




Ranking and Validation of Constructs in the International Strategic Marketing Model of the Cement Industry

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Abstract: The cement industry is a strategic sector that plays a crucial role in economic and infrastructural development and holds the largest share of production among other industries. In today's world, cement, as a future-oriented and strategic commodity, is regarded as a prerequisite for development, employment, and progress in all countries. This study aims to propose an international strategic marketing model for the cement industry during the sanctions period. The research is quantitative, and the statistical population includes managers and experts in the cement industries of Tehran province. The software tools used for data analysis are SPSS26 and SmartPLS3. The researcher seeks to answer the following questions: What are the validations of the constructs in the international strategic marketing model of the cement industry during the sanctions period? How are the constructs of the international strategic marketing model of the cement industry during the sanctions period ranked? How do the constructs of the international strategic marketing model of the cement industry during the sanctions period relate to each other?

Keywords: Strategic model, marketing, international marketing, cement industry, sanctions period.

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1. Introduction

One of the current realities of industrial markets is the intense competition within them, where successful companies must design and offer their marketing proposals in a way that aligns better with the target markets. This requires the use of strategic marketing. In this approach, companies, instead of focusing solely on production and sales, consider themselves as part of the process of delivering value to customers, taking the environment into account. CEOs have recognized the important role of strategic marketing in creating value for customers and, consequently, building strong brands [1, 2]. Marketing strategies and detailed marketing plans are among the most critical components of the marketing management process. Formulating precise marketing strategies over time requires the appropriate knowledge, skills, and flexibility. Although companies must follow a specific strategy, they should not neglect to revise and improve their strategies. In addition to developing general strategies, companies must also develop specific strategies for their products and services [3-5].

The increasing importance of foreign trade in the growth and economic development of countries is such that some economists refer to it as the engine of economic development. According to this group of economists, the

growth of exports, particularly food exports, to other countries can help foster their economic development [6]. Increasing exports has a direct impact on the foreign currency income of countries, and through this, it facilitates the investment needed to place the economy on a path to growth and development [7].

Strategic planning is a process aimed at mobilizing organizational resources and aligning efforts towards achieving long-term goals and missions, while considering both internal and external constraints [8]. In another definition, strategic planning refers to the process of assessing the current position and future path of an organization or society, setting goals, formulating a strategy to achieve those goals, and measuring outcomes (Hughes, 2016). Strategic planning is also a structured and systematic effort to make fundamental decisions and implement essential actions that shape the nature and direction of an organization's activities within a legal framework [9]. The stages and factors of strategic planning can be summarized as follows: (1) defining the organization's purpose by answering questions such as: Why does the organization exist? What specific mission or service is expected from it? What are the motivations of the designers and implementers of the plans? (2) understanding the environmental conditions by addressing questions such as: What political, economic, social, and technological changes are occurring, and what opportunities or limitations do these changes present? (3) assessing strengths and weaknesses by determining which factors facilitate or limit future direction, such as labor inflation, aging workforce, illiteracy, diseases, and managerial instability [10].

Strategic marketing aims to enhance company performance through strategic marketing methods. Customer satisfaction is a key component of strategic marketing, as it focuses on comprehensive plans for customer interaction and the use of new sales and marketing methods to achieve market dominance. Strategic marketing also contributes to creating a more innovative business and helps improve an organization's influence within its target market and society. Organizations using strategic marketing plans identify customer needs and develop marketing strategies to meet those needs and increase profitability [11]. Typically, every organization requires a strategic marketing plan that outlines the marketing programs within a set timeline and the methods for their implementation. Strategic marketing involves analyzing markets and opportunities in the long term, making strategic decisions free from the confusion of daily marketing and sales activities [12-15]. The strategic marketing process generally includes preparing a strategic marketing plan in three stages: analyzing the situation (where is the company currently?), setting marketing objectives (what does management want for the company?), and determining marketing strategies (what should the company do to achieve its goals?) [16, 17]. After analyzing the market, customer benefits, and the purchasing process, a strategic marketing plan can be developed to ensure that all marketing programs align with company goals and effectively communicate with customers. This approach improves company performance in all areas, including increased revenue, market share growth, and reduced costs, ultimately leading to greater profitability and success in achieving broader goals [18, 19].

Mohammad-Kazemi (2017) identified the factors influencing international marketing and their impact on export performance in sports equipment manufacturing companies, using SPSS and PLS for data analysis. The results showed that all five factors—environmental, technological, organizational, market, and industry—positively influence international marketing and improve export performance [20]. Tajrishi et al. (2021) developed a futures research model for aligning international marketing strategies in the downstream oil industry, highlighting that higher strategic alignment enhances international marketing performance [21]. Finally, Rasouli et al. (2021) prioritized international marketing strategies for Iran's crude oil exports under sanctions, emphasizing the importance of payment transactions, utilizing bilateral and multilateral currency agreements, establishing small refineries, and leveraging the dark room strategy and trust companies [10].

In the current economic conditions of Iran, the development of non-oil exports is one of the most important political and economic issues that the country's officials must address. Therefore, it is essential to be familiar with global incentive policies and to examine drafts of laws and regulations designed to encourage and increase export development within the country. The development of non-oil exports is not only crucial for earning foreign currency but also holds special significance in terms of creating employment opportunities within the country. Diversifying non-oil exports seems to be an effective solution not only from an economic perspective but also as a political means to achieve the government's objectives. Fortunately, today, officials and even the public understand that the true progress and economic stability of the country are largely dependent on export development and securing reliable markets in various countries [22]. The leap in non-oil exports is the primary goal of the country's Third Five-Year Economic, Political, Social, and Cultural Development Plan. In recent years, the government has formulated and implemented various measures and incentives for the growth of non-oil exports, which have alleviated some of the barriers and bottlenecks in exports. One of the economic sectors that can significantly impact foreign exchange and has considerable relative and competitive potential is the industrial sector. Therefore, the export of manufactured goods from companies is one of the key factors that must be considered in terms of comparative advantage if Iran joins the World Trade Organization and reduces the country's economy's reliance on a single product and foreign currency. One of the defining features of the environment over the past few decades has been its variability and increasing competitiveness, which continues to grow day by day. Today, managers have realized that short-term plans and scattered efforts to address these issues are insufficient. These problems require strategic thinking. Therefore, one of the prerequisites for effectively entering the foreign export market is the formulation of an export strategy, which can be used to compete with domestic and foreign rivals and fully capitalize on occasional environmental opportunities. Thus, given the aforementioned points and the lack of research on international strategic marketing and its impact on the performance, growth, and profitability of cement companies in the country, studying and examining the current topic seems essential. The researcher seeks to answer the following questions: How do the constructs of the international strategic marketing model of the cement industry relate to each other during the sanctions period? How are the constructs of the international strategic marketing model of the cement industry ranked during the sanctions period? How are the constructs of the international strategic marketing model of the cement industry validated during the sanctions period?

2. Methodology

The appropriate research method depends on the objectives, nature, and subject of the research, as well as the available practical resources. The goal of the research is to obtain accurate and easy access to answers to the research questions. The statistical population of this study consists of managers and experts in the cement industries of Tehran province. In the quantitative phase of the current research, data were collected from managers and experts in the cement industries of Tehran province. Stratified random sampling was used in this study. Stratified sampling includes a two-stage sampling process, which primarily creates a probable sample group rather than a judgmental or accessible sample group. Considering the statistical population, the Cochran formula was used in the quantitative part of the research. Descriptive statistics and indices such as central indices (mean), dispersion indices (standard deviation), and distribution shape indices (skewness and kurtosis) were used to examine respondent characteristics. Demographic information was typically presented using frequency tables, bar charts, pie charts, histograms, and contingency tables. At the inferential level, analysis of variance (ANOVA) and Structural Equation

Modeling (SEM), including confirmatory factor analysis and path analysis, were used. The software packages used for data analysis in the quantitative part of the research are SPSS26 and SmartPLS3.

3. Findings

In this section, the central tendency indices, dispersion indices, and distribution shape indices for the research variables will be examined to determine the suitability of the statistical tests.

Table 1. Description of Variables

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Relationship Marketing	3.8945	0.83469	-0.856	0.156
Integrated Marketing	3.3924	0.85362	-0.498	0.217
Internal Marketing	3.4346	0.88249	-0.618	0.348
Operational Marketing	3.6287	0.75859	-0.793	0.821
Volatility	3.2869	0.96629	-0.308	-0.275
General Activation	3.6920	0.85530	-0.530	0.260
Co-creation of Value	3.3713	1.04184	-0.372	-0.783
Dialogue	3.5105	1.14707	-0.623	-0.358
Offline to Online Transition Components	3.4873	0.93533	-0.341	-0.346
Comprehensive Marketing Strategy	3.3966	0.89008	-0.271	-0.209
IT Online Changes	3.6920	0.95746	-0.558	0.099
Operational Program	3.3418	1.01840	-0.040	0.439
Control and Evaluation	3.1857	0.99964	-0.156	0.581
Financial Performance	3.3544	0.96718	-0.413	-0.307
Marketing Performance	3.3840	1.01286	-0.219	-0.592

Given that the mean value for all variables is close to or above 3, it can be concluded that the sample respondents have a relative agreement with the indicators. According to the standard deviation column, since the standard deviation of all variables is above 0.5, the responses of the individuals also exhibit a reasonable level of dispersion. Skewness and kurtosis: Based on the values, as predicted, our variables are normally distributed, meaning they lie between (3 and -3) and (5 and -5).

After the data were collected and their validity was examined, statistical tests were performed. In any study, the researcher, by collecting data and information in a correct and scientific manner and analyzing them, seeks to find answers to the research questions and assess the hypotheses derived from theoretical foundations. In the first stage, confirmatory factor analysis was used to examine whether the data align with a specific factor structure. In the second stage, path analysis, model fit indices, and coefficients of determination were used to assess the structural model.

As we know, for the Likert scale, the test that indicates whether the distribution of our data is normal or not is the skewness and kurtosis test. As observed in the descriptive statistics section, the normality of the variables and research questions was examined, and the normal distribution of our data was confirmed.

The measurement model (outer model) of the research, based on the variables, is shown in the table below.

Table 2. Formative and Reflective Variables in the Research

Variable	Questions	Formative and Reflective
Relationship Marketing	AQ1-AQ3	Reflective
Integrated Marketing	BQ1-BQ3	Reflective
Internal Marketing	CQ1-CQ3	Reflective
Operational Marketing	DQ1-DQ3	Reflective

Volatility	FQ1-FQ3	Reflective
General Activation	GQ1-GQ3	Reflective
Co-creation of Value	HQ1-HQ3	Reflective
Dialogue	IQ1-IQ3	Reflective
Offline to Online Transition Components	JQ1-JQ4	Reflective
Comprehensive Marketing Strategy	KQ1-KQ3	Reflective
IT Online Changes	LQ1-LQ3	Reflective
Operational Program	MQ1-MQ4	Reflective
Control and Evaluation	NQ1-NQ3	Reflective
Financial Performance	OQ1-OQ3	Reflective
Marketing Performance	PQ1-PQ3	Reflective

Table 3. Reliability Values of Research Variables

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
Relationship Marketing	0.835	0.901	0.752
Integrated Marketing	0.756	0.860	0.672
Internal Marketing	0.820	0.893	0.737
Operational Marketing	0.738	0.852	0.657
Volatility	0.788	0.876	0.703
General Activation	0.781	0.873	0.694
Co-creation of Value	0.802	0.883	0.716
Dialogue	0.886	0.929	0.814
Offline to Online Transition Components	0.915	0.940	0.796
Comprehensive Marketing Strategy	0.829	0.898	0.746
IT Online Changes	0.867	0.918	0.788
Operational Program	0.938	0.956	0.844
Control and Evaluation	0.858	0.913	0.779
Financial Performance	0.895	0.935	0.827
Marketing Performance	0.897	0.935	0.829

As shown in the table, all Cronbach's alpha values are above 0.7, indicating that our variables have internal consistency outside the model. Furthermore, the composite reliability values demonstrate that the research variables have a composite reliability greater than 0.7 ($CR > 0.7$). Therefore, we have internal consistency within the model's items as well. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) indicates that each question can retain its explanatory variance in the model. The AVE for each variable in this table shows that all values are above 0.5, confirming that we also have convergent reliability. Given that all three types of reliability are established, it can be concluded that our model is reliable.

The quality of the reflective measurement model refers to whether the questions of each variable have accurately measured their corresponding variable in an outer model. The method for assessing the quality of the reflective measurement model is through a specific test called cross-load indicator validity.

Table 4. Evaluation of Reflective Measurement Model Quality (Cv Com)

Variable	Value
Relationship Marketing	0.463
Integrated Marketing	0.334
Internal Marketing	0.436
Operational Marketing	0.317
Volatility	0.387
General Activation	0.375
Co-creation of Value	0.401

Dialogue	0.549
Offline to Online Transition Components	0.605
Comprehensive Marketing Strategy	0.443
IT Online Changes	0.508
Operational Program	0.662
Control and Evaluation	0.492
Financial Performance	0.571
Marketing Performance	0.573

The Cv Com values are compared with three values: 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, which are classified as weak, moderate, and strong, respectively. According to the results in the table, all Cv Com coefficients are evaluated as strong.

The correlation coefficient (r) indicates the strength of the relationship between two variables, and its square (R^2) represents the variance of the independent variable. The analysis of R^2 helps in understanding how much of the variance in the dependent variable can be determined by a set of predictors. The coefficient of determination is a more definitive measure than the correlation coefficient. It is the most important metric to explain the relationship between two independent variables. This coefficient reflects the percentage of changes in the dependent variable explained by the independent variable. The coefficient of determination (R^2) fluctuates between zero and one and is interpreted as follows:

If R^2 equals zero, it means the regression line could never relate the changes in the dependent variable to the independent variable. In other words, if no changes in the dependent variable are explained by the regression relationship, the R^2 value is zero. If R^2 equals one, it means the regression line has perfectly explained the changes in the dependent variable with respect to the independent variable. The determination coefficients for the conceptual model of the research were obtained using the SMART PLS software.

Table 5. R^2 Values

Variable	R Square
Relationship Marketing	0.598
Integrated Marketing	0.787
Internal Marketing	0.754
Operational Marketing	0.735
Volatility	0.684
General Activation	0.667
Co-creation of Value	0.760
Dialogue	0.714
Comprehensive Marketing Strategy	0.744
Operational Program	0.704
Control and Evaluation	0.601
Financial Performance	0.826
Marketing Performance	0.824

According to Chin (1998), three values—0.19, 0.33, and 0.67—are used to assess R^2 , which are classified as weak, moderate, and strong, respectively. Based on these values, the following evaluations are made:

- Relationship marketing with an R^2 value of 0.598 is moderate,
- Integrated marketing with an R^2 value of 0.787 is strong,
- Internal marketing with an R^2 value of 0.754 is strong,
- Operational marketing with an R^2 value of 0.735 is strong,
- Volatility with an R^2 value of 0.684 is strong,

- General activation with an R^2 value of 0.667 is moderate,
- Co-creation of value with an R^2 value of 0.760 is strong,
- Dialogue with an R^2 value of 0.714 is strong,
- Comprehensive marketing strategy with an R^2 value of 0.744 is strong,
- Operational program with an R^2 value of 0.704 is strong,
- Control and evaluation with an R^2 value of 0.601 is moderate,
- Financial performance with an R^2 value of 0.826 is strong,
- Marketing performance with an R^2 value of 0.824 is strong.

This indicates that our independent variables have effectively predicted the behavior of the dependent variable at a very high level.

The quality of the structural model must be assessed using a test called cross validity redundancy (Cv Red).

Table 6. Evaluation of Cv Red

Variable	Value
Relationship Marketing	0.418
Integrated Marketing	0.491
Internal Marketing	0.521
Operational Marketing	0.445
Volatility	0.452
General Activation	0.430
Co-creation of Value	0.514
Dialogue	0.543
Comprehensive Marketing Strategy	0.509
Operational Program	0.536
Control and Evaluation	0.442
Financial Performance	0.639
Marketing Performance	0.638

The Cv Red index is compared to three values: 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, which correspond to weak, moderate, and strong, respectively. All variables are assessed as having strong quality, indicating the structural model's excellent capability in prediction.

This test indicates the quality of the overall model. The index is the square of the product of the average values of the shared variance and the average R^2 coefficients.

Three values—0.01, 0.25, and 0.36—are proposed as weak, moderate, and strong for the GOF index (Wetzels et al., 2009). Based on the GOF index value of 0.743, the overall quality of our final model is assessed as strong.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

Based on the mean test, the following results were obtained:

- Relationship Marketing: 3.8945
- Integrated Marketing: 3.3924
- Internal Marketing: 3.4346
- Operational Marketing: 3.6287
- Volatility: 3.2869
- General Activation: 3.6920
- Co-creation of Value: 3.3713

- Dialogue: 3.5105
- Offline-to-Online Transition Elements: 3.4873
- Comprehensive Marketing Strategy: 3.3966
- Online IT Changes: 3.6920
- Operational Program: 3.3418
- Control and Evaluation: 3.1857
- Financial Performance: 3.3544
- Marketing Performance: 3.3840

Therefore, based on the mean test output, Relationship Marketing, with a mean of 3.8945, has the highest rating among the constructs.

The research was assessed, and the normality of the data distribution was confirmed.

The Cv com is compared with the values 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, which correspond to weak, moderate, and strong, respectively. Based on the results, all Cv com coefficients are assessed as strong.

For R^2 assessment, three values are proposed: weak, moderate, and strong. Based on the mentioned values, Relationship Marketing (0.598) is assessed as moderate, Integrated Marketing (0.787) as strong, Internal Marketing (0.754) as strong, Operational Marketing (0.735) as strong, Volatility (0.684) as strong, General Activation (0.667) as moderate, Co-creation of Value (0.760) as strong, Dialogue (0.714) as strong, Comprehensive Marketing Strategy (0.744) as strong, Operational Program (0.704) as strong, Control and Evaluation (0.601) as moderate, Financial Performance (0.826) as strong, and Marketing Performance (0.824) as strong. This indicates that our independent variables have very effectively predicted the dependent variable's behavior.

The Cv Red index is measured against the values 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35, representing weak, moderate, and strong, respectively. All variables exhibit strong quality, indicating the structural model's excellent predictive capability.

Given the GOF index value of 0.743, calculated using Equation 4-1, the quality of our final model is assessed as strong.

The findings of this study provide significant insights into the relationship between strategic alignment and company performance, aligning with the theoretical perspectives outlined in the literature. Strategic planning, as described by Kiani (2019), is an organized process designed to equip an organization with the necessary resources and direct its efforts toward long-term goals. Moreover, the concept of international marketing strategy reveals that factors such as market conditions, technological advancements, and organizational capabilities significantly influence the success of international marketing initiatives. These factors, when aligned with strategic objectives, facilitate enhanced export performance and market penetration [7, 10, 13, 15-18, 21]. For instance, Mohammad-Kazemi (2017) emphasizes the role of external and internal factors in boosting export performance [20]. These perspectives align with the view that marketing strategies must be adaptable and responsive to both internal and external environmental changes, a finding that is echoed by Rasouli et al. (2021) in the context of international sanctions on Iran's oil exports. Thus, the integration of strategic planning with international marketing principles is crucial for firms seeking to navigate complex market environments and ensure sustainable growth [10].

In light of these findings, it is clear that a well-aligned strategic approach, encompassing business, IT, and marketing dimensions, not only supports organizational performance but also drives successful market engagement, particularly in international contexts. The theoretical framework and empirical literature together highlight the importance of considering the dynamic interplay between different strategic elements, urging

organizations to maintain flexibility and responsiveness in their strategic planning processes to achieve long-term success.

Authors' Contributions

Authors equally contributed to this article.

Ethical Considerations

All procedures performed in this study were under the ethical standards.

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Conflict of Interest

The authors report no conflict of interest.

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