

Thesis Abstract

According to the National Export Strategy (NES, 2014), the stone and marble sector is one of the most contributors to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) of Palestine and one of the most active sectors in regards to exporting. However, the sector is facing many challenges concerning exporting and most of them stem from the lack of building competitive advantages and competitive strategies that could help the Palestinian stone and marble companies in increasing their exports on regional and international levels. The primary purpose of the study is to examine the internal and external challenges that the Palestinian companies in the stone and marble sector face when exporting and try to assess their competitive advantages and suggest competitive strategies based on minimizing the impact of the related challenges.

The data of the study is collected from fourteen stone and marble companies in Palestine and three officials who work in institutions related to the stone and marble sector. In total, seventeen semi-structured in-depth interviews were held with executives and representatives of institutions. The method of the study is based on qualitative exploratory multiple case study using deductive content analysis and thematic analysis to analyze the gathered data.

Based on the results of the study, it is concluded that there are many challenges that the stone and marble companies in Palestine face whether they were internal challenges such as top level management capabilities, staff and organizational learning skills, employees' competence, etc. or external challenges such as the government limited support, local institutions role and the prolonged occupation. In order for the stone and marble companies to be able to build concrete competitive advantages and strategies to compete on regional and international levels, solutions should be developed to minimize the impact of the internal and external challenges.

Lastly, the study provides recommendations on company, institutional and governmental levels that serve as guidelines to help the sector enhance its exporting status and help in building competitive strategies for the Palestinian stone and marble companies. Furthermore, the study recommends the need to investigate thoroughly in hybridized strategies and developing theorized framework.