

# Organisational determinants as antecedent factors of export marketing strategy archetypes of agri-food firms: a three country analysis

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## Abstract

**Purpose** - This paper researches export marketing strategy (EMS) archetypes, and organizational determinants that pose as antecedent factors of theirs, for agri-food exporters from three countries, two developing and one developed but still in prolonged economic crisis, with a threefold objective: to define hitherto used EMS, to compare identified EMS with archetypes taken from literature, and to examine differences of various groups of agri-food exporters based on researched, organizational determinants.

**Design/methodology/approach** - Methodological rigour grounded on comparative research design, quantitative methodology, descriptive and causal data analyses was employed. EMS archetypes were portrayed on radial plots, while six hypotheses were tested by use of MANOVA.

**Findings** - Different EMS archetypes were identified in researched countries, and diversity of EMS archetypes were found due to the effect of organizational determinants, confirming their ambivalent impact on depending resources, capabilities, and contingencies firms have faced.

**Research limitations/implications** - Several limitations are inherent in this paper, including *inter alia* those arisen from the paper's theoretical background, concentration only on organizational determinants, the research's cross-sectional nature, and use of self-report data from managers. Nevertheless, numerous practical implications are defined, so revealing the general recommendation that researched settings require flexible and adaptable EMS.

**Originality/value** - To our knowledge this paper is the first to apply EMS an archetype perspective in the agri-food industry in a developing country context and in an economic crisis context. It integrated resource-based, dynamic capability, and contingency theories to extend understanding of agri-food firms' EMS and organizational determinants.

**Keywords** agri-food industry, export marketing strategy, organizational determinants, Belarus, Greece, Serbia

**Paper type** Research paper

## 1. Introduction

Over the past two decades world food exports have increased on average by seven percent per year and exceeded 1.8 trillion of USD, marking export as being a matter of firms' viabilities and growth (World Trade Organization, 2020; Fernandez-Olmos and Diez-Vial, 2014; Serrano *et al.*, 2016). This has made understanding of agri-food firms' export behaviour and its determinants important not only for scholars, but also

for managers and policy-makers (Fernandez-Olmos and Diez-Vial, 2014; Karipidis *et al.*, 2020).

When compared to other industries it stands out that there is insufficient empirical knowledge about agri-food firms export behavior (Ibeh, 2005; Fernandez-Olmos and Diez-Vial, 2014; Serrano, *et al.*, 2016). Recent studies focused on reasons for direct/indirect exporting (Fernandez-Olmos and Diez-Vial, 2014), entry costs (Kandilov and Zheng, 2011), competitiveness (Bojnec and Ferto, 2017), role of innovation (Ghazalian and Furtan, 2007), networking (Serrano *et al.*, 2016), relationship within {the} supply chain (Karipidis *et al.*, 2020), co-operation in distribution (Galdeano-Gomez *et al.*, 2015), marketing and financial barriers (Sudarevic *et al.*, 2017), phenomenon of food culture distance (Azar, 2014). Some studies researched determinants of agri-food exporters' strategic marketing behavior, but they examined one country or single product (Karelakis *et al.*, 2008; Mavrogiannis *et al.*, 2008; Ibeh, 2005; Sudarevic *et al.*, 2015).

Considering the aforementioned, purpose of this paper is to research export marketing strategy (EMS) and organizational determinants that pose as its antecedent factors for agri-food exporters from three countries, two developing and one developed in prolonged economic crisis. The research setting of the aforementioned purpose of this paper was chosen due to several reasons. There are numerous appeals for paying more attention to EMS of firms from developing countries due to the uncertain environments they operate in, infrastructural and informational problems, and their possession of limited resources and capabilities (Samiee and Chirapanda, 2019; Ipek, 2020; Rana *et al.*, 2020). One developed country still in prolonged crisis was researched because crisis requires new strategic decisions for a reality in which uncertainty and complexity are growing (Ang *et al.*, 2000). Moreover, a changed environment limits firms' resources and capabilities, causes drops in profit, raises production cost, decreases employment, and requires changes in EMS (Beliaeva *et al.*, 2020; Koksal and Ozgul, 2007). Additionally, the impact of crisis on the agri-food sector has rarely been taken into consideration. Traditionally it has been seen as an anti-cyclic sector, but nowadays its integration into global economy and finance changes such a consideration (Crescimanno *et al.*, 2014). Furthermore, the majority of previous research has been focused on the macroeconomic effects of crises, neglecting firm level and impact on strategies related to organizational determinants (Calvo-Porrall *et al.*, 2016; Notta and Vlachvei, 2017; Koksal and Ozgul, 2007).

This paper paid attention only to organizational determinants because they cover key assets and competencies of a firm, having a vital role in developing countries context and crisis environment (Ipek, 2020; Koksal and Ozgul, 2007; Notta and Vlachvei, 2017). Firm size, export experience and export product type pose as the most researched organizational determinants (Tan and Sousa, 2013; Ipek, 2020; Serrano *et al.*, 2016). This paper expanded their number by adding capital ownership, export intensity, and export dynamism as less researched determinants (Bernard *et al.*, 2012; Ipek, 2020; Chen *et al.*, 2016). In attempt to omit particularity, our focus was not strategies for isolated elements of marketing mix, but whole EMS (Samiee and Chirapanda, 2019; Theodosiou and Leonidou, 2003; Chung *et al.*, 2012). Moreover, EMS has been usually researched in the context of market offering, from an organizational structure point of view, or competitive aspect, whereas this paper

employed a rarely applied, archetypical perspective that treats EMS as structural pattern of behavior (Lim *et al.*, 2006; Venaik and Midgley, 2019).

The objective of this paper is threefold: 1) to explore and define EMS in chosen research setting by descriptive analysis; 2) to compare identified EMS with archetypes drawn from literature; 3) to examine differences in EMS archetypes of various grouping of agri-food exporters based on researched organizational determinants. To fulfill the stated purpose and objectives, methodological rigor grounded on comparative research design, quantitative methodology with primary data collection by survey, descriptive and causal data analyses were employed.

## **2. Theoretical background and hypotheses development**

Research discussing strategic marketing behavior in the agri-food industry represents one of crucial importance to the whole agri-food economic (Cotterill and Westgren, 1994). Organizational behavior studies have indicate that interactions between firms and their environments they operate in are internally and externally instigated, so firms represent adaptive entities which modify their behavior throughout interactions with a changing environment, depending on their organizational determinants (Schneider, 1983; Kilduff, 1992). In that sense, marketing strategy reflect the strategic behavior in a turbulent business environment (Koksal and Ozgul, 2007).

In order to achieve business goals, its EMS includes a a firm's decisions about marketing mix elements incorporated in the complete plan of exporting, with the aim of fitting internal organizational determinants to external circumstances (Ipek, 2020; Cavusgil and Zou, 1994). EMS is usually considered through standardization/adaptation, concentration/dispersion or integration/independence dilemmas, and some scholars indicated that such approaches did not represent EMS's integrative character (Lim *et al.*, 2006). A solution is to research EMS by following the idea of "configuration as strategy", and portray it through archetypes (Vorhies and Morgan, 2003; Venaik and Midgley, 2019). In international business, especially in field of agri-food firms' internationalization, this term is rarely employed even it may cover a broader scope of EMS, so making a possibility for model building (Lim *et al.*, 2006; Venaik and Midgley, 2019). Previous research identified several EMS archetypes: two pure archetypes, unification and localization, and several mixed - Bartlett-Ghoshal, Venaik-Midgley, Global Marketers, Infrastructural Minimalist, and Tactical Coordinator archetypes (Venaik and Midgley, 2019; Lim *et al.*, 2006).

The resource-based, dynamic capabilities, and contingency theories are commonly used in any explanation of EMS, and they state that strategy is dependent upon various organization-level and environment-level factors (Safari and Saleh, 2020; Ipek, 2020; Chen *et al.*, 2016; Cotterill and Westgren, 1994). The resource-based theory indicates that a firm's strategy depends on its resources, dynamic capabilities theory explains that appropriate deployment and integration of resources in capabilities leads to superior performance while contingency theory suggests that successful strategy has to fit a firm's internal determinants with its external environment (Morgan *et al.*, 2004; Calantone *et al.*, 2006). This leads to the conclusion that these mentioned theories are not mutually exclusive, but are addressing what are different aspects of researched phenomena (Safari and Saleh, 2020; Savino and Shafiq, 2018).

The importance of organizational determinants in developing countries and in economic crisis environments arises from the fact that they reflect demographic, operating, resource, goal and objective characteristics of exporting firm and only exporters which possess adequate and sufficient organizational determinants can develop and sustain a -creating EMS (Katsikeas *et al.*, 2000; Morgan *et al.*, 2006). Numerous organizational determinants, often seen as antecedent factors of EMS due to their crucial impact on organization, were identified in literature, but only a small number of them have been empirically researched (Theodosiou and Leonidou, 2003). Firm size, export experience, and export product type have been frequently researched in previous studies (Tan and Sousa, 2013; Ipek, 2020; Fernandez-Olmos and Diez-Vial, 2014; Serrano, 2016; Safari and Saleh, 2020). However, they have rarely researched in the agri-food industry context. Simultaneously, various scholars have considered that more organizational determinants have to be scrutinized; among others capital ownership, export intensity, and export dynamism have been mentioned as less researched (Bernard *et al.*, 2012; Ipek, 2020; Chen *et al.*, 2016).

Firm size is usually connected with more resources and capabilities, economy of scale, and better absorbing of foreign market risks, hence numerous scholars indicated that large firms have different EMSs from do small and medium firms (Chen *et al.*, 2016; Serrano *et al.*, 2016; Tan and Sousa, 2013; Chung *et al.*, 2012). The impact of export experience on EMS is usually considered by maxim "learning by doing", thus unlike less experienced exporters more experienced ones often use experience in foreign markets for better positioning and communication with consumers and intermediaries (Chung *et al.*, 2012; Tan and Sousa, 2013). Industrial products exporters recognize that their products have a similar purpose internationally, they are less sensitive to the tastes, cultural norms and export infrastructure compared to those procucers of consumer goods, and consequently they often follow a unified strategy (Cavusgil and Zou 1994; Chung *et al.*, 2012; Tan and Sousa, 2013). Foreign-owned firms, operating in developing countries or in an economic crisis environment, were to be found more export oriented and to have better access to various resources when compared to domestically-owned firms, which have ownership impact export behavior and EMS (Ciszewska-Mlinaric and Trapczynski, 2020; Kolasa, *et al.*, 2010). Export intensity, as a measure of 's involvement in exporting, is usually associated with a higher degree of marketing know-how regarding product development, performance, and customer orientation, hence firms with a higher export intensity differ from firms with a lower level of export intensity, because low level of export intensity usually indicates absence of firm commitment to exporting and extension of domestic marketing strategy abroad (Pla-Barber and Alegre, 2007; Ellis *et al.*, 2011; Kneller and Pisu, 2011). Additionally, firms that are engaged in exporting on a regular basis are more likely to set a flexible and market-oriented export pricing policy, pay more attention to export market research, and have more control over distribution, while sporadic exporters concentrate on the domestic market, often using rigid, cost-based export prices, so allowing total control of distribution to intermediaries (Samiee and Walters, 1991; Katsikeas, 1996).

Based on the above, the following hypotheses were formed:

*H1*. Firm size causes differences in agri-food exporters EMS.

H2. Export experience causes differences in agri-food exporters EMS.

H3. Export product type causes differences in agri-food exporters EMS.

H4. Capital ownership causes differences in agri-food exporters EMS.

H5. Export intensity causes differences in agri-food exporters EMS.

H6. Export dynamism causes differences in agri-food exporters EMS.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Research design, setting and units of analysis**

Comparative research design, quantitative methodology, and an e-mail survey were employed with the intention of indicating similarities and differences regarding the research topic in a multi-country context, to provide precise and measurable data, and to ensure flexibility and speed in the data collection process (Buckley and Chapman, 1998). The three countries, Belarus, Greece, and Serbia were subjected to research following the criteria of relevance, independence, and comparability for units of macro analysis in international business research, overcoming limitations of single-country analysis (Craig and Douglas, 2005, pp. 153-156; Chen *et al.*, 2016). Agri-food export profiles of chosen countries are presented in Table 1.

*(insert Table 1 around here)*

As presented data have indicated, the three countries have similarities in potential for agri-food development and exporting, but there are many differences between them, especially in main export products and export destinations.

Listings of agri-food exporters were drawn from databases of the Belarusian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Panhellenic Export Association and the Ministry of Agriculture of Serbia. The total of 900 firms were selected, i.e. the 300 biggest agri-food exporters of each country. After initial emailing and three follow-ups, a total of 276 completed questionnaires were obtained, 72 from Belarus, 95 from Greece, and 109 from Serbia. This resulted in total response rates of 30.67%, i.e. 24% for Belarus, 31.66% for Greece, and 36.33% for Serbia. All potential respondents were asked to fill the questionnaire having in mind their most important agri-food product in their most important market due to advantages of usage of the export venture as a unit of analysis in accordance with earlier research (Oliveira *et al.*, 2012).

#### **3.3. Measurement**

Measurements of independent variables, i.e. organisational determinants, were replicated from previous studies. Firm size was measured by the number of employees and annual sale (Pla-Barber and Alegre, 2007). Export experience was measured by years of involvement in exporting, while firms were divided into exporters of industrial products and consumer products export product type (Cavusgil

and Zou, 1994; Chung *et al.*, 2012). Domestically-owned and foreign-owned firms were identified by capital ownership (Ciszewska-Mlinaric and Trapczynski 2020; Kolasa *et al.*, 2010). Export intensity was measured by percentage of foreign sales (Kneller and Pisu, 2011; Pla-Barber and Alegre, 2007). For export dynamism, sporadic and regular exporters were spotted (Samiee and Walters, 1991; Katsikeas, 1996).

EMS as dependent variable was measured by use of a five-point STRATADAPT scale, to indicate differences between strategy for domestic and main export market (Lages *et al.*, 2008). This scale was chosen because of good dimensionality, validity and reliability, and previous usage in multi-industry and multi-country contexts (Hagen *et al.*, 2012; Asseraf and Shoham, 2019).

### **3.4. Data collection procedure and analysis**

The questionnaire contained two parts, first focussed on firms' organisational determinants and second using a STRATADAPT scale. Originally developed in English, it was translated to Russian, Greek, and Serbian languages and pre-tested with six scholars, experts from the field, and 15 senior export/marketing managers, and only small adjustments in wording to some categories and items were required. The questionnaire was emailed to managers in top/middle positions, responsible for exporting and EMS, offering participants a summary of the study's results to encourage participation.

EMS archetypes were identified by descriptive statistics as the dominant method used in analyzing the degree of EMS unification/localization in previous studies and portrayed on radial plots (Theodosiou and Leonidou, 2003; Venaik and Midgley, 2019). Specified hypotheses were tested with multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA) because in survey research it enables accessing the effects of each level of independent variable on dependent variables (Hair *et al.*, 2019, p. 372).

## **4. Preliminary analysis**

The objectives of the preliminary analysis were to describe data, to explore existence of equivalence due to the multi-country context of research, to check possible biases, and to test assumptions of MANOVA, ensuring a possibility for drawing correct conclusions from findings to be obtained (Hult *et al.*, 2008; Verma and Abdel-Salam, 2019).

As is presented in Table 2, in each of three data-sets the majority of the respondents were large firms, domestically-owned, with export experience from 11 to 24 years, which exported consumer products with export intensity of more than 51%, and belonging to the group of regular exporters.

*(insert Table 2 around here)*

Collected data equivalence was tested by accessing absence of large differences in total of 15 sub-levels of independent variables. The Friedman test result,  $\chi^2(2) =$

0.133,  $p = 0.936$ , with calculated mean rank of 2.000 for Belarus, 2.000 for Greece, and 1.930 for Serbia, indicated presence of data-sets equivalence.

Results of t-tests showed that there were no statistically significant differences at the level of  $p < .050$  in any of six researched independent variables between groups of early and late respondents. Results of Harman's single factor test showed that only 26.639 % of variance in the Belarusian data-set, 41.126% of variance in the Greek dataset, and 31.082 % of the variance in the Serbian dataset could be explained by a single factor. Additionally, findings of common latent factor technique indicated statistically significant results for all three data-sets at the level of  $p < .050$ , for Belarus  $\chi^2(9) = 36.015$ , for Greece  $\chi^2(9) = 41.030$ . and for Serbia  $\chi^2(9) = 22.945$ , with poor goodness-of-fit indices. Those testings indicated absence of non-response and common method bias in the conducted research (Armstrong and Overton, 1977; Fuller *et al.*, 2015; Hair *et al.*, p. 642).

As is shown in Table 2 dimensionality, validity and reliability of STRATADAPT scale were accessed by calculating convergent validity, internal consistency/reliability, composite reliability, percentage of variance explained, number of factor extracted, average variance extracted, and square root of average variance extracted, following recommendations from literature (Izquierdo *et al.*, 2014; Lloret *et al.*, 2014). Following rules of thumb that acceptable values are  $\lambda > .400$ ,  $\alpha > .700$ ,  $\rho > .600$ , with more than 60% of variance explained, and minimum number of factor extracted, it was concluded that the measurement scale showed acceptable validity, reliability, and dimensionality in researched data-sets (Hair *et al.*, 2019, p. 151; 161; 663). Additionally, calculated correlations among each construct of the scale, which ranged in the Belarusian dataset up to .705, in Greek dataset up to .517, and in the Serbian dataset up to .699, were lower than appropriate square roots of  $\rho_{vc(n)}$  values, which confirmed the scale's discriminant validity (Fornell and Larcker 1981; Bagozzi and Yi, 2012).

MANOVA assumptions, regarding the nature of variables, sample size, independence of observations, linearity, multivariate normality, absence of heteroscedasticity, multicollinearity, univariate and multivariate outliers, and homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices, were tested and evaluated in accordance with appropriate rules of thumb (Hair *et al.*, 2019, pp. 381, 398-399; Tabachnick and Fidell, 2014, pp. 292-295; Pituch and Stevens, 2016, pp. 76; 108-112; 220-235). Variable appropriateness was satisfied, because dependent variables were measured on the continuous STRATADAPT scale, while independent variables had at least two sub-levels and a categorical nature. Data-sets adequateness was met because there were more cases in each group of independent variable than in the number of analyzed dependent variables. Individually administered questionnaire mode to each respondents excluded possibility for their interactions, satisfying independence of observations. Constructed Q-Q and P-P plots for dependent variables indicated linearity and multivariate normality. Obtained VIF and TOL values, in the Belarusian dataset VIF = 1.212-2.215, TOL = .475-.825, in the Greek dataset VIF = 1.104-1.541, TOL = .649-.906, and in the Serbian dataset VIF = 1.560-2.415, TOL = .414-.641, confirmed absence of multicollinearity. Calculated Mahalanobis distance  $D^2$  values for Belarusian dataset 10.371, for Greek dataset 8.878 and for Serbian dataset of 13.961, implied absence of multivariate outliers, following the corresponding critical value of  $\chi^2 = 18.47$  for  $df = 4$  and  $\alpha = .001$ . Results of Levene's test and Box M test showed

violations of homogeneity of variance-covariance matrices assumption, which indicated MANOVA results have to be reported using only the value of Pillai's trace statistic  $V$  due its robustness (Tabachnick and Fidell, 2013, pp. 294; Pituch and Stevens, 2016, p.242).

## **5. Research findings**

Data presented on radial plots in Table 3 showed that agri-food exporters from Belarus, Greece, and Serbia used different EMS archetypes. Serbian firms' EMS is characterized by high unification of product, medium localization for price and distribution, and low localization for promotion. Belarusian firms use the same archetype, but with a lower level of unification for product and higher level of localization for other elements of EMS. The Greek firms' employed EMS archetype localized in all elements. In terms of archetypes previously identified in literature, The EMS of Serbian and Belarusian agri-food exporters may be treated as variants of the Venaik-Midgley archetype that has product unification, localized price, promotion less localized than price, and distribution localized more than promotion, while the EMS of Greek agri-food exporters represent pure localized archetype.

*(insert Table 3 around here)*

A series of MANOVA, with an additional examination of the coefficients for the linear combinations and insight in mean values, were conducted to assess the effect of six independent variables on EMS archetypes. Obtained results presented in the rest of Table 3 led to the rejection of H6 in the Belarusian, H1 the Greek and both H1 and H6 in the Serbian case.

The effect of firm size exists only in the Belarusian case. Small firms' distribution, promotion, and product strategies distinguished differences the most. Those firms almost extended their EMS from domestic market abroad opting for unification, while medium and large firms use a Tactical Coordinator archetype.

The effect of export experience exists in all researched countries. In Belarus, promotion and product strategies of firms with export experience less than five years distinguished differences the most. Those firms almost extended their EMS from domestic market abroad opting for unification, while more experienced firms use Tactical Coordinator archetype. In the Greece, product and promotion strategies of firms with export experience less than five years and firms with export experience between 6 and 10 years distinguished differences the most. Those firms opt for unified strategies for product and promotion, localizing price and distribution, while more experienced firms use Tactical Coordinator archetype. In Serbia, EMS of firms with export experience less than five years is unified, while more experienced exporters use the Venaik-Midgley archetype.

The effect of export product type exists in all researched countries, too. In Belarus, price strategy of industrial products exporters distinguished differences the most. Those firms use the Tactical Coordinator archetype, while exporters of consumer products use the Venaik-Midgley archetype. In Greece, product strategy of industrial products exporters distinguished differences the most. Those firms use the Tactical Coordinator archetype, while consumer products exporters use localization archetype. In Serbia,



distribution and promotion strategies of industrial products exporters distinguished differences the most. Those firms use the Infrastructural Minimalist archetype, while consumer products exporters use the Tactical Coordinator archetype.

The effect of capital ownership exists in all researched countries, also. In all three cases particular strategies of domestically-owned firms distinguished differences the most. In Belarus those firms use more localized promotion and product strategies, opting for pure localization archetype, while foreign-owned firms use the Tactical Coordinator archetype. In Greece those firms use more localized promotion strategy, opting for localization archetype, while foreign-owned firms use the Tactical Coordinator archetype. In Serbia those firms use more localized distribution, promotion, and price strategies and low product unification opting for the Tactical Coordinator archetype, while foreign-owned firms use the Infrastructural Minimalist archetype.

The effect of export intensity exists in all researched countries, likewise. In Belarus price, promotion, and product strategies of firms with export intensity less than 15% and from 15-50% distinguished differences the most. Those firms use pure localization archetype, while firms with more than 51% of export intensity use the Tactical Coordinator archetype. In Greece product strategy of with export intensity less than 15% distinguished differences the most. Those firms use pure localization archetype, while firms with higher export intensity use the Tactical Coordinator archetype. In Serbia distribution and price strategies of firms with export intensity less than 15% distinguished differences the most. Those firms use the Tactical Coordinator archetype, while firms with higher export intensity use the Venaik-Midgley archetype.

The effect of export dynamism exists only in the Greek case, where product strategy of sporadic exporters distinguished differences the most. Those firms use localization archetype, while regular exporters use the Tactical Coordinator archetype.

## **6. Discussion and concluding remarks**

### **6.1. Discussion of findings**

This paper researched EMS archetypes and organizational determinants that pose as their antecedent factors in agri-food exporters from Belarus, Greece, and Serbia. Obtained results indicated that Belarusian and Serbian firms use the Venaik-Midgley, while Greek firms use localized archetype. Impact of firm size on EMS was rejected in Greek and Serbian case, while impact of export dynamism on EMS was rejected in Belarusian and Serbian case. Possible explanation for the Belarusian and Serbian cases is routine for firms from developing countries to extend strategies from domestic to foreign markets, while in the Greek case localized EMS may be seen as the tool for maintaining profit margin in a downturn context, through gaining differentiation advantage, using additional promotion methods, and developing more activities with intermediates (Samiee and Chirapanda, 2019; Rana *et al.*, 2020; Calvo-Porrá *et al.*, 2016; Notta *et al.*, 2018). Following a marketing concept approach, in which differences are mainly identified in product strategy, which reflects the firm's ability to anticipate and respond to the environment demands, to direct organizational

resources and actions toward desirable outcomes, can be found in amount of firms' resources, because localization requires more resources and capabilities (Hultman *et al.*, 2009; Cavusgil and Zou, 1994).

MANOVA results showed diversity of EMS archetypes due to the effect of organizational determinants, confirming their ambivalent impact depending on the contingencies firms have faced. Unification archetype is used by small and less experienced Belarusian exporters, and less experienced Serbian exporters. Such an archetype is usually the result of global companies proactiveness, but in the research case it represents domestic market strategy's extension abroad (Venaik and Midgley, 2019; Samiee and Chirapanda, 2019; Ipek, 2020; Rana *et al.*, 2020).

Localization archetype is used by Greek exporters of consumer products and sporadic exporters, domestically-owned firms from Belarus and Greece, Belarusian and Greek firms having lower export intensity. The key driver of this archetype is the diversity and distance between markets and consumers, which explains the behavior of consumer product exporters from Greece (Venaik and Midgley, 2019). The explanation of use of this archetype in other mentioned groups of firms can be because of their endeavors to gain more market share and profit (Beliaeva *et al.*, 2020; Koksal and Ozgul, 2007).

The Venaik-Midgley archetype is used by more experienced exporters and those exporters with higher export intensity from Serbia, and by consumer product exporters from Belarus. The main feature of this archetype is more adjustment on positioning and promotion than on price in order to serve the diverse export markets (Venaik and Midgley, 2019). A possible explanation might lie in the refusal of those firms to be just low-cost products exporters, possession of strong regional brands or superior quality products, and of creative strategies employment to reach goals in exporting.

The Infrastructural Minimalists archetype is used only by the Serbian industrial products exporters and foreign-owned firms. Considering that this archetype is usually used by firms exporting strong brand through well-established channels across different countries, explanation for its usage in mentioned cases might be reactive behavior of previously mentioned groups of firms which do not have initiative to seek, identify and exploit export opportunities and their export activities represent simply responding to environmental stimuli or strictly following rules and practice from their parent company (Lim *et al.*, 2006, Katsikeas, 1996).

The Tactical Coordinators archetype is used by Belarusian medium and large firms, more experienced and industrial products exporters from Belarus and Greece, Serbian exporters of consumer products, foreign-owned firms from Belarus and Greece, domestically-owned firms from Serbia, higher export intensity firms from Belarus and Greece, Serbian firms with low export intensity, and Greek regular exporters. In the desire for gaining a competitive advantage, those firms through this archetype coordinate their communication, process of competitive decision-making and harmonize tactics across markets, using selective approach of unification, facing the presence of shared competitors across various markets (Lim *et al.*, 2006).

## **6.2. Theoretical contributions**

Several contributions to theory may be drawn from this conducted research. First, it integrated resource-based, dynamic capability and contingency theories demonstrating their compatibility for extending understanding of agri-food firms' EMS and its organizational determinants impact in developing country and economic crisis contexts. Second, by containing an extended number of empirically researched organizational determinants, it affirmed the idea that their effect cannot be treated mechanistically, because it depends on contingencies firms have faced. Third, to our knowledge this paper is the first to apply an EMS archetype perspective to the agri-food industry in both a developing country context and an economic crisis context. Moreover, it identified EMS archetypes of various types of exporters, and supplied the possibility for the use of richer descriptions of strategic marketing options. Additionally, the existence of a novel Venaik-Midgley EMS archetype recently identified in literature was confirmed. Fourth, it focused on whole EMS, omitting particularity of researching particular strategies for elements of the export marketing mix in isolation and confirmed validity and reliability of the STRATADAPT scale, as a previously tested multidimensional instrument, in a novel research setting. Fifth, by concentrating only on firms from agri-food sector we shed more light on researching this rarely researched industry in the field of strategic marketing, organizational behavior and international business. Sixth, the application of rigor in the methodological approach and data analysis represents our attempt to study researched phenomena in multi-country context in a more systematic way.

### **6.3. Managerial and policy-makers implications**

For business practitioners several guidelines were provided. This paper's findings were based on managers' perception and practice, which imply their informative importance for practice review and improvement. A general recommendation for managers is that the developing country and the economic crisis context require flexible and environment-adaptable EMS. Firms usually have as their goal short-term cost savings, but they should not disregard development of longer-term relations in their value chain. Integration of resource-based, dynamic capability, and contingency theories main postulates imply that managers first have to analyse their firm's situation in relation to environment contingencies, next to review available resources, then to specify which resources need combinations and integrations in capabilities and for what purpose, and finally to configure EMS in a such a way to allow greater efficiency of export operations. An archetypical perspective and STRATADAPT scale may be helpful for monitoring, evaluating and improving EMS, and its communication to different organizational units, suppliers and distributors. In addition, they can outline the way in which organizational resources and capabilities have to be engaged in order for them to apply a proper response to environmental contingencies. Confirmed differences in EMS archetypes of various agri-food exporters underlined the need for continuous creation and development of any firm's capabilities, not only tangible ones, but also intangible based on knowledge. This can be especially useful for small, less experienced and low export intensity firms. Their resource deficit usually does not allow price competitiveness. Possible solutions can focus on specific needs, serving well-defined market niches, differentiation based on product origin or value-adding processing or networking and association.

Policy-makers may benefit from firms' perspective study of the agri-food export. They have to recognize that resource and capabilities deficit and various contingencies exporters have to face result in different perception of export barriers. Besides, given the need for the creation and maintenance of favorable domestic business environment and traditional export promotion programs, they have to acknowledge different needs of export support for small and less experienced businesses. Moreover, agri-food firms who export high quality products and products with region-of-origin or country-of-origin reputation/labelling deserve special support.

#### **6.4. Limitations and future research directions**

Several limitations are inherent in this paper. First, its explanations arise from the integration of three theories, thus giving a possibility of a solid explanation of the research phenomena. However, more detailed information might be obtained by taking into account more appropriate theories. For example, institutional theory can explain how domestic business environments impact EMS. In addition, external determinants or contingencies from export markets and consumers may be included in future research in order to obtain more detailed explanations. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the research and self-report data from managers may pose limitations. To overcome this weakness, longitudinal research and appropriate secondary data could be used additionally. Fourth, export venture as the used unit of analysis in this research poses limitation, because most firms export diversified product portfolios and have operations in many foreign countries. Fifth, although authors of this paper believe that their work in it offers a valuable contribution, the EMS archetype and export performance interplay may be included in further research.

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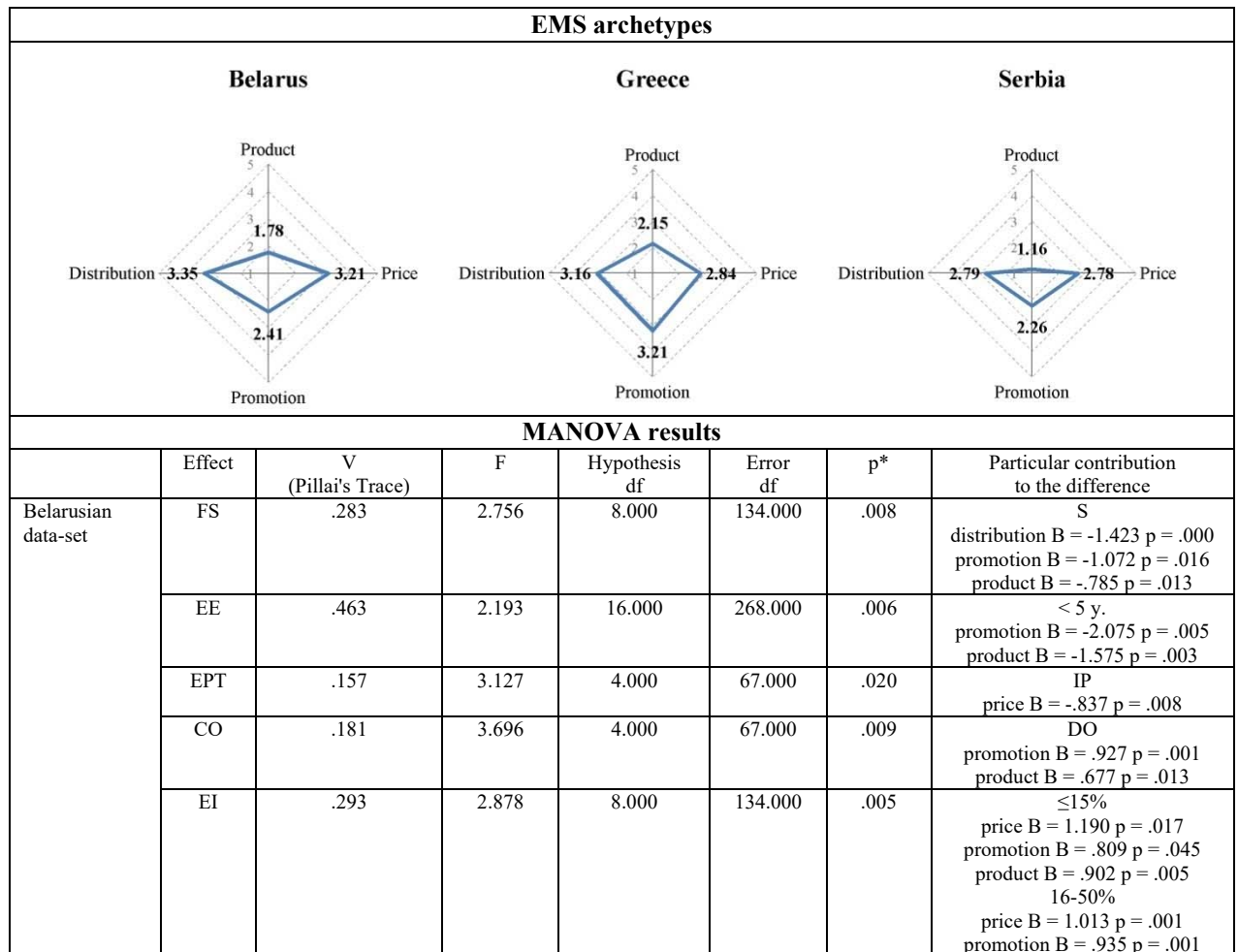


|              |                                   |      |      |      |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|--------------|-----------------------------------|------|------|------|----------------|----------------|----------------|---------------|---------------|---------------|----------------|----------------|----------------|
| Price        | Retail price                      | .923 | .902 | .900 | .946<br>[.957] | .908<br>[.932] | .960<br>[.967] | 78.993<br>[1] | 69.991<br>[1] | 83.318<br>[1] | .789<br>[.888] | .700<br>[.836] | .833<br>[.912] |
|              | Wholesale/trade price             | .939 | .853 | .944 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Profit margins to trade customers | .893 | .917 | .930 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Profit margins to end-users       | .864 | .786 | .886 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Discounts                         | .812 | .830 | .906 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Sales/credit terms                | .895 | .715 | .909 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
| Promotion    | Advertising                       | .768 | .467 | .840 | .941<br>[.952] | .819<br>[.948] | .949<br>[.956] | 76.819<br>[2] | 73.279<br>[2] | 68.771<br>[1] | .670<br>[.818] | .654<br>[.808] | .687<br>[.828] |
|              | Creative/execution style          | .851 | .941 | .753 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Message/theme                     | .784 | .878 | .805 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Media allocation                  | .735 | .870 | .874 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Sales promotion                   | .743 | .660 | .803 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Sales force structure/management  | .870 | .809 | .824 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Sales force role                  | .942 | .865 | .783 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Public relations                  | .839 | .841 | .875 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Personal selling                  | .879 | .822 | .881 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Advertising/promotion budget      | .747 | .856 | .846 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
| Distribution | Channels of distribution          | .884 | .852 | .924 | .957<br>[.996] | .931<br>[.952] | .954<br>[.966] | 88.729<br>[1] | 83.756<br>[1] | 87.911<br>[1] | .869<br>[.932] | .835<br>[.913] | .879<br>[.937] |
|              | Physical distribution             | .944 | .907 | .933 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Type of middlemen                 | .976 | .938 | .942 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |
|              | Role of middlemen                 | .961 | .959 | .951 |                |                |                |               |               |               |                |                |                |

Degree of rating: 1 = without any difference, 2 = not very different, 3 = moderately different, 4 = very different, 5 = completely different  
Notes:  $\lambda$  (factor loading) = convergent validity;  $\alpha$  (Cronbach's alpha) = internal consistency/reliability;  $\rho$  = composite reliability;  $\rho_{ve(n)}$  = average variance extracted;  $\sqrt{\rho_{ve(n)}}$  = square root of average variance extracted, B = Belarusian data-set; G = Greek data-set; S = Serbian data-set.

Source: authors' research

**Table 3. Summary of research findings**



|   |     |      |        |        |         |      |  |
|---|-----|------|--------|--------|---------|------|--|
|   |     |      |        |        |         |      | product B = .700 p = .001  |
|   | ED  | .131 | 2.517  | 4.000  | 67.000  | .051 | /  |
| Greek data-set  | FS  | .152 | 1.846  | 8.000  | 180.000 | .071 | /  |
|   | EE  | .482 | 3.084  | 16.000 | 360.000 | .000 | < 5 y.<br>product B = .810 p = .002<br>promotion, B = -.572 p = .015<br>6-10 y.<br>product B = .901 p = .003<br>promotion B = -.683 p = .013 |
|   | EPT | .283 | 8.896  | 4.000  | 90.000  | .000 | IP<br>product B = -.828 p = .000   |
|   | CO  | .188 | 5.193  | 4.000  | 90.000  | .001 | DO<br>promotion B = -.445 p = .011   |
|   | EI  | .414 | 5.876  | 8.000  | 180.000 | .000 | ≤15%<br>product B = .902 p = .005  |
|   | ED  | .317 | 10.419 | 4.000  | 90.000  | .000 | SE<br>product B = .821 p = .000  |
| Serbian data-set  | FS  | .078 | 1.051  | 8.000  | 208.000 | .399 | /  |
|   | EE  | .322 | 2.276  | 16.000 | 416.000 | .003 | < 5 y.<br>distribution B = -1.507 p = .015<br>price B = -1.433 p = .008<br>promotion B = -1.336 p = .008<br>product B = -.932 p = .019       |
|   | EPT | .116 | 3.426  | 4.000  | 104.000 | .011 | IP<br>distribution B = -.565 p = .022<br>promotion B = -.455 p = .030  |
|   | CO  | .230 | 7.785  | 4.000  | 104.000 | .000 | DO<br>distribution B = 1.031 p = .000<br>promotion B = .840, p = .000<br>price B = .696, p = .000<br>product B = .603 p = .000               |
|   | EI  | .231 | 3.399  | 8.000  | 208.000 | .001 | ≤15%<br>distribution B = -.990 p = .000<br>price B = -.598 p = .008  |
|   | ED  | .021 | .545   | 4.000  | 104.000 | .703 | /  |
| * statistically significant at the level of $p < .050$  |     |      |        |        |         |      |  |
| Notes: FS = firm size; EE = export experience; EPT = export product type; CO = capital ownership; EI = export intensity; ED = export dynamism; S = small firms; < 5 y. = firms with export experience less than 5 years; 6-10 y. = firms with export experience from 6 to 10 years; IP = industrial products exporters; DO = domestically-owned firms; ≤15% = firms with export intensity less/equal 15%; SE = sporadic exporters |     |      |        |        |         |      |  |
| Source: authors' research   |     |      |        |        |         |      |  |