

Research article

Managers' environmental commitment towards the adoption of environmental strategies: Exporting Ecuadorian SMEs

Directivos y Estrategias Ambientales: PYMES Exportadoras de Ecuador

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Abstract

Introduction: Over the past few decades, sustainability and natural environmental degradation have grown in importance around the world. However, studies on internationalization and corporate environmental responsibility have frequently concentrated on larger businesses in industrialized nations. **Methodology:** This study examines the owners' engagement and environmental attitude in Ecuadorian exporting SMEs using four case studies. **Results:** The results indicate that the firm's green commitment and the owners' environmental attitude and involvement may be influenced by their prior knowledge, environmental goals. Additionally, human and financial resources are crucial to the company's adoption of eco-friendly practices. **Discussion:** In exporting Ecuadorian companies, a conceptual framework was created that describes the connection between the owners' past knowledge, their attitude toward the environment, and the company's green commitment. **Conclusions:** the article expands the literature in dynamic capabilities, top management commitment and environmental responsibility.

Key words: manager, prior knowledge, environmental attitude, environmental commitment, CER, internationalization, exporting Ecuadorian SMEs, international sustainable entrepreneurship.

Resumen

Introducción: La degradación ambiental natural y la sostenibilidad se han convertido en temas importantes en la esfera de los negocios internacionales durante las últimas décadas. Sin embargo, las investigaciones se han centrado en empresas más grandes de regiones desarrolladas. **Metodología:** Utilizando cuatro estudios de caso, este artículo analiza la actitud y el compromiso ambiental de los propietarios de las PYMES exportadoras ecuatorianas. **Resultados:** Los hallazgos sugieren que el conocimiento previo, los valores y objetivos ambientales de los propietarios pueden influir en su actitud y compromiso ambiental, y en el compromiso ecológico de la empresa. Además, los recursos financieros y humanos juegan un papel clave en la adopción de estrategias ecológicas dentro de la empresa. **Discusión:** Se desarrolló un marco conceptual que explica la relación entre el conocimiento previo de los propietarios, la actitud ambiental y el compromiso verde de las empresas exportadoras ecuatorianas. Conclusiones: Este artículo contribuye a la literatura internacional sobre emprendimiento sostenible y compromiso ambiental de los gerentes.

Palabras clave: gerentes, conocimientos previos, actitud ambiental, compromiso ambiental, estrategias ambientales, internacionalización, PYMES ecuatorianas exportadoras, emprendimiento sostenible

1. Introduction

International entrepreneurial activities are one of the most relevant sectors of the economy to promote economic growth within a country (Almodóvar-González et al., 2020; Peña-Vinces & Delgado-Márquez, 2013). However, this growth of the economy is not environmentally sustainable because of the natural resources' exploitation, leading to pollution, global warming and climate change. (Spence et al., 2012). In the last two decades stakeholders, clients, NGOs, international organizations, among others, have been pressuring SMEs, large and multinational corporations to adopt environmental strategies.

There are numerous internal and external factors influencing the adoption of environmental strategies within the firms; but there is lack of information explaining these phenomena in small and medium enterprises (Galkina, 2021). For example, Kennelly & Lewis (2003) mentioned the importance of internationalization on environmental performance. González-Benito & González-Benito, (2006) found that company features, stakeholder pressure, industrial sector and geographical location directly affect environmental proactivity of a firm. Peñasco et al., (2017) stated influence of customers in foreign markets, international regulations, cooperation with international institutions and the presence of foreign equity in firms may affect sustainable actions and eco-innovation within companies.

Even though, these phenomena can be studied from different perspectives there is one important aspect that can be the starting point for the adoption of environmental actions within the firm: the managers willingness to implement these strategies (Aguilera-Caracuel et al., 2011; Cantor et al., 2013; Peña-Vinces & Delgado-Márquez, 2013; Schaltegger & Wagner, 2011). Top managerial commitment to the environment is a key element for the adoption of environmental strategies within organizations. The commitment of top executives shapes the organizational culture towards sustainability and CSR. Literature indicates that personal commitment to environmental issues among top managers