

1. Introduction

Mexican foreign trade has undergone several structural changes over different periods of time in the last 20 years including the entry into NAFTA and the present financial crisis. New entrants, such as China and India, have challenged Mexico to take rapid measures in the near future in order to boost international trade to be able to face these new competitors. Mexico has constantly suffered from a decrease in the growth of global export market share, compared to China, in addition to a one-sided trade orientation to the U.S. and on a few industrial sectors such as the textile-, automotive- and oil sector. Due to the importance of the manufacturing exporting sector in the overall Mexican economy, Mexico needs to contemplate the strengthening and diversification of its foreign trade structure.

Sporadic exporters represent the majority of overall exporting companies in Mexico today. The lack of continuity in exports surges from external obstacles as well as companies' internal weaknesses.

The detection of Mexican companies' internal success factors for export stimulation is the major purpose of this work. The focus will be on the identification of major characteristics differentiating sporadic and regular exporters. Consequently, the purpose of this study is to detect the major internal characteristics differentiating sporadic from regular exporters that impede permanent exporting behavior. These variables will be categorized and set into a hierarchical order with the intention to highlight the more significant variables, in order to derive recommendations for the development of more efficient public promotion programs.

This study consists of three major parts:

The general background of the problem provides an overview about the latest developments in Mexican foreign trade structure, suggesting directions in terms of governmental or non-governmental measures, promoting foreign trade at the microeconomic level.

The second part consists of the theoretical background, giving an overview about existing studies dealing with sporadic exporting behavior and characteristics that have been already identified by the most important authors in this field of research. As a result of the literature review, we propose our own categorization of

the main variables that differentiate sporadic and continuous exporters. This literature review also constitutes the basis of the interview guide used for our interviews of exporters in the Puebla region.

The third and most important part is the data analysis extracted from the interviews I realized, in order to illustrate the propositions made at the end of the literature review and adding new particular insights as the result of my own elaboration.