

Mediating Effect of Export Commitment on the Relationship of Export Knowledge and Performance: A Study of Indian Handloom Industry

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Abstract

In this study, the determinants export knowledge and commitment were identified from the earlier literature, and their impact on the dependent variable export performance is being evaluated. The primary objective has been to create a linear model that depicts the structural link between the identified factors and the export performance. To achieve this objective, first-order confirmatory factor analysis with regression aids in data interpretation has been conducted by analysing the influence of variables on export performance. The independent variable export knowledge is used to examine the relationship with the dependent variable export performance in the presence of mediating variable, export commitment. The study found that knowledge influences the export performance significantly, but export commitment, as a mediator, intensifies the indirect relationship between knowledge and performance. As a result, it can be stated that while export knowledge assists management in acquiring export-related information, export commitment drives management to put knowledge into practice and make the most use of available resources to positively influence the export performance.

Keywords: Export Knowledge, Indian Handloom Industry, Export Commitment, Export Performance.

Introduction

Export operations are a conventional and necessary technique to get access to the international market and benefit a specific sector as well as the country's economic situation. Exporting operations boost the currency reserve, provide employment, and improve a country's earnings –(Di Fatta et al., 2019). Rapid rise in the industry's earnings creates prospects for expansion –(Wei et al., 2014). Export operations benefit the local economy by creating job possibilities, boosting the country's foreign exchange reserves, and producing considerable cash via tariffs. Export contributes significantly to economic growth and the development of a country's per capita income in all of these ways. —(Fan et al., 2015; Lee & Habte-Giorgis, 2004).

According to earlier research, export success is also influenced by other factors such as a competitive export advantage (Singh & Gautam,

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2019) and export participation —(Leonidou & Katsikeas, 2010; Subasat, 2002). Simultaneously, research on export performance identifies export commitment and expertise as critical factors in achieving successful export results (Bogdanova et al., 2016).

Handloom Export

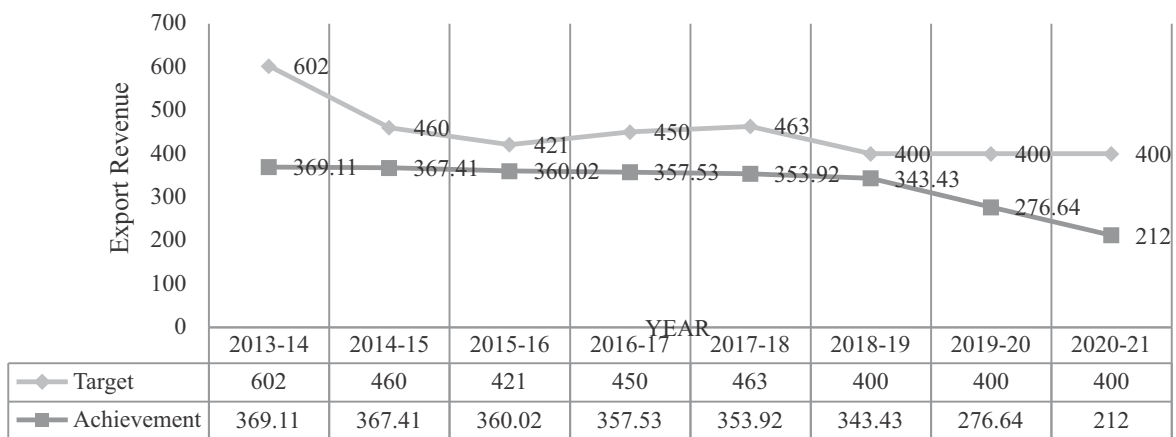
In the global textile sector, the Indian handloom industry has a tradition that is unrivalled. It is the oldest industry that preserves Indian culture and

employs many Indian rural communities, mostly the economically disadvantaged, and is the second-largest unorganised industry in terms of job creation after agriculture. More than 3.5 million handloom employees labour in over 2.7 million units and 3.15 million families using handlooms. Handloom laborers, both direct and indirect, can find work in this business. Rural India has a large population and provides equal opportunities for

labour for lower-middle-income people of all castes. The Indian handloom industry leads handcrafted fabric manufacturing, according to the (Textile Ministry Annual Report 2020-21, 2021). It accounts for 95% of all handmade fabric production in the globe and 15% of total fabric/cloth output in India. Instead of these benefits, the handloom industry's export performance has been declining for some time. Trends have been shown in Figure 1:

Figure 1

Export Targets and Achievement (In US million dollars)



Source: Textile ministry annual report 2020-21

Literature Review

Export Knowledge

Knowledge is information gained via education or through self-exploration, and it develop the understanding of a topic through theoretical, practical implications and by surroundings. Everyone has information, views, interpretations, and conclusions based on their abilities (Catanzaro & Teyssier, 2020). Export knowledge was researched as a factor of export success by –(Singer & Czinkota, 1994). They discovered that export knowledge aids in identifying the prerequisites for exporting activities such as identification of target market and channel partner selection before the commencement of export to the target market. The government used to offer a variety of export aid programs that companies

could research and take advantage of based on their requirements in order to reduce export-related hurdles and enhance exports. As a result, export knowledge is a critical driver of export success, as it aids enterprises in identifying potential markets and devising efficient methods for increasing income through exporting operations (Di Fatta et al., 2018). In his research, –(Filatotchev et al., 2009) discovered that the role of potential consumers is more important in meaningful export activities, which is also a component of knowledge. However, according to the author, knowledge may have a considerable mediated influence on a firm's export performance. (Falahat et al., 2020) investigated the carpet industry's export characteristics and discovered that export knowledge has a direct impact on export strategy, commitment.

Export Commitment

Management's commitment enables a company to find and develop a potential market in a globalised environment. The company seeks to improve production capabilities in response to market demand by embracing a changes in socio-cultural environment between the present market and the current new market –“(Sraha et al., 2017). Organisational commitment is classified in a number of ways, including top-level management and commitment to exports. The ultimate goal of this commitment is to increase the company income –“(Navarro et al., 2010). One of the predictors, export commitment, is dependent on managerial capability, revealing the relevance of this aspect in the unorganised industry's export performance. Sufficient export commitment results in considerable financial and non-financial success for the export industry (Purwanto et al., 2018). –“(Di Fatta et al., 2019) investigated export commitment and export performance relationship of emerging market SMEs in the context of international commerce and discovered that export related commitment positively influences the industry's performance in the international market.

Export Performance

International business is a necessary component for any sector to have a competitive advantage. Given these circumstances, exporting related operations is essential for the industry's long-term survival and expansion (Singh & Gautam, 2021). Export-related operations and their results demonstrate an organisation's ability to conduct meaningful export activities that, in turn, offer a financial advantage for rivals and contribute considerably to overall revenue production –“(Filatotchev et al., 2009). As a result, detailed information of exporting operations is critical for effective performance, as different managers and policymakers have stated. Various aspects of export performance have been identified in study that contribute considerably to the firm's

capabilities. These studies aid in improving the practical side of particular businesses as well as the overall economy of the country –“(Katsikeas et al., 2000). To avoid being ignorant of the global market, companies in today's day attempt to demonstrate their ability to embrace any home and foreign market problems. It is the most effective technique to gain exposure in the international market and demonstrate their competitive advantages –“(Leonidou & Katsikeas, 2010).

Handloom Export

–“(Nadh et al., 2013) investigated handloom exports to other nations and discovered that cotton fabric is the most in-demand item on the global market. The international market is drawn to the hand twisted yarn and handcrafted fabric. The hand twisted yarn, handwoven cloths, and productive skills of weavers handed over from many generations. –“(Liebl & Roy, 2003) investigated the export involvement of the handloom industry and discovered that it is growing and creating considerable demand for handloom items, despite the fact that it is still using obsolete tools and processes. This sector needs a marketing standpoint in order to find potential new consumers on a local and national level in order to improve export performance, as well as to determine the cause of the industry's lagging so that effective intervention might aid the industry. Based on export data from the last two decades, (Auguskani et al., 2017) investigated the value of export operations for the improvement of Indian economic conditions. Cotton has a substantial export competitiveness, according to the researchers, and India has a comparative edge in this item. –“(Ahmed et al., 2021) looked at the handloom sector from the standpoint of marketing and distribution in international markets. The researchers proposed certain strategies for raising awareness, marketing, and improving export performance. (Singh & Gautam, 2019) studied the Balassa revealed comparative advantage (RCA), and Lafay index (LFI) and stated that they are unique

indicators that quantify the strength of international trade commodities. They determine that which goods have a comparative advantage and which one has a specialised level in the export. The empirical data revealed that Silk has a comparative advantage in export, however it is steadily falling over the previous ten years (2008-17). Cotton provides good comparative advantage followed by carpet and other floor coverings. Other handloom items like distinctive woven textiles, pieces of apparel and clothing accessories have a major comparative advantage in export.

Research Methodology

Data Collection Process

The study's data collecting is extremely important. This study uses a structured questionnaire to obtain data from exporters who are members of the Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO). To assure the study's relevance, the data collecting instrument was pretested by 40 FIEO exporters. The population consists of exporters who deal in handloom-related items with ITC-HS codes 50, 51, 52, 57, 58, 62, and 63. According to FIEO, there will be 10247 registered exporters dealing with the above-mentioned commodity codes in 2020-21. As a result, when collecting data from exporters, it was made a point to ensure that they belonged to all of the clusters and covered as much of the country's geographical terrain as possible in order to portray the true health of the sector.

The respondents were chosen via purposive sampling, and the data collection instrument was sent to 256 exporters, who responded with 234 replies. Some of the replies were deleted after data cleaning to ensure consistency, and only 209 were selected for further analysis.

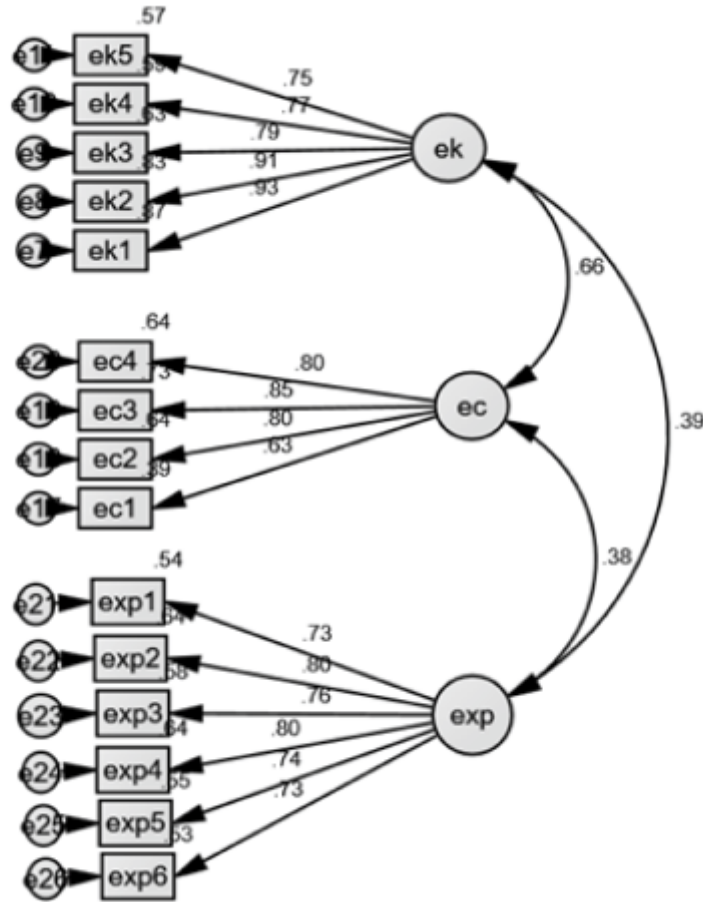
Various variables of export success have been established via research into the literature relating to the export performance of manufacturing enterprises. The researcher looked at studies on SMEs and other manufacturing industries' exporting operations and discovered certain variables of export performance that are relevant to the handloom industry. All data is collected on a five-point scale in which (1) "strongly disagree" to (5) "strongly agree" and all the items of instrument adapted according to the requirement of the study.

First-order CFA

Confirmatory factor analysis is a statistical method for determining the validity of variables and the strength of their relationships. Figure 2 shows the outcome of the first-order CFA.

The model is judged to be compatible based on the findings of CFA, which comprise five components. The path coefficient of each variable represented by each item ranges from 0.75 to 0.93 for construct ek (export knowledge), 0.63 to 0.85 for ec (export commitment), and 0.73 to 0.80 for exp (export performance). The high correlation coefficient implies a meaningful association between the constructs.

Figure 2: The first order CFA



Hypothesis Design and Structural Equations

The hypothesis design explains the prospect relationship among variables which is shown below and proposed structural representation illustrated in Figure 3.

H₁: The export performance as dependent variable positively influenced by the independent variable export knowledge.

H₂: The export commitment as dependent variable positively influenced by the independent variable export knowledge.

H₃: The export performance as dependent variable

positively influenced by the independent variable export commitment.

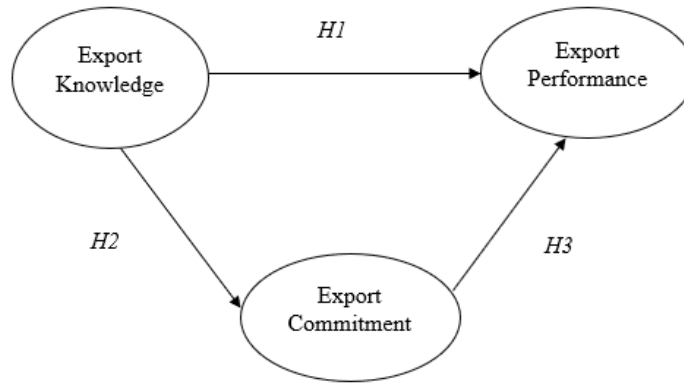
Further, structural equations of the model will be as follow:

$$\text{Export commitment} = a (\text{Export Knowledge}) + \text{Error}$$

$$\text{Export performance} = b (\text{Export Knowledge}) + c (\text{Export Commitment}) + \text{Error}$$

Where a, b and c are path coefficients between variables.

Figure 3: Proposed Research Model



Results

Exporter's Characteristics

Table I shows the profile information and

management qualities of those who took part in the study. The age of respondent, educational qualification, foreign trip frequency, industrial experience and export experience represented accordingly

Table 1: Exporter's Details participated in the Data Collection

		n(frequency)	%
Age (in the year)	Up to 35 years	63	30.14
	Between 36-50	98	46.89
	Above 50 years	48	22.97
Education Level	Up to School level	51	24.40
	UG to PG level	118	56.46
	Above PG level	40	19.14
Foreign trip frequency (per year)	Sometimes (0-2)	134	64.11
	Frequent (3-5)	42	20.10
	Very frequent (5<)	33	15.79
Industry Experience (in years)	Novice (0-10)	65	31.10
	Intermediate (11-20)	94	44.98
	Advanced (20<)	50	23.92
Export Experience (in years)	Novice (0-10)	92	44.02
	Intermediate (11-20)	77	36.84
	Advanced (20<)	40	19.14
Total number of Respondents		209	100%

Source: Data Survey

SEM analysis

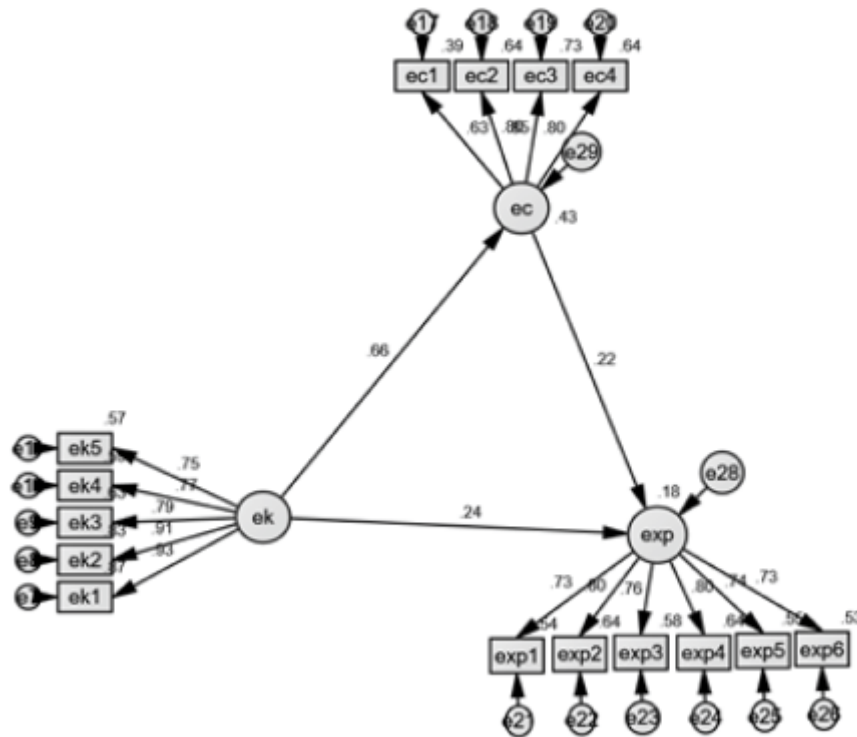
To assess the hypothesised conceptual research model, SEM was used to test the structural model.

Table II shows the estimates, critical ratio, and equations for the structural model based on the SEM. The hypothesis' conclusion indicates each of the path coefficients that describe the relative

relevance of the affecting elements. Hypotheses H1, H2, and H3 were all supported by the crucial value. The Cronbach's α value of export knowledge, commitment and performance are 0.92, 0.85 and 0.89 whereas composite reliability (CR) is 0.92, 0.86 and 0.90 respectively. The variances of all three variables were calculated and found that average variance is more than the

calculated maximum variances whereas shared variance found minimal as compared to average and maximum variance ($AVE > MSV > ASV$). The goodness of fit index is near about 0.90 whereas badness of fit index is less than 0.10. SEM remains within acceptable bounds, according to the indices, and it may be deemed a viable model (Hair et al., 2010).

Figure 4: Structural Model



The direct effect and indirect effect have shown in Tables 3 & 4. Figure 4 shows the route diagram for the structural equation model. The independent variable export knowledge has a favourable effect on the dependent variable export performance, according to the data shown in Figure 4 and Table

II. The relationship between export knowledge and performance has a path coefficient of 0.24. It indicates that a unit increase in export knowledge strength results in a 0.24 unit improvement in export performance.

Table 2: Data Collection Interpretations

Factor/Items	Standardised parameter estimates	Mean	Standard Error
Factor: Export Knowledge (adopted from (G. Wang & Olsen, 2002))			
ek1: The firm can prepare the packaging of products for export according to standard norms.	0.93***	3.31	—
ek2: The firm can prepare export-related documents.	0.91***	3.24	0.043
ek3: The firm gathers the information of the foreign market in which it supposes to operate.	0.80***	3.40	0.050
ek4: The firm has sufficient knowledge about marketing services available through public and private resources.	0.77***	3.20	0.048
ek5: The firm has sufficient knowledge about government regulation and the export market to influence the export.	0.75***	3.09	0.055
Factor: Export Commitment (adopted from (Lages & Montgomery, 2004))			
ec1: The firm has a suitable structure to handle all the export-related activities.	0.63***	2.96	—
ec2: The firm's executive learns and updates the knowledge related to export procedures and documentation regularly.	0.80***	2.93	0.128
ec3: The firms keep in communication with institutions to gather foreign market information and identify market potential.	0.85***	3.24	0.127
ec4: The firm possesses the adequate financial capability to enter a new export market.	0.80***	3.21	0.118
Factor: Export Performance (adapted from (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994))			
exp1: There is a significant contribution to sales through export in total sales.	0.73***	3.79	—
exp2: There are significant enquiries received of products for export purposes.	0.80***	3.67	0.111
exp3: There is a significant contribution of sales through export in the profitability.	0.76***	3.61	0.102
exp4: Export helps in increasing the awareness of products.	0.80***	3.73	0.121
exp5: Handling of competitive environment helps in significant export.	0.74***	3.89	0.097
exp6: Building a relationship with prospective overseas customers is part of export.	0.73***	3.57	0.122
Hypotheses		Critical Ratio	Result
H1	0.238***	2.387***	Supported
H2	0.656***	7.616***	Supported
H3	0.225***	2.143***	Supported
Structural Equations			
ec= 0.66ek + 0.10			R2 = 0.43
exp= 0.24ek + 0.22ec + 0.29			R2 = 0.18

Source: Author's interpretation

Table III explain the direct effects among variable. Here, the direct relationship between export knowledge (ek) and export commitment (ec) is 0.42 at $***p < 0.001$ significance level. Export knowledge (ek) shows its direct relationship with export performance (exp) is 0.213 at $**p < 0.05$

significance level, and relationship of export commitment (ec) with export performance (exp) is 0.279 at $p < 0.05$ significance level. So, all the hypotheses of direct relationship found significant and acceptable.

Table 3: Direct Effect of Dependent and Independent variables

Direct Relationship Tested	Estimates	P-values	Significance	Hypotheses
ec<---ek	0.472	0.000	significant	accepted
exp<---ek	0.213	0.028	significant	accepted
exp<---ec	0.279	0.020	significant	accepted

Source: Author's interpretation

Table 4 explain the indirect effect between the factors in the presence of export commitment as a mediator. The indirect relationship between factors is 0.632 at $p < 0.05$ significance level, which is significant. Since the direct effect of knowledge

(ek) and performance (ep) in the presence of commitment (ec) persist, which represent that there is a partial mediation effect of mediator commitment (ec) in the relationship between knowledge (ek) and performance (ep).

Table 4: Indirect Effect of Dependent and Independent Variable with Mediator

Indirect Relationship Tested	Estimates	P-values	Significance	Mediation Effect
exp<---ec<---ek	0.632	0.014	significant	partial mediation effect

Source: Author's interpretation

Discussion

Because export commitment in export performance pushes managers to aggressively discover market possibilities and implement effective strategies to meet export objectives, this study demonstrated a positive relationship between export knowledge and export commitment (H1) –(Chetty & Hamilton, 1993; Koh, 1991). Export commitment is an important factor in determining a company's export performance - (Aaby & Slater, 1989; Chetty & Hamilton, 1993; Sousa et al., 2008; Zou et al., 1997). Export commitment demonstrates a manager's ability to put forth effort in support of export activities, assisting in the efficient use of available resources and maximising opportunities to improve export performance –(Haddoud et al., 2019; Navarro et al., 2010). In this study, export knowledge (H2) has a beneficial

influence on export performance, which is consistent with earlier research —(Di Fatta et al., 2019; Lages et al., 2009). Firms may improve their internationalisation skills by practicing and learning on a regular basis –(Dhanaraj & Beamish, 2003). Firms can achieve successful export performance by pursuing aggressive exporting strategies and committing to their implementation –(W. Wang & Ma, 2018). Commitment (H3) assists businesses in identifying foreign commercial possibilities, converting those prospects into actionable plans, and increasing export performance - (Koh, 1991; Krammer et al., 2018; Tsiang, 2019). The results of this study demonstrated that export commitment (H3) has a substantial direct influence on export performance. Managers that lack appropriate understanding lack commitment and develop weak export plans –(W. Wang & Ma, 2018).

The indirect association strength with dependent and independent variables through a mediator was shown to be stronger than the direct link between these variables. Given the importance of knowledge and commitment in the study, the mediation impact of export commitment in the link between export knowledge and export performance was shown to be significant with a partial mediation effect, which is consistent with prior research (Di Fatta et al., 2019; Johanson & Vahlne, 1977; Machado et al., 2018).

Conclusion

A complete model of the handloom industry's export performance has been presented based on the literature and identified drivers. Export knowledge, export commitment, and export performance are the three components of the model. Each direct and indirect link between variables is discovered and analysed. Export knowledge is a vital component of a successful export strategy and commitment; as a result, exporting enterprises must be familiar with various foreign market segments, socio-economic circumstances, and political contexts that aid in the expansion of export market shares. Various research on export performance attempted to describe the notion using various models and theories but failed to assess the feasibility of implementation. It was intended to convey the substance of the concept without resorting to sophisticated models or overly-complicated academic explanations.

Managerial Implication

The study uncovers the handloom industry's multiple flaws, which may be to blame for the industry's continual decline in income generating through export. Despite possessing extensive export expertise, the research demonstrates that business management is unable to sustain the other qualities associated with export activity. As a

result, senior management must take into account the identified factors of the firm's export success and encourage consistent export activity. A monthly conference of exporters should be held at the national level, particularly for handloom-related items. It might aid in the creation of effective and innovative products that meet the needs of foreign markets, as well as ideas for lowering export obstacles for the handloom industry's export activities.

Limitations

The study's evaluation was done with several constraints in mind. Respondents' willingness and replies are always contingent on an unavoidable circumstance that may impact the study's goal, which is most often the case in social science investigations. The researcher, on the other hand, makes an effort to minimise these restrictions. This research is confined to handloom-related commodities; thus, its findings cannot be applied to the country's entire export performance. Further research is needed to better classify enterprises based on capital structure and degree of internationalisation, as this has a noticeable impact on the execution of export-related activities.

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