilities and skills are thought to become crucial for businesses operating in global marketplaces (Hult, 2011). Just as having the right resources is important, having the right competencies also helps organisations implement their marketing strategies (Leiblein & Reuer, 2004; Leonidou et al., 2011).

2.4. Eco-friendly export marketing strategies (EMS)

According to (Morgan et al., 2004), green marketing includes a company's activities that advertise, package, and retrieve products with consideration for the environment. The term "green marketing" has many connotations, and terms like "environmental marketing," "ecological marketing," and "sustainable marketing" are used interchangeably for green marketing [31, 25, 03]. According to these definitions, "green marketing" refers to all marketing activities with special consideration of environmental consciousness to generate revenue and produce results. In this sense, implementing a green marketing strategy requires modifying the marketing mix elements, such as product, price, place, and promotion (Leonidou et al., 2015). Green marketing mix components can improve performance (Li et al., 2017). Examples of green product strategies include making judgments about products and focusing on efforts to minimize waste and pollution (Leonidou et al., 2013b). Companies may use environmentally convenient product and distribution methods, which have been shown to have a favorable impact on market and product performance (Katsikeas et al., 2016). Businesses need specialized resources and competencies to achieve a lasting competitive advantage and design and implement solid marketing strategies (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017; Hart, 1995).

Knowledge of population and environmental issues, biodiversity loss, and climate change causes exporting organizations to focus on sustainability issues in export marketing (Fraj et al., 2011). The frequent exposure of exporting enterprises to environmental issues leads to eco-consciousness (Li et al., 2017). Consumers' growing environmental concerns further provoke firms' eco-consciousness to develop and embrace eco-friendly export marketing techniques to attain their export market objectives (Galeazzo &

Klassen, 2015; Li et al., 2017). discovered that businesses operating abroad typically perform better when using a sustainable approach to marketing tactics. This improved performance may be attributed to the increased profitability achieved via cost reduction and improved market performance (Hart, 1995), improved socio-ecological standing [03,25], or the creation of competitive advantage (Leonidou et al., 2015).

Furthermore, according to (Chan, 2010), sustainability concerns and actions of exporting firms are influenced by a variety of external factors, including macro-environmental factors such as regulations, technology, cultural/social norms, the economy, and micro-environmental factors (Leonidou et al., 2015). Adopting green marketing tactics may influence all enterprises and exporting businesses operate in a more complicated environment. Exporting businesses face difficulty in implementing sustainable strategies and breaking into international markets because of the differences in the external environments of the home and host countries (Taherdangkoo et al., 2017).

2.5. Firm export performance (EFP)

Although there is no commonly accepted definition of export performance, this notion has been examined extensively (Hultman et al., 2009). This is also known as the outcome of an organization's export activities (Aaby & Slater, 1989). The performance of export firms can be measured comprehensively in terms of products offered, market entry, customer satisfaction, or gross economic gains and is typically studied as effectiveness, efficiency, or adaptability (Diamantopoulos & Kakkos, 2007; Katsikeas et al., 2000).

Research indicates that several variables affect export success, including management traits, organizational variables, environmental influences, and export marketing strategies (Diamantopoulos & Kakkos, 2007). In particular, some marketing strategies appear to play a crucial role in achieving outstanding performance in international markets (Morgan et al., 2004). Additionally, export businesses have a good relationship with sustainability-related challenges such as eco-innovation (Leonidou et al., 2002). It is being observed that companies adhere to sustainable concerns typically do better in the export market [03, 25]. However, recent research (Leonidou et al., 2002) highlights the importance of sharing environmental knowledge.

2.6. Hypothesis development

A company's business orientation reflects its business philosophy and relationship with the environment and stakeholders (Galbreath et al., 2021) and it serves as a point of difference (Leonidou et al., 2002). This represents the methodologies, preferred practices, and decision-making processes that guide a firm's operations. According to (Hult, 2011), The MES is a market orientation that captures businesses' preferences for sustainable market green practices. Market-focused sustainability may influence an organization's strategy. According to (Murray et al., 2011), a robust MES may promote learning and the creation of novel and sustainable practices.

Consumers have grown increasingly aware of and interested in environmental goods and services as green consciousness and sustainability challenges have grown over time [03,25]. Market-oriented businesses create value by knowing their customers' present and latent demands (Galbreath et al., 2021; Menguc et al., 2010). These businesses are aligned with market needs. Likewise, exporting firms adopt green export marketing practices and create eco-friendly products and services that customers would appreciate (Dibrell et al., 2011; Galeazzo & Klassen, 2015). Firms may support environmental causes by using eco-friendly resources and showing their commitment towards the sustainable usage of these resources (Crittenden et al., 2011). As a result, businesses prioritize resources and competencies that are environmentally sustainable (Dangelico & Vocalelli, 2017; Leonidou et al., 2015). Thus, we postulate the following hypothesis:

- H1. MES has a favorable relationship with resources for green exports (ERR).
- H2. MES has a favorable relationship with export-related green capabilities (ERC).

Identification of the skills and resources that influence a firm's capacity to pursue success concurrently in the business and environmental spheres has advanced noticeably (Chan et al., 2012). Green export

marketing practices are aided by eco-friendly export resources (Li et al., 2017). However, to fully realize the value of resources—specifically, physical, financial, and experience resources—in green practices and export strategy, they must be used in the creation of capacities (Barney, 2001). According to the RBV school of thought, having the requisite resources may be necessary but insufficient for value delivery. The firm's strategy is influenced not only by its resources but also by how it uses them and the competencies it develops (Leonidou et al., 2013a).

Capabilities and competencies are believed to be essential for firms in international markets (Ray et al., 2004). Similar to having the necessary resources, having the appropriate capabilities aids businesses in implementing their marketing plans (Leiblein & Reuer, 2004; Leonidou et al., 2011). For example, market responsiveness was found to be crucial for enhancing the performance of exports in enterprises serving emerging international markets (Berchicci & King, 2007). The orientation of the market and how quickly the firm responds to changing conditions are among the qualities that have been shown to be helpful in implementing green export marketing strategies (Li et al., 2017). Furthermore, environmental knowledge and learning obtained from global marketplaces may aid export firms in creating export marketing strategies (Khan & Khan, 2021). Based on the above literature, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3. Green export-related resources (ERR) influence an eco-friendly export marketing strategy (EMS).

H4. An eco-friendly export marketing strategy (EMS) is influenced by green export-related capabilities (ERC).

2.7. Environmentally sustainable export marketing strategy and export performance

Previous studies (Aguilera-Caracuel et al., 2012; Boone & Kurtz, 2001) suggest that environmental sustainability problems may be incorporated into firms' marketing strategies. Companies may alter current goods and manufacturing systems to address the environmental concerns of various stakeholders, thus minimizing ecological effects and enhancing environmentally oriented performance (Chabowski et al., 2011).

Promoting innovation, creating possibilities, and competitive advantages define significant aspects of a strategy (Cronin et al., 2011). Owing to better resource management, decreased waste, and enhanced efficiency, eco-friendly decisions and practices may result in cheaper costs and higher profits or market share via sustainable positioning (Varadarajan, 2014). As a result, incorporating environmental concerns into the strategic forefront helps enterprises perform well and gain a competitive advantage (Hart, 1995; Leonidou et al., 2017). Previous research (Cronin et al., 2011) has demonstrated that implementing sustainability practices results in higher performance. According to (Li et al., 2017), an eco-friendly marketing strategy influences export performance. As a result, the following assertion was made:

H5. A company's eco-friendly export marketing strategy (EMS) directly impacts export performance (EFP).

3. Research methodology

The Resource-Based View (RBV) is a theoretical framework that proposes a firm's competitive advantage stems from its unique bundle of resources and capabilities. In the context of green leather exports from Indian SMEs, RBV offers a valuable lens to examine how these firms can achieve success.

3.1. Market-oriented environmental sustainability (MES)

MES reflects a firm's strategic use of resources to integrate environmental considerations throughout its market-facing activities. This aligns with RBV's emphasis on resource deployment for competitive advantage.

3.2. Export-related resources (ERR)

ERR represent the tangible and intangible assets a firm possesses for export activities. These resources are essential for firms to implement MES strategies, such as eco-friendly materials for sustainable leather production or financial resources for marketing green products in international markets.

3.3. *Export-related capabilities (ERC)*

ERC represent the skills and processes a firm develop to utilize its export-related resources effectively. Developing these capabilities allows firms to leverage their ERR for successful green exports. Examples include marketing capabilities for crafting compelling green marketing messages or operational capabilities for efficient export logistics with minimal environmental impact.

3.4. *EMS*

The Resource-Based View (RBV) and export marketing strategy are fundamentally intertwined for firms aiming to achieve a competitive advantage in international markets. RBV proposes that a firm's unique bundle of resources and capabilities is the key to sustainable competitive advantage. These resources can be tangible (machinery, technology) or intangible (knowledge, skills), and capabilities represent the "know-how" to leverage these resources effectively. An effective export marketing strategy builds upon the foundation of RBV by focusing on: Analyzing the firm's resources and capabilities to identify those that are Valuable (contribute to competitive advantage), Rare (not easily replicated by competitors), Inimitable (difficult for competitors to imitate), and Non-substitutable (no readily available substitutes).

3.5. *Export performance (EFP)*

RBV emphasizes that a firm's unique bundle of resources and capabilities is the key to achieving sustainable competitive advantage. These resources can be tangible (machinery, technology) or intangible (knowledge, skills), and capabilities represent the "know-how" to leverage these resources effectively. RBV suggests that firms with superior resources and capabilities can achieve better EFP by Utilizing valuable R&D capabilities and knowledge of international markets to create products that meet the specific needs of foreign customers, leveraging relationship management capabilities to establish trust and collaboration with distributors, suppliers, and government agencies in export markets, and by utilizing marketing capabilities to create compelling messaging, target the right audience in international markets, and utilize appropriate marketing channels. This can increase brand awareness, attract new customers, and ultimately lead to higher export sales.

3.6. *The marketing mix (4Ps)*

The four key elements a firm can adjust to influence customer decisions:

Product: The good or service offered, including its features, benefits, and quality. In the context of green leather exports, this would encompass the sustainability attributes of the leather products.

Price: The monetary value assigned to the product. Green marketing strategies may allow SMEs to command premium prices for eco-friendly leather goods.

Place: The channels through which the product reaches the customer. This could involve online marketplaces, international trade shows, or partnerships with distributors in target markets.

Promotion: The communication activities used to inform and persuade potential customers. Green marketing strategies would focus on highlighting the environmental benefits of the leather products.

By effectively utilizing the marketing mix (4Ps) alongside a strong foundation in RBV principles (MES, ERR, ERC), Indian leather SMEs can achieve a competitive advantage in green leather exports.

3.7. *Procurement of data and management*

This study concentrates on small- and medium-sized Indian enterprises (SMEs) that export manufactured goods. SMEs actively attempt to establish strategies that integrate the global environment in earlier growth phases (Dibrell et al., 2011). Additionally, SMEs expand abroad more quickly than their domestic rivals (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000). The Business Standard¹ (2023) provides the sampling frame, chosen for

this research which included 1000 top-ranking companies. Companies with international operations were selected from this list. Four Hundred Forty-Eight (448) companies were contacted to confirm their export operations. A questionnaire was sent to 380 companies engaged in leather manufacturing and allied services; 294 responses were received.

A self-administered online survey was distributed to the sampled companies through email. This email contained a link to the poll and a letter outlining the study and ensuring the confidentiality of the data, participants, and companies. The person in charge of the export operations was designated as the study's main informant. Data were collected in three waves. Two Hundred Ninety-Four (294) people responded, yielding a response rate of 77.36%. All the questionnaires were accompanied by a cover letter through which consent was taken in writing.

In this research, the identity of all respondents was kept confidential, and a cover letter was attached to inform the respondents about the purpose of the data and confidentiality in advance. The Ethical approval was waived by the ethics committee due to the following reasons.

- Personal data under the Data Protection Act would not require ethics review.
- Research involving anonymized records and data sets that exist in the public domain, e.g. datasets available through the Office for National Statistics or the UK Data Archive where appropriate permissions have already been obtained and it is not possible to identify individuals from the information provided.
- Studies of public behavior that are purely observational (non-invasive and non-interactive) unless the recorded observations identify individuals (names, photographs) which could place them at risk of harm, stigma, or prosecution
- Research involving the use of non-sensitive, completely anonymous educational tests and surveys when the participants are not defined as "vulnerable" and participation will not induce undue psychological stress or anxiety
- Taste and food quality evaluation and consumer acceptance studies, if the food consumed is wholesome without additives or contains a food ingredient, agricultural, chemical, or environmental contaminant, for a purpose and at a level declared safe by the relevant national food safety agency. (UCL, 2024).

The questionnaire was developed using a three-step process. Each concept was validated in the first phase by drawing on literature. Academics with backgrounds in international marketing and sustainability assessed the questionnaires. The questionnaire was cross checked by the experts and SME managers. Only few adjustments were recommended and were incorporated. As a validity and quality check, respondents were asked about their seniority within their company and in their respective jobs. The average tenure of the respondents at the business was 13.6 years, and they had held the same job for more than ten years. The majority of respondents (58.4%) were exporting directors. The organizational profiles show that 45.81% of the enterprises reported having between 11 and 50 employees, while the remaining ones had between 51 and 249 full-time employees. On average, businesses export up to 11 markets, and have been doing so for at least 20 years. Regarding the proportion of the company's total revenue that was attributable to exports, 16.01% of the companies reported that it was less than 20%, 28.39% reported that it was between 21% and 49.8%, 20.09% reported that it was between 51% and 80%, and the remaining 37.51% of the companies reported that it was more than 80% of their total revenue.

3.8. Assessing nonresponse bias and common method bias

We compared early and late respondents to measure the variables covered in this study and other demographic factors to test for non-response bias (Andersson et al., 2004). The respondents responded on 1st reminder were considered early and the respondents answered after 2-3 reminders were considered late responders. Responses were collected one time from each respondent. No appreciable variations were observed in any of the comparisons. Comparisons were made using independent-sample t-tests.

Table 1. Estimation of non-response bias.

	Constructs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MES	Early	183	3.4455	1.32250	.28173
	Late	20	2.0645	1.32269	.24110
ERR	Early	183	2.8636	1.35260	.28102
	Late	20	1.2581	1.12251	.20197
ERC	Early	183	2.6364	1.39282	.29123
	Late	20	1.7097	1.48258	.26118
EMS	Early	183	1.6455	1.32250	.22173
	Late	20	2.1645	1.33269	.23110
EPF	Early	183	1.6455	1.32250	.22173
	Late	20	2.1645	1.33269	.23110

Some ex-ante strategies recommended by previous scholars were utilized to ensure common method bias (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Malhotra et al., 2006). According to Harman's single-factor test results, eleven (11) components with eigenvalues larger than 1.0 were identified by the rotated EFA analysis, accounting for 78.7% with top loading of 33.99% on a single factor. Therefore, common method bias was not observed in this study as shown in Table 1.

The marker variable test, which makes use of a conceptually unrelated construct (known as "marker variable"), was the last test we conducted (Khan & Khan, 2021). Following earlier research (Podsakoff et al., 2003), respondents' tenure was considered a marker variable. There was no significant correlation between the marker variables and the other study variables.

Existing validated scales were selected from the literature to measure each latent variable in this study. When responding to the questionnaire, respondents were instructed to concentrate on a particular product market initiative (Li et al., 2017). A total of 10 questions used to test MES were taken from (Barney, 1991). ERR and ERC were adapted and considered as higher-order variables in line with other studies (Leonidou et al., 2011). A construct called green export-related resources (ERR) comprises experience, financial, and physical resources relevant to green exports. The tools were used through the recommended software SPSS 22.0 and Lisrel 9.00 to assess structural equation models.

The green export-related capability (ERC) items were derived from (Leonidou et al., 2015). The operationalization of the EMS scale included four factors adapted from (Li et al., 2017). Five questions adapted from (Leiblein & Reuer, 2004; Li et al., 2017) were used to measure (EPF). Seven-point Likert scales with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 7 being 'strongly agree' were used to measure each research construct.

4. Results

Structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed using Lisrel 9.0. program was used to test the conceptual model (Silva et al., 2019). This section presents the findings of the measurement and the structural models.

4.1. Measurement model assessment

According to the data, loadings for all research constructs were greater than the acceptable limit of 0.60 and $p < 0.001$ (Ringle et al., 2015), supporting the unidimensionality and reliability of individual indicators. All constructs were assessed to evaluate internal consistency, reliability, and convergent validity through CR and AVE. Table 2 lists the values for α , AVE, and CR. All study scales' Cronbach's alpha and CR values were above the cutoff point of 0.7 (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000), which indicates sufficient construct reliability. The AVE values of all constructs were higher than the threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Consequently, constructs also showed sufficient convergent validity, tested through the t-statistic.

High-standard loadings can be used to establish it (Armstrong & Overton, 1977; Ringle et al., 2015) Hair et al., 2008; Malhotra & Dash, 2011). To prove convergent validity, additional measurements (NFI > 0.9) were performed (Bagozzi & Yi, 1988). T-value findings are also recommended by Anderson and Gerbing (1988) to prove convergent validity. For the study scale, the t-values should be greater than 2. All the scales in the present research had t values of more than 2, which is a sign of excellent convergent validity. The convergent validity values for each scale are presented in Table 3.

Table 2. Cronbach 's alpha, CR, and VE.

Constructs	Cronbach's Alpha	Constructs Reliability (CR)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
MES	.721	0.6	0.7
ERC	.714	0.7	0.5
ERR	.756	0.8	0.4
EMS	.745	0.8	0.5
EFP	.765	0.7	0.5

Table 3. Loading values, NFI, and T-values for convergent validity.

Constructs	Loading value Range	NFI	Range of t-values
MES	0.74–0.79	0.90	5.75 – 18.81
ERR	0.65–0.89	0.90	3.43 – 4.56
ERC	0.50–0.63	0.91	11.64 – 14.16
EMS	0.58–0.60	0.92	10.26 – 13.16
EFP	0.43–0.60	0.90	8.76 – 12.21

The heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT) recommended by (Lenssen & Van Wassenhove, 2012) and the Fornell-Larcker test suggested by (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000) were used to assess discriminant validity. The square root of AVE was greater than the largest correlation of each construct with any other research construct. Thus, discriminant validity is supported by the HTMT criteria (McDougall & Oviatt, 2000), and all HTMT ratios must be less than 0.9 (Hair et al., 2017). Every HTMT ratio fell below the 0.9 cutoff. Together, these findings demonstrate discriminant validity.

4.2. Structural model

The determination estimates show the significance of the path to assess the model's prediction accuracy (Hair et al., 2017) as well as the structural linkages. The collinearity of the model was evaluated before the structural model (Hair et al., 2017). However, the VIF values for strategies for sustainable export marketing were below the indicated value of 5, ranging from 1.92 to 2.90 (Hair et al., 2017). These findings imply that there were no collinearity issues.

Based on the path estimates provided by Lisrel, four endogenous variable values were significantly higher than 0.5, demonstrating the model's predictive usefulness. 5,000 bootstrap resamples at 95% confidence level were processed to assess the estimations for the postulated structural links (Hair et al., 2017). The standardized path estimates, t-values, and p-values for the suggested path associations are listed in Table 4.

Hypothesis H2 holds that MES favorably affects organizational capabilities and competence ($b=0.07$, $p < 0.001$). These findings are in line with those of (Barney, 1991) who discovered that a market-oriented sustainability culture aids businesses in building capabilities and competence in the organization. However, H1 showed no association between MES and resources dedicated to green exports ($b=-0.02$; $p < 0.001$). The possible reasons behind insignificant relationship between MES and ERR could be poor execution of a Market-Oriented Environmental Sustainability (MES) strategy can limit its impact on acquiring resources for green exports. Moreover, scarcity of sustainable materials or technologies in the market can hinder the positive relationship between MES and ERR. Further, the factors like supplier relationships, overall financial resources, or government incentives might influence resource acquisition for green exports, independent of MES. The structural model with path coefficients was given in Figure 2.

The value ($b=-0.06$; $p < 0.001$) does not support H3, which suggests no significant association between ERR and EMS. The reason for insignificant association may the resources might be primarily focused on production aspects of eco-friendly products (e.g. clean technology), with limited resources allocated for marketing and communication (EMS). These findings are consistent with those of (Ozkan et al., 2022) on capabilities that influence the routines on which the company is founded. To develop its competence (Leonidou et al., 2017), also acknowledges the critical role that resources play. However, this study did not find any such association. According to this hypothesis, ERR does not significantly affect EMS directly ($b=0.033$; $p=0.001$), and H4 was accepted ($b=0.23$; $p=0.001$). implies that while resources are

Table 4. Hypotheses results based on estimates provided in SEM 9.0.

S.NO	RESULT	Relationship	ESTIMATES	T values	P Values
H1	NOT ACCEPTED	MES-----ERR	-0.02*	0.98	0.682
H2	ACCEPTED	MES-----ERC	0.07	3.78	0.000
H3	NOT ACCEPTED	ERR-----EMS	-0.06*	0.87	0.675
H4	ACCEPTED	ERC-----EMS	0.23	3.46	0.000
H5	ACCEPTED	EMS-----EFP	0.24	5.96	0.001

*Denotes hypotheses not accepted, $p < 0.05$.

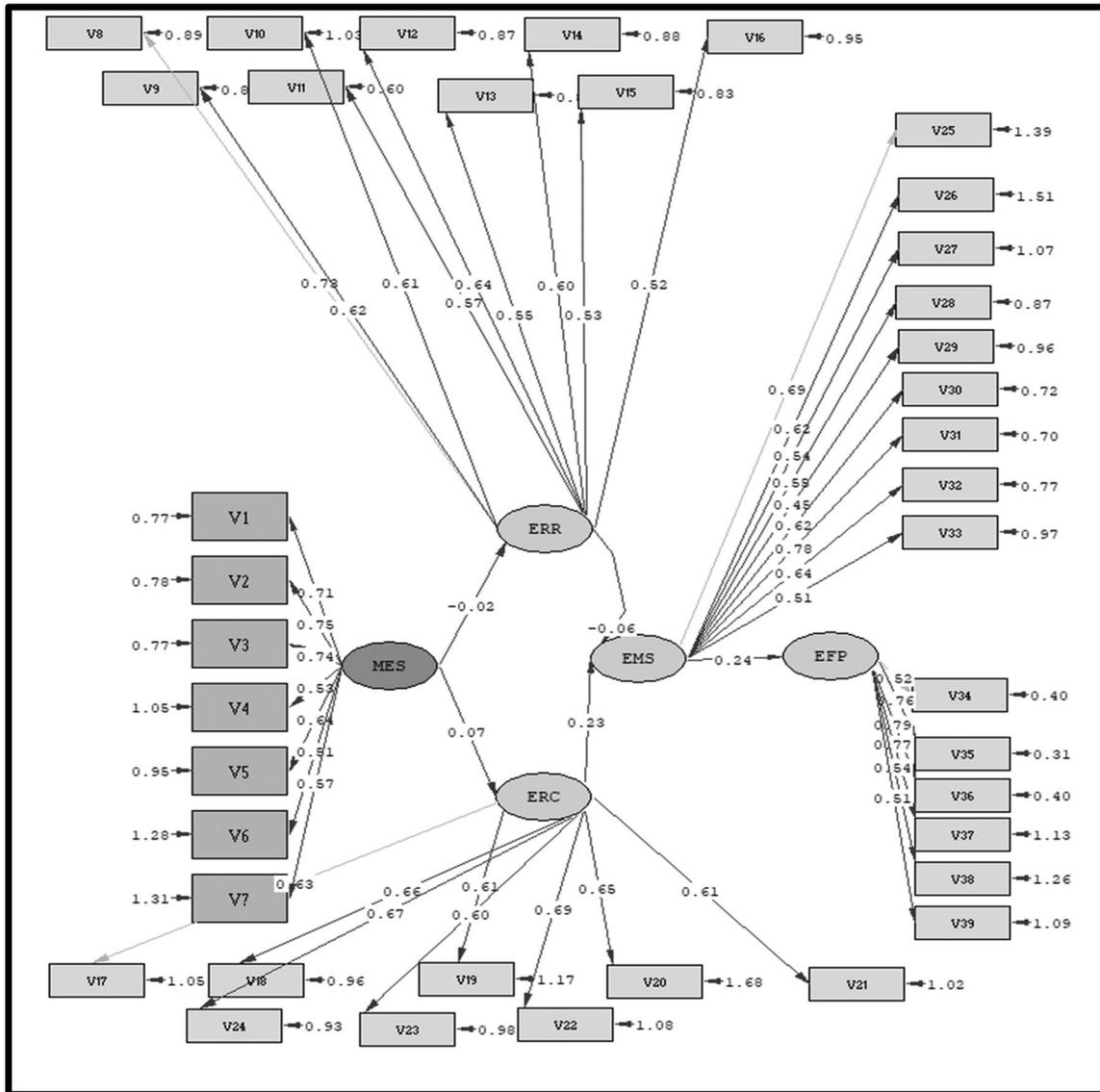


Figure 2. Structural model.

important, framing the marketing strategy might not be sufficient, despite being useful for creating an eco-friendly export marketing strategy. They must be converted into capabilities to fully realize their worth (Barney, 2001).

Furthermore, H5 was accepted as a strategy affecting the EPF ($b=0.24$; $p=0.001$). These findings are consistent with earlier studies conducted in the context of domestic or international markets (Hart, 1995; Leonidou et al., 2013b), which discovered a favorable correlation between companies' product market success and green products and marketing strategies. Adopting an eco-friendly export marketing plan can improve exports (Leonidou et al., 2015).

5. Discussion and conclusions

The lives of people and businesses are increasingly affected by environmental concerns and sustainability. Customers and businesses support environmentally conscious behaviors owing to the detrimental effects of human activities on the environment (Chiarvesio et al., 2015). In terms of businesses, this entails altering procedures and incorporating environmental considerations into commercial practices (Varadarajan, 2014). This is considered pertinent, especially for businesses that operate in export markets (Leonidou et al., 2013b). However, few studies have focused on sustainability issues in export marketing (Leonidou et al., 2002). Therefore, the current study intends to comprehend the effects of MES on ERR and ERC linked to green exports as well as their impact on EMS and EFP.

5.1. Theoretical implications

As shown in the structural model, MES favorably impacts green export-related competencies and not resources. This can be attributed to the fact that most of the sampled organizations are in their transformation stages. Therefore, deploying resources based on eco-friendly orientation contradicts claims in their vision statements. It was also concluded that businesses with a culture that facilitates sustainable concepts, norms, and conduct are more likely to possess eco-friendly capabilities. Additionally, these competencies influence eco-friendly export-marketing strategies. Such a strategy can be accomplished through capabilities rather than by deploying more resources. Finally, the adoption of an eco-friendly export marketing strategy should boost the performance of exporting organizations. These findings corroborate those of previous research in this field (Leonidou et al., 2013a).

This study makes several contributions based on these findings. First, it synthesizes research on green marketing, sustainability, international trade, and the performance of exporting firms. This study develops a model to validate the link between organizational orientation, processes, strategy, and performance. In this regard, it has been discovered that organizations focusing on the market and sustainability concerns tend to favor eco-friendly skills. Additionally, while acquiring resources by itself does not support an export marketing plan, developing competencies does so. This outcome is an empirical test of the RBV's justification for allocating resources to capabilities. Third, by operationalizing an ecologically sustainable viewpoint, this research adds to the body of knowledge on sustainability. Fourth, we supplement the current analysis of the influence on export marketing strategies using the RBV and sustainability to gain knowledge about SMEs operating in India. There are many studies in this area; however, each has its own focus in the existing literature. For instance (Bıçakcıoğlu et al., 2019; Galeazzo & Klassen, 2015), investigated the influence of strategies on the performance of exports rather than on the marketing strategies of exports (Ozkan et al., 2022). evaluated multinational enterprises in an international context. Few researchers have investigated this issue using RBV as the primary explanation.

This research adds knowledge to the field of sustainability by experimentally examining the relationship between a firm's resources and skills and its strategic orientation toward sustainability. The findings show that businesses are more capable of implementing eco-friendly export marketing strategies when they support environmental systems and acquire capabilities. Additionally, it supports the notion that eco-friendly export marketing techniques improve businesses' export outcomes.

5.2. Managerial implications

This explicitly opens up significant decision-making channels for Indian SMEs engaged in exporting to various markets. First, it advises businesses that their acquisition of resources and eventual development of skills will be influenced by their orientation, that is, their preferences for eco-friendly shared values, norms, and behaviors. The findings of this study also demonstrate that businesses must put effort into developing capabilities rather than simply investing in resources alone. This is beneficial for Indian SMEs. SMEs are further conditioned in this respect even though they do not operate with boundless resources. This should be considered when developing a business model for eco-friendly export. The results also imply that adopting green practices benefits export performance. The results imply that the environmental orientation of stakeholders and the organization as a whole are crucial for practical market orientation. This

necessitates the development of a defined environmental plan that serves as a channel for both internal and external communications.

The policymaking viewpoint may also be used to analyze these implications. Adopting an eco-friendly strategy may require expenditures, materials, process modifications, or rearranging operations. Businesses may be reluctant to advocate such changes, especially if they are unaware of the advantages that may arise as a consequence. Public authorities play a crucial role in helping businesses become more aware of their environmental challenges and advantages. In that sense, they might support campaigns, such as distributing successful eco-friendly case studies or hosting environmental seminars. Additionally, authorities can offer incentives to businesses to undertake measures that reduce environmental effects, such as tax breaks.

5.3. Limitations and future research directions

Our study had several limitations. On the one hand, generalizability is constrained by data from manufacturing exporting Indian SMEs, which constitute a sample from a single nation. Other restrictions include the use of a single responder per organization. Future research could build on this study's findings by examining businesses from different nations and considering different environmental rules, national cultures, and export practices. In addition, comparing exporting and non-exporting businesses allows researchers to empirically examine the improved importance of sustainability for exporting businesses. According to (Invest India, 2023), another direction for future research is to contrast samples from companies in developing and mature economies. To reduce the influence of common technique bias and include objective measurements of export success to corroborate our findings, future studies may involve numerous respondents.

Note

1. *Business Standard*, India's leading business newspaper, provides latest news on stock markets, investing, companies, industry, banking, finance and economy-an independent research house-annually publish rankings of companies in India.

Institutional review board statement

No experimental or physical activity was carried out. Although it was an intellectual participation hence no ethical approval was required neither taken.

Informed consent statement

Informed consent was obtained from all subjects involved in the study.

Author contribution statement

Syed Khusro Chishty: Conception and Design, Analysis, and interpretation of the data; Editing Research Gap identification.

Sonia Sayari: The drafting of the paper, Revising for intellectual content, Data Cleaning and Tabulation and Literature.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Data availability statement

Data is available on request by author Syed Khusro Chishty.

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