

Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Jafari-Sadeghi, Vahid (2021) Internationalisation, risk-taking and export compliance: a comparative study between economically advanced and developing country. *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 43 (3). pp. 384-408. ISSN 1476-1297

Published by: Inderscience

URL: <https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2021.10039076>
<<https://doi.org/10.1504/IJESB.2021.10039076>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/id/eprint/46667/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

Internationalisation, risk-taking and export compliance: A comparative study between economically advanced and developing country

Abstract

The global economy involves enormous internationalisation activities that provide untapped opportunities for entrepreneurs and businesses. In a rapidly evolving economic environment, it is inevitable to adopt an integrated policy for presence in global markets. Although in recent years, the business environment has been characterised by the liberalisation of emerging nations and their increasing contribution to the global economy there are still some restrictive regulations that all international businesses need to comply with. In this regard, export compliance is defined as a multidisciplinary and specialised framework, which supports enterprises in compliance risk management. This research aims to explore the essence of this phenomena in the international business economy and investigate the consequence of the failure to comply with the international regulations as the potential risk that firms might face in their global activities. Similarly, this paper aims to explore the risk-taking practices of small ventures in Italy and Iran. Consequently, the methodology of this paper relies on the multiple case studies, in which the data were gathered through conducting interviews with the CEOs/s managers of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Italy and Iran. The result of this study compares Italian versus Iranian businesses in regards to the concept of risk-taking and export compliance and introduces the context-based, universal and ineffective factors.

Keyword: internationalisation, export compliance, risk-taking, Case study, Iran

Biographical notes: Vahid Jafari Sadeghi is a post-doctoral research fellow at the Università degli Studi di Torino. His research interests are international entrepreneurship, strategy, entrepreneurship, and internationalisation. He has been a visiting research scholar in the University of Regina, Canada and contributed in different research projects with various scholars and universities. He has published papers in several international journals and publications such as *Research in International Business and Finance*, *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, etc. Vahid is a member of editorial board/ reviewer of scientific journals.

Introduction

In a rapidly evolving global economic environment, it is inevitable for countries to adopt an integrated policy to support the participation of firms from the country presence in global markets (Chichilnisky and Heal, 1986). But internationalisation is among the most intricate and challenging strategies that can be undertaken by enterprises (Fernández and Nieto, 2005). In part this complexity is created by accelerating changes in the international business environment in the global marketplace (Acs, Dana, & Jones, 2003; L. P. Dana & Wright, 2009; Etemad, Wright, & Dana, 2001), compounded by development of technologies and reduction of barriers across

borders through regional trade agreements (Maignan and Lukas, 1997; Zou and Stan, 1998; Leonidou, 2004). These changes have facilitated the internationalisation of small and medium-sized firms (Knight, 2000). The increasing trend of this category of firms in the international arena has led scholars to identify pushing and pulling factors for their success (Acs *et al.*, 2012; Dana, 2017). Theories such as those of international new ventures (Oviatt and McDougall, 1994) and born-globals (Madsen and Servais, 1997) have been developed in this context. However, empirical firms serving as a reference to these theories were essentially located in developed countries where the pushing factors suggest the market saturation and needs for moving to low-cost production environments. Little is known about factors facilitating the success of internationalisation of Small- and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs) originating from developing countries and indigenous context where these conditions are not generally present. The current study intends to fulfil this gap by examining the factors of internationalisation of SMEs in developed as well as developing countries. It will answer the following questions: what are the factors of SMEs internationalisation in developed and developing countries? What are the factors facilitating SMEs internationalisation in developed countries, but they are less applicable to the least developed countries? What are the factors facilitating SMEs internationalisation in developing countries, but they are less applicable to developed countries?

The objective of this research study is to examine the risk-taking and export compliance characteristics needed for the internationalisation of ventures in different places. It is further intended to determine which of these characteristics are universal, and which ones are context (place/ people) related. The research questions developed for exploration is; “What are the factors of risk-taking and export compliance that influence internationalisation of SMEs in studied contexts?” and “how do these determinants influence the international performance of SMEs?” Further, it is expected to differentiate the universal determinants that have the same impact IE processes regardless of the nature of people/ place against the context-based ones.

To this end, this manuscript has been divided into four main parts. In the first part, the literature surrounding the influence of international business process and IE characteristics are outlined to leverage them for developing a qualitative set of semi-structured protocol questions. The second part devoted to the multiple case study methodology approach as the nature of this research is exploratory and its approach in the literature are still to be developed. In the next section, the findings from the research are evaluated and the context-based and universal determinants of IE are distinguished among the Italian and Iranian businesses. Eventually, the contributions of this paper, as well as opportunities for future research directions, are concluded.

Literature review

In recent years, the internationalisation literature developed through the focusing on the role international entrepreneurs in SMEs (e.g., Bell *et al.* 2003; Johanson and Vahlne 2003; Oviatt and McDougall 2005; Loane 2005; Welch and Welch 2004; Glavas and Mathews 2014; L.-P. Dana and Dana 2004). To be more precise, although the board of directors or management team is in

charge of decision making for the large multinational firms, in SMEs, the international entrepreneur is responsible for the internationalisation process (Bhuian, Menguc and Bell, 2005). However, the contribution of the international entrepreneur in the internationalisation process of the organisations have been broadly studied in the literature (e.g., Cavusgil, 1984; Lu and Beamish, 2001; Hutchinson, Quinn and Alexander, 2006; Ratten and Dana, 2007; Moreno and Casillas, 2008a; Frishammar and Andersson, 2009). For instance, Dana, Hamilton, & Wick, (2009) highlighted that there is a positive relationship between IE and pulling triggers, such as realisation of potentially available international niche markets, expectations of the family for early overseas experience, increased profit margin through economies of scale, and etc. Further, as Etemad, Wilkinson, & Dana, (2010) argued the theoretical challenge of integrating internationalisation processes into IE, especially for the smaller, entrepreneurial and innovative enterprises. In fact, through the cognitive perspective analysis, researchers examine how international entrepreneurs identify and exploit opportunities in international markets (Dana, 2001; Zahra, Korri and Yu, 2005; Milanov and Maissenhalter, 2014).

In recent years, the determinants for the participation of SMEs in international business has been increasingly considered as a subject of IE research (Etemad and Wright, 2003; Jones, Coviello and Tang, 2011; Boehe, 2013). The present IE research stresses the explanatory variables related to the specific subject like internal characteristics of firms (Zhang *et al.*, 2016). However, numerous studies that examine the SME globalisation issues fail to pay attention to the extent of how particular people in particular places leverage their unique resources and capabilities to enhance their international activities. These resources, capabilities, beliefs, and practices that vary from place to place, culture to culture can be utilised for the development of entrepreneurship in the international context (Anderson, Dana and Dana, 2006). To address this gap, I review the prior studies in the fields of international business and IE to identify the IE determinants for SME internationalisation and to differentiate particular factors, which are influenced by people 'on their own terms'.

Briefly, the IE characteristics needed in the international business processes of the venture are expanded in present work for further analysis to differentiate the factor belonged to each context. Attached to this part is a discussion of the identified IE determinants influencing the process of internationalisation.

In the business literature, entrepreneurial orientation has been generally considered as the crucial element of strategy making of entrepreneurial firms (Lumpkin and Dess, 2001). Researchers, in addition, highlighted that this subject can be applied as a tool for exploration and assessment of the firms internationalisation (e.g., Calabrò, Campopiano, Basco, & Pukall, 2017; Covin & Miller, 2014; Hernández-Perlines & Mancebo-Lozano, 2016; Hernández-Perlines, Moreno-García, & Yañez-Araque, 2016; Jantunen, Puumalainen, Saarenketo, & Kyläheiko, 2005; Kuivalainen, Sundqvist, & Servais, 2007; Mostafa, Wheeler, & Jones, 2005; Slevin & Terjesen, 2011). The IEO incorporates risk-taking in global environments and being more proactive rather than rivals as well as taking advantage of international market offerings (Covin and Slevin, 1991;

Jantunen *et al.*, 2005; Wang, 2008). The concept of international entrepreneurial orientation, in fact, involves three elements that explain the firm's tendency to be involved with in cross-national business in innovative, proactive and risk-taking ways so as to obtain the competitive advantage and international objectives (Knight, 2001).

First, as Knight (2001) argued, international proactiveness associated with the offensive positioning relative to rivals with a strong underscore on the achievement of the enterprise's global market goals. It has also been suggested that with a 'forward-looking' insight, proactive businesses have the tendency to be pioneers, thereby taking advantage of the new and existing global business opportunities (Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005). Literature, however, argued that international proactiveness inspired to the ability of international entrepreneurs to future needs of the business and even to obtain the competitive advantage due to leveraging the new prospects of the international market (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Knight and Cavusgil, 2004; Jantunen *et al.*, 2005; Mostafa, Colin and Jones, 2005).

Second, for achieving competitive advantage rather than international rivals, firms can benefit the international innovative behaviour. International innovativeness is related to the willingness of firms to adventure into new international ideas, experimentation, and get away from initiated practices (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005). Knight (2001) introduced the technological perspectives of international innovativeness through the making initiative and development of the products and services, such as new administrative technologies for improving the international organisational operations of the business. However, literature explains it as an antecedent to phenomena including successful international outcomes (Jantunen *et al.*, 2005; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005), technology leverage (Knight and Cavusgil, 2004; Wang, 2008; Mosey, Guerrero and Greenman, 2017), and internationalisation (Knight, 2001; Ripollés-Meliá, Menguzzato-Boulard and Sánchez-Peinado, 2007; Lomberg *et al.*, 2017). Therefore, international innovation, as an important factor of international entrepreneurial orientation, is expected to facilitate the IE process of firms.

Third, international risk-taking orientation, which is one of the main concerns of this paper, designates the tendency of the international entrepreneur to commit resources and make investments to projects that have abnormal high profits/ losses or major risk of success/ failure (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Lee, Lee and Pennings, 2001; Wiklund and Shepherd, 2005). Further, according to Wiklund & Shepherd (2005), the risk-taking is also regarded as the desire of international entrepreneur to segregate from former initiated practices and have the courage to explore the unknown. Research in field of IE (Jantunen *et al.*, 2005; Oviatt and McDougall, 2005; Ripollés-Meliá, Menguzzato-Boulard and Sánchez-Peinado, 2007; Şahin and Gürbüz, 2017) as well as one in entrepreneurship study (Lumpkin and Dess, 1996; Moreno and Casillas, 2008b; Covin and Wales, 2012; Wang, Thornhill and De Castro, 2017) found that the risk-taking propensity, as an element of entrepreneurial orientation of ventures, have positively influenced the international business endeavours (such as SME internationalisation). Overall, it can be said that

an international risk-taking propensity will be fundamental to the firm's international business process.

Researchers in the field of IE (e.g., Bruton et al., 2010; Busenitz et al., 2000) have tried either to identify the consequences of entrepreneurship on the environment or to identify institutional factors that facilitate international entrepreneurship. As such, entrepreneurship is considered as one of the drivers of the economic development of countries (Wennekers, Sander; Thurik, 1999; Beugelsdijk, 2007; Acs, Desai and Hessels, 2008; Acs, Autio and Szerb, 2014; Grigore and Dragan, 2015). Acs et al. (2012), Bruton et al. (2008), and Kiss et al. (2012) emphasise the critical function of entrepreneurship in propelling ventures into global markets and thus facilitating the country's growth in the economy. As such, export compliance challenges that refer to the interaction of businesses to the formal institutions is of the main issues of this research. According to EIFEC (2017), export compliance is defined as a multidisciplinary and specialised framework, which supports enterprises in compliance risk management, like the risk of reputation deterioration administrative or administrative sanctions or financial losses for non-compliance with rules, regulations, laws, and legislation, codes of conduct and good practice (Biancone and Jafari Sadeghi, 2016). It includes all international activities of organisations including export and import of any kind of commodities and/ or services, whether tangible or intangible assets (also the money transfer or payment) which somehow are subject to restrictive regulations (Dual-Use, Sanctions and restrictive measures etc.) enforceable to arrangement between two different jurisdictions/ states/ entities (EIFEC, 2017). The term organisations are intended as all public and private organisations that have activities falling within the scope of this charter including companies of any nature, associations and even bodies. The term export also refers to the international activity of the organisation; an import in a broader sense, as an indissoluble operation (EIFEC, 2017).

Method of research

This research benefits multiple case studies, applying non-probability purposive selection criteria (Yin, 2003; Dana and Dumez, 2015). Multiple case studies provide a comprehensive insight of an intricate topic, namely the SME internationalisation and the influence of nature of characteristics for successful IE in different places; therefore, building a theoretical platform where no standards or procedures are in applied (Gummesson, 2000). For this research, a total of ten in-depth, structured 90-minute to two-hour case interviews is conducted with Italian and Iranian international entrepreneur. In order to unify the interviews, an interview protocol was provided, the length of which restrains its inclusion into this study. However, a remarkable part of the questionnaire discussed to what extend internationalisation process was influenced by various determinants. Direct questions about the founder/owner/central decision-makers IE characteristics, as well as the nature of this determinates within the context were discussed. A comparative data mining on the results of interviewed cases in different places differentiates the universal IE characteristics that were important regardless of the place from the context-based determinants that exclusively have seen in one country. Thus, a holistic view of the factors needed for successful

SME internationalisation in different places as well as its differences and similarities can be obtained from the findings of this research.

For the purpose of the inquiry international entrepreneurs in different contexts, five cases of Italian firms as well as five of Iranian businesses were selected; from which eight cases were good-oriented and two firms were service-oriented ventures. The level of analysis in this research has adapted to the survey conducted by Loane (2005) who performed interviews with SME decision-makers for a firm-level analysis of the internationalisation of SMEs. Literature of internationalisation confirms that the international entrepreneur can be considered as the representative of the firm, in conjunction with the internal decision-making process of SME internationalisation (Dana and Dana, 2005; Jantunen *et al.*, 2005; Loane, 2005; Mostafa, Colin and Jones, 2005). Therefore, through a process of the data collection, this paper addressed the individual international entrepreneur. However, the findings of this study apply also to the firms as well.

The individual international entrepreneur is the unit of data collection unit for this paper. However, questions of the case study covered information from both the international entrepreneur and the firm as a collective. In this regard, as Reid (1981) discussed, it is suggested to analyse the individual level first rather than a collective because the power in small and medium firms mostly concentrated in the central decision maker/s. This is due to the significant role of SME's founder/owner in the initiation and development of the process of internationalisation (Chetty and Hamilton, 1993; Hutchinson, Quinn and Alexander, 2006).

As for the case selection, a total of ten international entrepreneurial firms from both the manufacture and the services sector in Italy, as a representative of advanced countries, and Iran, as a representative of developing countries, were selected for close examination in this research. Four out of five cases selected in each country are good-oriented, and one is services oriented. Service-oriented firms in this research were sourced from the advisor industry regarding the international business. However, firm size of the selected cases adapted to SMEs (Jafari Sadeghi and Biancone, 2017), ranged between 2 to 250 employees, from the Italian and Iranian international firms. Small ventures employ not more than 50 employees, and medium-sized firms between 51 and 250 employees (OECD, 2005).

Within-case analysis

According to Eisenhardt (1989), a within-case analysis involves the detailed write-up for each firm, which also allows the researcher to begin to identify the unique patterns of each case before the cross-case examination.

The demographic information relevant to international entrepreneurs at the individual level discusses the job role, age, gender, country of birth, and education. As the promise of this research of keeping the name of international entrepreneurs and their firm's confidence, they will be addressed to as CASE IT-1 to CASE IT-5, for Italian firms, and CASE IR-6 to CASE IR-10, for

Iranian firms. All ten entrepreneurs interviewed were the central decision-makers in the internationalisation of their firm. The sample consisted of one female (see CASE IT-2), and four male international entrepreneurs within Italian businesses while all Iranian firms studied were directing by male managers. However, the Iranian managers were relatively younger, the average age of 39, than Italian international entrepreneurs with an average age of 43. The country of origin confirms that firms in Iran were leveraging the indigenous entrepreneurs compared to Italian firms, in which on the case were directed by a French director (see CASE IT-5). The year of the establishment was ranged from 1992, the earliest, to 2013, the most recent, for firms operating in Italy, and from 1967, the earliest, to 2012, the most recent, for Iranian businesses that are much older. The regional focus of the Iranian firms is extended to the close neighbouring nations rather than Italian ones that targeted also cross-continent markets. A brief description of the product/service offered by each case is presented as the customer orientation of companies in this research covered both business-to-business and business-to-consumer operations.

Context One: Italy

CASE IT-1: Online Retailer of Made in Italy Fashion and Craftsmanship. CASE IT-1 is an online boutique, which sells high-quality products, distinguished by the excellent and rigorous aesthetic Made in Italy, realised by renamed historic Italian brands and emerging young designers. Two young Italian entrepreneurs, in their desire to combine tradition and innovation, have decided to “challenge” the crisis, remaining in the country they love. Which is why, in 2013, they founded an online boutique with the aim of enhancing and promoting Italy abroad through its craftsmanship and creativity.

CASE IT-2: Second-Hand Machinery Provider for Ceramic Industry. CASE IT-2 with almost twenty years’ experience, operates on the second-hand market and serves the industry by supplying almost any kind of equipment to companies seeking out top-end used products. CASE IT-2 offers full installations for the entire production line - from raw material preparation to the final phases. CASE IT-2 boasts outstanding reliability and a highly qualified technical support team able to complete the entire installation process from testing, start-up, and product search stages. This has led to growing demand from both Italian and international customers and today CASE IT-2 is the best choice worldwide for second-hand products in the ceramics industry and many other sectors too.

CASE IT-3: Manufacturer of Equipment for Industrial Vehicles. Innovations, development of new ideas, design and advanced manufacturing process make CASE IT-3 a pioneer of the industry. The company pays great attention to the issue of modernisation. All CASE IT-3’s plants are equipped with modern industrial machines, starting from a laser cutter for steel, shit-balding press or welding robot, and ending with an automated shot-blasting chamber and paint cabin. For 35 years, its range of products has been exported to more than 40 countries to achieve a simple goal: to make real and tangible the human desire to design, build and transport any type of material at any distance.

CASE IT-4: Injection Moulding Industry and Assembly of Plastic Articles. The CASE IT-4 is a company with twenty-five years of experience in the injection moulding industry and assembly of plastic articles, with headquarters in the north of Italy. Slim but capable of providing the customer with a step-by-step service from product development through production, logistics management of orders up to delivery, and offering guarantees based on the standard quality of productions. One of the competitive advantages of CASE IT-4 is the customer service, in which it offers study, design, and implementation of new solutions, solving any needs in the technical field.

CASE IT-5: Regulator and Non-Profit Advisor. CASE IT-5 is a service-based organisation, which provide services including assistance and consultancy in the field of international trade. The mission of CASE IT-5 is to foster international security through managing and promoting the framework for export compliance, providing innovative solutions to the most critical challenges in a global marketplace becoming a very complex arena for businesses to navigate. The organisational values of CASE IT-5 are derived from the flagship European standards, principles of transparency, commitment to compliance, accountability, consistency, and effectiveness.

Context Two: Iran

CASE IR-6: Glass Manufacturing Company. CASE IR-6 is one of the largest float glass company in Iran producing float glass, coated glass, laminated glass, and mirrors. The knowledge and experience in glass manufacturing led CASE IR-6 to find a good position in the international markets. A wide range of glass products in different colours and distinguished quality suitable for automotive and architecture industry are achievements of CASE IR-6 using advanced process control. The modern factory contains new machinery and expertise, such as robotic unloading, paper machine, marking device, online thickness, and stress measurement, etc., which meet the stringent requirements of today's international quality and standards.

CASE IR-7: International Trader and Advisor Company. CASE IR-7 is a small firm that is active in importing different adhesives for domestic use in Iran and also provides advisory services for the exporting to different countries. The young business established in 2011 and focuses on supplying specialised adhesives applicable in industry and contraction. Although with 26 employees, the company is small it has different sales offices in the most industrial zones in Iran to promote its sales.

CASE IR-8: Cosmetic Producer Company. With many years' experience CASE IR-8, operates on the cosmetic market and produce many types of products like shampoos, hair gels, body gels, body washes, sun creams, baby nappy creams, face moisturisers, anti-ageing creams, hand washings, washing up liquids, disinfectants, solutions for washing vegetables, etc. In its activities, CASE IR-8 aims at protecting the environment by implementing policies to prevent water pollution, soil contamination, air pollution, and preventing wastage of natural resources.

CASE IR-9: Dairy Producer Company. With over 30 years of activities CASE IR-9 was established in 1986 and started its production with yoghurt and milk. CASE IR-9 is a medium-

sized firm with about 30 staff but has a basket of more than 50 pasteurised dairy products that are made from all-natural ingredients and are free of any preservatives. CASE IR-9 is one of the most suppliers of dairy products of the neighbouring country, Iraq, by exporting more than 80% of the production in this market.

CASE IR-10: Irrigation and Nutrition Company. CASE IR-10 is active in the field of producing and packaging different types of Iranian dried fruit including raisins, pistachios, dates, dried apricots, seeds, and peanuts. It was founded in 2010 to pursue the aim of supplying dried fruit to the domestic markets as well as exporting to different countries. The company has so far succeeded in providing the highest quality dried fruit national market as a position as one of the leading brands in Iran. The company has succeeded in expanding the market for its products and exporting different types of dried fruit such as pistachio, raisins, dried apricots and figs to different countries namely Iraq, United Arab Emirates and Bahrain in these years.

Cross-case analysis and findings

Along with the within-case search is a cross-case analysis for patterns (Eisenhardt, 1989) that improves the likelihood of reliable and accurate theory development through gathering novel findings that may exist in the data (Eisenhardt, 1989). Cross-case synthesis, therefore, is employed to ensure robustness in the presented data, ultimately giving the results greater meaning, due to the strengthening of data findings across the multiple cases presented (Perry, 1998b; Yin, 2009). In this regard, two determinants - *international risk-taking, export compliance*– will be addressed in order to differentiate the context-based vs. universal characteristics needed for internationalisation of SMEs.

International risk-taking

The first concept to be discussed is the international risk-taking. All firms were asked: *whether the firm would be specifically likely to make investments in new international projects that are risky.* The responses are analysed in two contexts, Italy and Iran, and then the universal characteristics are determined.

Context one: Italy

In Italy, the analysis of risk-taking in firms indicates that very high levels of international risk-taking propensity, as shown in column (H) of Table 1, was noted in case IT-Sg-1. High levels of risk were noted in one case (IT-Ms-5) and moderate levels of risk were noted in two firms (IT-Sg-2, IT-Mg-3), while low risk-taking in international business decision-making processes was identified in one out of the five Italian firms in this study (IT-Sg-4). The data recognised three key factors of international risk-taking tendency, which positively impress the performance of the firm: (1) *Commitment of resources to the international projects where there is a risk of failure*, (2) *Risk-taking for exploration of new markets*, (3) *Evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking.*

Please insert **Table 1** about here

(1) The commitment of resources to international projects where there is a risk of failure

Three out of the five firms interviewed (IT-Sg-1, IT-Sg-2, IT-Ms-5) represented the ability to commit resources to the projects where there is an evident risk of failure (see Table 1). CASE IT-Sg-1 (online retailer) suggested that investment of the huge percentage of the capital into opening a new physical boutique for the UAE market was specifically was highly risky. For instance, the CEO and the founder of CASE IT-Sg-1 said that: *'The nature of our business is risky. We are a small and emerging company in selling fashion items online, which suffer from a small budget. During one of my business travels in Sharjah, the idea of opening a physical boutique that makes our items feasible for the customers came to my mind. Due to our limit budget, this decision was risky for us. So by the partnership with a local investor, we have taken the risk of establishment of physical boutique alongside the online one.'* The case evidence also suggests that committing resources to projects with a risk of failure is part of its strategy to improve the international performance by technical support of customers. In this regard, CASE IT-Sg-2 (second-hand machinery provider) contributes to the risk of customers. For example, the sales manager and co-founder of CASE IT-Sg-2 stated: *'We take the risk to help our clients and give them the credit to purchase our goods as well as trying to share with their risk to establish or develop their factories. We stay with our clients from the beginning to the final steps of the project and purposefully give them service to make sure that the machines sold are well launched and work properly.'*

(2) Risk-taking for exploration of new markets

Taking the risk of exploring new market was evident in three out of the five firms interviewed (IT-Sg-1, IT-Sg-2, IT-Mg-3). Participants indicated a forward-looking perspective to penetrate new markets by being able to undertake the risk of the future market challenges that may face the business. As an example, the sales manager and member of the board of CASE IT-Mg-3 (manufacturer of equipment for industrial vehicles) stated: *'the main risk I can take as an owner of the company is coming from the market...I will never invest in a market that is not a big market and there is no demand for vehicle. That is why I am constantly taking the risk to open or penetrate the markets in different nations. For example, in 2013, although the market in Russia was risky, we decided to enter this market and then we invested millions of euros. However, after a while, the market completely collapsed and we lost a lot in the Russian market.'*

(3) Evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking

A total of four firms in this research (see, IT-Sg-1, IT-Mg-3, IT-Sg-4, IT-Ms-5) highlighted that evaluation and management of the uncertainty was one of their key priorities to take the risk. The international entrepreneurs indicating anticipation and evaluation of the future potential

uncertainty that their firms face and make decisions if they take that risk. For instance, the sales manager and member of the board of CASE IT-Mg-3 (manufacturer of equipment for industrial vehicles) said that: *‘Every entrepreneur needs to take some risks but this risk should be calculated before to be taken. For example, Iran is one of the biggest construction markets for us but to enter this market we need to take the risk of unknown circumstances like cultural differences etc. So before starting our activities there, we need to assess the level of uncertainty and the return percentage of our investment. Therefore, if the assessment shows a positive result, we go for it otherwise we decline to allocate our capital in the condition of loss, like what we experienced in Russia.’* The data and quotes from interviews supporting ‘Evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking’ are shown in Table 2 below.

Please insert **Table 2** about here

Context two: Iran

In the study of Iranian cases, the analysis of risk-taking in firms indicates that very high levels of international risk-taking propensity, as shown in column (H) of Table 3, was noted in case IR-Mg-6. High moderate levels of risk were noted in one case (IR-Ss-7) and moderate levels of risk were noted in one firm (IR-Mg-10), while low risk-taking in international business decision-making processes was identified in two out of the five firms in this study (IR-Mg-8, IR-Sg-9). The data identified one key factor of international risk-taking tendency, which positively impresses the performance of the firm: (1) *Evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking.*

Please insert **Table 3** about here

(1) Evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking

A total of five firms in this research (see, IR-Mg-6, IR-Ss-7, IR-Mg-8, IR-Sg-9, IR-Mg-10) emphasised that the uncertainty assessment was one of their crucial introductory activities to take the risk. In this regard, CASE IR-Mg-6 (glass manufacturing company) highlighted that reasonable risk-taking in the investment of new technology was the main reason for their success. For example, the CEO and founder of CASE IR-Mg-6 stated: *‘Given our emphasis on risk-taking, we were able to succeed in our business. We are not the first Iranian glass company, but we are currently one of the most powerful ones, thanks to our high risk-taking. The first Iranian glass company, for instance, disappeared from the market due to false decision-making in risky conditions and lack of technology development. In our company, not only we tried to fulfil the current demand of the market but also we are constantly into taking the risk of future needs. That is why we allocate part of our resource to identify these opportunities and reveal the consequences of taking the risk of launching such projects.’* Moreover, CASE IR-Ss-7 (international trade and

advisor company) discussed the influence of economic conditions, as a necessity to take the risk. In this case, the CEO and founder of CASE IR-Ss-7 said that: *'Without risk, there is no chance to improve...Indeed, in Iran, the economic condition is highly risky. In this circumstance, which is highly unstable, if we stay stagnant, we will fall and lose our position in the market while if we are more flexible and take the risk we can survive and grow. In addition, this flexibility and risk-taking would not be possible without evaluation of the level of uncertainty and identification of opportunities and threads.'*

The data and quotes from interviews supporting 'Evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking' are shown in Table 4 below.

Please insert **Table 4** about here

Overall discussion

A comparative analysis between the Italian and Iranian businesses represents that among the determinants regarding risk-taking, *evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking* is a universal factor, as it is evident in both contexts. In fact, SMEs in their internationalisation, no matter their place, are needed to evaluate the levels of uncertainty before taking the risk. However, *the commitment of resources to the international projects where there is a risk of failure and the risk-taking for exploration of new markets* were evident only in the context of Italy. Therefore, they are considered as Italian context-based determinants. The types of international risk-taking propensities not found to be important for the cases in this research are *risk-taking to try new technologies for production or selling, being a risk-taker manager and the existence of the risk in the nature of the business*. These factors were not indicated to be important either in Italian or in Iranian cases and will not be included in the entrepreneurial determinants of internationalisation of firms. The schematic summary of the determinants regarding the international risk-taking propensity is represented in Figure 1, based on the typologies of universal, context-based, and ineffective variables.

Please insert **Figure 1** about here

Export compliance

The second concept to be discussed is the export compliance. All firms were asked: *(i) the extent to which they faced restrictions in their international activities, (ii) to explain how well they know identity of their customers, (iii) to explain if they archive the documents regarding their internationalisation, and (iv) to describe the influence of the export compliance on their performance in international markets*. The responses are analysed in two contexts, Italy and Iran, and then the universal characteristics are determined.

Context one: Italy

In Italy, the analysis indicates the moderate levels of export compliance, as shown in column (G) of Table 5, was noted in three cases (IT-Sg-1, IT-Sg-2, IT-Mg-3), and the low levels were indicated by two firms (IT-Sg-4, IT-Ms-5). The data recognised one important factor regarding the export compliance of Italian small and medium firms in the scope of this study: *(1) Customs limitations or embargoes/ sanctions from authorities.*

(1) Customs limitations or embargoes/ sanctions from authorities

Three out of four firms studied in this research highlighted that they suffered from the customs limitations and/ or face the embargoes/ sanctions from authorities in their international activities (see IT-Sg-1, IT-Sg-2, IT-Mg-3). For example, the sales manager and co-founder of CASE IT-Sg-2 (second-hand machinery provider) said that: *'For trading in the global context, there is some national and international regulation to be respected. In our business, we mostly suffer from items that have dual-use application in trading with Iran and Russia. For example, about three years ago, we had a big shipment of the complete plant to Iran. This package was blocked by the custom for more investigation to ensure whether the shipping items are countered in the dual-use list. After about one month we could solve the problem by receiving the certification of compliance with an authority that allowed us to proceed to export to Iran...'*

Please insert **Table 5** about here

Context two: Iran

Among Iranian cases, the analysis indicates the moderate levels of export compliance, as shown in column (G) of Table 6, was noted in four cases (IR-Mg-6, IR-Ss-7, IR-Mg-8, IR-Sg-9), and the low levels were indicated by one firm (IR-Mg-10).

Please insert **Table 6** about here

(1) Customs limitations or embargoes/ sanctions from authorities

Customs limitations and/ or face the embargoes/ sanctions from authorities were indicated by three out of five Iranian cases as a restriction in their process of internationalisation (see IR-Mg-6, IR-Ss-7, IR-Mg-10). In this case, the founder and CEO of CASE IR-Ms-6 (glass manufacturing company) stated: *'...in the exporting to some countries like Turkey and India, we encountered restrictive rules that were supposed to support their national industry. These sanctions, which imposed time by time, were regulated by their government and executed through the customs clearance.'* Similarly, the factory manager of CASE IR-Mg-10 (irrigation and nutrition) revealed

that: ‘...we were looking for an advanced technology to change our production line. Therefore, the contract has been made and even the invoice received for the further process of payment, but in the last step, we could not buy this equipment because of the sanctions. The most important part of our problems is banking sanctions that we are not able to connect our bank transactions to the international banks, which put the company's activities in the international context in the challenge.’

Overall discussion

A comparative analysis between the Italian and Iranian businesses represents that among the determinants regarding the export compliance, *customs limitations or embargoes/ sanctions from authorities*, is a universal factor, as it is evident in both contexts. However, we found no Italian or Iranian context-based determinants in this study. The types of export compliance determinants not found to be important for the cases in this research are *lack of suitable recordkeeping, unknown/ less-known costumers, dual-use violation, and using harmful materials*. These factors were not indicated to be important either in Italian or in Iranian cases and will not be included in the entrepreneurial determinants of internationalisation of firms. The schematic summary of the determinants regarding the export compliance is represented in Figure 2, based on the typologies of universal, context-based, and ineffective variables.

Please insert **Figure 2** about here

Discussion and conclusion

In the previous research the characteristics of SME internationalisation has been studied in different perspectives (e.g., Kim & Hemmert, 2016; Zhang, Ma, Wang, Li, & Huo, 2016). This paper considers the drivers of international entrepreneurship from two point of views, international risk-taking and export compliance. The findings of this study develop further understanding in the field of international entrepreneurship in different places. In fact, it is expected that the outcome of this research will assist scholars to take into consideration the importance of the context that a firm operates in the process of internationalisation. The results of this paper are also supposed to help the international entrepreneurs in considering what risk-taking and export compliance characteristics are needed for the internationalisation of SMEs. Given the constraint of the required entrepreneurial characteristics, it is assumed that this research will assist to identify the nature of the people/ place shaped characteristics that can contribute to successful international entrepreneurship by particular people ‘on their own terms’. Therefore, the findings of this paper discussed two kinds of determinants. First, the universal factors that influence SME internationalisation regardless of the location of the firm. Second, the context-based factors, which are dependent on the nature of the people/ place of the firm and differentiates the performance of the SMEs in the global markets. In this regard, the paper studied two countries, Italy and Iran, as

representatives of advanced and developing countries for developing their business in the global markets.

Literature confirms that risk-taking activities, as an element of entrepreneurial orientation, positively influence the international presence of organisations (Jantunen *et al.*, 2005; Moreno and Casillas, 2008a; Wang, 2008). In this vein, the findings of this research also indicate that no matter the location, managers would not jeopardise their firms by taking the risk without analysing it before. Therefore, *the evaluation of the uncertainty level before taking the risk* is a universal factor and it influences the process of SME internationalisation in Italy and Iran. However, *the commitment of resources to the international projects where there is a risk of failure and the risk-taking for exploration of new markets* were evident only in the context of Italy. This finding reveals the difference between the advanced and developing countries in levels of risk-taking, in which Italian firms, in comparison to Iranians, are much more likely to take the risk of internationalisation. Furthermore, our comparative analysis between the Italian and Iranian businesses indicates that among the determinants regarding export compliance one factor is universal as follows: *Customs limitations or embargoes/ sanctions from authorities*. Our findings reveal the important influence of export compliance in the international activities of small firms. However, the other four factors found to be ineffective in both countries: *Lack of suitable recordkeeping; Unknown/ less-known costumers; Dual-use violation; and Using harmful materials*.

Expanding the international activities is crucial for firms, especially SMEs, to survive, succeed and grow (Majocchi, Bacchiocchi and Mayrhofer, 2005; Dikova *et al.*, 2016) and promote their economic growth. Moreover, SMEs need to get along with various exporting challenges, depending on that from which country SME operates. For instance, SMEs belong to transitional economies mainly meet internal derived challenges like unprincipled and unskillful behaviour or lack of capital (Khattak, Arslan and Umair, 2011) whereas firms from developed economies generally confront external problems like import restriction policies or political instability (Neupert, Baughn and Dao, 2006). This thesis contributes to the IE theory by adding the concept of export compliance as an institutional variable that a firm should consider in their international activities. In this regard, as Jafari Sadeghi *et al.* (2017) state, export compliance emerges as a hot topic in the world of international business, which should be considered in studying the internationalisation of firms. However, although the literature has scantily considered the export compliance issues in the IE literature in the last few years, academia turned the attention to the essence of this multidisciplinary driver for internationalisation of firms.

In the last decade, one emerging issue for ventures desire to sell their products and services abroad is their commitment to avoid making conflict at the international level. In fact, firms have to comply with the international regulations to prevent violations which make the world unsafe. However, exporting firms no matter their size, whether large and multinational firms or SMEs, may directly or indirectly face the export compliance violations. The western governments for increasing their national security rely on the due diligence of exporters. However, there is an increasing concern linked to security, whether international or homeland, as well as terrorism and

the proliferation of mass destructive weapons. Therefore, there should be a strong partnership between the public and private sector that prevent any diversion of dual-use items for devastating and harmful purposes (BIS, 2011). In this case, making a balance between national security, from one perspective, and commercial and efficiency interests, from the other perspective, is an essential issue for firms to consider which can be applied by promoting innovation while minimising risks (Samson, 2015). For this reason, export compliance as a multidisciplinary tool assists managers to mitigate the risk of being imposed by sanctions, embargoes, and other restrictions (Jafari Sadeghi *et al.*, 2018). An important managerial continuation of this thesis is exploring the role of export compliance in SME internationalisation and introducing as a multidisciplinary tool for the survival of firms active in the global market.

However, depending on the size and the nature of the firm, compliance programs might vary. For instance, some firms decide to appoint a single expert responsible for compliance endeavours as well as administration, performance, and coordination of export. Other kinds of organisations prefer to decentralise these authorities to a number of employees throughout the organisation and supervise these responsibilities to make sure if essential compliance standards are maintained. To avoid failing to comply with export regulations the size and organisational structure, and production/ distribution network of an organisation act as the crucial determinants of where personnel and compliance functions should reside. Many enterprises amalgamate the administration of recordkeeping, training, dissemination of regulatory material, the alarm of failure to comply, and audits. However, wherever first-hand knowledge and information of customers is available, the actual screening efforts against different governmental restrictions of foreign individuals that ought to be avoided, known and tracked end-use and end-user activities, and violation risk may be carried out by personnel throughout the organisation like in sales and marketing, order entry, or shipping (BIS, 2011).

At first glance, it comes to the minds that export control and compliance regulations are a barrier, which threads firms for conducting an international business activity. Numerous rules, laws, and regulations create complexity and being compliant and resolving the challenges take energy and time from international oriented organisations. In another perspective, however, export compliance is not a thread but also an opportunity to ensure their existence in the foreign markets. Depending on the size, as an ownership resource, and the nature of the firm, compliance programs might vary. For instance, some firms decide to appoint a single expert responsible for compliance endeavours as well as administration, performance, and coordination of export. Other kinds of organisations prefer to decentralise these authorities to a number of employees throughout the organisation and supervise these responsibilities to ensure if essential compliance standards are maintained. By this means, enterprises can ensure that their international activities (like imports and exports) are safe both for themselves, which creates a safeguard to avoid imposing sanctions and for the global community to ensure that no harms thread the human. Moreover, export compliance creates this opportunity for firms to prevent the consequences of unwanted export compliance violations, including sanctions, blacklists, fines, penalties etc.

This study begins to lighten up this multidimensional and dynamic subject, but still, much more studies are required. Moreover, this paper will perform as a basis for further research to differentiate the universal determinates from the one is dependent on the context of the SMEs. Furthermore, future studies ought to investigate more precisely the levels of IE determinants found in this research and specifically discovering other universal and context-based characteristics of SME internationalisation. Future research also should study more cases in various countries to have a comprehensive insight into differences between the universal and context-based determinants needed for SME internationalisation.

References

- Acs, Z., Dana, L. P. and Jones, M. V. (2003) 'Toward new horizons: the internationalisation of entrepreneurship', *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 1, pp. 5–12. doi: 10.1023/A:1023257414794.
- Acs, Z. J. *et al.* (2012) 'Growth and entrepreneurship', *Small Business Economics*, 39(2), pp. 289–300. doi: 10.1007/s11187-010-9307-2.
- Acs, Z. J., Autio, E. and Szerb, L. (2014) 'National Systems of Entrepreneurship: Measurement issues and policy implications', *Research Policy*. Elsevier B.V., 43(3), pp. 476–494. doi: 10.1016/j.respol.2013.08.016.
- Acs, Z. J., Desai, S. and Hessels, J. (2008) 'Entrepreneurship, economic development and institutions', *Small Business Economics*, 31(3), pp. 219–234. doi: 10.1007/s11187-008-9135-9.
- Anderson, R. B., Dana, L. P. and Dana, T. E. (2006) 'Indigenous land rights, entrepreneurship, and economic development in Canada: "Opting-in" to the global economy', *Journal of World Business*, 41(1), pp. 45–55. doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2005.10.005.
- Bell, J. *et al.* (2003) 'Towards an integrative model of small firm internationalisation', *Journal of international entrepreneurship*. Springer, 1(4), pp. 339–362.
- Beugelsdijk, S. (2007) 'The Regional Environment and a Firm's Innovative Performance: A Plea for a Multilevel Interactionist Approach', *Economic Geography*, 83(2), pp. 181–199. doi: 10.1111/j.1944-8287.2007.tb00342.x.
- Bhuiyan, S. N., Menguc, B. and Bell, S. J. (2005) 'Just entrepreneurial enough: the moderating effect of entrepreneurship on the relationship between market orientation and performance', *Journal of business research*. Elsevier, 58(1), pp. 9–17.
- Biancone, P. Pietro and Jafari Sadeghi, V. (2016) 'Risk Management in Export Compliance: Concepts, Procedures, and Solutions', in Cantino, V., Vincentiis, P. De, and Racca, G. (eds) *Risk management: perspectives and open issues. A multi-disciplinary approach*. McGraw-Hill Education, London, UK, pp. 47–62. Available at: <http://www.ateneonline.it/cantino/ebook/>.
- BIS (2011) 'Export Management and Compliance Division Compliance Guidelines : How To Develop an Effective Export Management and Compliance', (June). Available at: www.bis.doc.gov.
- Boehe, D. (2013) 'Collaborate at Home to Win Abroad: How Does Access to Local Network Resources Influence Export Behavior?', *Journal of Small Business Management*, 51(2), pp. 167–182. doi: 10.1111/jsbm.12013.
- Bruton, G. D., Ahlstrom, D. and Li, H. L. (2010) 'Institutional theory and entrepreneurship: Where are we now and where do we need to move in the future?', *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 34(3), pp. 421–440. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6520.2010.00390.x.
- Bruton, G. D., Ahlstrom, D. and Obloj, K. (2008) 'Entrepreneurship in emerging economies:

Where are we today and where should the research go in the future', *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*. Wiley Online Library, 32(1), pp. 1–14. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6520.2007.00213.x.

Busenitz, L. W., Gómez, C. and Spencer, J. W. (2000) 'Country institutional profiles: Unlocking entrepreneurial phenomena', *Academy of Management Journal*, 43(5), pp. 994–1003. doi: 10.2307/1556423.

Calabrò, A. *et al.* (2017) 'Governance structure and internationalisation of family-controlled firms: The mediating role of international entrepreneurial orientation', *European Management Journal*, 35(2), pp. 238–248. doi: 10.1016/j.emj.2016.04.007.

Cavusgil, S. T. (1984) 'Differences among exporting firms based on their degree of internationalisation', *Journal of business research*. Elsevier, 12(2), pp. 195–208.

Chetty, S. K. and Hamilton, R. T. (1993) 'Firm-level determinants of export performance: a meta-analysis', *International Marketing Review*. MCB UP Ltd, 10(3).

Chichilnisky, G. and Heal, G. M. (1986) *The evolving international economy*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. Available at: <http://www.loc.gov/catdir/description/cam031/86006124.html>.

Covin, J. G. and Miller, D. (2014) 'International Entrepreneurial Orientation: Conceptual Considerations, Research Themes, Measurement Issues, and Future Research Directions', *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 38(1), pp. 11–44. doi: 10.1111/etap.12027.

Covin, J. G. and Slevin, D. P. (1991) 'A conceptual model of entrepreneurship as firm behavior', in *Entrepreneurship: Critical perspectives on business and management*, pp. 5–28.

Covin, J. G. and Wales, W. J. (2012) 'The Measurement of Entrepreneurial Orientation', *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 36(4), pp. 677–702. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6520.2010.00432.x.

Dana, L.-P. and Dana, T. E. (2004) 'On the internationalisation of New Zealand SMEs', *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 1(3/4), pp. 330–338. doi: 10.1504/IJESB.2004.005663.

Dana, L.-P. and Dumez, H. (2015) 'Qualitative research revisited: the epistemology of a comprehensive approach', *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 26(2), pp. 154–170. doi: 10.1504/IJESB.2015.071822.

Dana, L. P. (2001) 'Networks, Internationalisation & Policy', *Small Business Economics*, 16(2), pp. 57–62. doi: 10.1023/A:1011199116576.

Dana, L. P. (2017) 'International entrepreneurship research: how it evolved and directions for the future', *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*. Inderscience Publishers (IEL), 30(4), pp. 477–489.

Dana, L. P. and Dana, T. E. (2005) 'Expanding the scope of methodologies used in entrepreneurship research', *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 2(1), pp. 79–88. doi: 10.1504/IJESB.2005.006071.

Dana, L. P., Hamilton, R. T. and Wick, K. (2009) 'Deciding to export: An exploratory study of Singaporean entrepreneurs', *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 7(2), pp. 79–87. doi: 10.1007/s10843-008-0032-8.

Dana, L. P. and Wright, R. W. (2009) 'International entrepreneurship: research priorities for the future', *International Journal of Globalisation and Small Business*, 3(1), pp. 90–134. doi: 10.1504/IJGSB.2009.021572.

Dikova, D. *et al.* (2016) 'What is beneficial for first-time SME-exporters from a transition economy: A diversified or a focused export-strategy?', *Journal of World Business*, 51(2), pp. 185–199. doi: 10.1016/j.jwb.2015.05.001.

- EIFEC (2017) 'European Code for Export Compliance EU-CEC'. Available at: www.eifec.eu/docs/eu_cec.pdf (Accessed: 26 February 2016).
- Eisenhardt, K. M. (1989) 'Building theories from case study research', *Academy of management review*. Academy of Management, 14(4), pp. 532–550.
- Etemad, H., Wilkinson, I. and Dana, L. P. (2010) 'Internetisation as the necessary condition for internationalisation in the newly emerging economy', *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 8(4), pp. 319–342. doi: 10.1007/s10843-010-0062-x.
- Etemad, H. and Wright, R. W. (2003) 'Internationalisation of SMEs: Toward a New Paradigm', *Small Business Economics*, 20(1), pp. 1–4. doi: 10.1023/A:1020274419262.
- Etemad, H., Wright, R. W. and Dana, L.-P. (2001) 'Symbiotic international business networks: collaboration between small and large firms', *Thunderbird International Business Review*, 43(4), pp. 481–499. Available at: <http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com/doi/10.1002/tie.1009/abstract>.
- Fernández, Z. and Nieto, M. J. (2005) 'Internationalisation Strategy of Small and Medium-Sized Family Businesses: Some Influential Factors', *Family Business Review*, 18(1), pp. 77–89. doi: 10.1111/j.1741-6248.2005.00031.x.
- Frishammar, J. and Andersson, S. (2009) 'The overestimated role of strategic orientations for international performance in smaller firms', *Journal of international entrepreneurship*. Springer, 7(1), pp. 57–77.
- Glavas, C. and Mathews, S. (2014) 'How international entrepreneurship characteristics influence Internet capabilities for the international business processes of the firm', *International Business Review*. Elsevier Ltd, 23(1), pp. 228–245. doi: 10.1016/j.ibusrev.2013.04.001.
- Grigore, A.-M. and Dragan, I.-M. (2015) 'Entrepreneurship and its economical value in a very dynamic business environment', *Amfiteatru Economic*. Bucharest Academy of Economic Studies, Faculty of Commerce, 17(38), p. 120.
- Gummesson, E. (2000) *Qualitative methods in management research*. Sage.
- Hernández-Perlines, F. and Mancebo-Lozano, E. (2016) 'Conditional mediation of competitive strategy and environment in international entrepreneurial orientation of family businesses', *European Journal of Family Business*. European Journal of Family Business, 6(2), pp. 86–98. doi: 10.1016/j.ejfb.2017.05.001.
- Hernández-Perlines, F., Moreno-García, J. and Yañez-Araque, B. (2016) 'The mediating role of competitive strategy in international entrepreneurial orientation', *Journal of Business Research*. Elsevier Inc., 69(11), pp. 5383–5389. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2016.04.142.
- Hutchinson, K., Quinn, B. and Alexander, N. (2006) 'The role of management characteristics in the internationalisation of SMEs: Evidence from the UK retail sector', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 13(4), pp. 513–534. doi: 10.1108/14626000610705723.
- Jafari Sadeghi, V. et al. (2017) 'Export compliance: a missing component of international entrepreneurship', *International Journal of Business and Management*, 12(11), pp. 103–110. doi: <https://doi.org/10.5539/ijbm.v12n11p103>.
- Jafari Sadeghi, V. et al. (2018) 'How does export compliance influence the internationalisation of firms: is it a thread or an opportunity?', *Journal of Global Entrepreneurship Research*, 8(1), p. 3. doi: 10.1186/s40497-018-0089-3.
- Jafari Sadeghi, V. and Biancone, P. Pietro (2017) 'How micro, small and medium-sized enterprises are driven outward the superior international trade performance? A multidimensional study on Italian food sector', *Research in International Business and Finance*. Elsevier, 45(August 2016), pp. 597–606. doi: 10.1016/j.ribaf.2017.07.136.
- Jantunen, A. et al. (2005) 'Entrepreneurial orientation, dynamic capabilities and international

performance', *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*. Springer, 3(3), pp. 223–243.

Johanson, J. and Vahlne, J.-E. (2003) 'Business relationship learning and commitment in the internationalisation process', *Journal of international entrepreneurship*. Springer, 1(1), pp. 83–101.

Jones, M. V., Coviello, N. and Tang, Y. K. (2011) 'International Entrepreneurship research (1989-2009): A domain ontology and thematic analysis', *Journal of Business Venturing*. Elsevier Inc., 26(6), pp. 632–659. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusvent.2011.04.001.

Khattak, J., Arslan, M. and Umair, M. (2011) 'SMEs' export problems in Pakistan', *E3Journals.Org*, 2(5), pp. 192–199. Available at: [http://www.e3journals.org/cms/articles/1330778191_Jamshed et al.pdf](http://www.e3journals.org/cms/articles/1330778191_Jamshed_et_al.pdf).

Kim, J. J. and Hemmert, M. (2016) 'What drives the export performance of small and medium-sized subcontracting firms? A study of Korean manufacturers', *International Business Review*. Elsevier Ltd, 25(2), pp. 511–521. doi: 10.1016/j.ibusrev.2015.09.002.

Kiss, A. N., Danis, W. M. and Cavusgil, S. T. (2012) 'International entrepreneurship research in emerging economies: A critical review and research agenda', *Journal of Business Venturing*. Elsevier Inc., 27(2), pp. 266–290. doi: 10.1016/j.jbusvent.2011.09.004.

Knight, G. A. (2000) 'Entrepreneurship and Marketing Strategy: The SME Under Globalisation', *Journal of International Marketing*, 8(2), pp. 12–32. doi: 10.1509/jimk.8.2.12.19620.

Knight, G. A. (2001) 'Entrepreneurship and strategy in the international SME', *Journal of International Management*, 7(3), pp. 155–171. doi: 10.1016/S1075-4253(01)00042-4.

Knight, G. A. and Cavusgil, S. T. (2004) 'Innovation, organisational capabilities, and the born-global firm', *Journal of International Business Studies*, 35(2), pp. 124–141. doi: 10.1057/palgrave.jibs.8400071.

Kuivalainen, O., Sundqvist, S. and Servais, P. (2007) 'Firms' degree of born-globalness, international entrepreneurial orientation and export performance', *Journal of World Business*. Elsevier, 42(3), pp. 253–267.

Lee, C., Lee, K. and Pennings, J. M. (2001) 'Internal capabilities, external networks, and performance: a study on technology-based ventures', *Strategic management journal*. Wiley Online Library, 22(6–7), pp. 615–640.

Leonidou, L. C. (2004) 'An Analysis of the Barriers Hindering Small Business Export Development', *Journal of Small Business Management*, 42(3), pp. 279–302. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-627X.2004.00112.x.

Loane, S. (2005) 'The role of the internet in the internationalisation of small and medium-sized companies', *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*. Springer, 3(4), pp. 263–277.

Lomberg, C. *et al.* (2017) 'Entrepreneurial Orientation: The Dimensions' Shared Effects in Explaining Firm Performance', *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 41(6), pp. 973–998. doi: 10.1111/etap.12237.

Lu, J. W. and Beamish, P. W. (2001) 'The internationalisation and performance of SMEs', *Strategic Management Journal*, 22(6–7), pp. 565–586. doi: 10.1002/smj.184.

Lumpkin, G. and Dess, G. (1996) 'Clarifying the Entrepreneurial Orientation Construct and Linking It to Performance', *The Academy of Management Review*, 21(1), pp. 135–172.

Lumpkin, G. T. and Dess, G. G. (2001) 'Linking two dimensions of entrepreneurial orientation to firm performance: The moderating role of environment and industry life cycle', *Journal of Business Venturing*. Elsevier, 16(5), pp. 429–451. doi: 10.1016/S0883-9026(00)00048-3.

Madsen, T. K. and Servais, P. (1997) 'The internationalisation of born globals: an evolutionary process?', *International business review*. Elsevier, 6(6), pp. 561–583.

- Maignan, I. and Lukas, B. A. (1997) 'Entry mode decisions: the role of managers' mental models', *Journal of Global Marketing*, 10(4), pp. 7–22. doi: 10.1300/J042v10n04.
- Majocchi, A., Bacchiocchi, E. and Mayrhofer, U. (2005) 'Firm size, Business Experience and Export Intensity in SMEs: A Longitudinal Approach to Complex Relationships', *International Business Review*, 14(6), pp. 719–738. doi: 10.1016/j.ibusrev.2005.07.004.
- Milanov, H. and Maissenhalter, B. (2014) 'Cognition in international entrepreneurship', *The Routledge Companion to International Entrepreneurship*. Routledge, pp. 47–69.
- Moreno, A. M. and Casillas, J. C. (2008a) 'Entrepreneurial Orientation and Growth of SMEs: A Casual Model', *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*, 32(3), pp. 507–528. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6520.2011.00483.x.
- Moreno, A. M. and Casillas, J. C. (2008b) 'Entrepreneurial orientation and growth of SMEs: A causal model', *Entrepreneurship theory and practice*. Wiley Online Library, 32(3), pp. 507–528. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6520.2011.00483.x.
- Mosey, S., Guerrero, M. and Greenman, A. (2017) 'Technology entrepreneurship research opportunities: insights from across Europe', *The Journal of Technology Transfer*. Springer, 42(1), pp. 1–9.
- Mostafa, R. H., Colin, W. and Jones, M. V (2005) 'Entrepreneurial orientation, commitment to the Internet and export performance in small and medium-sized exporting firms', *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*. Springer, 3(4), pp. 291–302.
- Neupert, K. E., Baughn, C. C. and Dao, T. T. L. (2006) 'SME exporting challenges in transitional and developed economies', *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*, 13(4), pp. 535–545. doi: 10.1108/14626000610705732.
- OECD (2005) *OECD SME and Entrepreneurship Outlook*. 2005 Editi. Paris: OECD. doi: 10.1787/9789264009257-en.
- Oviatt, B. M. and McDougall, P. P. (1994) 'Toward a theory of international new ventures', *Journal of international business studies*. Springer, 25(1), pp. 45–64.
- Oviatt, B. M. and McDougall, P. P. (2005) 'Defining International Entrepreneurship and Modeling the Speed of Internationalisation', *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, (April), pp. 537–554. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6520.2005.00097.x.
- Ratten, V. and Dana, L. (2007) 'Internationalisation of SMEs : European comparative studies Mary Han Isabell Welpé', *International Journal of Entrepreneurship and Small Business*, 4(3).
- Reid, S. D. (1981) 'The decision-maker and export entry and expansion', *Journal of international business studies*. Springer, 12(2), pp. 101–112.
- Ripollés-Meliá, M., Menguzzato-Boulard, M. and Sánchez-Peinado, L. (2007) 'Entrepreneurial orientation and international commitment', *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*, 5(3–4), pp. 65–83. doi: 10.1007/s10843-007-0016-0.
- Şahin, F. and Gürbüz, S. (2017) 'Entrepreneurial orientation and international performance: The moderating role of cultural intelligence', *Journal of Management & Organisation*. Cambridge University Press, pp. 1–25.
- Samson, V. (2015) 'Workshop Review: Export Controls of Space Systems', *Astropolitics*, 13(2–3), pp. 118–122. doi: 10.1080/14777622.2015.1083793.
- Slevin, D. P. and Terjesen, S. A. (2011) 'Entrepreneurial orientation: Reviewing three papers and implications for further theoretical and methodological development', *Entrepreneurship: Theory and Practice*, 35(5), pp. 973–987. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-6520.2011.00483.x.
- Wang, C. L. (2008) 'Entrepreneurial Orientation, Learning Orientation, and Firm Performance', *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice*, 32(4), pp. 635–657. doi: 10.1111/j.1540-

6520.2008.00246.x.

Wang, T., Thornhill, S. and De Castro, J. O. (2017) 'Entrepreneurial Orientation, Legitimation, and New Venture Performance', *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 11(4), pp. 373–392. doi: 10.1002/sej.1246.

Welch, C. L. and Welch, L. S. (2004) 'Broadening the concept of international entrepreneurship: Internationalisation, networks and politics', *Journal of International Entrepreneurship*. Springer, 2(3), pp. 217–237.

Wennekers, Sander; Thurik, R. (1999) 'Linking Entrepreneurship and Economic Growth', *Small Business Economics*, 13, pp. 27–55. doi: 10.1023/A:1008063200484.

Wiklund, J. and Shepherd, D. (2005) 'Entrepreneurial orientation and small business performance: a configurational approach', *Journal of business venturing*. Elsevier, 20(1), pp. 71–91.

Yin, R. K. (2003) *Case study research: Design and methods*. Third. Los Angeles: Sage publications.

Zahra, S. A., Korri, J. S. and Yu, J. F. (2005) 'Cognition and international entrepreneurship: implications for research on international opportunity recognition and exploitation', *International business review*. Elsevier, 14(2), pp. 129–146.

Zhang, X. *et al.* (2016) 'What drives the internationalisation of Chinese SMEs? The joint effects of international entrepreneurship characteristics, network ties, and firm ownership', *International Business Review*. Elsevier Ltd, 25(2), pp. 522–534. doi: 10.1016/j.ibusrev.2015.09.001.

Zou, S. and Stan, S. (1998) 'The determinants of export performance: a review of the empirical literature between 1987 and 1997', *International Marketing Review*. MCB UP Ltd, 15(5), pp. 333–356. doi: 10.1108/02651339810236290.

Figure 1. Schematic summary of the international risk-taking characteristics

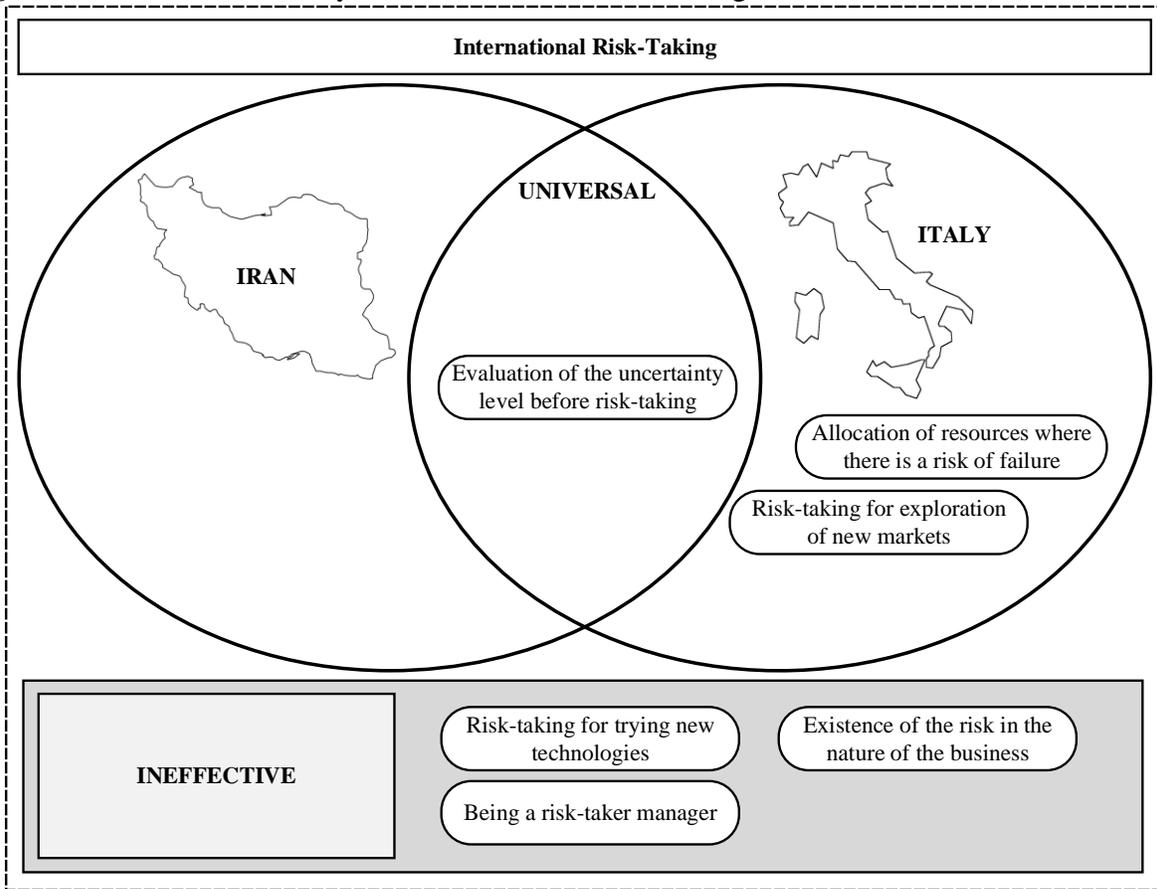


Figure 2. Schematic summary of the export compliance determinants

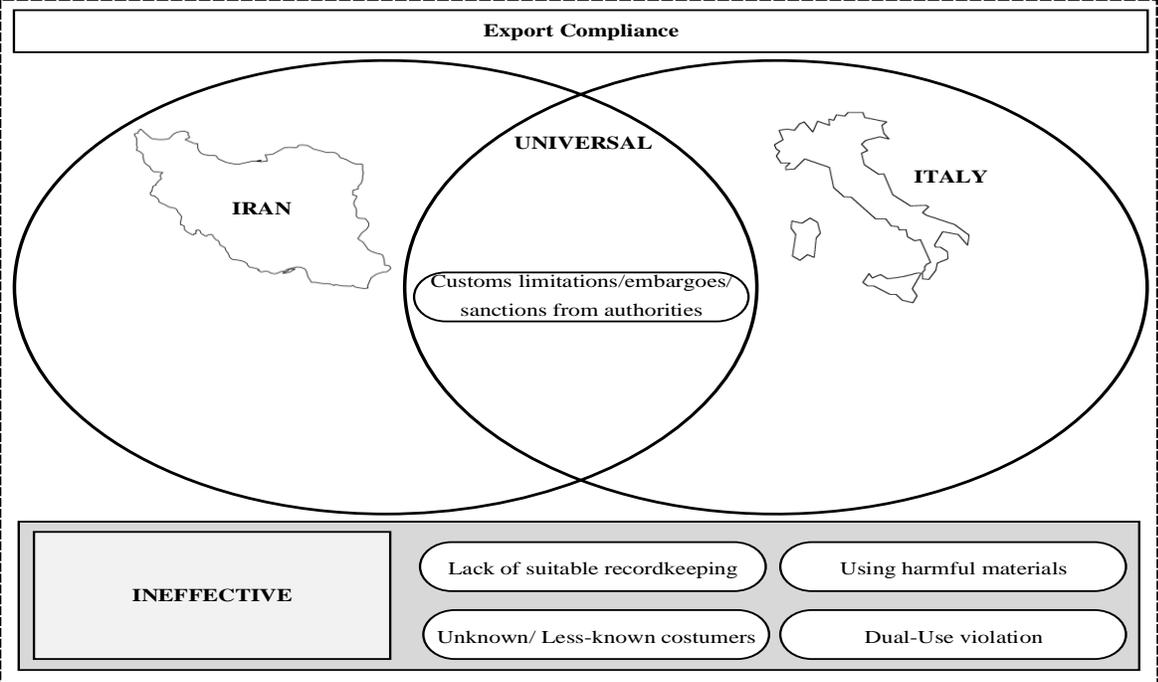


Table 1. Levels of the international risk-taking propensity in Italy

Case #	Type of risk-taking explicit in firm processes in an international environment							H	Level of risk-taking	Descriptive comment
	A	B	C	D	E	F	G			
	Level of Importance Overall	Commits resources to international projects where there is a risk of failure	Takes the risk of exploring new market	Takes the risk to try new technologies for production or selling	Evaluates & try to control the uncertainty before taking the risk	Personally, is a risk taker	The risk exists in the nature of the business			
<i>CASE IT-Sg-1</i>	<i>VSI</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Very High</i>	<i>High risk-taking levels evident in the development of costly online boutique and physical store branch in UAE.</i>	
CASE IT-Sg-2	MI	✓	✓	-	-	-	-	Moderate	Commits resources to improvement of international performance by technical support of costumers.	
CASE IT-Mg-3	MI	-	✓	-	✓	-	-	Moderate	Accepts to take the risk after evaluation the level of uncertainty and prediction of its consequences.	
CASE IT-Sg-4	MI	-	-	-	✓	-	-	Low	Indicates low risk-taking propensity in international markets as is conservative against the risk.	
CASE IT-Ms-5	SI	✓	-	-	✓	✓	✓	High	Firm activities indicate medium levels of risk-taking. The core of the business is a risk assessment.	
ITALY		3	3	1	4	2	2			

Note. VSI = Very strong importance, SI = Strong importance, MI= Moderate importance, LI= Limited importance, NI= No importance, dashed line (-) = Not applicable, bold and italicised font= Indicates very high levels of international risk-taking.

Table 2. Supporting quotations for uncertainty assessment before risk-taking in Italy

Case #	Evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking
CASE IT-Sg-1	<i>'...In order to take the risk of opening a physical boutique in UAE, we deeply studied the market and found the opportunities and threads for this investment. After all, I decided to mitigate the risk by making a partnership with a local investor.'</i>
CASE IT-Sg-2	<i>'Indicates no evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking'</i>
CASE IT-Mg-3	<i>Every entrepreneur needs to take some risks but this risk should be calculated before to be taken. For example, Iran is one of the biggest construction markets for us but to enter this market we need to take the risk of unknown circumstances like cultural differences etc. So before starting our activities there, we need to assess the level of uncertainty and the return percentage of our investment. Therefore, if the assessment shows a positive result, we go for it otherwise we decline to allocate our capital in the condition of loss, like what we experienced in Russia.</i>
CASE IT-Sg-4	<i>In our business, we usually work in a situation that we can control. If we face the risk, however, we check the risk to be survived because, in the nature of our business, we are conservative against the risk.</i>
CASE IT-Ms-5	<i>I am a person who carries different business activities and capable to evaluate and manage the risk. Actually, the core of my business is risk management. Therefore, controlling risk is part of my duties to assist our clients.</i>

Table 3. Levels of the international risk-taking propensity in Iran

Case #	A	Type of risk-taking explicit in firm processes in an international environment						H	Level of risk-taking	Descriptive comment
		B	C	D	E	F	G			
	Level of Importance Overall	Commits resources to international projects where there is a risk of failure	Takes the risk of exploring new market	Takes the risk to try new technologies for production or selling	Evaluates & try to control the uncertainty before taking the risk	Personally is a risk taker	The risk exists in the nature of the business			
<i>CASE IR-Mg-6</i>	<i>VSI</i>	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	<i>Very High</i>	<i>Developed the expensive high-tech production line to compete with international rivals.</i>	
CASE IR-Ss-7	VSI	-	✓	-	✓	✓	✓	High	Takes the risk of adventure in new markets in countries where competition is less due to the distance.	
CASE IR-Mg-8	VSI	-	-	-	✓	-	-	Low	Does not indicates risk in making internationalisation decision. Evaluate the risk of taking domestic decisions.	
CASE IR-Sg-9	MI	-	-	-	✓	-	-	Low	No indication of risk-taking in an international context. Trying to stabilise their position in the current markets.	
CASE IR-Mg-10	SI	✓	-	-	✓	-	-	Moderate	Conservative against risk and provide needed resources before taking the risk.	
IRAN		2	2	1	5	2	2			

Note. VSI = Very strong importance, SI = Strong importance, MI= Moderate importance, LI= Limited importance, NI= No importance, dashed line (-) = Not applicable, bold and italicised font= Indicates very high levels of international risk-taking.

Table 4. Supporting quotations for uncertainty assessment before risk-taking in Iran

Case #	Evaluation of the uncertainty level before risk-taking
IR-Mg-6	<i>Given our emphasis on risk-taking, we were able to succeed in our business. We are not the first Iranian glass company, but we are currently one of the most powerful ones, thanks to our high risk-taking. The first Iranian glass company, for instance, disappeared from the market due to false decision-making in risky conditions and lack of technology development. In our company, not only we tried to fulfil the current demand of the market but also we are constantly into taking the risk of future needs. That is why we allocate part of our resource to identify these opportunities and reveal the consequences of taking the risk of launching such projects.</i>
IR-Ss-7	<i>Without risk, there is no chance to improve...Indeed the economic condition is highly risky. In this circumstance, which is highly unstable, if we stay stagnant, we will fall and lose our position in the market while if we are more flexible and take the risk we can survive and grow. In addition, this flexibility and risk-taking would not be possible without evaluation of the level of uncertainty and identification of opportunities and threads.</i>
IR-Mg-8	<i>Before launching the project, we do market research and measure the market conditions through the committee of experts and decision-makers; and if the market is demanding and it can be assured that a product has potential to sale in this market, we take that risk.</i>
IR-Sg-9	<i>At present economic condition is such that the risk exists at all levels, but we are currently looking to stabilise our position in the market. Considering the status of the company, I, as the manager of the company, strongly emphasise to proceed step by step because the economy does not have enough stability.</i>
IR-Mg-10	<i>First of all, we need to make sure if the financial and non-financial resources available. In the case that the company is able to provide the resources required for the project, we will analyse the risk and anticipate what will be earned for this risk-taking.</i>

Table 5. Levels of export compliance challenges in Italy

Case #	A	Type of export compliance challenges explicit within the firm					G	Descriptive comment
		B	C	D	E	F		
	Level of Importance Overall	Lack of suitable recordkeeping	Unknown/ less-known costumers	Dual-use violation	Using harmful materials	Customs limitations/ embargoes/ sanctions from authorities	Level of export compliance	
CASE IT-Sg-1	MI	✓	✓	-	-	✓	Moderate	A low indication of export compliance restrictions. In some cases suffered from the custom's limitations.
CASE IT-Sg-2	VSI	✓	-	✓	-	✓	Moderate	Faced some challenges in a trade with Iranian clients. Resolved the dual-use problem due to the certificate from an authority.
CASE IT-Mg-3	VSI	-	✓	-	-	✓	Moderate	Not sufficient recognition of the end user/s of its products. No challenges faced except customs duties.
CASE IT-Sg-4	MI	-	-	-	✓	-	Low	Involves restrictions on using harmful materials (heavy metals) in their products.
CASE IT-Ms-5	VSI	-	-	-	-	-	Low	As is advisor and regulator in export compliance field, not involved with this problem.
ITALY		2	2	1	1	3		

Note. VSI = Very strong importance, SI = Strong importance, MI= Moderate importance, LI= Limited importance, NI= No importance, dashed line (-) = Not applicable, bold and italicised font= Indicates very high levels of export compliance challenges.

Table 6. Levels of export compliance challenges in Iran

Case #	A	Type of export compliance challenges explicit within the firm					G	Descriptive comment
		B	C	D	E	F		
	Level of Importance Overall	Lack of suitable recordkeeping	Unknown/ less-known costumers	Dual-use violation	Using harmful materials	Customs limitations/ embargoes/ sanctions from authorities	Level of export compliance	
CASE IR-Mg-6	SI	-	-	✓	-	✓	Moderate	Low export compliance involvement. Emphasised on Recordkeeping on the mission of the business. In the purchase of production line challenged with dual-use sanction.
CASE IR-Ss-7	VSI	✓	-	-	-	✓	Moderate	Highly challenged with bank transfers to other countries because of restrictions against Iranian transactions.
CASE IR-Mg-8	VSI	-	✓	✓	✓	-	Moderate	Requires licenses in the import of chemical materials used for its products.
CASE IR-Sg-9	SI	-	✓	-	✓	-	Moderate	As a result of the nature of the Iraqi market does not have enough information about customers.
CASE IR-Mg-10	SI	-	-	-	-	✓	Low	Suffered from sanctions for equipping its production line.
IRAN		1	2	2	2	3		

Note. VSI = Very strong importance, SI = Strong importance, MI= Moderate importance, LI= Limited importance, NI= No importance, dashed line (-) = Not applicable, bold and italicised font= Indicates very high levels of export compliance challenges.