

SMART

Journal of Business Management Studies

(An International Serial of Scientific Management and Advanced Research Trust)

Vol-10 Number - 1

January - June 2014

Rs.400

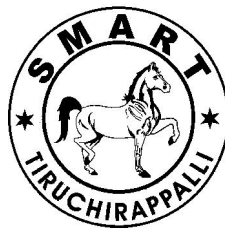
ISSN 0973-1598 (Print)

ISSN 2321-2012 (Online)

Decennial Year Publication

M. SELVAM, Ph.D

Founder - Publisher and Chief Editor



2012 Impact Factor : 0.656 (GIF)

SMART Journal of Business Management Studies is a Professional, Refereed International and Indexed Journal. It is indexed and abstracted by Ulrich's International Periodicals Directory, Intute Catalogue (University of Manchester) and CABELL'S Directory, USA, ABDC Journal Quality List, Australia.

**SCIENTIFIC MANAGEMENT AND ADVANCED RESEARCH TRUST
(SMART)**

TIRUCHIRAPPALLI (INDIA)

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A CRITICAL REVIEW OF BARRIERS TO EXPORT BUSINESS

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Abstract

Exporting is a common mode to enter international business. However, there are many organisations which face difficulties in their international venture. Therefore, it is critical to understand the export barriers that may affect organizations. The article tries to identify the issues that are related to export barriers. The review found that past researchers have found conflicting findings in terms of export barriers. However, there are some common grounds too.

Keywords: *Export Barriers, Knowledge, Resource, Procedural, Exogenous.*

JEL CODE: F13, F23, F51

1. Introduction

Progressing into international level business is the aim of many visionary organizations in order to expand their business. In addition, external trends such as globalization and liberalization of markets spur businesses to be involved in international business (Chetty and Campbell-Hunt, 2004; McDougall and Oviatt, 2000). Majority of businesses enter international market through exporting which requires less investment and which is comparatively less risky (Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010). However, there are organizations which have reservations about entering international market while those who

are involved in international business, do not perform as expected or face failures (Leonidou, 2004; Leonidou and Katsikeas, 1996; Miesenböck, 1988). Such conditions could be a serious threat to the development of a business from the micro level as well as a country's prosperity at the macro level (Chung, 2003; Leonidou, 1995; Patterson and Cicic, 1995). Therefore, attention needs to be focused on factors that contribute to this situation.

Although a number of studies have been done on barriers of exporting, there is yet no consensus on the identification of critical barriers (Suarez-Ortega, 2003). In order to address this problem, there is a need to understand the issues related to exporting barriers.

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2. Literature Review

A number of definitions have been provided by the researchers. Porter (1980) had defined barriers as obstacles preventing entrant firms from being established in a particular market. The most common definition found in many studies is the one provided by Leonidou (1995, 2004) since he had covered a broad scope. He defined barrier as any constraint that hinders the ability of a business to operate in an overseas market. Barriers could be at any stage of operation, at the initiation stage, development or at a later stage. In addition, the barriers can be in the form of attitude, structural, operation or others.

Suarez-Ortega (2003) defines barriers as all factors, which include both internal and external, that could dissuade firms from exporting or even hinder their exporting activity.

Similarly, Arteaga-Ortiz and Fernando-Ortiz (2010) indicated that a barrier to exporting includes any element or factor which may be from internal or external source and it blocks or discourages companies from initiating, increasing or maintaining export activities.

Studies in exporting barriers revealed that barriers can be divided into external barriers and internal barrier (Leonidou, 2003; Cavusgil 1984). A four matrix categorization of barriers into internal domestic barriers, internal foreign barriers, external domestic barriers and external foreign barriers was proposed by Leonidou (1994b). Nevertheless, many researchers came up with their own categorization based on the factor analysis conducted on the barriers they have studied. Among them are:

Milanzi et al. (2012) - (knowledge barriers, capacity barriers, financing barriers, infrastructure barriers, regulatory barriers); Al-Hyairi et al. (2011) – (government, environment

and political legal barriers, procedural and currency barriers, task and socio cultural barriers); Pinho et al., (2010) - (company related barriers, product related barriers, industry related barriers, host-country market barriers and home-country market barriers; Ortiz and Ortiz (2010) – (knowledge barriers, resource barriers, procedure barriers and exogenous barriers); Rutihinda (2008) - (firm specific barriers, institutional barriers, foreign industry barriers, government support); Koksal (2006) - (problem related to general economy, product characteristics problem, problems relating to lack of foreign market information, manufacturing problem, domestic market structure problems); Craig and Julian (2005) – (export market attractiveness, foreign practices incompatible with domestic business, export venture management characteristics, distribution access, adapting to foreign market needs and government policy); Suarez Ortega (2003) – (knowledge barriers, resource barriers, procedure barriers and exogenous barriers); Suarez Ortega and Alamo Vera (2003) – (micro environment barriers, internal resource barriers, procedural barriers, improvement of export performance, improvement of global competitiveness, pre-export knowledge barriers and exogenous barriers); Da Silva and Da Rocha (2001)- (political and economic restrictions, lack of information and access to target market, lack of firm commitment to exporting, non-tariff barriers in the target market, corruption, lack of firm competitiveness in the target market, operational difficulties and quality requirements); Katsikeas et al. (1996) – (information communication with export market, product adaptation, export pricing constraints, marketing organization adaptation, exogenous logistic constraints, national export policy, perceived procedural complexity and domestic currency devaluation); Ramaswami and Young (1995) –

(knowledge barriers, resource barriers, procedure barriers and exogenous barriers) and Seringhaus and Rosson (1990) - (operational/resource-based, motivational, informational and knowledge-based barrier types).

Significant differences can be observed in the factors enumerated in the literature reviews even though some similarities can also be identified such as resource barriers, knowledge barriers, procedural barriers and exogenous barriers. Another common issue in the study of export barriers studies is the types of respondents. In some studies, researchers just focused on exporters (Bijmolt and Zwart, 1994; Bilkey and Tesar, 1977) or non-exporters (Alexandries, 1971) while in others, both exporters and non-exporters were considered (Yaprak, 1985; Barker and Kaynak, 1992; Kedia and Chhokar, 1986; Hook and Czinkota, 1988; Cheong and Chong 1988; Keng and Juian, 1989; Shaw and Darroch, 2004; Ahmed et al., 2005; Pinho and Martins, 2010). Exporters have also been divided into sub groups in the study of barriers. Among them are marginal exporters and active exporters and studied together with non-exporters (Sharkey et al., 1989), sporadic exporters and regular exporters (Ibrahim et al., 2009) and likely exporters, exporters and non-exporters (Shaw and Darroch, 2004).

Although numerous researches have been done on export barriers, consensus on barriers has not been reached. The reason is that there are many barriers to choose from and there is lack of research based on previous research (Suarex-ortega, 2003), or integration of results from previous work (Ortiz and Ortix, 2010). Therefore, in order to understand and reduce such problems, it is important to understand the issues related to export barriers. The following part explains the barriers connected to export.

3. Exporting Barriers

Some of the common barriers studied are in the functional area such as finance, human resource/personnel, marketing, production and logistics. In addition, those related to knowledge and information are also studied. Barriers derived from external environment are payment issues, documentation, bureaucracy/red tape, rules and regulations, tariff and non tariff barriers, competition, government's assistance and incentives, currency issues, lack of assistance of external parties (banks or agents), customer, language and socio-cultural differences and even problems in politics and economy. Others barriers are in terms of risk, benefits, market research, unfamiliarity, lack of managerial time.

a. Knowledge

Knowledge as a barrier, has been frequently included in exporting barrier related studies. This is because of the need to identify whether there is lack of knowledge in terms of export market opportunities (Milanzi et al., 2012), potential export market (Pinho and Martins, 2010; Suarez Ortega, 2003; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Koksal, 2006; Suarez-Ortega and Alamo Vera, 2005) or even foreign business practices (Milanzi et al., 2012). There are also researches that focus on the general lack of knowledge on how to export (Suarez Ortega, 2003; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Suarez-Ortega and Alamo Vera, 2005). In addition, foreign business practices being difficult and unfamiliar business practices are also found in some studies (Rutihinda, 2008; Craig and Julian, 2005). Results obtained indicate that although both exporters (Shaw and Darroch, 2004; Bijmolt and Zwart, 1994) and non-exporters (Kedia and Chhokar, 1986; Pinho and Martins, 2010; Shaw and Darroch, 2004; Suarez Ortega, 2003) regard knowledge as a barrier, it is more commonly found among non exporters.

b. Problems related to Finance

Another common problem studied in export related studies is finance. Among the issues that have been studied are in terms of investment (Barker and Kaynak, 1992; Hook and Czinkota, 1988), financial resources (Milanzi et al., 2012; Shaw and Darroch 2004) or capital that is insufficient (Rutihinda, 2008; Koksai, 2006). Other studies used terms such as high cost of capital to finance export, self financing problem (Katsikeas et al. 1996) or problem in recovering export related investment (Ortiz and Ortiz, 2011). Another variable connected to barrier in finance is limited finance to conduct market research (Suarez-Ortega, 2003). Problem associated with finance is also found to be faced by both non-exporters and exporters (Ahmed et al. 2005). Issue of high initial investment is normally found in non exporters (Barker and Kaynak, 1992; Hook and Czinkota, 1988), but Bilkey and Tesar (1977) point out that it is also found to be a barrier among exporters. Lack of capital to finance export is found to be a common problem for exporters (Cheong and Chong 1988; Shaw and Darroch, 2004).

c. Problems related to Personnel

Barrier that has been studied in relation to personnel is usually due to adequacy (Rutihinda, 2008), lacking in skill (Milanzi et al., 2012) or qualification (Pinho and Martins, 2010; Koksai, 2006; Katsikeas et al., 1996). Hiring qualified personnel has also been studied (Da Silva and Da Rocha, 2001). Some specifically identified problems are lack of staff for export planning (Suarez-Ortega, 2003; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2011) or lack of staff for export administration or managing international trade activity (Suarez-Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2005; Craig and Julian, 2005). Exporters indicated issues of personnel connected to skills (Barker and Kaynak, 1992; Hook and Czinkota, 1988) while non-exporters

in terms of inadequacy or lack in terms of quantity (Yaprak, 1985; Barker and Kaynak, 1992)

d. Production Barriers

Barrier in production is usually related to insufficient or lack of production capacity (Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Koksai, 2006; Suarez-Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2005; Craig and Julian, 2005; Ahmed et al., 2005). Milanzi et al. (2012), on the other hand, used the term to refer to export supply capacity constraint. Even though production barrier is tested in a number of studies, this factor has not been considered as a critical barrier except by Ahmed et al. (2005) who found lack of capacity preventing continuous supply of exports to be a barrier for both exporters and non exporters. Leonidou et al. (2004) have ranked it as a low level barrier.

e. Marketing Barriers

Most researches on barriers have included marketing related barriers which consist of distribution of product, price and promotion. In terms of distribution, the area of study is the complexity level (Rutihinda, 2008) or the accessibility level of the distribution channels (Rutihinda, 2008; Craig and Julian, 2005). Some studies have indicated the difficulty in identifying or locating distributors who are suitable, reliable or capable (Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Craig and Julian, 2005; Katsikeas et al., 1996) while others focused on difficulty to maintain control and communication (Milanzi et al, 2012). There are also studies that looked into the accessibility of wholesalers or retailers (Da Silva and Da Rocha, 2001) or even lack of information on overseas distributors (Katsikeas et al.1996).

Product related barriers include quality standards (Rutihinda, 2008; Bilkey and Tesar, 1977), lack of quality (Pinho and Martins, 2010; Koksai, 2006) or the difficulty in meeting the

quality requirement (Katsikeas et al., 1996). Others look into product usages which are different, product adaption issues (Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Craig and Julian, 2005), packaging quality (Katsikeas et al., 1996), design and styles of product (Milanzi et al., 2012; Katsikeas et al., 1996), poor product functions (Koksal, 2006), or after sales service (Craig and Julian, 2005).

Promotion issues as barriers are related to the cost (Koksal, 2006), the adequacy (Katsikeas et al., 1996) and the adaptability or adjustment (Rutihinda 2008; Da Silva and Da Rocha, 2001; Craig and Julian, 2005). Pricing issues include the difficulty in setting the price to match the competitor (Rutihinda, 2008; Milanzi et al., 2012; Katsikeas et al., 1996) or the need to modify the price according to the needs of the foreign market (Craig and Julian, 2005). Distribution, promotion and prices (Keng and Juian, 1989) and product (Bilkey and Tesar, 1977; Cheong and Chong, 1988) are acknowledged as barriers by exporters rather than non-exporters.

f. Cost- Transportation, Shipping and Insurance

Specific export related cost that has been highlighted in barrier related studies are those in terms of transportation, insurance and shipping. This is because most studies focus on whether the barrier is due to cost (Rutihinda, 2008; Suarez Ortega, 2003; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Suarez Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2005; Craig and Julian, 2005; Katsikeas et al., 1996), poor infrastructure (Milanzi, et al., 2012) or difficulties involved in the transportation of the goods (Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Katsikeas et al., 1996). Exporters seem to perceive transportation cost, shipping cost or insurance cost as barriers (Barker and Kaynak, 1992; Hook and Czinkota, 1988; Bauerschmidt, Sullivan and Gillespie, 1985) compared to non exporters.

g. Payment

Barrier linked to payment are because of slow collection (Al-Hyairi et al., 2011; Pinho and Martins, 2010; Da Silva and Da rocha, 2001), delayed payment (Katsikeas et al., 1996), difficulty of payment collection (Craig and Julian, 2005; Ahmed et al. 2005) or even the risk of non-payment of buyers (Pinho and Martins, 2010). This is a common variable studied in many studies and considered as a barrier by exporters (Ahmed et al. 2005; Yaprak, 1985; Bilkey and Tesar, 1977) rather than non exporters. However, Ahmed et al. (2005) identified difficulty of collecting payment to be a barrier for non-exporters as well.

h. Risk

Risk as a barrier to exporting is normally in terms of concern with loss of money (Suarez Ortega, 2003; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Suarez Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2005; Craig and Julian, 2005). Ahmed et al. (2005), who studied both exporter and non exporters, found that risk due to selling abroad is identified as a barrier by both of them.

i. Benefits

Lack of awareness on benefits of export has been found in some barrier related research (Suarez Ortega, 2003; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010). Other studies indicated it as lack of awareness of potential value of export (Craig and Julian, 2005). Suarez Ortega and Alamo-Vera (2005), on the other hand, linked benefits with export performance such as firm's profit, opportunities for growth and financial returns. In addition, they have also linked the benefits in terms of global competitiveness from the perspectives of product competitiveness, diversifying product line and improving market position.

j. Market Research

Problems involving market research is usually connected with financing (Suarez-Ortega, 2003) or insufficient or lack of market research (Koksal, 2006; Suarez Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2005; Katsikeas et al., 1996). However, market research identified as a barrier was not indicated in past researches.

k. Competition

Barrier related to competition is usually in terms of the level such as keen competition, degree of competition or strong competition. Competition as a barrier is researched in many export related studies (Al-Hyairi et al., 2011; Pinho and Martins, 2010; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Ahmed et al., 2004; Suarez Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2005; Suarez-Ortega, 2003; Katsikeas et al., 1996). Exporters are found to consider competition as a barrier in comparison with non exporters. This is found by many authors viz Cheong and Chong (1988), Bijmolt and Zwart, (1994). Nevertheless, in the studies by Pinho and Martins (2010), it is the non-exporters who are found to consider competition as barriers while in the case of Ahmed et al. (2005), both exporters and non exporters expressed competition to be a barrier.

l. Information

A number of researchers (Rutihinda, 2008; Pinho and Martins, 2010; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Katsikeas et al., 1996) included limited or insufficient information on foreign markets in their study of barriers. Some researchers tested the difficulty to gather information that is accurate on the foreign market (Craig and Julian, 2005) while information on products and services is highlighted by Ortiz and Ortiz (2010). Katsikeas et al. (1996) concentrated on lack of information on overseas distributors. Non-exporters have predominately considered information as barriers compared to exporters. Studies by Yaprak (1985), Barker and Kaynak (1992), Cheong and Chong (1988) and Hook

and Czinkota (1988) provide the insight that non exporters have problem with information related to foreign market.

m. Documentation and Red Tape

Documentation procedure that is required for export, has also been tested by researchers to identify whether it is a barrier or not. This is because the researchers want to study the complexity (Al-Hyari et al., 2011; Katsikeas et al., 1996), extensiveness or whether it is cumbersome (Milanzi et al., 2012; Koksal, 2006). Results of studies in documentation and procedures showed that it is the non-exporters who found it to be a barrier (Kedia and Chokar, 1986).

Red tape or bureaucracy issues is found in studies by Al-Hyari et al. (2011), Ortiz and Ortiz (2010), Suarez-Ortega (2003), Suarez Ortega and Alamo-Vera (2005), Suarez-Ortega (2003) and Katsikeas et al. (1996). Red tape in comparison is found to be a more common problem for exporters (Yaprak, 1985; Barker and Kaynak, 1992; Hook and Czinkota, 1988)

n. Insufficient Government Assistance

Barrier due to insufficient government's assistance can be found in most studies. Among the focus areas is lack of assistance (Rutihinda, 2008; Craig and Julian, 2005; Katsikeas et al., 1996) and financial assistance (Pinho and Martins, 2010) while Al-Hyari et al. (2011) tested the lack of government incentives. Some researchers tried to identify if the problem is connected to lack of awareness (Suarez Ortega, 2003; Suarez-Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2003) or lack of knowledge (Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010) in terms of the government assistance and others looked into problems such as not enough information on the export support programmes (Milanzi et al. 2012). Another issue is on insufficient or ineffective export promotion or even incentives (Koksal, 2006; Katsikeas et al. 1996). Both exporters and non-exporters have identified the problem being due to incentives

and financial assistance as barriers (Barker and Kaynak, 1992; Shaw and Darooch, 2004; Pinho and Martins, 2010).

o. Rules and Regulation, Trade, Tariff and Non-Tariff Barriers

Rules and regulation barriers are usually tested to find out whether they are strict (Rutihinda, 2008; Al-Hyairi, 2011), unfavorable, inadequate (Rutihinda, 2008; Ah-Hyairi et al., 2011) or confusing (Craig and Julian, 2005). Barriers such as tariffs and non-tariff are also studied. This factor has been included in studies by Al-Hyairi et al. (2011), Pinho and Martins (2010), Suarez Ortega (2003), Ortiz and Ortiz, (2010), Suarez-Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2003).

Confusing foreign import regulations were highlighted as a barrier by both non-exporters and exporters (Ahmed et al., 2005). Similarly, exporters and non-exporters consider trade barriers (Barker and Kaynak, 1992), tariffs and non-tariff barriers (Bauerschmidt, Sullivan and Gillespie, 1985; Hook and Czinkota, 1988) to be an obstacle to them.

p. Foreign Exchange/Currency

Currency related barrier is verified in a number of studies. The focus areas are the risk involved (Rutihinda, 2008; Pinho and Martins, 2010), fluctuation rate, unconvertible state (Milanzi, et al. 2012), exchange/variation risks (Suarez Ortega, 2003; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Suarez-Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2003), high value of a specific currency, unstable exchange rate (Koksal, 2006), devaluation concern (Katsikeas et al., 1996) and the policies that are inadequate (Da Silva and Da Rocha, 2001) or pricing problems because of the high fluctuation rate (Craig and Julian, 2005). Currency risk as a barrier is found in studies of exporters (Ahmed et al., 2005; Bauerschmidt, Sullivan and Gillespie, 1985). Nevertheless, non exporters too have indicated that high value of currency relative to those in export markets to be a problem (Ahmed et al., 2005).

q. Politics and Economy

Politics and economy as barriers raise the question whether they are unstable political environment (Rutihinda, 2008; Al-Hyairi, 2011; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Da Silva and da rocha, 2001) or poor or deteriorating economics (Al-Hyairi et al. 2012; Koksal, 2006). In most cases, the focus is on the foreign or destination market although some looked into their own domestic market. Exporters regard economic condition as a barrier (Yaprak, 1989).

r. Customer

Researchers, who included communication with foreign customers in their studies, had focused on difficulties in communication (Milanzi et al. 2012), inadequate communication (Al-Hyairi et al., 2011) or ineffective communication (Katsikeas et al., 1996). There are also studies which looked into the lack of response time to customer's need. Others studied lack of customer service (Koksal, 2006). However, results in terms of barriers due to customer issues did not confirm it as a barrier.

s. Language/Cultural Differences

Differences in language and culture are also studied (Al-Hyairi et al., 2011; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010; Suarez Ortega and Alamo-Vera, 2005, Da Silva and Da Rocha, 2001; Craig and Julian, 2005). Other issues include need to be identified or there is lack of time to learn them (Pinho and Martins, 2010). Most results did not identify it as a barrier whether they are exporters or non-exporters. But the study by Ahmed et al. (2005) provided contradicting results whereby both exporters and non-exporters seem to indicate that language and cultural differences are barriers.

t. Other Sectors

Banks, private sector and trading companies have also been considered in barrier related studies. In terms of banks, it is about lack of local banks that have international

expertise (Suarez-Ortega, 2003; Ortiz and Ortiz, 2010) or banks may be unwilling to serve the company which is small or medium sized (Suarez-Ortega, 2003; Suarez-Ortega and Alamo Vera, 2005). In terms of private sector or trading companies, it could be because they are lacking (Suarez-Ortega and Alamo Vera, 2005). Results also indicate them not to be a barrier for exporters or non-exporters.

4. Discussion

The review of literature on export barriers revealed a number of points. Firstly, based on the definition and past results, barriers of exporting are present at all stages, whether it is before exporting, during initial stage or even the advanced stage. Studies may be conducted to identify the barriers at one or more stages.

Secondly, while studying exporting barriers, it is important to cover the critical areas which should be from both internal and external sourced barrier. Thirdly, if the research intends to study non-exporters and exporters, it is necessary to include a comprehensive set of barriers to ensure the study is complete. Barriers that should be included if the target respondents are exporters, are knowledge issues, financial issues, human resources issues, market related issues, risks, payment and cost, in addition to competition, government assistance and customers. However, if non exporters are included as part of the research, it is essential that additional areas such as information issues, documentation, perception on tariff and non-tariff barriers, currency risk, language and sociocultural differences are also considered.

Fourthly, while studying export barriers, building the current research on previous researches, especially if there are similarities in the characteristics of the respondents, can reduce the inconsistencies of the findings and possible consensus can be achieved. Studying exporting barriers is of critical importance. It may be conducted on non-exporters or even exporters. This is because it can identify the

critical barriers that are faced which are necessary for the management, policy makers and even researchers.

5. Conclusion

Barriers related to knowledge, finance, human resource, marketing, market research, benefits, risks and cost are internally sourced. Management needs to play a critical role in managing the barriers well and reduce their impact on performance. In addition, the government may provide the necessary support to minimize the barriers faced by exporters. For example, lack of knowledge, insufficient skills, or problem associated with marketing can be assisted through various schemes by the government. The government needs to ensure that the target audience of the programs or initiatives, benefits from the assistance provided. The efficiencies and effectiveness of the programs must be measured in order to identify whether any improvement or enhancement is needed.

In terms of barriers such as payment, competition, political and economic condition, customers, currency risk, political and economic risk which are external, it is important that the management identifies the correct target customers and market to be involved, to ensure that these barriers are avoided. The government should also ensure that lack of information on target market is not faced by organization since this would have an influence on the ability of the organization to recognize the suitable target market. Furthermore, procedural barriers such as rules and regulations, documentation, tariff and non-tariff barriers are areas where assistance is needed to ensure that these factors do not become further obstacles to exporting. In addition, barriers such as language differences and social cultural differences can also be avoided if organizations take a proactive initiative to learn about them. It is important to ensure that future studies on export barriers reach a level of greater consensus to enrich the existing

body of knowledge in this field. Therefore, continuous effort needs to be made to identify and understand the presence of barriers to exporting.

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