

The Influence of Differentiated Marketing Strategy on the Export Performance of SMEs

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Abstract

This research aims to determine the impact of differentiated marketing strategies on the export performance of SMEs. Therefore, based on the previous scholars' research on export performance, this study uses the 4P marketing mix model to further divide the differentiated export marketing strategies into the differentiation of product, differentiation of price, differentiation of place strategy, and differentiation of promotion and puts forward the research hypothesis of the relationship between export marketing strategy and export performance. Research design, data, and methodology; the researcher applied a quantitative method (n=272) at a confidence level of 90%, allowing an error of 5%, distributing questionnaires to foreign trade enterprises in China. The non-probability sampling includes judgmental sampling in selecting foreign trade enterprises in China then convenience sampling in collecting data and distributing it thru the online survey. Descriptive (frequency, percentage, mean, and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (multiple linear regression) were used for data analysis. The results found that differentiation of product strategy negatively affects export performance; then, differentiation of price, place, and promotion strategy has a significant positive effect on export performance for export SMEs.

Keywords : Export Performance, Marketing Strategy, Differentiation, 4Ps, SMEs, Foreign Markets

JEL Classification Code: D29, L10, L11, M30, M31

1. Introduction^a

The rapid growth of international trade, compared with surviving in the increasingly saturated domestic market, more and more enterprises choose to go to the international stage and strive to find their competitive advantage all over the world. Export performance tests whether the path chosen by these enterprises is correct. Export performance refers to the export profitability of foreign trade enterprises, including export performance, including the three dimensions of sales, profit, and change (Madsen, 1987). Through the analysis of these three dimensions, we can see the achievements of an enterprise in the international market. Export performance can test the ability of a single enterprise to create wealth in export trade and measure the overall international trade level from a macro perspective. When the global economy is booming, international

business is profitable, measuring the export of enterprises. In terms of export performance, enterprises worldwide will improve accordingly; when the global economy enters a downturn, for example, since the outbreak of the COVID-19 epidemic, the economies of various countries have fallen into great difficulties, and international trade has suffered tremendous setbacks. Therefore, the export performance of enterprises is also much damaged. Thus, the research on export performance has vital practical significance. With the increasing attention to the theory of export performance, more and more papers on the influencing factors of export performance are published in top journals.

In the acceleration of global integration, more and more SMEs participate in the competition in the international market through international trade. However, due to the small scale of SMEs, it is often difficult to compare their economic output with that of large enterprises. Therefore,

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the research in the export performance mainly focused on large enterprises and multinational corporations (Paul et al., 2017). There was a lack of sufficient understanding of the export performance of SMEs. However, the importance of SMEs is often underestimated. Taking China as an example, the number of SMEs in China exceeds 40 million, accounting for 99% of enterprises. These SMEs have solved 80% of employment and contributed more than 60% of GDP (China report, 2020). Therefore, SMEs are the pillar of the national economy that cannot be ignored. At present, there are more than 40 million SMEs in China, which is much higher than that in other countries in the world. Therefore, it is very representative to study the export performance of SMEs in China. In addition, as the country with the best effect of epidemic prevention and control, China's total import and export output value returned to the level before the epidemic as early as the third quarter of 2020. Therefore, China's export SMEs can quickly recover their vitality and provide experience for SMEs worldwide (GACC, 2020). At present, the continuous expansion of the COVID-19 epidemic makes the future international trade situation full of uncertainty. No enterprise can avoid being affected by this epidemic, and the SMEs participating in international trade are affected by both the supply and demand sides. At present, the research on export performance is of great practical significance in today's society with frequent export activities. Therefore, there are many relevant studies on export performance in the academic circle, but there are still existing problems. Moreover, whether differentiated marketing or standardized marketing positively impacts export performance, there is no unified theory and framework in the academic community. Then, from the perspective of marketing, this study analyzes the influencing factors of export performance. The empirical research mainly focuses on Europe and the United States, but this may not apply to China's SMEs. Also, because the previous empirical research on the influencing factors of export performance varies significantly in time and region, the research objects and environment are very different, leading to different research results. Therefore, this research further explores the impact of differentiated marketing on export performance and makes an empirical study, hoping to provide marketing strategies and theoretical support for China's SMEs on how to improve export performance.

In this study, therefore, the objectives aim to determine the impact of differentiated product strategy on the export

performance of SMEs. The study wants to assess the effects of differentiated price strategy on the export performance of SMEs, determine the impact of differentiated place strategy on export performance of SMEs, and evaluate the impact of differentiated promotion strategy on export performance of SMEs.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1. Product differentiation and export performance

Compared with other methods, less capital is required, lower risk and greater flexibility are the advantages of direct export. Therefore, it is often an attractive way for enterprises to enter foreign markets (Njuguna, 2018). For enterprises that set export trade expansion as their strategic goal, improving their ability, internal assets, strategy, and attractiveness will bring significant export results to the company (Kumlu, 2014). In addition, to analyze a firm's achievement level in foreign markets, export performance is a great indicator. In the past 50 years, the scale of export performance has been expanding, and the relevant research has made fruitful progress. Chen et al. (2016) summarized the research progress of export performance in recent years through literature review, made a descriptive evaluation, and defined export performance as the result of enterprises' activities in the export market. Njuguna (2018) believes that economic indicators and non-economic indicators can measure export performance. Before that, Leonidou et al. (2002) also identified income, income growth, and profitability as the leading economic indicators to measure export performance. Non-economic indicators are not related to finance, mainly including subjective indicators such as the company's products, market, and experience (Njuguna, 2018).

Product differentiation has measures product differences of brand, design, label, and main export product lines. It compares the differences between domestic and foreign markets (Lages & Jap, 2002). Besides, implementing a product differentiation strategy is to develop unique products for customers in different markets to cultivate customer loyalty in other regions (Valipour et al., 2012). Leonidou et al. (2002) believe that product differentiation fundamentally reflects the enterprise's customer-oriented mentality. Implementing this strategy can make the product and market mild to the greatest extent, make customers obtain greater satisfaction, and guide the enterprise to get more significant benefits. However, it also requires enterprises to have more innovative thinking.

Therefore, enterprises implementing product differentiation strategy usually tend to invest heavily in R & D activities to improve their innovation ability and ensure that they can compete with their competitors (Jermias, 2008).

The relationship between product differentiation and export performance is one of the most concerned research hotspots in export marketing strategy (Xu, 2007). Katsikeas et al. (2000) believe that product differentiation strategy is related to the smooth implementation of enterprises' export plans. Consumers often focus on the differences between products and their substitutes. Therefore, product differentiation can affect consumers' cognition. If the differentiation strategy brings advantages to products, that is, the developed products exceed customers' expectations. Consumers' willingness to pay can be improved accordingly to improve the export performance of enterprises (Njuguna, 2018). However, in previous studies, the impact of product differentiation strategy on export performance has been very controversial (Xu, 2007). Samiee and Roth (1992) believe that compared with differentiated product strategy, standardized product strategy can positively impact export performance. Standardized products can enable enterprises to enter new markets quickly. It is also easy to form economies of scale and bring cost advantages so that enterprises can provide more powerful prices than competitors. However, some scholars have come to the opposite conclusion because product differentiation can positively affect export performance (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994; Shoham, 1996). Their main view is that political, economic, and social differences make it very difficult to sell standardized products. Product differentiation is more likely to adopt differential pricing, resulting in additional profits over standardization. In addition, Boehe and Cruz (2010) also defined a new view of product differentiation which is more important for developing country companies. Especially in the case of fierce cost competition or reduced cost competitiveness caused by macroeconomic conditions, the low-cost advantage brought by standardization may deteriorate over time. On the contrary, a product differentiation strategy is more likely to contribute to export performance in such markets positively. Therefore, the hypothesis is formulated:

***H1:** There is a significant cause-influence relationship between the differentiation of product strategy and the export performance of SMEs.*

2.2 Price differentiation and export performance

Price differentiation is a strategy to adopt different price strategies for the same product in foreign markets (Lages & Jap, 2002). Many previous marketing studies have proved

that adopting differentiated prices for other regions can be a profitable pricing strategy (Xu, 2007). Indeed, implementing a differentiated price strategy is based on the market gap in different countries and regions. Considering competitors' prices, production costs, market structure, consumer purchasing power, financial transaction barriers, and distribution channels in different markets, enterprises have to adjust prices to maintain competitiveness in the local market (Leonidou et al., 2002).

The research of Lages and Jap (2002) shows that enterprises must have export pricing suitable for different markets to perform better in the export market. Besides, Das (1994) also found a similar result that enterprises with high export performance are more likely to adjust the price of their products in foreign markets. At present, there is not much controversy in the academic circles on the view that the adoption of differentiated price strategies in different regions and countries has a positive impact on export performance (Xu, 2007). If it can adapt to the local market, differentiated price strategies can help enterprises effectively expand market share (Leonidou et al., 2002). Moreover, if the pricing method is flexible enough, it may also realize the advantage of low cost and improve the profit level to improve the export performance (Njuguna, 2018). However, contrary conclusions have been reached in some studies. Lages and Montgomery (2001) found that if the price in the domestic market is lower than that in the export market, or the export company can make use of the monetary advantage, price standardization rather than differentiation will improve export performance. Shoham (1999) has a similar conclusion. Hence, the hypothesis is expressed:

***H2:** There is a significant cause-influence relationship between the differentiation of price strategy and the export performance of SMEs.*

2.3 Place differentiation and export performance

Generally, enterprises do not contact consumers directly but often establish contact with consumers through distributors. Therefore, if enterprises want to achieve smooth communication with consumers, they should pay attention to the cultivation of distributors and the establishment of a distribution system (Xu, 2007). Marketing channel refers to the circulation channel of

products transferred from producers to consumers. It is an essential part of the distribution system. For export enterprises, marketing channels can be divided into indirect and direct exports (Xu, 2007). Previous studies by Leonidou et al. (2002) showed that the selection of channels often needs to be determined according to different market conditions, such as economic level, distribution structure, and competitive conditions, and the standardized distribution strategy has weak adaptability. Therefore, the distribution system can be adjusted according to different markets, including selecting intermediaries, network types, and channel functions (Keegan, 1995).

Cavusgil and Zou (1994) believed that enterprises with relatively little experience selected, encouraged, and evaluated foreign distributors matching the enterprise, which are essential for export marketing. By reinforcing the enterprises' competitiveness in the export market, they are needed to cultivate the ability of distributors or subsidiaries in the export market. Lages and Jap (2002) believed that enterprises that adopt differentiated place strategies in different export markets regularly behave well in export performance because differentiated distribution system selection, distribution budget, and distribution network can better match the variables in the business environment. A large number of previous studies have proved that companies that have formulated differentiated place strategies for export markets perform better in export than companies that implement standardized distribution strategies in foreign markets (Lages & Jap, 2002). This conclusion is rarely controversial at present. Lages and Jap (2002) put forward that when an export company adjusts its place strategy in the export market, it can effectively improve its export performance if it considers the differences in the local environment, transportation logistics, channel length, and distribution function. Therefore, the hypothesis is formulated:

H3: There is a significant cause-influence relationship between the differentiation of place strategy and the export performance of SMEs.

2.4 Promotion differentiation and export performance

McCarthy (1960) explained that enterprises implement a promotion strategy to stimulate consumers and expand

enterprise popularity. The promotion strategy for export companies is to enable them to convey information to consumers effectively, seek suitable customers, respond to their concerns and needs, and improve the purchase rate (Njuguna, 2018). There are significant differences in religious beliefs, customs, political and legal environment among countries and regions, which may lead to a gap in local consumers' acceptance of enterprise promotion measures. Therefore, promotion adjustment must be considered when enterprises enter different markets (Xu, 2007).

For exporters, a variety of promotion strategies should be used as much as possible within the budget scale to attract customers' attention and enhance their purchase intention, which can have a positive and significant impact on their export performance (Njuguna, 2018). Shoham (1999) has long judged that enterprises' export performance satisfaction and changes will increase with implementing differentiation strategies in a promotion such as media configuration, advertising content, promotion process, and budget level. (Njuguna, 2018) It also believes that differentiated promotion strategies can enable the company to better adapt to the foreign market and seek suitable customers through effective integration of information to respond to customer preferences. Indeed, some scholars hold different opinions. Cavusgil and Zou (1994) pointed out that differentiated communication strategies eliminate the global attraction of products. The opposite result will occur even if promotion differentiation leads to a significant cost increase or does not adapt to local customs, traditions, and beliefs. Thus, promotion differentiation will adversely affect export performance. Then, the hypothesis is formulated:

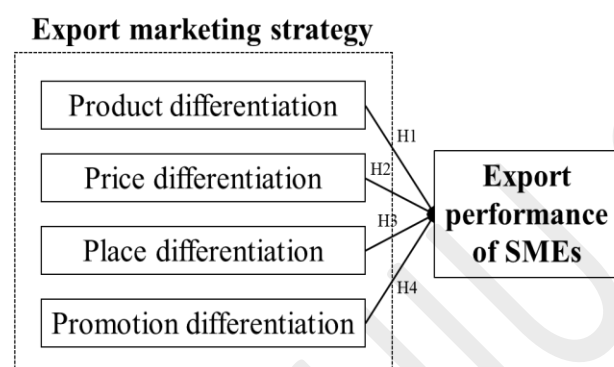
H4: There is a significant cause-influence relationship between the differentiation of promotion strategy and the export performance of SMEs.

2.5 Conceptual Framework

The research model is based on the adoption of seven theoretical frameworks: product quality differentiation, product innovation differentiation, and export performance by Boehe and Cruz (2010) from the first theoretical framework. The second framework by Lages and Jap (2002) applied product adaptation, promotion adaptation, pricing and distribution, and satisfaction with performance

improvement in the current year. Next, the third theoretical framework from Njuguna (2018) referred to product strategy, promotion strategy, place strategy, and price strategy with export performance. Then, the fourth theoretical framework from Kretschel (2015) mentioned marketing standardization and export performance. The fifth framework of examining firm and environmental influences on export marketing mix strategy and export performance of Australian exporters by O’Cass and Julian (2003) also referred to strategy adaptation-standardization and overall marketing performance. Next, the sixth framework of firm-level determinants of export performance by Nazar et al. (2009) considered export marketing strategy capabilities and export performance. Lastly, the seventh framework of the determinants of export performance: a review of the literature 2006 – 2014 was conducted by Chen et al. (2016), provided export marketing strategy and export performance. The conceptual research framework is proposed as follows Figure 1.

Figure 1.
The Conceptual Framework



Source. Constructed by the authors

3. Methods and Materials

This research used quantitative analysis of related the influence of differentiated marketing strategy on the export performance of SMEs. The survey was conducted among foreign trade enterprises in China to gather the required information. Due to the restriction during COVID19, the survey was done thru using platform from Credamo agency. The questionnaire had three parts screening questions, respondents’ demographic profile, and a five-point Likert scale with five variables and twenty-one items (questions). A five-point Likert scale was employed to assess hypotheses ranging from strongly agree (5) to strongly disagree (1). The sample size was calculated using Cochran (1977) formula with a 90% confidence level and error margin of 5%; therefore, 272 respondents were determined to be the suitable sample size in this study. The study used a Chinese Agency company to distribute the online survey, and then, a purposive sampling technique was selected to support recruiting the data. In terms of validity, the item of congruence index (IOC) was used to check content validity with three experts. Therefore, the IOC value of each question has been scored higher than .5, defining that all the questions have been appropriated. The pilot testing with Cronbach’s Alpha at 50 respondents was used to perform a reliability test, in order to evaluate internal consistency associated with variables. The result of reliability for questions in the questionnaire is greater than 0.8, which implied that all questions inside the questionnaire are reliable for data collection. As shown in Table 1 below, the Cronbach’s Alpha score of all variable are excellence above 0.8, then, each variable is highly reliable.

Table 1.
Reliability Test (Consistency of the Scales Test n=30)

Variables	Number of items	Cronbach’s Alpha	Reliability
Export performance	5	0.857	Good
Differentiation of product strategy	4	0.902	Excellent
Differentiation of price strategy	4	0.943	Excellent
Differentiation of place strategy	4	0.901	Excellent
Differentiation of promotion strategy	4	0.951	Excellent

Source: Constructed by the researcher

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The respondents of 272 enterprises engaged in export-related trade in China were responded to the survey. The demographic information in the survey includes firm size, firm age, annual sales of the firm, distribution of sales, and

type of products. The frequency and percentage calculated by the data are listed in table 2.

Table 2.
Frequency distribution and percentage of demographic information

Firm size (number of employees)		Frequency	Percentage	
Less than 50		17	6.3%	
50-199		53	19.5%	
200-499		73	26.8%	
500-999		78	28.7%	
1,000 or more		51	18.8%	
Total		272	100%	
Firm age		Frequency	Percentage	
Less than 1 year		6	2.2%	
1 to 5 years		103	37.9%	
6 to 10 years		93	34.2%	
11 to 20 years		43	15.8%	
20 years or more		27	9.9%	
Total		272	100%	
Annual export sales of firm (in thousands of dollars)		Frequency	Percentage	
Less than 500		22	8.1%	
500-1,999		48	17.6%	
2,000-9,999		119	43.8%	
10,000-49,999		57	21.0%	
50,000 or more		26	9.6%	
Total		272	100%	
Distribution of sales		Frequency	Percentage	Percent of Cases
Asia		143	27.4%	52.60%
Europe		125	24.0%	46.00%
North America		133	25.5%	48.90%
South America		36	6.9%	13.20%
Oceania		58	11.1%	21.30%
Africa		26	5.00%	9.60%
Total		521	100.00%	191.50%
Type of products		Frequency	Percentage	
Consumer products		144	52.9%	
Industrial products		118	43.4%	
Other		10	3.7%	
Total		272	100%	

Source: Constructed by the researcher

The results in table 2 show that companies with 500-999 employees have the most significant number, accounting for 28.7% (78), followed by companies with 200-499 employees, accounting for 26.8% (73). Companies with 50-199 employees and more than 1000 employees accounted for 19.5% (53) and 18.8% (51), respectively. The number of companies with less than 50 employees is the

lowest, only 17 (6.3%). In terms of company age, the number of companies with 1 to 5 years of establishment is the largest, accounting for 37.9% (103). There are also many companies with 6-10 years of establishment, 93 (34.2%). The proportion of companies with less than one year of establishment is the least, with only 6 (2.2%). In addition, the number of companies with 11 to 20 years of

establishment and more than 20 years of establishment is 43 (15.8%) and 27 (9.9%), respectively. In terms of annual export sales of the company, the number of companies with annual sales of 2,000-9,999 thousand dollars is the largest, accounting for 43.8% (119). They were then followed by companies with annual sales of 10,000-49,999 thousand dollars and 500-1,999 thousand dollars, 57 (21.0%) and 48 (17.6%) respectively. The smaller number of companies are those with annual sales of more than 50,000 thousand dollars and less than 500 thousand dollars, accounting for 9.6% (26) and 8.1% (22), respectively. From the company's sales distribution, Asia, North America, and Europe are the primary sales regions of export companies, with 143 companies exported to Asian countries, 125 companies exported to European countries, and 133 companies exported to North American countries. In addition, the number of Companies in target sales areas in South America, Oceania, and African countries is small, 36, 56 and 28 respectively. Finally, in terms of the types of products exported by the company, the number of companies with

consumer products is the largest, accounting for 52.9% (144). At the same time, the number of companies with industrial products is also significant, accounting for 43.4% (118). The number of companies selling other products is minimal, accounting for only 3.7% (10).

4.2 Mean and standard deviation

The summary of the mean and standard deviation of each group of variables consists of export performance, differentiation of product strategy, differentiation of price strategy, differentiation of place strategy, and differentiation of promotion strategy, as shown in table 3. In order to interpret the mean score for respondents' opinions level, the researchers adopted the interpreting procedure designed by Moidunny (2019) as detailed 4.21 to 5.00 is very high, 3.21 to 4.20 is high, 2.61 to 3.20 is medium, 1.81 to 2.60 is low, and 1.00 to 1.80 is very low.

Table 3.
Mean and Standard Deviation of Each Variable

Export Performance	Mean	Std. Dev.	Interpretation
EP1: Our market growth is better than our competitors.	3.10	0.85	Medium
EP2: Our company has a vigorous export intensity.	3.54	1.05	High
EP3: Our export volume is among the best in the industry.	2.77	0.91	Medium
EP4: Our export profits are outstanding.	3.22	0.87	High
EP5: Our profits are growing faster than our competitors.	3.20	0.82	Medium
Differentiation of Product Strategy			
DPO1: For different markets, the product quality is different.	2.74	1.06	Medium
DPO2: For different markets, the product designs are different.	2.75	1.13	Medium
DPO3: For different markets, product packaging is different.	2.89	1.07	Medium
DPO4: For different markets, the positioning of products is different	2.98	0.97	Medium
Differentiation of Price Strategy			
DPI1: For different markets, product prices are different.	3.47	1.04	High
DPI2: For different markets, credit standards are different.	3.79	1.03	High
DPI3: For different markets, the means of payment are different.	3.90	0.98	High
DPI4: For different markets, adopt different discount methods.	3.48	1.04	High
Differentiation of Place Strategy			
DPL1: For different markets, distribution channels are different.	3.54	0.99	High
DPL2: For different markets, sales force management is different.	3.33	1.19	High
DPL3: For different markets, adopt different distribution budgets.	3.61	1.02	High
DPL4: For different markets, establish a differentiated distribution system.	3.43	1.07	High
Differentiation of Promotion Strategy			
DPM1: For different markets, the promotion budgets are different.	3.74	0.98	High
DPM2: For different markets, the promotion contents are different.	3.83	1.11	High
DPM3: For different markets, the means of promotion are different.	3.77	1.03	High
DPM4: For different markets, the media used for promotion are different.	3.86	1.05	High

Source: Constructed by the researcher

As can be seen from table 2, among the measurement items of Export Performance, the item with the highest mean is “our company has a vigorous export intensity”, which is 3.54, and the item with the lowest mean is “our export volume is among the best in the industry”, which is 2.77. On the other hand, the standard deviation of the item “our company has a vigorous export intensity” is also the highest, which is 1.05, while the item with the lowest standard deviation is “our profits are growing fast than our competitors”, which is 0.82. Differentiation of product strategy in table 2; the item with the highest mean is “for different markets, the positioning of products is different”, which is 2.98, and the item with the lowest mean is “for different markets, the product quality is different”, which is 2.74. At the same time, the standard deviation of the item “for different markets, the positioning of products is different” is the lowest, which is 0.97, while the item “for different markets, the product designs are different” is the highest, which is 1.13. Differentiation of price strategy in table 2, the item with the highest mean is “for different markets, the means of payment are different”, which is 3.90, and the item with the lowest mean is “for different markets, product prices are different”, which is 3.47. At the same time, the standard deviation of the item “for different markets, the means of payment are different” is the lowest, which is 0.98, while the standard deviation of “for different markets, product prices are different” and “for different markets, adopt different discount methods” are both 1.04, which is the highest standard deviation. Differentiation of place strategy in table 2, the item with the highest mean is

“for different markets, adopt different distribution budgets”, which is 3.61, and the item with the lowest mean is “for different markets, sales force management is different”, which is 3.33. Instead, the standard deviation of the item “for different markets, sales force management is different” is the highest, which is 1.19, while the item “for different markets, distribution channels are different” is the lowest, which is 0.99. Lastly, differentiation of product strategy in table 2, the item with the highest mean is “for different markets, the media used for promotion are different”, which is 3.86, and the item with the lowest mean is “for different markets, the promotion budgets are different”, which is 3.74. At the same time, the standard deviation of the item “for different markets, the promotion budgets are different” is the lowest, which is 0.98, while the item “for different markets, the promotion contents are different” is the highest, which is 1.11.

4.3 Inferential Analysis

Inferential statistics is a statistics tool to analyze the characteristics of a sample to a population. Hypothesis testing is the use of statistics to determine the probability that a given hypothesis is true. In this study, there are four hypotheses constructed based on the conceptual framework by using multiple linear regression (MLR), detailed can be viewed in table 4.

Table 4.
Model summary of regression of variables

Variables	Std. Error	Beta	Sig.	VIF	Result
(Constant)	0.229		0.000		
Differentiation of Product Strategy	0.038	-0.168	0.001*	1.515	Supported
Differentiation of Price Strategy	0.059	0.254	0.001*	3.647	Supported
Differentiation of Place Strategy	0.060	0.254	0.002*	3.871	Supported
Differentiation of Promotion Strategy	0.057	0.177	0.023*	3.662	Supported
R Square		0.562			
Adjusted R Square		0.556			
F		85.814			

Note: *p-value < .05

Dependent variable: Export Performance

A multiple linear regression (MLR) analysis was conducted to the research to evaluate the predictors of attributes (differentiation of product strategy, differentiation of price strategy, differentiation of place strategy, and differentiation of promotion strategy). Table 4 indicate that differentiation of product strategy, differentiation of price strategy, differentiation of place strategy, and differentiation of promotion strategy for 56.2% at 90% confidence level as shown by R square value of 0.562. Differentiation of

product strategy, differentiation of price strategy, differentiation of place strategy, and differentiation of promotion strategy were supported since p-values were less than 0.05. Hence, differentiation of product strategy, differentiation of price strategy, differentiation of place strategy and differentiation of promotion strategy have influence on export performance in enterprises/export-related trade in China.

Table 5.
Strengths of influence of variables toward Export Performance for SMEs

Rank	Independent variable	Beta
1 st	Differentiation of price and place strategies	0.254
2 nd	Differentiation of promotion strategy	0.177
3 rd	Differentiation of product strategy	-0.168

Note: Dependent variable: Export Performance

As the results of table 5, it indicates the ranking of the variable from the most significant influence to less significant influence of independent variables toward export performance for SMEs. The Beta was revealed to analyze the level of interest from the variable. It presents that the highest significant influence is differentiation of price and place strategies 0.254, followed by differentiation of promotion strategy 0.177, and differentiation of product strategy -0.168.

4.4 Discussion

There is a positive significant relationship between differentiation of price strategy, differentiation of place strategy, differentiation of promotion strategy, and export performance, there is a significant negative effect between differentiation of product strategy and export performance detailed were discussed below.

Differentiation of product strategy; according to the conclusion of the hypothesis results, the researchers found that the use of differentiation of product strategy has a significant negative impact on the export performance of enterprises, and the impact coefficient is -0.168. Considering that compared with the standardization of product strategy, differentiation of product strategy does not have the advantage of low cost, and it is difficult to form the scale advantage, so it does not meet the goal of enterprises to expand rapidly in new markets. Therefore, differentiation of product strategy will hinder the improvement of export performance. This result is the same as the empirical research conclusion of Samiee and Roth (1992).

Differentiation of price strategy; the results found that the use of differentiation of price strategy has a significant positive impact on the export performance of enterprises, with an impact coefficient of 0.254. The use of differentiation of price strategy can enable enterprises to better adapt to the market and effectively expand market share. Moreover, the use of a flexible pricing strategy can also enable enterprises to achieve low-cost advantages, so as to improve the profit level. Therefore, differentiation of price strategy can significantly improve the export performance of enterprises. This result is the same as the previous research conclusions of Lages and Jap (2002),

Leonidou et al. (2002), and Njuguna (2018).

Differentiation of place strategy; the results in this study found that the use of differentiation of place strategy has a significant positive impact on the export performance of enterprises, with an impact coefficient of 0.254. The use of differentiation of place strategy can enhance the competitiveness of enterprises in the export market, cultivate the ability of distributors or subsidiaries in the export market, and make enterprises better adapt to the changes in a business environment. In addition, if enterprises can fully consider the differences in different market environments, logistics conditions, channels, and distribution functions, and implement a reasonable differentiation of place strategy on this basis, it will also help enterprises realize low-cost advantages, so as to improve their export performance. This result is the same as the previous research conclusions of Cavusgil and Zou (1994) and Lages and Jap (2002).

Differentiation of promotion strategy; the results revealed that differentiation of promotion strategy has a significant positive impact on the export performance of enterprises, with an impact coefficient of 0.177. Using differentiation of promotion strategy is very helpful to attract customers' attention and enhance their purchase intention. The implementation of differentiation of promotion strategy in media configuration and advertising content will help to improve the satisfaction of export performance of enterprises and respond to customer preferences, so as to improve export performance of enterprises. This result is the same as the previous research conclusions of Shoham (1999) and Njuguna (2018).

5. Conclusions

According to the research results and discussions of this study, the following management and marketing suggestions are put forward for relevant export enterprises to help them improve their sales level and export performance detailed are presented below.

First, SMEs should adopt a standardization of product strategy rather than differentiation of product strategy. Because the differentiation of product strategy is not easy to control, and it is difficult to obtain a large cost advantage, it is not suitable for SMEs to use at the stage of entering the market. The standardization of product strategy is more helpful to improve the export sales of enterprises, and can also improve the quality and technology of products faster, so as to improve the export performance of enterprises.

Secondly, the adoption of differentiation of price strategy is more conducive to SMEs to improve export performance. Although the process of economic globalization is accelerating, the development of e-

commerce is also quite rapid, and the prices of global products have become similar, at present, the differences between regions are still very obvious. If the export target markets of SMEs are West Asia, Africa, South America and other regions, the price level in these regions is generally lower than that in European and North American countries. Therefore, it is more profitable to formulate differentiated prices.

Third, the adoption of the differentiation of place strategy is more conducive to SMEs to improve export performance. There are great differences in the business environment between different markets, and SMEs must adapt to the differences in distribution channels, distributors and management levels, and logistics and distribution functions between different markets, so as to effectively improve the market competitiveness of enterprises, realize low-cost advantages and further improve their export performance.

Finally, the adoption of differentiation of promotion strategy is more conducive to SMEs to improve export performance. For SMEs, although differentiation of promotion strategy may lead to an increase in costs, the increase in sales brought by the strategy can fully make up for the increase in costs. Therefore, SMEs should actively take a variety of ways to carry out promotional activities. SMEs can participate in various exhibitions, or carry out publicity with the help of intermediary companies. SMEs can also directly publish various promotional advertisements on local TV stations, newspapers, or social media.

5.1 Further Study

This research deeply studies the impact model of differentiated export marketing strategies on export performance. However, due to the limited space, the research framework of this research does not involve other aspects that affect export performance. Therefore, future research can also be further expanded on the basis of this research. In addition, this research conducted an online questionnaire survey on 272 export enterprises. Although it met the requirements of the number of samples, it failed to subdivide the characteristics of these enterprises in industry and other aspects due to the limitations of the research. Therefore, future research can also further subdivide the export enterprises. Finally, the research on export performance has been very in-depth, but there have been divergences in the conclusions in this field due to different research regions and methods. Therefore, the relationship model between export marketing strategy and export performance needs to be further improved with the

development of practice.

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