



THE EFFECT OF MACRO ENVIRONMENTAL ELEMENTS ON SALES, MARKETING AND EXPORT IN THE NATURAL STONE (MARBLE) SECTOR IN TURKIYE

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- The purpose of this study is to reveal the effect of macro environmental factors on sales, marketing and export in the natural stone (marble) sector in Turkey.

Methodology- The study employs questionnaire technique, one of the quantitative research methods, was used. The sector representatives participating in the 2023 Izmir Marble Fair were determined as the universe. The participants, who voluntarily exported 27 marbles, were reached by the convenience sampling method. Descriptive analysis was performed on the obtained data in SPSS program.

Findings- The findings obtained from the research data are as follows, from the highest to the lowest, the reasons affecting sales, marketing and export in the marble sector in Turkey; The necessity of constantly monitoring the technological changes in the sector and the daily economic developments in the country, the negative impact of the inflation in the country on sales, the effect of worldwide epidemics, whether there is an alternative action plan predetermined for the crisis periods, The situation, the political stability in Turkey, the search for alternative energy sources due to the price increases in oil, the high labor costs in Turkey compared to many countries, the customs discounts of the relevant country, quotas, legal conveniences and obstacles are taken into account when determining the countries to export. . Other findings are as follows, from the most important to the lowest, the macro factors that threaten the marble companies in Turkey; increase in input costs, economic instability, increase in financing costs, decrease in demand, epidemics, political factors, removal of existing incentives, technological developments and intense competition.

Conclusion- it may be concluded that it has been revealed that macro-environmental factors have an impact on the sales, marketing and export activities of companies operating in the marble sector in Turkey. Accordingly, it is recommended that companies create future scenarios by considering these factors in the planning of investment, production, sales, marketing and export activities.

Keywords: Marble industry, 2023 Marble Izmir Fair, macro environmental faktors, export.

JEL Codes: EO2, M31, F00

1. INTRODUCTION

Known as a natural stone type, marble is largely composed of calcium carbonate mineral and is formed by the natural formation process that lasts for thousands of years. It is a stone that can be found in various colors and patterns. It is available in colors such as white, gray, beige, brown, green and black. The unique look of marble is achieved thanks to naturally occurring veins, lines and patterns. These features ensure that each marble slab has a different and unique appearance. It is used in buildings, sculptures, counter tops and for decorative purposes (Pıçak et al. 2022). After the marble blocks are removed, they are transported to the factories where they are processed into slabs. Processed marble slabs are cut, polished and packaged according to customer demands (Yılmaz, 2020).

Marble is known as a durable material and is long-lasting. Also, a glossy surface can be achieved by polishing marble, making it aesthetically appealing. However, because marble has a porous structure, it can be sensitive to water and acids, so it's important to take the right care precautions. It has been used in many famous buildings throughout history. Marble has been used in many ancient buildings, temples, palaces and monuments from the Ancient Roman period to the present day. It is also a popular material in modern architecture and interior decoration. It is a versatile material due to its natural beauty, durability and variety. It can be used in many projects in both traditional and contemporary styles. It can provide an aesthetic appearance and an elegant feeling by using it both indoors and outdoors (Çörduk, 2006).

Turkey is one of the world's largest marble producers and a country with rich marble resources. Marble quarries in Turkey are located in many different regions and enable the production of various types of marble. Turkey's marble quarries are generally concentrated in the Aegean Region, Marmara Region, Central Anatolia Region and Mediterranean Region. The marble quarries in these regions allow for the extraction of hundreds of different types of marble. Some of the important marble types mined in Turkey are Muğla White, Süpren, Elazığ Cherry, Akşehir Black, Manyas White, Bilecik Beige, Tiger Skin, Denizli Travertine, Aegean Bordeaux, Milas Lilac, Gemlik Diabase and Afyon Sugar (Öztürk, 2006).

Turkey's marble exports are carried out to many countries. Especially countries such as the United States of America, China, Italy, Saudi Arabia, Israel and Italy show great demand for Turkish marble (Öztürk, 2006).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the literature, there are many studies on macro-environmental factors affecting marketing, sales and export in the marble industry.

Çetin, T. (2003) stated in his study that natural stone production and exports in Turkey are covered by the private sector, and he mentioned that private sector companies have some necessary precautions to be successful. Some of them are as follows; He mentioned that supports such as increasing the education level of administrative and technical personnel, establishing strategic partnerships between companies, promoting the manufactured products abroad with their original names and creating a brand, increasing incentives in the marble industry, and facilitating the purchase of machinery and equipment will contribute to the sector. In the study, it is mentioned that Turkey can dominate the market significantly due to its close proximity to important markets, and it is predicted that we can be in the second position after Italy in marble exports.

Akgün (2007) examines the sensitivity to these issues in Denizli Marble Industry by determining the macro-environmental factors that affect the marketing activities of the enterprises and examining the effects of these factors on the marketing activities. One of the sectoral problems he observed in his work is the lack of technology. As a result of this deficiency, it has been observed that most of the raw materials are exported abroad without processing. The energy and expenses, which are examined within the scope of the natural environment, constitute the heaviest expense items of the marble industry and increase the cost seriously. Therefore, businesses that do not want to incur losses, cannot reflect these costs on their prices and cannot reach the level of profitability in terms of product and price. As a result, he recommends that businesses examine the environmental factors in their marketing activities to the finest detail.

Eraslan et al. (2014) makes suggestions to determine the general competitive strategies of the marble sector, to reveal the competitiveness position of the main and sub-variables that make up the value chain of the sector, and to increase the international competitiveness of the sector by this means. In addition, the structure of the marble sector in Bilecik Region has been analyzed with the Diamond Model and has revealed its international competitiveness.

Bağcı and Karataş (2017) mentioned SWOT analysis in the marble sector of Muğla province in their study. As a result of the analyzes, they made suggestions on issues such as competition, cooperation, institutional structure, new technology and R&D studies, and they suggest focusing on sectoral development.

In his study, Bağırıcı (2019) investigates the effect of e-commerce and indirect export, which are export methods, on our country's marble exports. With the survey method, 40 companies were interviewed in Afyonkarahisar province and it does not affect the export.

Picak et al. (2022) macro developments in the marble sector and national and global trends were examined. In addition, the urban evaluation of the sector was evaluated by face-to-face interviews. Among the macro environmental factors, the effect of exchange rates on costs, the effect of legislation and bureaucracy on mining activities, the environmental effect of marble waste etc. They mentioned the elements.

Kokarcalı and Köksal (2022), in their study examining the macroeconomic factors affecting exports of the natural stone industry in Turkey, concluded that exchange rate, inflation, unemployment and interest rates affect natural stone exports.

3. DATA AND METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a quantitative research method, and the survey is used. The research questions were taken from the study of Yılmaz (2022) by being revised. The representatives of the marble sector participating in the 2023 İzmir Marble Fair were determined as the universe. 27 volunteers participated in the study. 88.9% of them are male. 25.9% are in the age range, 44.4% are in the age range, 18.5% are in the age range, 7.4% are in the age range and 3.7% are in the age range. The job titles of the participants are 14.8%, 18.5%, 66.7%. Graduation levels are 66.7%, 18.5% and 14.8%. In terms of their professional experience, 25.9%, 48.1%, 11.1%, 11.1%, 3.7% of the participants.

Participants were reached at the fair with the convenience sampling method. Descriptive analyzes were made on the obtained data in the SPSS program.

Table 1: Demographics

Variables	Categories	N	(%)
Gender	Male	24	89
	Female	3	11
Age	20-30	7	26
	31-40	12	44

	41-50	5	19
	51-60	3	11
Title	Export Supervisor	4	14.8
	Marketing Coordinator	5	18.5
	Other	18	66.7
Experience	0-3 Years	7	26
	4-6 Years	13	48
	7-9 Years	3	11
	10-12 Years	3	11
	13+ Years	1	4

4. FINDINGS

The data of the statistical enterprise that does not contain this, that uses statistics, and the results of the effects of the macro environment data on the effects of the enterprise are given in the tables. Below the tables we have explained some general relationships between the variables.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Categories	N	(%)
Number of employees of the firm	-10	2	7
	10-49	10	37
	50-249	12	45
	250+	3	11
Number of years the firm has been active	6-15	9	33
	16-25	9	33
	26-39	8	30
	40+	1	4
Export experience of the company	0-5	1	4
	10-14	10	37
	15-19	10	37
	20+	6	22
Existence of a separate department for overseas sales/marketing	There is a department	17	63.0
	no department	10	37.0
Ratio of exports in sales	%30 -	2	7
	%31-50	7	26
	%51+	18	68
In which field do you operate in the marble sector?	Quarry Operation	9	33
	Marble Processing Workshop	1	4
	Quarry and Marble Processing	14	52
	Other	3	11
Which country market do you mainly export to?	America	3	11
	Asia	16	59
	Europe	6	22
	Africa	2	8

In Table 2, 45% of the companies participating in the research have 50-249 employees, 37% have 10-49 employees, 11% have 250 and more employees, and 7% have less than 10 employees. The number of years the companies have been operating in the marble sector is 33 years 6-15 years, 33% 16-25 years, 30% 26-39 years and 4% 40 years and above. Export experience is 0-5 years for 4%, 10-14 years for 37%, 15-19 years for 37% and 20 years or more for 22%. The asset status of a separate department for overseas sales/marketing is 63%. The export rates within the annual sales amounts are below 30% of 7%, between 31-50% of 26% and above 51% of 68%. The fields they operate in the marble sector are: Quarry Management 33%, Marble Processing Workshop 4%, Stone and Marble Processing 52% and Other 11%. The main countries to which the companies export are 11% America, 59% Asia, 22% Europe and 8% Africa.

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev.	N
We are constantly following the technological changes in the sector.	4.63	0.565	27
We constantly follow the daily economic developments in the country.	4.59	0.572	27
Inflation negatively affects our sales.	4.56	0.801	27
Epidemics in the world affect our sales.	4.48	0.849	27
The population density of the countries we export affects our demand situation.	4.33	0.920	27
Political stability affects our marketing activities and sales.	4.30	0.912	27
Due to the price increases in oil, we are looking for alternative energy sources.	4.22	1.219	27
The fact that our labor costs are high compared to many other countries affects our sales.	4.22	1.121	27
While determining the countries to which we direct our exports, we consider customs discounts, quotas, legal facilities and obstacles.	4.11	1.086	27
We have an alternative action plan that we have previously determined for crisis periods.	3.41	1.279	27

A 5-point Likert-type scale was used, ranging from "totally agree to strongly disagree".

In Table 3, examples of macro-environmental factors are given and the participants' state of agreement with the relevant statement was asked. From highest to lowest: "We are constantly following the technological changes in the sector" 4.63 mean, "We constantly follow the daily economic developments in the country" 4.59 mean, "Inflation negatively affects our sales" 4.56 mean, "Epidemics in the world affect our sales" 4.48 mean, "The population density of the countries we export affects our demand situation" 4.33 mean, "Political stability affects our marketing activities and sales" 4.30 mean, "Due to the price increases in oil, we are looking for alternative energy sources" 4.22 mean, "The fact that our labor costs are high compared to many other countries affects our sales" 4.22 mean, "While determining the countries to which we direct our exports, we consider customs discounts, quotas, legal facilities and obstacles" 4.11 mean, "We have an alternative action plan that we have previously determined for crisis periods" 3.41 mean.

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	N
Increasing Input Costs	4.59	0.931	27
Economic Instability	4.26	0.984	27
Increasing Financing Costs	4.22	1.050	27
Decreased Demand	4.07	0.958	27
Epidemic Diseases	4.04	1.126	27
Political Factors	3.93	1.035	27
Removal Of Existing Incentives	3.78	1.086	27
Technological Developments	3.70	1.068	27
Intense Competition	3.63	1.079	27

A 5-point Likert-Type scale was used from "too much to too little".

In Table 4, macro-environmental factors are given in general and the participants' state of agreement with the related statement was asked. From highest to lowest: "Increasing Input Costs" 4.59 mean, "Economic Instability" 4.26 mean, "Increasing Financing Costs" 4.22 mean, "Decreased Demand" 4.07 mean, "Epidemic Diseases" 4.04 mean, "Political Factors" 3.93 mean, "Removal of Existing Incentives" 3.78 mean, "Technological Developments" 3.70 mean and, "Intense Competition" 3.63 mean.

5. CONCLUSION

The results obtained from the findings revealed that macro production factors have an effect on the business, marketing and export operating in the marble sector in Turkey. It is understood that companies constantly follow the technological changes in the sector and their daily economic activities. They state that the negative situations that most examine the sales of the companies are at the climbing and exit points at their peak in Turkey. They stated that the climb in inflation and the Covid-19 Outbreak increased their first win and the last win score. Economic instability, which naturally occurred due to these macro factors, also negatively affected sales. As a result, ensuring that future scenarios are created by taking this into consideration in the planning of corporate investment, production, sales, marketing and export shipments.

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