

# The Impact of Innovation on Export Performance: Evidence from Morocco

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**Abstract**— This study examines the impact of innovation on export performance in Moroccan export companies. A survey was distributed online to export department employees from different Moroccan export businesses in various industries, and a total of 180 responses were collected. The survey data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analysis in SPSS. The results indicate a significant positive link between innovation and export performance in Moroccan export companies. The findings suggest that innovation plays a crucial role in enhancing the export performance of Moroccan export companies, highlighting the importance of investing in innovation as a strategy for achieving a competitive advantage in international markets. The study contributes to the literature by providing empirical evidence of the impact of innovation on export performance in an emerging market context. It provides policymakers and export managers with insights into enhancing their firms' export performance through innovation.

**Index Terms**— Innovation; export performance; export companies.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Morocco's strategic location between Europe and Africa has made it a hub for international trade and a gateway to the African continent. The country has pursued a series of economic reforms aimed at creating a more diversified and competitive economy, reducing poverty, and promoting sustainable development. These reforms have included measures to liberalize trade, attract foreign investment, and modernize the country's infrastructure and institutions.

Despite the country's economic progress, the Moroccan economy remains vulnerable to external shocks and heavily reliant on exports, particularly in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors. In this context, innovation has been identified as a critical factor in enhancing the competitiveness of Moroccan firms and boosting their export performance. Recent studies have highlighted the importance of innovation in driving export performance in developing countries, with evidence suggesting that firms that invest in innovation tend to have higher export revenues and greater market shares.

However, the literature on the innovation-export performance link in Morocco still needs to be expanded, and there is a need for empirical evidence to understand better the dynamics of this relationship in the Moroccan context. This study seeks to fill this gap in the literature by examining the impact of innovation on the export performance of Moroccan

firms. The objective of this research is to investigate the impact of innovation on export performance in Morocco. The study will explore the extent to which innovation influences the export performance of Moroccan firms and identify the factors that facilitate or hinder the innovation-export performance link.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 A Summary of Research on Innovation

A study conducted by [1] investigates the relationship between a company's innovation capabilities, the type of innovation they engage in, and how it affects various aspects of its performance, such as innovation, market, and financial performance in insurance companies in Sri Lanka found a significant and robust relationship between a company's innovation capabilities, innovation efforts, and overall performance. Similarly, [2] discovered a positive relationship between a company's innovation capabilities, including planning, R&D, and commercialization capabilities, and business performance. According to a study by [3], the relationship between radical innovation and business performance is fully mediated by innovation capability. A study was carried out by [4] to examine the performance of 260 small and medium-sized wholesale and retail enterprises in Thailand and found a significant correlation between innovations in human resource practices, innovation capabilities, competitive advantage, and SME performance.

#### 2.1.1 Definition of Innovation

Prior studies have presented various definitions of innovation. One common definition characterizes an innovative firm as one that adopts innovations, suggesting that the more innovations it adopts, the more innovative it is [5]. Other definitions describe innovation as the generation and acceptance of new ideas, processes, products, or services [6], or as a process of transforming or changing new ideas, perceptions, or inventions into a product or service that customers are willing to pay for [6].

#### 2.1.2 Dimensions of Innovation

In early research, innovation was categorized into five types: new products, new production processes, new materials and resources, new markets, and new organizational forms. However, [8] simplified innovation into two primary types, which are product or process innovations. Innovation can also be classified into two types based on its degree as either radical or incremental [9]. According to [10] innovation is the alteration of product, process, service, organizational

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systems, and marketing systems to generate customer value. The current research is based on The Oslo Manual's [11] categorization of four kinds of innovation: product, process, organizational, and marketing innovations.

- Product innovation: refers to the introduction of a good, service, or process that is new or significantly improved in terms of its characteristics or intended uses. According to [12], product innovation generally involves the development of new or improved products, equipment, and services in the market.
- Process innovation: According to [13], process innovation refers to changes in how products or services are created and delivered. Another study [14] defined it as the introduction of new elements in production processes within an organization.
- Administrative innovation: is defined as the changes that occur within the social system of an organization [15]. According to [16], administrative innovation involves the introduction of new internal processes and practices that improve productivity and reduce costs.
- Marketing innovation: refers to the introduction of novel marketing techniques and processes for presenting and selling products by a company [17]. According to [18] marketing innovation is the result of implementing comprehensive changes in a company.

### 2.1.3 Measurement of Innovation

In the present study, an innovation scale comprising 21 items was utilized, which was adapted from [19]. This scale was created by incorporating various scales from the literature, including the scales for product innovation and process innovation adopted from [20] work. Administrative innovation was measured based on [21] research. Similarly, marketing innovation was based on the work of [22]. The degree of implementation for all types of innovation was evaluated using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree").

### 2.2 A Summary of Export Performance

A study conducted by [23] to investigate the potential benefits that market orientation capabilities could offer to Chinese firms in emerging markets when exporting found that Chinese firms with stronger market orientation capabilities can enhance their export performance by targeting institutionally distant markets and utilizing hierarchical channels for exports. According to [24], both internal and external knowledge has a direct and indirect impact on a firm's export performance via its level of innovativeness among 4347 East German firms. External knowledge sourcing is more critical for service firms than manufacturing companies in terms of improving their internal knowledge and innovativeness. A study by [25] examined information collected from 1733 small and medium-sized subcontracting firms operating in three manufacturing sectors in South Korea and discovered that the companies' export focus and the extent to which they export their products are influenced by not just their technological resources and managerial expertise but also by the characteristics of their subcontracting network connections.

### 2.2.1 Definition of Export Performance

Export performance is an important metric for evaluating the effectiveness of a company's export-oriented growth strategy. According to [26], export performance is the profit and market share of companies operating in the international market from the potential markets they target as a result of their marketing decisions and the degree of satisfaction of company managers from the profit and market share. [27] described the export performance as a result of a firm's international sales. [28] evaluated export performance as the degree of the economic success of the firm in export markets.

### 2.2.2 Dimensions of Export Performance

[29] proposed a framework for evaluating export performance that included five dimensions: level of analysis, frame of reference, temporal orientation, types of measures, and data collection method. [30] identified export sales, export profitability, and performance change as multifaceted dimensions of export performance. Meanwhile, [31] examined internal and external factors that influence export performance. Internal factors include company characteristics, product characteristics, competencies, management attitude, and perception, while external factors comprise industry characteristics, domestic market characteristics, and foreign market characteristics.

### 2.2.3 Measurement of Export Performance

In this study, we utilized the EXPERF scale by [32], which comprises three dimensions: financial export performance (including export profits, export sales, and export sales growth), strategic export performance (referring to the contribution of the export venture to the firm's competitiveness, strategic position, and market share), and satisfaction with export performance (including the perceived success of the venture, satisfaction with the venture, and the degree to which the venture meets expectations). A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly disagree") to 5 ("Strongly agree") was also employed.

### 2.3 The relationship between innovation and export performance

The relationship between innovation and export performance is an established fact supported by [33] and [34]. Various empirical studies have shown that different types of innovation have a positive association with export performance. For example, [33] discovered a positive relationship between innovation and export performance in French science-based companies. However, the relationship is dependent on several factors. For instance, [35] found that the relationship between innovation and export performance varied based on the firm size in their study on Chinese firms, while [36] found that the impact on export performance was related to the time span, with a longer effect observed for larger enterprises and a shorter one for SMEs in their study on Korean firms. Drawing on the information provided previously, the following hypotheses were formulated:

H1: Innovation has a positive impact on export performance

H2 Product innovation has a positive impact on export performance.

H3: Process innovation has a positive impact on export performance.

H4: Administrative innovation has a positive impact on export performance.

H5: Marketing innovation has a positive impact on export performance.

### III. METHOD

#### 3.1 Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design, using a survey questionnaire to collect data from export department employees in different Moroccan export companies in different industries. The study aims to investigate the relationship between innovation and export performance, examining the extent to which innovation types and characteristics impact export performance outcomes. The survey questionnaire includes questions related to innovation practices, export performance, and firm characteristics, among other factors.

#### 3.2 Sampling

The participants of this study are employees from the export department of different Moroccan export companies. A total of 180 participants will be selected for participation in the study.

To ensure representation across different industries and company sizes, the sample will be stratified by industry and company size. Participants will be selected from companies operating in various industries, such as agriculture, manufacturing, and services. The sample will also be stratified by company size, with participants selected from small, medium, and large export companies. The stratified sampling will ensure that the study captures a diverse range of export companies and employees, thus increasing the generalizability of the findings.

#### 3.3 Data Collection

Data will be collected through an online survey questionnaire distributed to the selected participants. The survey will be administered through LinkedIn, a social media platform that primarily focuses on business and employment. The data collected will be coded and analyzed using statistical software, specifically SPSS.

#### 3.4 Data Analysis

The study will employ descriptive statistics to describe the distribution of the data collected. Inferential statistics, such as correlation analysis and regression analysis, will be used to test the research hypotheses and determine the strength and direction of the relationship between innovation and export performance.

### IV. RESULTS

#### 4.1 Reliability Analysis

Reliability analysis is conducted to know if the items present in the variable are reliable enough to be included in that variable so that further inferential statistics can be made. To find this, Cronbach's alpha is used, the threshold for this is

0.6, which means that if the alpha value is greater than 0.6 then we will consider it reliable, while if the alpha value is less than 0.6 then it is not reliable.

**Table 1:** Reliability of Innovation and the Export Performance

Variables	Items	Cronbach's alpha
Innovation	21	0.953
Export performance	9	0.937

The results show that the innovation variable has 21 items and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.953 which is much greater than 0.6, this indicates that the items in the scale are highly reliable and are measuring the same construct consistently. Similarly, the export performance variable has 9 items and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.937, which also indicates a high level of internal consistency among the items. Overall, these results suggest that the measures used for innovation and export performance are reliable and can be used to accurately assess these constructs in the study.

#### 4.2 Descriptive Analysis

**Table 2:** Descriptive statistics

Variables	N	Min	Max	Mean	Std. Dev
Total innov	180	1.20	25.00	12.6783	5.58673
Product innov	180	1.00	5.00	3.7978	0.89392
Process innov	180	1.00	5.00	3.1963	1.01298
Admin innov	180	1.00	5.00	3.3700	0.99169
Marketing innov	180	1.00	5.00	3.5233	0.94029
Total export per	180	1.20	25.00	14.6836	5.56644
Financial exp per	180	1.00	5.00	3.8870	0.91349
Strategic exp per	180	1.00	5.00	3.7000	1.01148
Satisfaction with exp perf	180	1.00	5.00	3.6296	0.87228

Table 2 shows descriptive statistics for the variables in the study. The table includes the number of observations (N), the minimum and maximum values, the mean, and the standard deviation for each variable.

Total innovation ranges from a minimum of 1.20 to a maximum of 25, with a mean score of 12.67. This indicates that, on average, the participants in the sample had a moderate level of innovation. Similarly, the range of values for total export performance is 1.20 to 25, with a mean of 14.68, suggesting that, on average, the participants in the sample had a moderate level of total export performance.

The dimensions of innovation and export performance all range from 1 to 5, with means ranging from 3.19 to 3.88. The moderate mean scores suggest that, on average, the participants in the sample had a moderate level of these variables. Overall, the descriptive statistics suggest that the sample reported moderate levels of innovation and export performance, with little variation in the responses.

#### 4.3 Correlation Analysis

**Table 3:** Correlation between Innovation and Export performance

Variables	Innov	Product innov	Process innov	Admin innov	Marketing innov
Export perf	0.345**	0.368**	0.242**	0.346**	0.340**
Financial Exp Perf	0.220**	0.328**	0.131**	0.246**	0.232**
Strategic Exp Perf	0.369**	0.385**	0.255**	0.399**	0.352**

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

The results presented in Table 3 suggest that all dimensions of innovation are positively correlated with export performance. The significant correlations indicate that as levels of innovation increase, so do levels of export performance.

The findings also show that innovation is positively correlated with all measures of export performance. The strongest correlation is between marketing innovation and satisfaction with export performance ( $r=0.403^{**}$ ), followed closely by administrative innovation and strategic export performance correlation ( $r=0.399^{**}$ ).

#### 4.4 Regression Analysis

**Table 4:** Regression analysis between Innovation and Export performance

Predictor Variables	Export Performance
Innovation	0.397
Product innovation	0.742
Process innovation	1.078
Administrative innovation	1.038
Marketing innovation	0.969
R2	0.174
F-statistic	7.346
p-value	0.000

The regression analysis indicates that innovation (coefficient=0.397) significantly impacts export performance, supporting hypothesis H1.

The four dimensions of innovation also have a significant impact on export performance. The coefficients of the independent variables indicate the extent to which each variable contributes to the variation in export performance. The results show that process innovation (coefficient=1.078) has the strongest positive impact on export performance, followed by administrative innovation (coefficient=1.038), marketing innovation (coefficient=0.969), and product

innovation (coefficient=0.742). These results support hypotheses H2, H3, and H4.

The R-squared value of 0.174 indicates that the independent variables explain 17.4% of the variation in export performance. Although this may seem low, it is important to note that many factors besides innovation can affect export performance. The F-statistic of 7.346 with a p-value of 0.000 indicates that the regression model is statistically significant.

## V. DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the present study, it can be inferred that innovation has a significant positive relationship with export performance. This finding is consistent with a previous study [37] that has found innovation as a strategic means to attain a competitive edge, which in turn can result in superior export market performance. Another study by [38] Indicated that market and organizational innovations were found to have a substantial positive effect on the likelihood and intensity of exporting, while product innovation had a positive impact on the number of exports but not on the probability of exporting.

The current study also found that product innovation has a positive impact on export performance, previous studies reported similar findings. For instance, [39] also found a positive relationship between product innovation and export performance among developing market firms. Similarly, [40] noted that there is a correlation between product innovation and the upsurge in exports observed among 100 small and medium-sized manufacturing enterprises in Kosovo, which export to the markets of the European Union and neighboring regions.

The significant strong positive correlation between process innovation and export performance found in the present study is consistent with previous research. For example, [41] found that the implementation of process innovations, such as the HACCP system, upgrading of the plant environment, investment in new machinery, adoption of information technology, and innovation in management systems, has been instrumental in enhancing the export performance of Sri Lanka's permanent tuna exporters. These process innovations are frequently utilized by such exporters. Similarly, [42] concluded that the process innovation factor has a favorable impact on the export performance of the textile industry.

This paper also discovered that administrative innovation positively impacts export performance. This finding is consistent with the research [43] that revealed that export performance is impacted by organizational innovation, and organizational innovation is linked to both radical and extensive technological innovation. Moreover, [44] suggested that organizational innovation contributes to export performance through both direct and indirect means, by facilitating the sustenance of technological innovation.

Finally, the study examined the effect of marketing innovation on export performance and determined that there exists a significant and positive correlation between the two variables. These findings are in line with previous research, such as the work of [45], which has demonstrated a favorable

relationship between marketing innovation and export performance. Furthermore, the results suggest that an increase in marketing innovation leads to an enhancement in export performance.

## VI. CONCLUSION

This research investigated the impact of innovation on export performance in Moroccan export companies. The findings suggest that innovation has a positive impact on export performance. Export performance dimensions, including product innovation, process innovation, administrative innovation, and marketing innovation, were also found to impact export performance positively. These findings suggest that export companies in Morocco need to invest in innovation to enhance their export performance and achieve a competitive advantage in international markets.

The study contributes to the literature on innovation and export performance by providing empirical evidence from an emerging market context. It also highlights the importance of innovation as a strategy for export-oriented firms, particularly in countries where resources may be limited, and competition is intense. Furthermore, the study has practical implications for export managers and policymakers in Morocco, as it provides insights into the types of innovation that are most likely to enhance export performance and suggests avenues for investment in innovation.

However, there are some limitations to this study. The sample was mostly limited to export department employees from different Moroccan export companies, which may limit the generalizability of the findings. Future research could expand the sample size and include other types of stakeholders, such as customers, suppliers, and competitors, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the impact of innovation on export performance. Additionally, future research could investigate the role of other factors, such as market orientation, networking, and government support, in enhancing export performance through innovation.

Overall, this study provides important insights into the impact of innovation on export performance in Moroccan export companies and highlights the need for continued investment in innovation to achieve competitiveness in international markets.

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