Ai Tran Huu[1]

SEAFOOD EXPORT BARRIERS AT INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

The purpose of this article is to identify the main export barriers and to test empirically their impact on the exports of Vietnam seafood companies targeting the US market. The impact of barriers on exporting firms' performance is analyzed by groups – product barriers, technological, distribution, logistics and procedure barriers. Recommendations on overcoming all these barriers in practical trading are developed.

Keywords: *export barriers; seafood sector; Vietnam.*
JEL classification: M11; F15; O19.

Аі Тран Хуу

ТОРГОВЕЛЬНІ БАР'ЄРИ В МІЖНАРОДНОМУ ЕКСПОРТІ МОРЕПРОДУКТІВ

У статті представлено основні бар'єри в експорті та емпіричним шляхом продемонстровано їх вплив на експорт морепродуктів в'єтнамськими компаніями, що намагаються вийти на ринок США. Вплив бар'єрів досліджено за групами – продуктові бар'єри, технологічні, логістичні та процедурні бар'єри, бар'єри в дистрибуції. Надано рекомендації стосовно подолання всіх описаних бар'єрів у реальній практиці експорту.

Ключові слова: *експортні бар'єри; галузь морепродуктів; В'єтнам.*
Рис. 3. Табл. 9. Літ. 32.

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ТОРГОВЫЕ БАРЬЕРЫ В МЕЖДУНАРОДНОМ ЭКСПОРТЕ МОРЕПРОДУКТОВ

В статье представлены основные барьеры в экспорте и эмпирическим путём продемонстрировано их влияние на экспорт морепродуктов вьетнамскими компаниями, которые пытаются выйти на рынок США. Влияние барьеров исследовано по группам – продуктовые барьеры, технологические, логистические и процедурные барьеры, барьеры в дистрибуции. Представлены рекомендации по преодолению всех описанных барьеров в реальной практике экспорта.

Ключевые слова: *экспортные барьеры; отрасль морепродуктов; Вьетнам.*

Introduction. Export as an important economic activity and a driver of economic development of a nation has widely been acknowledged. In spite of numerous benefits of exporting, most firms do not export despite exporting being considered inevitable at increasingly integrated world markets (Papadopoulos and Martins, 2010). Despite the benefits derived from exporting in a globalized marketplace, for many smaller-sized manufacturers the internationalization path is beset by numerous obstacles. In particular, marketing barriers, such as product, price, distribution, promotion, procedures and logistics, occupy an important position because they often cause financial losses and negative attitudes to international activities (Balabanis, 2000; Leonidou, 2002).

The USA is the biggest export destination of Vietnamese product. In 2014 Vietnam exported 40% of its total exports to the US. Difficulties faced by Vietnamese frozen food export to the US market is mainly related to quality standards required by the US (US, 2012), and these US standards and regulations cover all stages from pro-

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cessing up to exporting. The whole process is monitored very carefully and series of problem could arise during the export process. In addition, the problems faced by Vietnamese seafood exporting companies in the US can be attributed to export barriers (Bari, 2008).

So, the research problem of this study is formulated as: What are the major barriers faced by processing Vietnamese small and medium sized shrimp and pangasius exporting companies at the US market?

Literature review. The USA and Vietnam are presently negotiating a free trade agreement (FTA), which aims to eliminate tariffs within a 7-year time frame. Such an agreement could transform the overall business environment of these economies. W. Bilkey (1978) suggests that if trade agreements between countries and/or economic blocs are to achieve their potential and bestow benefits public policy may be required to help firms in overcoming export problems.

Export marketing performance. Export performance of a firm reflects its behaviour in leveraging its resources and capabilities in the international context at a given point of time. Firm export performance is regarded as one of the key indicators of success of firm's export operations, and as such, it has been an extensively studied phenomenon. Export performance has been widely studied in international business literature (Shoham, 1999). The success of a firm in export marketing activities depends on the attitudes and characteristics of managers. Export marketing knowledge problems can be attributed to a large extent to the lack of trained and experienced human resources. The ideas and results presented in this article would shed light on the correlation between export performance, export barriers, firm size and internal management force.

Export barriers. Export barriers have been broadly classified into internal and external components. While internal barriers consist of company or product related variables, external barriers include industry, market or macro-environment variables (Tesfom and Lutz, 2006). Internal barriers are associated with insufficient organizational resource to export marketing. External export barriers include the imposition of tariff barriers and regulatory import controls by foreign governments, fierce competition, exchange rate fluctuations, limited foreign exchange for international trade, and cultural differences. Results of various studies showed that exporters' sensitivity to barriers at foreign markets is determined through managerial perception that in its turn is affected by underlying factors in relation to the size, resource, and capability of a company and its partnership in export (Suarez, 2003).

The research related to marketing barriers. Marketing barriers refer to the obstacles in firm's overseas activities, related to product quality, technology, distribution, logistics and procedure (Karelakiset et al., 2008). Table 1 shows a comprehensive picture of the effects of marketing barriers on export performance according to a range of studies.

Technical barriers refer to product standards that differ from country to country. These standards can also have the effect of restricting trade. Such standards can include specifications of characteristics of any type of a product and may be established by private or public bodies. Although compliance with these specifications may not be mandatory, the market may still penalize those who do not comply. Technical standards may require that products meet certain requirements before being placed at a market.

Table 1. **The literature review on the effect of marketing barriers on export performance,** *considered by the author*

Literature review	Product barrier	Logistic barrier	Distributive barrier	Precedure barrier	Technology barrier
Leonidou (2004)	X	X	X		X
Kaleka and Katsikeas (1995)	X	X			
Haidari (1999); Neto (1982)		X	X	X	X
Weaver and Pak (1990)	X	X		X	
Kedia and Chhokar (1986)	X	X		X	X
Cheong and Chong (1988)	X			X	
Weaver and Pak (1990)	X		X	X	
Bauerschmidt et al. (1985)	X		X		X

The second export market barrier is export procedures (Haidari, 1999; Weaver and Pak, 1990). One of the most cited obstacles with regard to exporting concerns time and paperwork required to comply with foreign and domestic market regulations. Governments do not solely impose these procedural requirements. In addition, independent organizations such as banks, shipping organizations and insurance companies, have their own procedures. The mere perception of inability to process all paperwork, either because of cumbersomeness or due to lack of time, constitutes a barrier to export.

Logistic barrier is considered as an extensive dimension of a distribution barrier (Karelakis, 2008). This barrier reflects difficulties in supplying inventory at overseas markets, unavailable foreign warehousing facilities, excessive transportation and insurance costs (Kaynak and Kothari, 1984). The lack of financial and human resources and large geographical distances generate many problems for firms in delivering products on time as well as maintaining the storage of products abroad.

The product barrier occurs in developing new products for foreign markets, meeting export product quality standards, adapting export product design/styles, and providing an after-sales service (Leonidou, 2004). Small and medium-sized firms often lack managerial expertise, research skills, R&D competence, and financial resources, thus limiting firms' fulfillment of high-quality standards for products required by foreign markets (Leonidou, 2004). Export market barriers are also related to cultural similarity and brand familiarity.

The distribution barrier refers to complex foreign distribution channels, accessing export distribution channels, obtaining reliable foreign representation and maintaining control over foreign intermediaries, facing difficulties in supplying inventory abroad (Leonidou, 2004). Complexity and length of foreign distribution channels makes it difficult for firms enter international markets. Small and medium-sized firms face a very low to high impact of different facets of the distribution barrier on their export performance.

Theoretical models and hypotheses. Basing on discussions and indepth interviews of experts and business managers, this study explores whether different categories of marketing barriers (products, technologies, distribution, logistics, and procedures) influence export marketing performance in the context of one industry. Because different industries have different success factors and drivers of export marketing performance (Leonidou, 2004), the following hypotheses are suggested:

H1: The products barrier has a negative effect on export marketing performance.

H2: The technologies barrier has a negative effect on export marketing performance.

H3: The distributions barrier has a negative effect on export marketing performance.

H4: The logistics barrier has a negative effect on export marketing performance.

H5: The procedures barrier has a negative effect on export marketing performance.

Table 2. **Measures of variables in the model proposal,** *considered by the author*

Measures	Measures review
Product barrier	Kaleka and Katsikeas (1995); Leonidou, (2004)
Technologies barrier	Christensen et al. (1987); Dicle and Dicle (1992)
Distribution barrier	Keng and Juian (1989); Leonidou (2004)
Logistic barrier	Kaleka and Katsikeas (1995); Yeung (2006)
Procedures barrier	Haidari (1999); Weaver and Pak (1990)
Export marketing performance	Chung (2003); Karunaratna and Johnson (1997)

The theoretical model is shown in Figure 1.

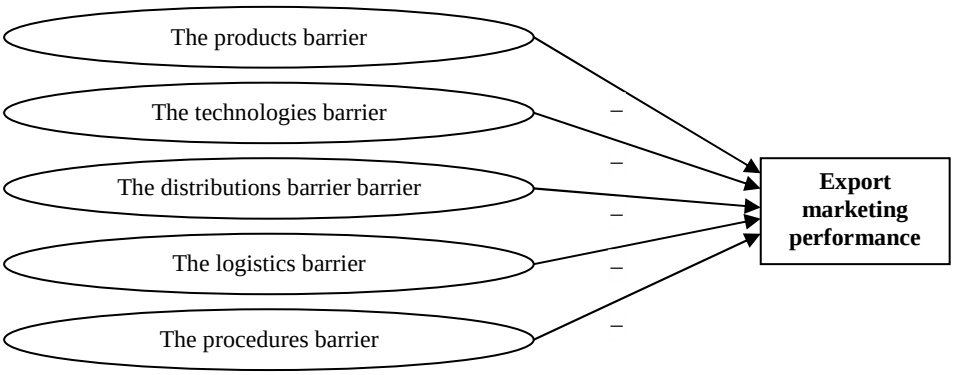

Figure 1. **Theoretical model for further research,** *authors'*

Methodology.

Data analysis. This study uses the exploratory factor analysis (EFA) and confirmatory factors analyses (CFA) and structural equation models (SEM) to test the hypotheses. SEM is clear and testable, thus competing models can be analyzed, synthesized and understood and, their effect whether direct, indirect or both can be investigated (Schumacker and Lomax, 2004).

Reliability and validity. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was determined through calculating the Cronbach's alpha coefficients using stepwise reliability analysis. Internally inconsistent items were sequentially deleted, therefore maximizing the scales' reliability at 0.70 (Sekaran and Bougie, 2010: 325). The Cronbach coefficient alphas were acceptable (exceeds 0.7); this implying that measurement instruments were fairly reliable.

Procedure for data collection. This study aimed to investigate the relationship between export barriers and export performance in the commercial relationship of seafood firms, Vietnam.

Thus, focusing on this industry is expected to generate a comprehensive view of the role of marketing barriers in export performance of Vietnam. In preparation for this study, we focused on 3 key export products: pangasius, shrimp, and surimi. About 300 seafood companies fulfilled the criteria and operate mainly in the south of Vietnam.

Quantitative research methods are used in this study. Theoretical models have 5 independent concept measured by 24 observed concepts and 1 dependent concept measured by 3 observed concepts. Scale concepts studied in theoretical models are multivariate ones. The observed concepts are measured on the 7-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 7 = strongly agree). To ensure that the questionnaire's contents and design are unambiguously understood by respondents, it was pre-tested by 7 experts. The questionnaire was then mailed to managers of these firms.

A survey questionnaire was sent by e-mail to business managers of 300 seafood companies with labor numbers over 300. In order to increase the response ratio, the firms' managers were contacted by phone to confirm their participation in the survey. Of 300 questionnaires dispatched, 246 usable responses were received, representing an effective response rate of 82%. SPSS 22.0 and Amos 22.0 were used as statistical software for further analyses.

Description of the survey. The data collected from 246 seafood exporters in Vietnam with the characteristics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. **The sample of seafood exporters in Vietnam,** *author's research*

Ownership	**Quantity**	**%**
Stock enterprises	104	42.27
Private enterprises	142	57.73
Size	**Quantity**	**100.00**
300 < Firm < 500 labours	138	56.10
Over 500 labours	108	43.90
Total	**246**	**100.00**

The results of the EFA, summarized in Table 4, showed 24 variations observed in 5 components of the enterprise performance scale and retained 5 factors with 20 observed concepts. There are 4 items of the excluded observed concepts: *the product barrier 6, the technology barrier 4, the logistic barrier 4, and the logistic barrier 5.*

After excluding the 4 concepts, the EFA results 5 factors of enterprise scale. As KMO coefficient = 0.853, EFA matches the data and the statistical test Chi-quare Bertlett 2324.641 worth 0.000 significance level. Thus, the observed concepts are correlated with each other considering the overall scope. The variance extracted by 70.028 shows that factors derived from 70.028% explained data variance, eigenvalues in the system by 1.268. Therefore, the scale draw is acceptable. The scales have observed concepts excluded by of EFA, the Cronbach's alpha coefficients were recalculated, and the results achieved reliability requirements.

Confirming factor analysis (CFA). The correlation coefficient between the components with accompanying standard deviation (Table 5) shows us these coefficients are less than 1 (with statistical significance). Therefore, the components: products barrier, technologies barrier, logistics barrier, procedures barrier and distributions barrier are worth distinguishing.

Table 4. **Construct, factor loadings, and reliability (EFA),** *author's research in SPSS 22.0*

Pattern Matrix[a]					
	Component				
	1	2	3	4	5
Knowledge and skills to deal with procedures	0.889				
Foreign business practices are difficult to understand	0.862				
High value of foreign currency in export markets	0.789				
Confusing foreign import regulations and procedures	0.672				
Customs procedures inadequate	0.654				
Complexity of foreign distribution		0.897			
Accessing, maintaining, and controlling		0.790			
Obtaining reliable foreign representation		0.789			
Cost high bonded warehouse		0.686			
Developing and producing new products			0.810		
Meeting strict quality standards			0.802		
Adapting export product design/styles			0.699		
Product compliance, product strengths			0.698		
Availability of after-sales service			0.503		
Technology updates				0.983	
New manufacturing techniques				0.980	
Advanced equipment				0.690	
High insurance fees					0.900
Excessive transportation costs					0.857
Renting suitable transportation means					0.828

Table 5. **Results of testing the value of distinguishing between the components of the scale,** *author's calculations in SPSS 22.0*

Correlation	R	S.E.	C.R.	P-value
Procedure <--> Distribution	0.583	0.157	5.302	***
Procedure <--> Product	0.488	0.114	4.197	***
Procedure <--> Technology	0.319	0.148	3.803	***
Procedure <--> Logistic	0.453	0.121	4.804	***
Distribution <--> Product	0.575	0.148	4.434	***
Distribution <--> Technology	0.216	0.168	2.650	0.008
Distribution <--> Logistic	0.392	0.140	4.178	***
Product <--> Technology	0.305	0.132	3.273	0.001
Product <--> Logistic	0.306	0.101	3.127	0.002
Technology <--> Logistic	0.228	0.148	2.861	0.004

Regarding the relevance general, linear structural analysis shows this valuable model chi-squared statistic is 184.314 with 94 degrees of freedom and the value of $p = 0.000$. Chi-squared relative degrees of freedom according Cmin/df was 1,961 (< 2). Other indicators such as TLI = 0.930 (> 0.9), CFI = 0.945 (> 0.9) and RMSEA = 0.069 (<0.08). Therefore, this model fit the data collected. This also allows draw individual judgments about the direction of the observed variables. About values converge, the standardized weights of the scales are > 0.5 with statistical significance $p < 0.05$, so the scale achieved the convergence value.

Structural equation model results. Table 6 shows the results of the goodness of fit test for the two constructs, namely, export barrier and export marketing performance and the resultant structural models from the two data sets. From the AMOS output reflected in Table 6, it is clear that the model fitted the data well, and therefore the proposed model was adequate in explaining the relationship between the variables.

Table 6. **Results of the AMOS analyses of the resultant models,** *author's calculations in SPSS 22.0*

Goodness of fit measures										
Model	**X^2**	**df**	**p**	**X2/df (CMIN/DF)**	**RMSEA**	**NFI**	**RFI**	**IFI**	**TLI**	**CFI**
Sample	185.314	94	0.000	1.682	.058	.905	.902	.960	.945	.959
.959 Criteria	P > .05 (non-significant)	≥ 0	-	2 to 3	<.08	>.90	>.90	>.90	>.90	>.90

Note: X^2 – chi-square test; df = degrees of freedom; RMSEA – Root mean square error of approximation; NFI – Normed Fit Index; RFI – Relative Fit Index; IFI – Incremental Fit Index; TLI – Tucker-Lewis Index; CFI – Comparative Fit Index.

The relationship between export marketing performance and export barriers. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was performed to explore the relationship between the structure of export marketing performance and export barriers. Tests on the basic relationship between the elements (products barrier, technologies barrier, customers barrier, procedures barrier and distributions barrier) and export marketing performance have been run.

The results show that this model valuable chi-squared statistics is 173.244 with 103 degrees of freedom (p = 0.000). Chi-squared relative degrees of freedom accordingly CMIN/DF was 1.682 (< 2). Other indicators are TLI = 0.910 (> 0.9), CFI = 0.925 (> 0.9) and RMSEA = 0.058 (<0.08). Therefore, this model achieved the compatibility with data already collected. However, technology barrier were excluded from the model because of no statistical significance at the 95% confidence level for P = 0.170 value (> 0.05). The remaining factors include products barrier (ES = -0.522; P = 0.000); logistics barrier (ES = -0.181; P = 0.041), distributions barrier (ES = -0.238; P = 0.020) and procedures barrier (ES = -0.263; P = 0.022) had P values < 0.05 and the estimated values are normalized, so negative they have direct influence and negative full value.

Table 7. **Causal relationships between the factors of export barriers,** *author's calculations in SPSS AMOS 22.0*

Relations	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
EMP <--- Procedure	-0.263	0.115	-2.286	0.022	accepted
EMP <--- Distribution	-0.238	0.102	-2.328	0.020	accepted
EMP <--- Product	-0.552	0.154	-3.582	0.000	accepted
EMP <--- Logistics	-0.181	0.089	-2.046	0.041	accepted
EMP <--- Technology	-0.073	0.053	-1.372	0.170	not accepted

The results show that the model last calibration value chi-squared statistics is 131.915 with 79 degrees of freedom (p = 0.000). Chi-squared relative degrees of freedom according Cmin/df was 1.670 (< 2). Other indicators such as GFI = 0.923

(> 0.9), TLI = 0.945 (> 0.9), CFI = 0.959 (> 0.9) and RMSEA = 0.058 (< 0.08). Therefore, this model achieved the compatibility with the data already collected.

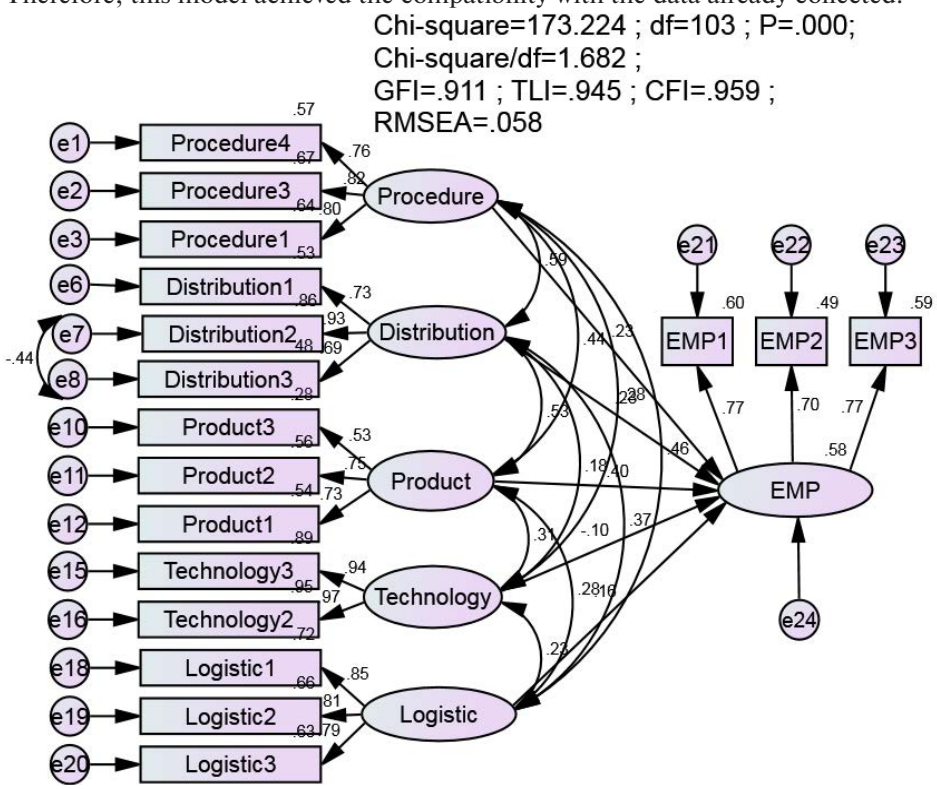

Figure 2. **The results of the model structure,** *author's calculations in SPSS AMOS 22.0*

Testing the reliability of estimates by bootstrap. Bootstrap method is used to test the model estimates, the last model with the pattern repeat is N = 1000. The estimation results are averaged together with deviations and are presented in Table 9, it can be said that the deviation is very small while not statistically significant at the 95% confidence level. Thus, we can conclude that the model estimates can be trusted.

As a result of testing the hypotheses for export marketing performance, the hypothesis H1, H2, H3 and H4 of the export barrier have the same direction relationship with the export marketing performance and are accepted. There are 4 relationships worth theoretically.

Conclusion.

1. Results and discussion. This study extends the previous studies (Leonidou, 2000) by analyzing and assessing the impact of trade barriers (product, technology, distribution, logistics and procedure) of export performance. The study used the data from the fishery industry of Vietnam, while the previous studies were conducted mainly in Western countries.

The results confirm the negative relationship between products barrier for export performance (ES = -0.552, p = 0.000 < 0.05). This result is consistent with most previous studies (Karelakis et al., 2008).

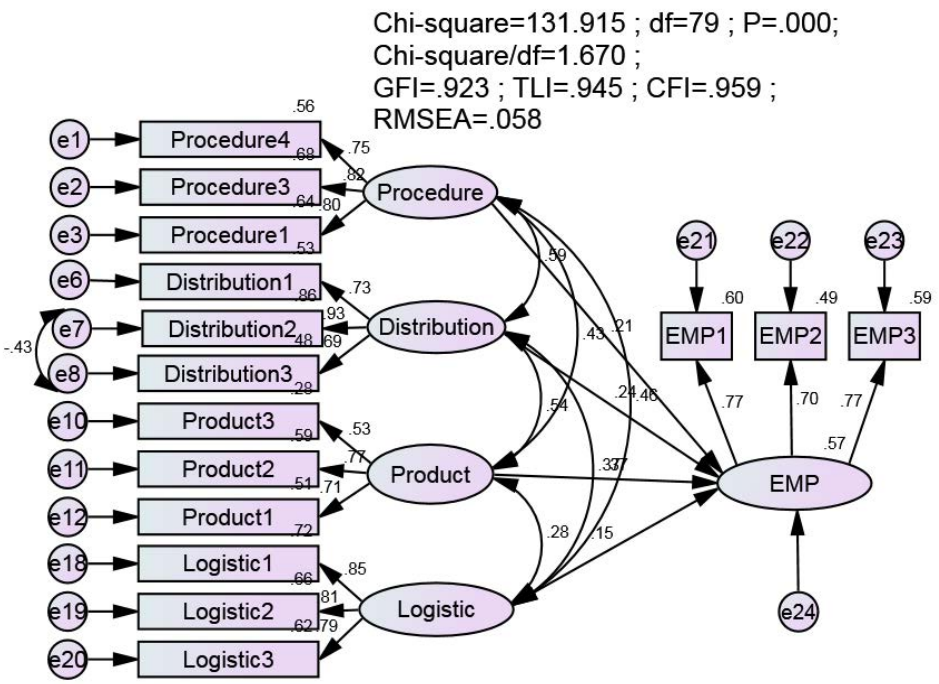

Figure 3. **The results of the model structure last calibrated SEM,** *author's calculations in SPSS AMOS 22.0*

Table 8. **Results of estimating causal relationships between the element,** *author's calculations in SPSS AMOS 22.0*

Relations	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
EMP <--- Procedure	-0.263	0.115	-2.286	0.022	accepted
EMP <--- Distribution	-0.238	0.102	-2.328	0.020	accepted
EMP <--- Product	-0.552	0.154	-3.582	0.000	accepted
EMP <--- Logistics	-0.181	0.089	-2.046	0.041	accepted

Table 9. **Results estimated by bootstrap,** *author's calculations in SPSS AMOS 22.0*

Parameter	Estimated standard			Estimated bootstrap			
	Estimate	SE	SE-SE	Mean	Bias	SE-Bias	CR
EMP <--- Procedure	-0.247	0.142	0.003	0.257	-0.010	0.004	-2.500
EMP <--- Distribution	-0.249	0.134	0.003	0.257	-0.008	0.004	-2.000
EMP <--- Product	-0.519	0.200	0.004	0.507	-0.012	0.006	-2.000
EMP <--- Logistics	-0.173	0.099	0.002	0.16	-0.014	0.003	-4.667

The findings show a negative effect of the procedures barrier on export marketing performance (ES = -0.263, p = 0.022 < 0.05). This result is similar to those of most previous studies (Leonidou, 2000; Leonidou, 2004). This study confirms the product barrier to be the most important predictor of export performance of seafood companies in. The procedures barrier is found to be the second most important pre-

dictor of export performance in the industry. It is argued that in the context of venture management characteristics, firm's capabilities and constraints (strengths & weaknesses) influence the choice of marketing strategy and the ability to execute a chosen strategy (Aaker, 1988).

The presented results also confirm a negative relationship between the distribution barrier and export marketing performance (ES = -0.238, p = 0.020 < 0.05). This result is consistent with most previous studies (Leonidou, 2002). Although the distribution barrier's impact on export performance is weaker than that of the product and price barriers, the magnitude of its effect is relatively strong. In fact, most export markets in the seafood industry are in developed countries. Therefore, this complexity of the distribution systems creates serious difficulties for firms.

The findings also reveal a negative effect of the logistics barrier on export marketing performance (ES = -0.181, p = 0.041 < 0.05). This result is consistent with (Katsikeas, 2008). Although the export revenue has continuously increased in recent years, the export markets of firms focus mainly on the US, the EU, and Japan; geographical distance increases transportation costs and is also limiting the ability to supply adequately. In addition, most firms have no warehousing facilities abroad. Thus, the flow of products to host markets is not constant and is sometimes delayed. As a result, the logistics barrier can decrease firms' competitiveness at international markets.

Finally, the results do not support a negative relationship between technology barrier and export marketing performance (ES = -0.073, p = 0.170 > 0.05). This result is inconsistent with some previous studies (Koksal and Kettaneh, 2011). However, it is worth noting that although the effect of the technology barrier on export performance is not significant, this barrier correlates highly with other marketing barriers. Thus, its effect on export performance may occur indirectly through other barriers, such as product, price, or distribution. As a result, it would be a mistake to ignore the role of this barrier in export performance. In fact, not many seafood firms in Vietnam can carry out their technology strategy effectively.

2. Implications for practical trading. This study has implications for management of commercial and industrial sector. First, seafood companies should pay attention to various trade barriers to reduce or improve export performance. Despite the importance of each type of barriers, as well as every aspect of every category, most of the aspects of trade barriers play a certain role in export performance. This means that managers and traders should have a comprehensive view of the limitations from barriers to trade mixed strategy. The use of common resources can be a good solution to overcome institutional barriers in trading internationally.

As far as adapting to foreign market needs is concerned, the study findings have shown that managers of export firms should make efforts to adapt their products/services to meet the needs of local markets to achieve success in their exports. Specifically, differences in product usage at various foreign markets, language and cultural differences, the need to modify pricing and promotional policies according to foreign market conditions and foreign customer preferences – all require management's attention. Export managers must be aware of the importance of adapting their products/services to meet the needs of local markets and refrain from opting for a globally standardized product/service.

Export assistance and promotion programs are designed to help Vietnamese seafood export industry, and those programs have evolved to encourage exports by small to medium sized firms. From the firm perspective, the programs are designed to bridge information gaps about international markets and assist in the initial pursuit.

3. Suggestions for further research. Further research should be conducted into the effects of these barriers to export on export marketing performance using a much larger sample in a different national setting to validate the findings of this study and to see if the measures developed here are statistically reliable and valid across different national settings. Future studies would benefit from exploring other barriers (e.g., firm's capabilities, experience of staff, informational or environmental) that also affect export performance. The results presented here are based on self-reported measures of export performance related to Vietnamese seafood industry. Objective measures of export performance could be used to increase the generalizability of the study.

Finally, this study has contributed to a more comprehensive understanding of the barriers to export that impact export marketing performance. Export venture management characteristics and adapting to foreign market needs have emerged as the key barriers to export that impact export marketing performance significantly.

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