An Investigating of Antecedences and Consequences of Information Sharing in Exporter-Producer Relationship of Export Supply Chain Management

Abstract

In international marketing, Information Sharing (ISh) is essential between a buyer and a seller to build and improve a relationship of Export Supply Chain Management (ExSCM). While ISh has been discussed as a granular dimension in the previous research, this research places ISh as a focal underpinning in the ExSCM. ISh in exporter-producer relationship is investigated to understand ISh creation and theoretical perspectives in order to combine different theoretical dimensions in unified model and analyze interrelations among ISh's antecedents, ISh creation, and ISh's consequences. Based on a literature review, experts interviews, and quantitative analyses, a sequence of hypotheses is tested empirically in Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (FFV)-export industry. Expected contributions are an understanding the theoretical perspectives, namely relationship, network, and transaction perspectives to generate new insights and theoretical dimensions in ExSCM and an investigating the impact of the theoretical dimensions on ISh, which impacts on the export chain performance. In addition, new practical insights are provided to managers in how to develop export business of FFV from Jordan to European markets.

Keywords: Information Sharing, Exporter-Producer Relationship, Export Supply Chain Management, Fresh Fruit and Vegetable, Jordan.

1. Introduction

In international marketing, Information Sharing (ISh) is essential between a buyer and a seller to build and improve a relationship of Export Supply Chain Management (ExSCM). This is required for successful Buyer-Seller Networks and Relationships (BSNR), chains, and Export Performance (ExP) (Kwon and Suh, 2004; Hsu et al., 2008). Furthermore, ISh is the central underpinning in relationships to
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match export products, marketing strategies and services with buyers-sellers requirements for modern export supply chain (Piercy et al., 1997; Lee and Wang, 2000; Mikkola, 2008). Effective and efficient Supply Chain Management (SCM) of agri-food such as Fresh Fruit and Vegetable (FFV) is based on ISh and marketing activities (Aksoy, and Kaynak, 1994). Indeed, social, organizational, and economical aspects reflect relationship, network, and transaction perspectives that concern three dimensions. Relationship and network theoretical dimensions have strong impact on ISh and long-term relationship (Nilakant and Rao, 1994; Halinen et al., 1999; Birthal et al., 2005; Dash et al., 2007). In addition, transaction theoretical dimensions contribute to explain the economic of information exchange, transaction costs and the ISh effects in the chain (Dyer, 1997; Williamson, 2002).

Exporter-producer relationship as a basic unit of analysis is based on several dimensions including ISh (Martinez and Poole, 2004). By the mid 1990s, developing countries contributed a third by value to horticultural export, twice the value of their traditional agri-food exports (Barrett et al., 1999). Jordanian agri-food sector witnessed a remarkable development in FFV-export industry. Production and marketing of FFV were on continuous increase during the period 1976-2001 in both Jordan Valley (JV) and Highlands (HL) (FEMISE, 2002). This was due to investments, collaboration, exchange activities, and increased demand domestically and internationally, but still there is a high potential for increasing exporting from Jordan to European Union (EU) through collaborative relationships of exporters-producers and development of export supply chains (World Bank, 2002). This is required at all management stages of supply chain (Batt, 2003) in order to expand reaching EU markets concerned increasing demand for year-round supplies of profitable FFV-products.

ExSCM is a broad picture that bases on exporter-producer relationships and networks. SCM provides a broader framework to group and manage business relationships and transactions (Williamson, 2008). This framework is recognized as a boarder strategy to build collaborative export relationships, where the reason is the failure to leverage information flows and knowledge lack within the SCM (Hsu et al., 2008). Firms have to deliver high quality products and service in a timely manner, but IS's shortage limits chain relationships (Yam et al., 2007). Therefore, actors should understand the relationships that
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can both facilitate knowledge and creation sharing information (Cross et al., 2002). Keeping the above
in mind, ISh has been neglected in the previous research (Toften and Olsen, 2003) thus; a relationship of
a buyer (exporter) and a seller (producer) among ISh's antecedences, IS-Creation in exporter-producer
relationship, and ISh's consequences is of particular interest under the research lens.

Drawing on the need to understand this field, exporter-producer relationship of ExSCM is undertaken as
the basic unit of analysis, the combination of the theoretical dimensions, namely relationship, network,
and transaction dimensions is concerned as antecedences, and the ISh creation is applied as focal
underpinning in exporter-producer relationship. Therefore, the current research attempts to use a holistic
theoretical model in order to put together the theoretical dimensions and ISh phenomenon under a

unified model. Using this model of FFV-ExSCM is seeking greater understanding of ISh in focal
exporter-producer relationship directly linked, along with their relationships of network in the export
chain; this research is specific to the context of the FFV-industry in Jordan exporting to EU importers
mainly. In addition, the research investigates the impact of ISh on the ExP as consequences required to
build up better export chain performance associated both the exporter and the producer. For these
reasons, the present research conducts mixed methods included 9 semi-structured in-depth interviews
with FFV experts and 300 face-to-face questionnaires for both side the producers and the exporters.

2. Research Aim, Questions, and Hypotheses

The aim of the current research is to understand an ISh in an exporter-producer relationship in order to
investigate the impact of several antecedent dimensions on ISh that impacts on ExP as consequence
among FFV-export supply chain associated exporters and producers in Jordan. This is through
developing and testing a new model of ExSCM to understand the exporter-producer relationship in
exporting of FFV from Jordan to EU importers, and investigating three theoretical dimensions (of
relationship, network, and transaction) in order to create and develop ISh. The research investigates ISh
impact on ExP for better export chain performance. In Jordanian export sector, ISh in exporter-
producer relationships is very important to provide production, logistics, and export marketing
information, trust between the partners, and ideal investment decisions and create long-term contracting
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and profitability. Keep the above in mind, the research aim and objectives are transferred into the following research questions that when answered would achieve the aim and the objectives:

RQ1: How do theoretical dimensions of relationship, network, and transaction have an impact on ISh creation in exporter-producer relationships for better export chain performance in an ExSCM?

RQ2: What is the impact of theoretical dimensions of relationship, network, and transaction on an ISh creation in exporter-producer relationship of an ExSCM (positive\ negative)?

RQ3: What is the impact of an ISh creation in exporter-producer relationship on the ExP for better export chain performance of an ExSCM?

The foregoing reviews indicate different gaps in the current literatures that reinforce addressing the current research questions. The research develops a conceptual model of ExSCM to understand the buyer (exporter)-seller (producer) relationship in exporting of FFV from Jordan to EU importers. This research investigates how theoretical dimensions are as antecedences (relationship constructs: trust and commitment, cooperation and collaboration, and communication, network constructs: activities, resources, and actors, and transaction constructs: assets specificity, uncertainty, and frequency) impact on ISh creation and how this ISh creation impacts on the export chain performance. Therefore, this reflects the first research question in order to be test through a case study as a qualitative research strategy. Moreover, the research restate the second and third research questions as a sequence of specific hypotheses sets to be tested through a quantitative analysis, which are interrelations among the three theoretical dimensions constructs, ISh creation, and export chain performance. The two types of hypotheses sets are hypotheses on the ISh's antecedents (what is the impact of three theoretical dimensions on ISh) and the hypotheses on the ISh's consequences (what is the impact of ISh on ExP).

3. Research Methodology

Previous research has tested ISh (the focal construct) in granular way and no research has been undertaken a unified-theoretical model to covered all the key dimensions and combine them in a holistic way to study relationships and their phenomena. Consequently, after literature review in fields of
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international marketing, SCM, and relationship, the present research has chosen mixed methods, namely a case study and a questionnaire in order to investigate the phenomenon under studying empirically.

Mixed methods are seldom seen as strong methods that help examine a phenomenon according to the viewpoint of the participants (Saunders et al., 2007). In addition, integration of quantitative and qualitative data and findings are used to address different aspects of the research problem in order to develop a full picture that can be regarded as complementary (Woolley, 2008). Therefore, based on the aforementioned discussion, the research questions demand the use of mixed methods. Based on the current research literature and case study strategy (exploratory design), the phenomenon under studying is investigated to get the feel of what was going on in order to understand better the nature of the problems and constructs. This is through using a semi-structured qualitative research process before going to confirm finding using a questionnaire survey. The questionnaire survey (conclusive design: descriptive and causal designs) is more formal and structured process than exploratory process, which is large and representative sample, and the data obtained are subjected to quantitative analysis in order to describe characteristics of relevant groups (producers and exporters) and explain the relationships between constructs or variable in the research. Consequently, this research is characterized by its deductive nature. Therefore, a mixed method is an appropriate choice of the research methodology.

3.1 The Case Study

The use of a single case study strategy aims mainly to refine the thoughts about the relation between the three theoretical dimensions in BSNR, ISh, and ExP in the export supply chain of FFV. The case study is designed depending on logical steps to ensure maximizing the validity and reliability of its results. A case study protocol agenda has developed using well-structured design of questions supported the research objectives and conceptual elements. In addition, well-structured fieldwork procedures are followed, therefore, this supports data collection.

Semi-structured in-depth interviews are adopted in this research to interview 7 respondents face-to-face for each one in their offices in two areas, namely JV and HL. In addition, 2 semi-structured in-depth
Interviews are conducted to interview private and government policy-makers in their offices in Amman to ensure a rich information collecting and check the collected information from the above 7 interviewees. The researcher uses the current conceptual research model as a map to guide the researcher to analysis the reading and re-reading collected data. In addition, any required process such as categorizing and summarizing are used to refine our thoughts and provide redefinitions about the constructs and the phenomenon of the empirical research model used in the quantitative methodology.

3.2 Questionnaire Survey

The quantitative research methodology considers a survey strategy concerned five stages: survey design strategy, data collection, constructs (conceptual elements) and their measurements, reliability and validity, and data analysis. This questionnaire survey strategy included different stages is employed to set up a conclusive research in order to investigate the empirical topic and the phenomenon (ISh in exporter-producer relationship) under studding in more detail manner. The research reflects the exporter-producer relationship as the main unit of analysis and tests the research hypotheses in a highly economical way for both sides of the focal relationship the exporters and the producers of FFV industry in Jordan. Well-structured questionnaires are collected through face-to-face interviews with 300 respondents in two areas, namely JV and HL (including Amman).

The research instrument is a rigorously validated questionnaire. A set of questions regarding the analysis of ISh in exporter-producer relationships is empirically tested. The questionnaires' design is based on the current literature review, previous quantitative methodologies, and the current case studies results in order to generate different variables and items that refer to the main conceptual elements. Moreover, structured scale questions are used mainly in the empirical research that are easy type of questions to code and analyze, made suitable interview, and reduce interview bias. Pilot-testing is conducted with the 7 industry experts asked to fill the questionnaires of their interest and provide helpful and logical suggestions to improve the questionnaire items and content and 2 experts of export supply chain be asked to evaluate the validity and logical issues of the questionnaires items and variables.
Most of the constructs measurements are based on different previous research in terms of validated items and variables. The analysis of whole data and pilot-testing response are done to ensure that all questions are well utilized and understood and the questionnaires obtain the reliable source and the necessary data. Following that, the researcher refines and edits the required content of the questionnaires items that reflects the final questionnaires agenda included cover letter to collect data. In addition, the original English versions of the questionnaires are translated to Arabic one. In doing so, these design processes help the researcher to generate an instrument that would produce reliable and unbiased scales.

Stratified random sampling is appropriate to be applied for exporters sampling and producers sampling. In total of (50) exporters (50% of population) selected in simple random way, who export FFV from both areas (JV and HL) to EU and other markets, are interviewed by the researcher in their firms in Amman mainly. Furthermore, producer sampling that is concentrated geographically in two areas divided to 7 regions (stratum) reflects the tow main areas of FFV production. The total of (300) producers are the sample size (50% of population): (200) JV’s producers and (100) HL’s producers are interviewed by the researcher in their firms in the two production areas. The 7 regions (stratum) reflect the importance of selecting a good sample size from each one to represent the subpopulation to have appropriate sample size for the whole population of the firms in Jordan as a one geographical area.

The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) as a statistical program will be used to analyze the data and reach the result of different issues (variables) related to the exporters and producers and their ISh in order to understand ISh in more detailed manner as a focal underpinning that strengthens exporter-producer relationship.

4. Research Contributions

Based on the current research literature, this research emphasizes the importance of exporter-producer relationship and ISh creation in ExSCM and international marketing. This research expands the growing body of literature on ExSCM and export marketing by maintaining a theoretical perspective that where exporter-producer relationship and export chain performance are associated with the ISh that impact on
building strong relationship and better performance. Clearly, this research contributes to academic research in two ways: the theoretical perspectives, namely social, economic, and organizational aspects are discussed to identify contributions to study a relationship of buyer and seller in the supply chain and develop an ExSCM model. This research of export supply chain generates new insights and theoretical dimensions combined to relationship in SCM. Secondly, it contributes to ISh in a focal relationship by investigating the impact of the theoretical dimensions on ISh impacting on the export chain performance that focus on relationship between both side the buyer and the seller, an area where research is limited.

Practically, the research emphasises the role of ISh in exporter-producer relationship to build long-term relationship and better performance. This research influences both the exporter and the producers in their business achievements and practices. Furthermore, the fact that this research is based on the country where provides new insights in how to develop export business of FFV, it also offers contributions and practical insights for other countries as conducted in Jordan exporting to EU markets.

5. References


