Open University of Cyprus **Hellenic Open University**

Master's join degree/post graduate Programme
Enterprises Risk Management (ERM)

MASTER THESIS

A Risk Management Framework for Greek Exports

Alexandros – Christodoulos Antoniou

Supervisor
Dr. Anastasis Petrou

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Summary

Fifteen years have passed since the economic crisis of 2007 and its effects are still evident in all aspects of economy worldwide. Nevertheless, risk management tools are available and allow both identification, assessment and evaluation of risks which might have failed to prevent the crisis. Since then, Covid-19 pandemic erupted, causing business inconvenience. It seems now clearer than ever that risk management's necessity is high in the business continuity.

Exports are the key factor of the Greek economy. During the Greek economic crisis, Greek companies have shifted their focus to international markets, trying to overcome the effects of the crisis. Greek exporters have had astonishing results in the last three years, which lead to double-digit growth and exports now being equivalent to one third of the country's GDP.

This master thesis will present the concept of risk management and strategic planning and it will then present the main risk concept on export companies. Research carried out through several interviews, allowed us to understand the business environment in which Greek companies operate, as well as how they face risks and how they turn them into a competitive advantage to enhance their efficiency and performance.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Exporting goods to other countries can result to a significant source of financial growth for businesses as new markets and opportunities arise. In the process, new risks are very likely to appear, especially when it comes to dealing with payments that they may not have encountered or experienced before. With careful management, businesses can understand the impact new risks could include and how to mitigate these risks on their own or with the help of third parties. However, not all risks will have the same significance. Some payment risks can lead to unexpected levels of debt that can therefore have devastating consequences for a business. Other situations involve risks that only lead to short-term issues, such as sporadic delays in payments, delays on delivery time, custom control issues. Unfortunately, it is not always immediately clear which risks can lead to which set of consequences. Therefore, managing an export business begins with a clear understanding and awareness of all the risks that a business faces as well as the level of those risks. With that insight, companies will be able to monitor (to an extent) and manage those risks as needed. It is when companies do not understand or recognize the inherent risks of export businesses that real problems occur. For example, looking the other way and hoping for the best is in no case a viable export risk management strategy.

Moreover, an organisation's ability to remain competitive is determined by its capacity to take advantage of its environment and to prosper by the changes within that very business environment. Additionally, exploiting its own force to overcome obstacles is what organisational advantage is all about (Elahi, 2013). Parker and Mobey (2004) have indicated that it is vital for an organisation to make as good use as possible of their environment and to ensure that the prevalent risks are evaded through effective planning. The parameters and factors involved with shaping these kinds of risks are numerous and are actively transforming day by day at international levels. One of the biggest and most significant examples into that area is without a doubt Covid -19. Political uncertainty, minimal economic growth, social unrest, financial leverage, debt, are just a few cases that contribute into the shaping of those risks which have always existed from the depths of history to now, and will keep existing for many years to come. It goes without saying that organisations can not foresee risks. They can sometimes predict situations according to calculations, research, creative feedback, and general experience into the field. The Covid-19 pandemic was an unexpected and devastating case which no one had envisioned. In this very rapid changing environment, risk and crisis management are now more important than ever (Culp, 2020). Overall, if a company is involved with exports (as well as imports) it is crucial and a big part of its own fundamental structure to be aware of the nature of all possible risks. Some examples are political or economic instability in the buyer's country, non-payment for the exported goods, loss or damage to goods in transit, currency fluctuations, the cost of returning to your premises any goods that a buyer refuses to accept, a new customer's credit worthiness, a fault that causes a client to sue.

Even though risk management becomes essential to organisations, it failed to prevent crisis such as the financial crisis of 2017's (Dionne, 2013). Risk management emphasizes into the internal or external threats that could harm an organisation. Risk management process usually consists of three sections: identifying, analyzing and managing threats (Cole, 2020). Literature review has shown that the implementation of a risk management plan which evaluates the significance of possible threats before they occur, can save money, time, working hours and can even secure the future of an organisation.

The need to understand how an organisation interacts with other organisations, as well as understanding areas of risks and setting plans to mitigate or take advantage of these risks, are some of the factors that lead to this research. This thesis is therefore guided by the call for crisis management in an organisation as part of strategic management.

Greece is an export-oriented country, representing 40% of GDP in 2019 (World Bank, 2020). Thousands of companies are exporting goods abroad such as mineral fuels, pharmaceuticals, construction materials, food, and agricultural products. The current thesis will focus on the risks that Greek Export Companies face and how they mitigate them to improve their performance. Analytical presentation of Greek's exports will follow next.

It also focuses on the engagement of stakeholders through crisis management, and it aims to present successful risk management cases from exports companies, while discovering the main business threats on Greek companies trading abroad.

The research’s significance aims to highlight the risk factors in export industry of Greece. It’s worth mentioning that even though there’s a broad focus on the risk management (Tang & Musa, 2011; Yang, 2011; Coliccia & Strozzi, 2012), export risk management is not addressed significantly in the literature. Even less are the papers that address the problems and the risks arising in Greece’s export industry. This paper aims to fill this gap by providing solutions on the way that export companies can deal with the increased risks in such a volatile sector as exports. The significance of this paper can be found in its goals which focus on providing solutions for better identification of risk related issues, when they arise in a country where exports are limited and therefore, risk management may aid to increase the volume and the efficiency of the export companies.

Chapter 2
Concept of Risk

When searching for the origin of the term “Risk”, this can be traced back to the ancient Greek language with the meaning “root, stone or cut from a firm land”. It was first mentioned by Homerin Odyssey (Skjong, 2005). A dictionary definition considers that risk is ‘the chance of injury, damage or loss’ (Webster, 1983 in Habegger, 2008). From another point of view risk is defined as a set of scenarios, each of which has a probability and a consequence (Kaplan and Garrick 1981; Kaplan 1991). Nowadays, the term “risk” is used to describe any variation from an ideal solution or method, which is typically expressed in terms of expected loss (Dionne, 2013). A solid risk management strategy would assist a business in establishing policies to prevent future risks, mitigate their effect if they do occur, and deal with the consequences when they are inevitable. When it comes to risk theory, it attempts to define and clarify the decisions people tend to make while under pressure or/and uncertainty about the future. A situation in which risk theory can be applied includes several possible decisions, several possible states of the world and an outcome for each combination of state and decision. We will analyze more about risk theory in the following pages. Organisations may be more secure in their strategic decisions due to their ability to consider and manage risk (Cole, 2020). In most cases, risk management is seen as a management burden, which is caused by the changing business environment and changing regulations, among other factors (Charette,1999). Therefore, risk management has gained more interest in the field of research considering the need for organisations to encapsulate themselves against any possible threats.

2.1 Crisis Management and Risk Concept

According to Cambridge dictionary, Crisis can be described as a period when great uncertainty erupts. Crisis in business environment can be determined as the unpredictable events in business that disrupt the normal way of doing things (Muşetescu & Shay 2019). These events usually cause high level of unreliability while threatening goal achievability (Cooke, 2004). Therefore, crisis and/ or risks are the various trends and factors that can destabilize an organisation's growth trend and hence, diminishing the shareholder's value, while squashing the expectation of the various stakeholders (Moran, 2014). In an organisational set up, crisis can be attributed to failure of an organisations' management to identify the various uncertainties and the changing business environment and develop the necessary plans to respond to these changes (Nocco & Stulz, 2006). Majorly, an organisation's crisis may have a low degree of occurring or possibility of occurrence, but it has a high affecting value, which therefore causes a threat to the existence of a company. The disruption caused by crisis therefore costs the organisation and hence the need to come up with solutions to improve the chances for success while ensuring that organisations remain sustainable (Carmeli& Schaubroeck, 2008).

Risk is considered as the probability of something occurring that will have impact on the general objectives of an institution or organisation (Brewer & Walker, 2011). It limits the ability of achieving the mission of a particular company or institution. Risk therefore, creates uncertainties when it comes to achievement of objectives. In a university set up, even though they are largely distinguished from the normal commercial institutions, it is important to note that they have an obligation to ensure that community's and their stakeholders' needs are met (Brewer & Walker, 2011). In this case, their strategic objectives represent plurality. It is important to note that their risks are defined by the ability to become responsible to the community at large, while at the same time risks may occur from their internal activities.

Reviewing the literature on crisis and risk management, it is evident that there is often confusion between these two concepts. Many researchers tend to analyze them together since they both deal with the way businesses plan, prepare, and mitigate (Walker, 2017). For this reason, business consultants and other researchers believe there is a need to discuss on the difference between the two concepts. Wilmer (2016), defines Crisis management as an occurrence that takes place at a particular moment in time. It is usually something unexpected, public, and with the potential to harm a company's finances, revenues, reputation, market positioning and service delivery. Risks can be either strategic or operational in nature (Andersen, 2006).

The risks taking place due to an organisational crisis that threatens fundamentally the organisation’s goals. For this reason, organisational research from a variety of disciplines focused to crises and crisis management aims to understand the occurrence phenomenon (Coombs & Holladay, 2002).As well as the way the management is applied and its endeavors to overcome the crises, also considering the possible crises outcomes (Gillespie & Dietz, 2009) However, many of the researchers (Zamoum & Gorpe, 2018; Bundy, Pfarrer, Short & Coombs, 2016) admit that there is a very limited understanding of crises and crisis management and needs to be much more research on what concerning the theoretical mechanisms at work.

Literature on crisis management can be divided in two primary perspectives, with the first one to referring to the internal perspective that concerns within-organisation dynamics of managing risk, complexity and technology (Bigley & Roberts, 2001). Additionally, the external perspective focuses on the interactions of organisations and external stakeholders (Dardis, & Haigh, 2009). The above perspectives seem to have evolved independently.

Internal perspective highlights the complexity of modern organisational life that contributes significantly to the phenomenon of crises (Perrow, 1984). Many scholars tend to focus on a pro crises prevention and present conceptual (Weick et al., 1999; Ashforth & Anand, 2003; Roux-Dufort, 2007; Leveson et al., 2009; Greve et al., 2010), or empirical research design (Roberts et al., 2007; Zhang et al., 2008; Bechk & Okhuysen, 2011; Wowak, et al., 2015) research design. Generally, the research which has been published can be divided in the same way, whether they examine Crisis Management, Post crisis outcomes or External perspective (social evaluations).

The identification of key stakeholders in crisis management is important. Based on the nature of the crisis, stakeholder’s significance varies, and managers are required to pay attention to their needs. The types of stakeholders are three: Shareholders, Regulators/Auditors and Customers. Some of these stakeholders, such as the shareholders and the employees are internal in the business.

2.2 Strategic Management

The concept of business strategy describes the means and policies followed by a company to achieve its goals. According to Johnson and Scholes (1999) strategy shows the direction and goal of the business in the long run.

The organisation's internationalization strategy aims to integrate the company into the international markets either through exports or imports or through the expansion of its production activities beyond the base of its operation. According to the literature, there are several strategies that promote the internalization of an organisation.

Strategic management can be considered as the continuous process of an internationalized organisation where the management tries to align their internal capabilities to their external environment changes and stakeholder's demands. So, it involves the formulating and implementing of given strategic moves while aiming at achieving given objectives (Henry, 2008). This is therefore an essential process where an organisation can identify the risk areas and make plans to limit the risks; it also allows an organisation to identify various opportunities, expected market changes that would improve the business competitiveness and hence make plans to take advantage of them (Lawrence, 1996). Strategic management consequently involves drafting objectives, analyzing the internal and external environment, evaluating, and implementing the set policies to achieve organisations overall goals. These ensure that the laid down resources are all focused towards achieving a common organization-goal. It involves governing all tactics that the organisation plans to use to bring about the desired result (Bracker, 1980).

A strategic plan can be defined as a master plan that the organisation can follow to achieve given goals including those that are related to trading and producing abroad. Any organisation will lay down its operational plans to ensure that it will not only survive but also make optimal use of its resources (Andersen, 2006). It gives the company the knowledge to undertake a given endeavor (Moran, 2014). A corporate business strategy is the laying down of possible approaches that are essential in enhancing the continuity of a business over a given period (Cooke, 2004). A corporate strategy is the overall scope of the various ways in which the whole organisation may be able to achieve its vision. “It revolves around the organisational structure, tradeoff strategy, human resource strategy, portfolio management and allocation of resources” (Cambell, 2006, p.54).

On the other hand, business strategy is a plan that is set up to demonstrate that the provision of a good or service that an organisation offers to a given market, sells optimally as well as ensures that, if possible, the same customer comes back, and the business can attain its objective (Cummings & Daellenbach, 2009). There are plans that are set towards a given course of action, and thus unlike the corporate strategy, the business strategy aims to maximize results (Kneller & Pisu, 2011). There are all tactics that are laid down to see whether the set corporate strategies or business strategy are materialized. Strategic options are alternative courses of actions that an organisation may undertake in response to any pressure, opportunities, threats, or market trends.

Researchers have concluded that there is not enough systematic research concerning the applicability of strategic management concepts including SWOT analysis (strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats), industrial organisation (I/O), resource-based view (RBV), knowledge-based view (KBV), balanced scorecard (BSC) and intellectual capital (IC) in the non-profit context (Kong, 2007). On the other hand, researchers have noted the importance of knowledge as a key organisational resource that can lead to competitive advantages for an organisation (Wall et al., 2004). The same applies for non-profit organisations as well (Zack, 1999; 2005).

Largely, the development of strategic management thinking is based on the importance of the economic role of ‘knowledge’. The last one is specified as either verbally or in writing, computer programs, patents, drawings (Davenport & Prusak, 1998; Hedlund, 1994).

2.3 Strategic Risk Management

As we have mentioned, risk management has developed an enormous usability and popularity by the business and the scientific world but also by organisations and practitioners. Therefore, even though risk management has been always part of humankind and their organisations, it had to pass some decades before the integrated approach was finally understood and the perks of its method arose to the view for managers and decision makers. Therefore, we might say that the maximum evolution of "the art of Risk Management" as many authors refer to, would be the comprehensive approach of the discipline which is often labeled as Enterprise Risk Management or Organisational Risk Management or Corporate Risk Management among other distinctions. Under this perspective, organisations are supposed to proactively manage risk, monitor in a conscious way the risks associated with their strategic objectives. Organisations need to adapt to the various external and internal conditions that would not only help to respond but also to fit into change. However, strategic management is seen as one of the ways of identifying the strategic risks that would destabilize an organisation and hence making plans to engage these risks (Chicken & Posner, 1998).

Some of the risks that the Greek Exporting Company must deal with include stiff competition, volatile market rates, changes in government policies and requirements that may restrict or make it easier to perform business among other factors (Karelakis et al., 2008). Through strategic management an organisation can plan, monitor, analyze and assess the organisational goals to help meet its objectives. Through the development of strategic objectives an organisation can use its resources effectively to achieve its mission (Griffith & Dimitrova, 2014). Following this process an organisation can be able to identify the likely changes within the business environment and make plans to respond to these changes effectively. This would enable an organisation to respond to change and risks that would hinder an organisations production capability. A risk could probably hinder an organisation's productivity, its ability to meet consumer expectations, to deliver their products on time among other impacts (Henry, 2008).

In this case, risks in a company set up may be strategic, which are the risks relating from the strategic objectives of an organisation. These are the threats that arise from the environment within an institution operates, and this could be the external environment (Brewer and Walker, 2011). We also have the operational risks which can be referred to as the activities of the various departments or in other words the administrative units. It is important to note that the management is responsible for implementing the company's strategic moves or priorities and a failure to run effectively would limit the ability of an organisation to achieve their objectives (Hilmersson & Jansson, 2012). The management is noted to come up with strategic plans; they are responsible for managing the company's resources to achieve competitiveness through fostering for research and encouraging education of personnel.

Understanding the connection between strategy development and risks is same as to recognize how an organisation can take advantage of their strengths by making plans that reduce these risks (Nocco & Stulz, 2006). Summarizing, Risk propensity can be defined as a competent management that understands the business environment and makes plans to reduce such risks. (Wang, Xu, Zhang, & Chen, 2016).

2.4 Risk Management Program

A risk management program is a systematic method for quantifying, qualifying, and mitigating issues that an entity may identify or define. Many businesses have a risk management program in place. An organisation, no matter its size, is exposed to a variety of threats. A risk management program demands the shareholders and its employees to consider these risks and devise plans to address them.

The purpose of a risk management program is to formulate the ideal mitigation strategy to prevent the occurrences and consequences of an incident. One of the major roles of the risk management program is to use mitigation strategies in response to the risk profile. A mitigation plan should embrace education, procedure and policy adjustments and insurance (Sennewald,2011).

The necessary steps/factors to implement a robust risk management program are the following:

1. Risk Profile Creation
2. Evaluation of Risks
3. Role Assignment
4. Prevention Strategies
5. Contingency Plan
6. Measure Risk
7. Monitor and report

It's important now to see the step-by-step risk management process in detail. An organisation's strategic objects or else, the creation of its risk profile are the starting point, which are directly linked to the next step – the risk assessment/evaluation of risks. These steps links us to the third step, the risk analysis-role assignment. These crucial first steps should be handled with creative collaboration from the organisation's inner members, as well as constructive insights because when defined, they lead to the next crucial step which is the risk description, the risk estimation and most importantly the decision on prevention strategies. When all of the steps above are clarified, comes the creation of a contingency plan (contingency planning is defined as a course of action designed to help an organisation respond to an event that may or may not happen). As it becomes clear, this leads to a major decision from the organisation's part, because after the contingency plan comes the next crucial step, the risk measure, the monitoring and finally the reporting (UK Standard 2002, p.109).

Identification of Risks is the first and most important step. This should happen at the start of the project or at a business plan and reputed regularly. There are several different approaches for identifying threats, and the followed strategy is defined by type and complexity of a project, resources, and team. Such as, case studies, brainstorming sessions, risk checklists, assumption analysis.

Evaluation of risks requires qualitative and quantitative analysis of every risk, to determine the consequences, the likelihood of occurrence and the impact on the project/ organisation. The existence of many possible threats demands a more complex system that called risk assessment matrix (Planio, 2020).

Even though it is important to identify and evaluate risks, it is not enough to exclude their appearance. So, a team is needed to prioritize them and estimate on needed resources to handle them.

To handle risks, the assembled team should design the proper response. There are four ways to prevent risk. The first way is changing the plan to avoid risks. The second way is to transfer risk by outsourcing it, such is the case where an insurance policy is at place. The third way is mitigating risks and taking all the necessary steps to minimize the impact of the risks. The fourth, is accepting the risk presuming the negative consequences by budgeting the cost.

In case of a risk occurrence and in the possibility of fallout, a contingency plan should be placed. It's a plan that describes the steps after the fallout, such as the diversion of the budget, a communication plan or scope differentiation.

Measuring the risk threshold allows risk management team to estimate the amount of risk an organisation and its' shareholders are willing to take.

Lastly, risk management is a continuous and persistent project. Risks needs to be always tracked, evaluating their influence and their probability. News risks may arise, and old ones evolve and change. (Duff, 2017)

In export businesses, a risk management program could apply on a strategic plan, a new market opportunity, a new product development or any internal project realization.

2.5 Impact of Risk on Organisational Performance

Organisational performance is defined by the goal achievements set by employers, services provision, or the goods acceptance paid for by consumers, contributing in whole to the company's sustainability, creation, growth, and benefit. Performance is a technique that is linked to each operation in an organisation, and its execution is dependent on the company, market, and climate. (Samsonowa, 2012).

Organisational performance is characterized by the efficiency of organisation's business units. By setting different goals and schedules the organisation uses its resources more constructive and accurate. Factors of failure or success are determined by a systematic evaluation of all business units. Organisations pay attention to efficiency, quality, and continuity and employee performance has a direct impact on an organisation's success or failure (Ling & Hung, 2010).

According to literature, there is a clear connection between organisational performance and risk management. So, the implementation of risk management consequently affects positively the organisation's performance. Managers can enhance their organisation's efficiency by building a risk management culture within it. When opposed to a weak personnel company culture, effective workers are the foundation of every business success (Baxter, Bedard, Hoitash & Yezegel, 2013).

Regarding risk management in public organisations, we can mention the definition of the risk management process by Martin Fone and Peter C. Young (2005), who have done efforts in terms of translating these concepts to the public sector. In a nutshell, the main goal of risk management is to create an environment that facilitates teamwork within the organisation, implements all employees in the decision-making process, and establishes an effective communication system to address risk. Learning from the risk-taking organisation's history and showing senior management leadership, helps the organisation to prevent fatal errors.

Risk management’s goal is to build a habitat within the company that promotes collaboration, involves all employees in decision-making, and creates an efficient risk communication framework. By educating employees on the significance and the processes of risk management is needed, organisations ensure their efficiency. Trained employees operate as a shield to risks (Al-Rosan, 2017).

In this context, exports companies should educate their employees on the risk management practices, to handling successfully risks.

2.6 Crisis impact on shareholder value

The best indicator on organisation performance is shareholder value. According to Knight and Pretty (1999), there are three factors consisting of shareholder value and these are tangible, premium, and latent value.

The book value of an organisation is often mentioned as a stangible value. Manufacturing plants, offices, machinery, and inventory are examples. The effect of a crisis on such tangible assets is well understood; for example, a plant and its machinery may be damaged or destroyed by fire or natural disaster.

The value above the book value at which the company trades in the open market is referred to as premium value. The components of premium value are the source of an organisation's competitive advantage, and it includes its prestige, brand(s), trademarks, innovation, growth opportunity, and, of course, its employees’ skills and experience. Crises can harm premium value in a variety of ways, depending on the nature of the crisis and the characteristics of the affected organisation. As a result of a crisis, corporate and product names may be harmed; management experience and organisational staff may be lost; the company's global scope may be harmed; and consumers may cancel orders (Knight & Pretty, 1999)

Finally, an organisation's latent value is defined as a potential value, which can be realized through asset efficiency, operating excellence, and product marketing optimization, among other things. Crises will quickly deplete latent value.

Shareholders’ value on export companies can be substantial reduced on crisis. Stock products in crisis period, especially when they are perishable is devastating for an organisation. Premium value could be harmed in case of crisis and potential growth could be minimized. As export companies are like any other organisation, performance and value could be reduced in the case of crisis. But as export companies are trading in many markets, they are more exposed to threats and crisis.

2.7 Literature review interpretation

There are various relations between crisis management and strategic planning which include focus on a business's future by looking into organisations ability with the hope of achieving growth. It also entails dealing with business threats and weaknesses where the focus is on creating plans that respond to these factors as they reduce business capability. They entail evaluating the environment of operation, identifying the risks and opportunities, and devising of plans to mitigate the risks while developing innovations to take advantage of the opportunities. The differences between the two variables, crisis management and strategic planning, is that the one focuses on risks while the latter focuses on opportunities (Funston & Wagner, 2010). This explains the need for strategic risk management as a mean of ensuring that crisis can be seen as part of strategic management.

Past research has focused on the need of creating risk and crisis-free businesses where it is indicated that the most effective means of managing crisis is through setting strategies to overcome risks. This involves setting effective risk management plans and strategies that would help a business in identifying areas of risk that are likely to cause crisis. Locating the possible risk areas, allows the management to set plans where they can mitigate these risks hence reduce the probability of crisis from occurring. On the other hand, the management may set measures and / or innovative strategies that would enable the organisation to turn the areas of risk into profitable ventures (Slywotzky, 2007). Cooke (2004) and Milestone (2009) usually refer to this as risk proofing which entails setting measures and/ or strategic plans that would help protect a business from risks.

Research further indicates that through the application of total quality management, organisations not only achieve quality products but also assess the internal processes of an organisation, identifying risk instances and making plans to mitigate and / or accommodate them. This indicates that part of the top-quality management process involves assessing the internal environment for some risk areas which can lead to crisis as for example reducing quality of products. Furthermore, it helps an organisation to identify the areas of crisis while involvement in research and development boosts an organisation's ability to turn risks into organisation strengths and / or opportunities.

Notably, most research studies (Dutty & Pullig, 2011; Ojasalo, 2009) indicate that it is impossible for companies to fully mitigate risks and instances that bring crisis. An impact to shareholder value may occur. However, despite the inability to fully mitigate instances of crisis, making plans helps reduce the negative impact of these dreadful events for the organisation and at the same time an organisation can be able to critically review the risk instances and develop opportunities that a business can take advantage of for success. In this case, it can be indicated that crisis management needs to be involved in the strategic planning process as they are two similar factors (Miller,1992). One of the benefits of strategic management according to research is its ability to focus on the environment where the entity operates and the risks and opportunities within this environment. Through strategic management an organisation can use its strengths to take advantage of opportunities while mitigating the risks, hence preventing crisis. However, research indicates that this requires an effective management connected with stakeholder needs and understands the internal and external environment of operation as well as a business that can effectively make plans.

Chapter 3
Risks in Exports

Crises are part of a company's business routine. Businesses that are more vulnerable to crisis are the export companies. The reason for that is because they are exposed to different environments setups not only in countries where they are producing their products but also in the countries that are exporting. Such an example is the global economic crisis (2008) where currency losses decrease profit margins to international buyers or covid-19 pandemic (2020) recession. Revenues in international markets are weakened by economic downturns. Unrest and protests obstruct product distribution. Floods and storms trigger travel delays. (Lehmann, 2013).

After the World War II, lower transportation costs, globalisation, economies of scale, and reduced tariff barriers contributed to the development of export businesses worldwide countries income. The importance of exports in the economy can be signified in three major pillars (Boyte-White, 2021):

- **Employment** - Export growth has the potential to build jobs.
- **Economic Growth** - Increased exports would cause aggregate demand and trigger higher economic growth.
- **Current Account Deficit** - The current account deficit is largely determined by the strength of exports.

3.1 Main Risks on Export Companies

According to Euler Hermes (2021), the main risks that export companies are exposed to, are the following:

3.1.1 Political Risks

According to Brink (2004), trading in different countries, exporters can face major political risks. There are threats that are well-known and well-established, while others may appear suddenly and unexpectedly. Elections, international sanctions or interference from organisations or state abroad, and civil unrest can alter drastically the political situation. So, the more stable a country's economic, financial, and social structures are, the lower its political risk.

As a political situation diverts, businesses trading in that country may face a variety of issues. Assets may be seized by governments. It is possible that difficulties would also be set on money transfer. Customers may default on payments if their businesses are harmed because of political unrest or shifting government policies.

As political risk is not feasible to predict, export businesses should be altered, on the countries the do business, as to avoid alteration on the political environment. As the situation appears to be worsening, a company must take action to reduce its financial exposure. For example, to lower credit limits for consumers in that country - to mitigate possible losses. Certain insurance plans, such as credit insurance, can cover damages resulting changes in the political climate.

3.1.2 Legal Risks

Around the world, laws and regulations may differ. What it may be standard for one country might not be for another. As a result, exporting businesses can encounter legal challenges in a variety of fields, including tariffs, contracts, currencies, and the ownership and copyrights associated with the goods they sell (Moorhead & Vaughan, 2015).

Hiring legal advisors who are either based in the export country or experienced with law on export country is the best ways to mitigate the legal risks of exporting. The last thing a corporation needs is to become entangled in a protracted court battle in a foreign country involving local legal issues.

Relying on reliable legal counsel can go a long way towards preventing, even predicting, and coping with possible legal problems. (Moorhead & Vaughan 2015).

3.1.3 Credit & Financial Risk

One of the major concerns for exporters when trading abroad is the possibility of payment failure or default by customers. Export credit risk is, without a doubt, one of the most important financial threats that a business can face. Even if a customer is across the street, debt collection is difficult. When the consumer is in another country, the task becomes exponentially more complicated (García, 2018).

One of the key tasks in trading abroad is to determine the client's credibility. The absence of reliable information on a customer's credit history is high. Prior to product's shipments, exporters depend on advance payments or alternative credit guarantees to reduce credit risks. By taking these measures exporters missing out business opportunities as the delay shipments or exclude buyers who are unable or unwilling to supply these guarantees (Euler Hermes, 2021)

Credit insurance is the most effective way to deal with export credit risk. Credit insurance may provide valuable credit information about current and future buyers, helping exporters to make more informed credit decisions, in addition to offering reimbursement in the event of a customer bankruptcy. Roughly 90% of the global trade credit insurance industry is covered by Euler Hermes, Coface, At Radius (Lezgovko & Jakovlev 2017).

3.1.4 Quality Risk

A customer can file a complaint about the quality of goods after they have been delivered. This may be a legitimate objection based on the buyer's unique needs and desires. It may also be a way for the buyer to gain control and negotiate a post-delivery discount on the shipped goods (Joo & Pak, 2017).

Hiring an independent third party to test the products before they are delivered is one way to deal with quality risk. If this is not feasible, the exporter should send samples to the importer or end user so that they can test the goods and decide whether the quality is satisfactory before shipping any orders (Allianz Trade USA, 2021).

3.1.5 Transportation and Logistics Risk

In the product life cycle one of the most important part is transportation. Some products must be kept refrigerated, must not be exposed to extreme heat or cold, or have a narrow expiration date. Other items are particularly delicate, need to be handled with care, or must be assembled before being delivered to the customer. All shipments are required to be monitored. If something goes wrong, the buyer has the option of negotiating a lower price or rejecting the shipment entirely.

Quality monitoring and thorough tracking techniques are often used to mitigate transportation and logistics risks. Some insurance companies provide compensation for damages incurred by delays and issues during shipping, and specialist transportation and logistics companies may also contribute expertise to this effort (Euler Hermes, 2021).

3.1.6 Language and Cultural Risk

Working with importers and consumers in another country necessitates a level of confidence. Language, culture, faith, and a variety of other facets of life all necessitate caution. Significant information and nuances, for example, can be lost in translation when exporters and consumers speak different languages (Dang & Zhao, 2020).

Anything from “business hours” to ethical conduct to whether consumers may choose to purchase a product is influenced by cultural norms. There are several instances where well-intentioned exporters can unintentionally irritate or offend buyers, government officials, and others who are critical to timely product shipments and other aspects of the company.

Hiring people who speak the local language or have lived in a specific community or area is the best way to avoid these types of issues. Furthermore, concentration on the development of local business partnerships is needed in order their goods to smooth out issues when they arise and strengthen the exporter's links and presence locally (Menzies et al., 2019).

3.2 Exports in Greece

Exports in Greece have a long history. The country's trade has been linked to abroad since the first years of independence. Even though the balance of the trade was adverse, it contributed to tackling the country's food problem, but at the same time was the most reliable source of revenue for public funds (Vernadakis, 1990).

Despite having a lower share of the economy than the European average, the export sector in Greece continues to play a significant role and has a significant impact, both in terms of economic growth and social stability, thanks to strong multiplier effects (Vernadakis, 1990).

Figure 1: Greek Exports Map
Source: Hellenic Production, 2021

Total value of exports in 2020 was €30,705.3 million, and in 2019 - €33,866.9 million. Except petroleum products, exports increased by 3.2 percent to €24,047.5 million in the same period (from €23,308.7 million in 2019), while excluding petroleum products and shipping, the rise was 2.9 percent (from €23,215.3 million to €23,890.3 million) (Comtrade, 2020).

According to ELSTAT, there are approximately 20.000 businesses trading abroad. Top 100 companies, in terms of revenue cover 53% of Greek exports.

In 2020, the following export commodities have the highest value in Greek exports.

1. Mineral fuels including oil (21.9% of total exports)
2. Pharmaceuticals (9.4%)

3. Machinery including computers (5.6%)
4. Aluminum (5.3%)
5. Electrical machinery, equipment (4%)
6. Vegetable/ fruit/ nut preparations (3.8%)
7. Plastics, plastic articles (3.8%)
8. Fruits, nuts (3.7%)
9. Dairy, eggs, honey (2.6%)
10. Fish (2.4%)

Exports to the European Union accounted for 57.5 percent of total exports, indicating the EU's importance in Greek export trade. (Enterprise Greece, 2021)

2019 was a record year for exports in Greece and Covid-19 pandemic has a negative outcome on exports performance (9% decrease).

According to Trading Economics, Greek exports will increase over the next years reaching €35 bil. This thesis is mainly focusing on Greek export companies that trade in Food & Beverage markets as well as in construction material.

What are the major crises that affected Greece and its businesses in last decade? Financial Crisis of 2018 had an unprecedented effect on Greek economy combined with the mismanagement of Government economics lead to austerity measures starting from 2010. A long period of doubt on Greek economy had a severe impact abroad in trusting of Greek companies. Crimea annexation led to restrictive measures to Russia which addressed with collateral measures to European products and companies. This fact had a negative impact mainly on Greek agriculture companies, a significant portion of Greek exports. Last, Covid-19 and its global effect on businesses from material shortages to customer demand had consequences for Greek businesses as well.

3.3 Business environment of Greek Export Companies

As it was highlighted, export companies face multiple risks not only in the markets they trade, but also in the markets they are based. What is the business environment in Greece?

The center-right government of New Democracy elected in July 2019 is committed to pro-business reforms, making effort to improve bureaucracy, while attempting to privatize some of the state-owned institutions. Even though the relying political party had to manage covid-19 pandemic, it ranks first in the opinion polls with voting estimation higher than the last election results. As far as the covid-19 crisis Greece is in the 12^{th} position among the EU27 countries per 100.000 cases since the start of the pandemic (World Health Organisation, 2022). In comparison to 2015-19, political instability and social instability have decreased. So, the political risk is low now (The Economist, 2021).

After almost 10 years in memorandum, Greek economy is in the road of recovery. Despite a relatively low number of cases and death rates during Covid-19 pandemic in Greece, in comparison with most of Europe, the economy is estimated to be among the most affected. The main reason is the strong dependence on tourism and the hospitality industry, affecting not only the trade balance but also the employment and domestic consumption (Export gate, 2021).

Greece's credit rating is "very likely" to be lifted again in the next 12 months, according to one of S&P Globals' top analysts, though regaining a coveted investment grade score is still a long way off (Jones, 2021). Under the “Next Generation” plan, Athens is set to receive grants of 19.4 billion euro by 2026 and is eligible for loans of up to 12.6 billion euro. S&P thinks the money could boost Greek growth by between 8-18% vs 2020 levels over the period (The Economist, 2021). The prospective for Greek economy is high over the next years and austerity measures or other difficulties on business development are not expected (OECD, 2021).

The Greek legal system is part of the European legal family, and it is influenced by French and German law. Greek law is mostly codified for the most part. Product safety is regulated in Greece supplemented by Regulation (EC) 765/2008, defining the accreditation and market surveillance criteria for the selling of goods (Santader, 2021)

Unless there are sensitive public policy grounds to the contrary, Greek courts will usually uphold the parties' choice of law in a commercial contract. Certain areas of national law, such as mandatory legal requirements relating to consumer protection, competition law, patents, and employee rights, will apply regardless of the parties' choice of law (GreeceInvestorGuide, 2021)

Greece, as it is positioned in Southeast Europe, has approximately important consumer markets such as Europe and Middle East. Port development over the last years made Greece an important hub on global goods logistics. Thanks to that, Greek products can access more markets. On the other way, considering European Union is the most important consumer (Intra-EU trade 57,5% of Greece exports, Enterprise Greece, 2021) transportation cost and time is higher compared to Eastern European countries (on similar products).

3.4 Preliminary Research on Export Risks

Before the presenting the findings on case studies for the abovementioned companies a preliminary analysis has been contacted on how export companies advocate crisis. Some examples of failure or success to mitigate risks are presented below.

3.4.1 Agriculture Market and Russian Embargo

In 2014, the Crimea Peninsula was annexed by the Russian Federation. European Union opposed this action among other as illegal and enacted economic sanctions against Russia. The sanctions resulted the collapsing of Russia Ruble and Russian Financial Crisis. As retaliation, Russia enacted sanctions on imported products from the European Union. Such products are fruits and vegetables. Greece was a traditional exporter of fruits and vegetables in Russia. In the previous period (1/8 / 12-31 / 7/13), Russia imports on Greek fruits and vegetables was 165 million euros. According to INCOFRUIT-HELLAS, the association of Greek Export, Fruit, Vegetable and Juice Companies, no alternatives have been found in countries outside the EU to compensate the volumes exported to Russia. In fact, the export of fruits and vegetables to non-EU countries has improved, but they have not returned to their share in all our exports at their pre-2013 rates (Eleftheros Typos, 2020).

The absence of a strategic plan by export companies to mitigate economic risks as well as the risk of relying on a single market led to irreparable damage for the fruit and vegetable companies.

Although European Commission (EC) has approved, a program to support fruits and vegetables produced in the European Union (EU) they were affected by the Russian embargo, it could not match the losses. Economic sanctions of Russia to EU products have been extended until the end of 2021.

3.4.2 Elevator Market and acquisitions trend

Following the financial crisis 2018, the global construction industry showed a decline. As consequence, many companies in this sector encountered problems in financing their projects. Some companies with liquidity took advantage to increase their market share through acquisitions. Such an example is the elevator market. Over 100 companies have either acquired or merged over the last years. KLEEMANN, a Greek exported of lifts has been affected by these transactions. Traditional clients abroad, especially in northern Europe has been acquired from other lift companies jeopardizing its market penetration and shares.

With a strategic plan at place and an export orientation, KLEEMANN tries to catch up through acquisitions. There are limitations to this project, such as business opportunities in one country may be limited while in another significant.

Chapter 4
Methodology & Methods

The literature review has emphasized the different factors that affect export business while highlighted the current state of affairs in Greece. This chapter focuses on the research methodology. This study will use qualitative research to achieve the research objectives as mentioned in the introduction. The methodology chosen directs towards the achievement of the research objectives as well as the reliability of the research itself. This section provides a plan that simply guides the researcher while collecting the required data for the research and at the same time, dictates the methods used to analyze the data collected. The importance of the methodology not only lies in guiding the researcher into collecting data but also showing the means that any other researcher, focusing on a similar study, can use to obtain relatively similar results.

The chapter begins by outlining the research philosophy that is to be applied, the research philosophy selected guides in determining the sample size that is adequate for the research, the data collection procedures and analysis techniques. The chapter continues by developing the research design and strategy that is to be applied for this research, the procedures utilized to collect data, sampling method and data analysis techniques. The study also mentions how the researcher intends to ensure reliability and validity while achieving ethics in research. The research study wishes to apply the case study methodology as it aims on crisis management as a mean of boosting business competitiveness and as part of strategic management. Importantly, the research aims at focusing on the Greek export companies.

The main aim of the research is to attempt drawing conclusions on the risk factors in export industry of Greece, how questioned enterprises mitigate risks and improve their performance and if they can be connected to any of the frameworks that are examined in the literature review.

In detail, an extensive and integrative search of articles published in major organisational academic journals has been performed identifying the areas of interest that apply to situation of crisis management as they can be drawn and presented as case studies.

4.1 Research Philosophy

This entails a belief that guides the way data is to be gathered by the researcher and the methods to be applied among other concepts. This, therefore, guides the way the researcher will gather, utilize, and present the data collected. The commonly applied paradigms are the positivist and the interpretivist approaches (Creswell, 1994). This research will seek to apply the subjective approach of Interpretivism.

This approach focuses on the need of the researcher to depend on people's experiences and objectives about the concept under study. This leads to the development of a realistically based approach into the issue being studied. The paradigm has based its argument on the fact that there is no single method of defining things and hence knowledge search and development is a broad field. (Chowdhury, 2014). Therefore, focusing on collecting data by observing the actions and opinions of the people, while seeking to understand their behavior, helps in picturing a holistic understanding of the issue being studied. This paradigm is focusing on the need to describe, translate and test the already developed concepts. It guides the researcher into interpreting these concepts, gaining a deeper understanding through incorporating various opinions while getting aligned to reality. The approach therefore describes the qualitative methodology (Weber, 2004).

Sociology approach of interpretivism is the right one for the research on Greek export companies. The reason for that lies on the understanding and interpreting beliefs of companies that have different experience and views on the same subject. The aim to understand the way the researched companies behave on certain ways.

4.2 Research Design

This describes the given strategy that the researcher wishes to achieve the intended goal or solve the given problem. It spells the means within which the research goals are to be met and hence constituting the blueprint for the study. This ensures that the evidence obtained allows one to find solutions to the problem that intends to be solved. In this scope, the case study research design will be applied. This design allows the researcher to focus on a particular and deeply studied group, with the aim of solving a given problem or bringing into light a particular understanding. This design would be the best to apply for this research as the intention is to focus on the Greek Exports Industry and specifically on the Greek exporting company.

Majorly, the case study design is one of the various strategies that can be applied to conduct a social research. The design involves the researcher conducting deep research on the issue under focus to develop valid variables and hypothesis that would guide data collection. The design is also applicable as it allows for a detailed view of the issue under focus hence allowing the researcher to understand it well, as well as get the most information needed.

The reason for using the case study design is the aim of the researcher to deeply explore into the problem being studied hence allowing the researcher to conduct detailed study on the topic and problem being investigated (Davies & Francis, 2018). The case study design also allows the researcher to investigate the detailed critiques from the participants which provides the researcher with maximum knowledge for the purpose of meeting the intended objective (Davies & Francis, 2018).

4.3 Sampling

To conduct the research, it is a doubt that the researcher can collect the required data from the entire population. The process can be tedious and time consuming while it may also cost the researcher a lot of finance to complete the study. This therefore explains the need for the researcher to select a representation of the population from which the researcher can engage to solve the research problem. Sampling is in this case an essential factor while conducting research as it allows the researcher to engage a portion of the population (export companies in Greece) and then use their contributions to understand the behavior of the entire population. This research uses non-probability sampling method as researcher use his judgement to select the sample of the qualitative research.

4.4 Data Collection Technique

4.4.1 Primary Data

During research two methods examined, interviews and formed questionnaires. A questionnaire was created via SurveyMonkey and a total of 2.500 companies are searched to find the right one. A list of 450 was build but the responses weren't enough to justify the research. That why interviews are preferred for sampling. The method of sampling chosen is judgmental, thus among the 25 organizations included are those who operate in Greece and export their products abroad. Even though over 35 companies are contacted via telephone many refused to answer or gave weak answers that cannot be formed in a text. Thus, 25 individuals have been interviewed, which currently hold or used to hold key positions in these companies. The sample includes organizations by various industry sectors, which employ from 100 to 2.000 employees. These individuals have expressed their opinion based on their working experience regarding ERM. To collect primary data, the case studies were applied. The case study method enables for in-depth, multi-faceted examinations of demanding subjects in the field of work. The value of the case study approach is recognized in many fields such these of business, law and policy. As Stake (1995) mentioned, *"A case study is both the process of learning about the case and the product of our learning"*. Three are the main types of a case study: intrinsic, instrumental and collective. In this thesis a collective case is used to study multiple cases simultaneously to build a deeper understanding of a particular subject. The methods seek to engage the participants and/ or the respondents to get their insights about the concepts under study, the research opinions, their beliefs and or attitudes (Crowe & Cresswell, 2021). This guided by the already formed research variables and hypothesis where the researcher can proceed to form questions that can guide data collection.

To approach the executives of these companies, the researcher used email and telephone and managed to gather the information needed through personal interviews. In the interviews, the questions used will be largely semi-structured. This allows the researcher to give a chance to the participants to air their ideas about the concept being studied with the aim of achieving the research objectives. These methods help researcher get information from people's experiences and investigating an objective; understanding the stand points of various participants would help an individual gain a better insight of the problem being studied for decision making. The use of qualitative interviews entails the researcher banking on the elements of trust, effective relationship between the researcher and the interviewee, informed and critically set questioning, use of empathy and respect as well as application of good listening skills. In this research, this allows for effective collection of data and easy reaching of the research participants at their own convenience and free time, the researcher aims to bank on the use of technology (Gill, Stewart, Treasure & Chadwick, 2008). The telephone interviews are taken place during the first half of 2021 and 2022. Average call time was 30-45 minutes. In some cases, there was an extra call for additional information.

These case studies were gathered to show the strategies used by companies to mitigate losses under a crisis. The structure of the following case studies is based on the main:

1. What kind of risks is your company facing?
2. What are the actions that your company takes to mitigate losses?
3. How do you think that risk management in your company will help company enhance performance?
4. How does your company manage to increase stakeholder's engagement?

4.4.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data allows the researcher to have a greater understanding of the concept under study as well as to compare the results of the current research with the past sources. These sources help in interpreting the events better which allows the researcher to better understand the data collected. The researcher will investigate these past reports and publications focusing on the issue of crisis management and the need to focus on strategic risk management as a way of mitigating risks and improving business performance for the Greek exporting industry.

4.4.3 Aimed Companies

For the aims of this study the researcher has approached the following companies:

1. ***Provinco SA*** an olive oil export company based in Athens, Greece which is a small-medium export company that activates in food and drinks sector. The company exports bottled olive oil in more than 8 countries.
2. ***Elea Olive oil*** an olive oil exporter in Loutraki, Greece that deals with exports of bottled olive oil also. The company's mission is to provide the best quality of olive oil which is gathered from small producers from the area where it operates. Their export activity includes exporting bottled olive oil in more than 10 countries worldwide. https://www.eleaoliveoil.com/.
3. ***Sierros Bros SA*** that is dealing with exports of sewing machines and ironing appliance.
4. **ARTION Conferences & Events** is a premium conference and event organizer, specializing in high quality services to companies, government bodies and organisations. ARTION has organized various events in many countries of the world with emphasis on Europe, Asia, and North America. https://artion.com.gr/
5. ***KLEEMANN Lifts*** - Founded in 1983 in Kilkis, Greece, KLEEMANN is one of the most important lift companies in the European and global market, producing all types of residential or commercial passenger and freight lifts, escalators, moving walks, accessibility and marine solutions, parking systems and components. Distributing to more than 100 countries. https://kleemannlifts.com
6. ***Captain Stamatis Group*** is based in Thessaloniki, Greece, produces and promotes in both local and global markets its premium quality products, which are 100% natural and

produced only from Greek raw materials. Product such as sea salt flakes and natural olives. The company exports to more than 15 countries. https://www.captainstamatisgroup.com

7. ***Dromeas*** is based in Serres, Greece. Company mainly engaged in the manufacture and trade of home and office furniture, partition walls and filing systems. The Company's home furniture offering includes sofas, wardrobes, ready-made kitchens, beds, bookcases and chairs with adjustable mechanisms. Its office furniture offering includes offices and chairs, furniture for waiting areas, auditorium seating systems, bookcases, as well as partition walls. It also has its own integrated tool making shop that produces various tools and high-pressure aluminum die casting parts. https://www.dromeas.com
8. ***Ta nisiotika*** is based in Thessaloniki, Greece, is a food and beverage company producing authentic Greek products. Their recipes encapsulate familiar and traditional flavors. Their export activity is expanding to countries such as the UK, Germany, France, Spain, Romania, the Netherlands, Italy and New Zealand. https://tanisiotika.gr
9. ***Elvial*** is one of the largest and most well-known aluminium extrusion industries in Greece. It produces integrated aluminium systems in a fully vertically integrated production line housed in a new, state-of-the-art plant in Kilkis, Northern Greece. https://www.elvial.gr
10. ***Inart*** is characterized a pioneer and a highly regarded company in the home decorations and Furniture market. With clients all over Greece and in all of Europe, the company's products decorate over 40 million Households and bring a smile to their owners. Inart is based in Thessaloniki, Northern Greece. https://www.inart.com/
11. ***Isomat*** is a Greek multinational Group specializing in the development and manufacture of building chemicals, mortars and paints. For over 40 years, ISOMAT has been making a history of quality, reliability, advanced technical know-how and continuous business growth. It has three production plants; one in the parent company in Greece and two in its subsidiaries in Romania and Serbia. In addition, it has five sales subsidiaries in Germany, Russia, Turkey, Bulgaria, and Slovenia and exports to over 80 countries worldwide. https://www.isomat.eu/
12. ***ALFA WOOD*** group is one of the first licensed plants in the waste wood processing sector in Greece. Founded in 1981 and has been following a continuous upturn, making it the largest Wood Processing Industry in Greece and one of the most significant in the Balkans. https://alfawood.gr

13. ***JANNIS S.A.*** was founded in 1965, in Thessaloniki. The company was one of the first large scale producers of Sesame bars in Greece. They offer a wide range of Sesame bars, Nut bars, Nougat bars, Greek style delights, and Coconut sticks. With a clientele growing internationally, they adjusted to the international market dynamics and created certified biological (organic) choices. https://www.jannis.gr/
14. ***K&N EFTHYMIADIS S.A.*** was founded in 1935 and is the largest company in the Efthymiadis Group of Companies, which since 2003 is named "REDESTOS" - Efthymiadis AgrotechnologyGroup. The Group includes 10 subsidiaries in Greece and the Balkans, fully dedicated in the Production, Research & Development and Services for Agriculture. The Group's activities are separated into four distinct sectors: Agricultural Inputs, Plant Propagation Material, Services, Food Sector.

    For over two decades, K&N EFTHYMIADIS SINGLE MEMBER S.A. has had significant export activities in the Balkans through independent subsidiaries in Bulgaria, Romania, Albania and Serbia, staffed both by Greek and local personnel and which developed into important, modern distribution networks for a comprehensive range of agricultural supplies and services and also through representatives in F.Y.R.O.M. https://www.efthymiadis.gr/
15. ***Diopas S.A.*** is a specialized company in terms of the net and its creations. Specifically, manufactures and sells fish nets, fishing nets, nets for sporting fields, playgrounds nets, shading nets and any special construction based on the net. The nets used are of excellent quality as well as High quality is the materials used on these (ropes, yarn, etc.). https://diopas.com
16. ***Souroti S.A.*** was founded in 1987. The company's line of business includes the manufacturing of soft drinks and carbonated waters. Within a few years, souroti has gained a leading position in the carbonated water sector with a market share of more than 46%. At the same time, it is growing dynamically in new markets worldwide, such as the Middle East, Australia, Canada, Germany, Belgium, the Netherlands, Sweden, Russia and Cyprus. https://souroti.gr/
17. The ***Avakian*** Company started as a family business from Mr. Daniel Avakian in the county of Pieria, Greece, in the early 1950s. Since its establishment until present the company continues its reputation for its credibility and long term commitment towards the processing and distribution of its products, as well as, demonstrating sincere respect for its

customers. They are proud of being pioneers in the production, packaging and distribution of dried nuts and fruits. https://avakian.gr/

18. ***Kri-Kri Milk Industry SA*** is engaged in the production of dairy products. Its products include yogurt, ice-cream, Gluten-free, and milk. The company's segments are classified into Ice-cream and Dairy-Yogurt. The majority of the revenue is generated from the Dairy-Yogurt segment and geographically from Greece. Year to year export sales are increasing. https://www.krikri.gr
19. Founded in 1973, Ptolemaida (Northern Greece) based ***THERMODYNAMIKI S.A.***, provides heating products and specialized metal constructions to a broad range of commercial and industrial clients throughout Europe. Anchored by loyal employees who are dedicated to providing superior service and grounded in the philosophy that honesty and integrity are as important as the bottom line, THERMODYNAMIKI S.A. (Kombi) has enjoyed an impeccable reputation for over 40 years.
20. ***MELAS – EPIDAURUS OLIVE OIL DOMAIN***» is an extroverted family business of dealing with production and standardization of extra virgin olive oil based in Lygourio, next to the Ancient Theater of Epidaurus. Is an Internationally recognized premium quality olive oils with strong export activity since 1992. https://melasoil.gr
21. ***CAIR S.A*** was established in 1928 from a group of Italian investors an remains one of the biggest wineries in Greece. The full company name was Compagnia Agricola Industriale Rodi and from that name the acronym CAIR was produced. Their activity is focused on the production and promotion of high quality Rodian wines. https://cair.gr
22. **Thrace Marble SA** is housed in privately owned premises which cover over 30,000 m². The modern equipment and well-trained human resources enable their company to produce tens of thousands of square meters of marble per month to cater the needs and requirements of our customers and partners accordingly. Having many years of experience and admiration for this natural gift combined with providing an excellent quality of products and services have been established in the field of marble and made their company known both nationwide and worldwide since more than 50% of our production is exported. https://thracemarble.gr/
23. ***Critida*** is a family business (1912) with experience and tradition in olive oil production. It was founded in Heraklion, Crete, with the aim of standardizing and marketing olive oil. It

specializes in the trade of two categories of standardized olive oil: extra virgin and organic. The company also produces and markets olive paste, simple and organic, olives and Delicatessen products, which combine extra virgin olive oil with traditional Cretan herbs such as thyme, rosemary, garlic and paprika. It has developed significant export activities in international markets, such as Germany, Denmark, Sweden, the Netherlands, China and Japan. https://critida.com/

24. ***NICO LAZARIDI*** Winery gave another dimension to the world of Greek wine, leading the way a combination of all the senses and the creation of a complete experience. Inside the winery, the famous "Magic Mountain Gallery" was created, hosting the works of all the artists who created the labels of the iconic brand. But Château Lazaridi's public areas are filled with works of art: paintings and sculptures, in an eternal dialogue between wine, brush and chisel. These choices soon led the company to top results and fine products and very soon NICO LAZARIDI wines managed to win over the wine-loving public in Greece and abroad. https://www.chateau-lazaridi.com
25. ***Papantonis Winery*** is located in Argos, perhaps the oldest continuously inhabited city of Greece. Insisting on quality rather than quantity, the company stays true to the reasons that led its founders to professional winemaking. http://papantonis.gr/

4.5 Ethics in Research

Given the fact that the researcher will collect data from individuals and other sources, there is need for the researcher to observe ethics in research. This will be through ensuring that data is collected in respect to the human participants; to achieve this the researcher will provide a statement noting that participation in the research and answering the questions is highly voluntary (Hensgen, 2011). Further, the researcher will seek to get permission from the research body and other necessary agencies to conduct research on this topic.

4.6 Data Analysis

This entails the application of logical and or statistical techniques to investigate, review and evaluate the information gathered from the research participants and the sources used. However, the most important factor is to ensure that data integrity is ensured using accurate data analysis methods and techniques to ensure that the analysis reflect the emotions and the intentions of the research participants. In this case, the researcher will apply narrative analysis which entails looking into the content gotten from the research, and the narratives while using research themes developed during data analysis to complete the analysis (Davies & Francis, 2018). Further, the researcher will seek to represent the analyzed information interns of texts, tables, charts, and other methods for understandability.

Chapter 5

Data Analysis and Findings

Introduction

In this chapter, the case studies of the investigated companies are presented with an analysis on the findings of the research. To extract the data as a case study a questionnaire was formed presented in the previous chapter. An open discussion followed, through interviews, on the businesses approach on risk management.

5.1. Case Studies

5.1.1. Elea Olive oil

According to their salesman when asked what kind of risks Elea Olive faces, she responded that they face a wide range of risks that have to do not only with the competition, which is quite a risk, given that multinational companies are entering the market but also their company faces a number of other risks which are related to the exchange rates in various countries they export, but also they are facing other risks such as political instability in many countries around the world and also risks which are related to the foreign companies from Spain and Italy that they also export olive oil and their fraud allegations that their product is of Greek origin.

In case of unreliable or new customers, the company often ask prepayment or prepaid bills of lading when it is about a sea transport.

The risk and crises faced by the company is indeed an opportunity "since the company's managers can identify better the trends on the risks and the changes in the industry. Had it not been the risks, the company would not be aware of the market situation and therefore it would not be possible to reform their strategy to deal with the changing conditions.

The company has a program ensuring that a process record is maintained for possible purposes of tracking, learning and compliance. This method will begin at the very start and be stored and transferred from one point to the next to document life cycle decisions over the duration of a project or company. It means that people are aware that the risks they face are handled effectively and promote them instead of passing on responsibility for the risks they pose and that increases engagement.

5.1.2. Provinco

The company deals with a handful of risks that are mostly operational, political, and related to sales aspects. Exchange risks, political risks in third world countries, as well as risks which are related to letter of credits are the most significant as the Procurement Manager stated. The export business is quite unforeseen and can be affected by several circumstances; therefore, they must be aware of what these risks are and how they can be treated adequately in order not to be exposed to damages. Disruptions across the supply chain is one of the most important risks faced by any export company.

The use of credit limit to ensure that the exposure will be manageable in case that the customer will prove to be untrustworthy. They avoid trading with countries that transactions are not considered safe.

By the implementation of a robust risk management, the company managed to enhance its performance through the product differentiation, increasing the bonds between the company and its suppliers.

To overcome the mentality of not being responsible for things happening in the company and allow the stakeholders to develop with a new appreciation of other stakeholder's interests, business constraints, and a new awareness of common interest which had previously not existed, the process of identifying common objectives is crucial. Increasing the sense of collective responsibility and coordination between the key stakeholders engaged in the risk and opportunity management process is critical to defining shared goals.

5.1.3. Sierrios Bros

Risks in the export business is on the daily routine, therefore the company should deal with risks as part of their job. The company deals with risks in terms of product parts as machines are quite fragile during transportation, therefore packaging plays an important role. This means that machines and appliances that do not function properly will have to be returned and replaced. Also, they face several risks that are related to the distribution channels as their sales Manager stated. To quote his exact words “Risks in the export business is on the daily routine, therefore we all have to deal with risks as part of our job. My company deals with risks in terms of product parts as machines are quite fragile during transportation, therefore packaging plays an important role. This means that machines and appliances that don’t function properly will have to be returned and replaced. Also, we face several risks that are related to the distribution channels. Such risks are realated to long-term customs procedures or incomplete accompanying documentation can delay the transport of goods. During the transport goods can be damaged and deceptive. The transportation may be unreliable and incomplete. All this causes additional costs and hurts an exporting company's image”.

Another employee in a lower-level management position stated that the company faces a “wide range of risks which are related to the nature of products that company exports. Customer dissatisfaction from the shipment methods or the shipment time, as well as the loss or damage of the products in the custom office of the destination country, are only some of the risks. In addition, we are among in the few companies that still sell goods to countries were sanctions apply and we they can hardly find a bank that is still able to manage a payment transaction. Embargos will make it difficult to supply goods for States that sanctions apply in transactions”.

There are several ways for the company to mitigate losses. One of this is to buy percentage of Euros and dollars to limit exchange fluctuations. Also, since the business is highly related to the product specifications, they manage to limit any damages that may occur, through providing product certifications and when it is sold to a client, a credit cap is set. They then track payment receipts very closely and slowly increase the limits for reliable customers.

Moreover, they try to focus on mitigating the risks by following all the regulations applying in the sanction country, but they also focus on the core area of risk of sanctions lies, identify, and develop a group or individual policies based on that risk and train people how to best meet their own organisations.

The companies that can overcome crisis are getting out stronger. The crisis is never a single isolated incident but is based on the successful crisis management strategy. It has been a domino effect with both internal and external stakeholders most affected in different facets of the business. A crisis can show the flaws in the company. Organisations that learn from and overcome these gaps until it is too late are much more optimistic in a crisis. The company through risk management strategies gives importance on training and innovation and in this regard performance of the organisation increases.

The process manager will track the plan, make sure it is implemented as expected, analyze whether progress is not made in compliance with plan and learn from it through better organisation and integrate lessons into employees and key stakeholders' training programs. Supply chain awareness is a critical aspect of effective management of risk and opportunity frequently overlooked. The company tries to involve all persons dealing with export business in the culture of the company and therefore, knowledge sharing offers engagement for all the persons in the company.

5.1.4. ARTION Conferences & Events

In the case of ARTION Conferences & Events, the business owner, reported that "the main risks are related to the fiscal, taxation and regulational framework, meaning transaction issues – including bank operation procedures and currency exchange rates as well as regulations. In certain cases, the company is called to activate a fiscal profile in the country where the service is materialized. This would include tremendous workload in accounting and taxation procedures causing possible unexpected loss in administrative costs. Another significant risk is related to the network of local suppliers of both products and services who are either not familiar or unwilling to contract with a foreign company. However, this challenge is somehow addressed in the case of local taxation profile activation"

The main priority is to evaluate the financial and any regulatory framework prior to the contracting of the service, to evaluate the optimal scenario between working with the Greek taxation profile or with a new international one. Moreover, taking benefit of the international organisations and alliances that the company participates as active member, the objective is to investigate well in advance for experienced and evaluated sub-contractors – suppliers that are affiliated with the organisations / alliances.

Risk management should mainly focus on financial and business operation and materialization issues, to evaluate and assess the possible profit / loss outcome and consider accordingly the formation of the financial proposal to the end client. At the same time, risk management will add value towards the optimum and more effective management of the unknown factor related to the operational issues that arise only during the materialization of the service.

Having a related process developed to facilitate as a standard operating procedure, they manage to form a holistic approach to address any risks. This would start for the very first stage of forming the framework of the cooperation (i.e. analyzing the risk factors, forming the needed contingency plan and translating all these factors in the financial aspect of the proposal) and end up to the final stage of project evaluation and debriefing (having already included the "unexpected costs" in the financial proposal). Moreover, the supply chain and any related logistical issue is always a crucially important matter to consider.

5.1.5. KLEEMANN Lifts

KLEEMANN is exposed to threats that may occur from its operation or alterations on the operating environment. The communications manager, mentioned that the deterioration of economic environment, tensions in international relations, changes in the competitive or consumer environment. Furthermore, the development of the needed organisation capabilities, spare parts availability, and subcontracted labor. Product-related risks such as integrity, safety, and quality exists. Lastly, operation interruptions due to the risks arise on its suppliers and financial risks.

“Prior to market entrance all risks are encountered in a detailed business plan. The evaluation of risks allows the company to react fast to any given scenario. Technical dep. is always on the scope to monitor all the changes in regulations, so KLEEMANN will act fast on the needed changes. Exchange Rates risks are controlled by minimizing payments and earnings to basic currency. Economic risks are managed through the effort of approaching new customers and expanding market share. While competition Risks are checked through an excellent customer experience and seek of collaboration opportunities. Transportation risks are exceeded by contracted insurance fees. Lastly, staff risks are controlled in two ways by ensuring competitive salaries and efficiency bonus while integrating to company’s culture through coaching”. To mitigate these risks KLEEMANN tries to improve its competitiveness in all the countries, to expand and balance its portfolio. KLEEMANN follows the changes on regulations and policy and evaluates its impact to the company’s functionality intervening on a case-by-case basis. Through innovation and creativity company tries to lead the market rather than follow in it. Emphasizing to human resources development, the company evaluates the needs of key roles to the strategy and acquires either from internal pool or externally. KLEEMANN operations efficiency aims to point out the critical supplier implementing at least a dual sourcing with multi-year contracts reinforcing availability and business operation. Strict quality controls are at place to mitigate products risks and preventing risks on reputation and hazard incidents. KLEEMANN implements a business continuity plan to reduce the impact and likehood of risks in supply chain.

Along with the Strategic Planning, the Risk Management program coordinates and establishes a comprehensive evaluation of challenges and opportunities within key business planning and decision-making processes.

Risk Management team manages and encourages the evaluation of threats and opportunities related to the business environment which includes operations, assets and financial results. As part of the strategic planning and budgeting processes, KLEEMANN's business units are responsible for discovering, evaluating, and mitigating risks that could jeopardize the achievement of their business objectives. Shareholders plays vital role on in the process of risk management setting limits and goals. The Risk Management team promotes and monitors the implementation of defined risk mitigation activities by assigning control of identified risk exposures to particular business units.

5.1.6. Captain Stamatis Group

The business owner of Captain Stamatis Group responds: “As an export company, we confront many risks while doing business abroad. The most important is customer reliability. We are often approached by new customers, which is difficult to discern if it is a fraud. Regulations are an important risk since there are different in many countries even in the European Union. Competition risks are applied by companies that can force you out of the market in terms of price.”

They have established a procedure to evaluate new customers. This procedure tends to be time consuming and thus delaying the selling process. Even though their production capability is small, they spread their sales in many customers to secure themselves for credibility issues. New customers are reluctant in pre-payment, so to overcome the risk they send small quantities at start. Even though they had sent samples to customers some of them tend to raise quality risk concerns. They are searching for a third party to evaluate their products. They haven’t solved the risk of theft of goods during custom control~~,~~ and secure the transportation by sending proof of sending.

They constantly learn from their mistakes and use them as an opportunity to grow. No risk robust risk management plan is at place. Risk Management is based on market knowledge and predefined actions. Education and pursuit of new ways deal with threats is mainly based on training sessions provided by registered chambers which does not occur in regular basis. They are trying to monitor process as a step stone to improvement.

5.1.7. Dromeas

An executive manager in Dromeas responds: “Throughout our experience we have mainly faced the following risks: financial risks, on client’s economic failure or scheme. Political and economic risks that endanger sales and products transportation. Competition Risks from companies with lower operating costs. To suppress the economic risks, when we trade with a new or unknown customer, we request leverage enough to ensure the order’s cost. When customer is based on an unstable political country leverage requested from another’s nation’s bank. As it concerns the risk management, the step-by-step risk assessment and management allowed us to be more sufficient in our projects, ensuring our development and empowering our strategic goals”. Dromeas must manage and access many risks. Such as, the uncertain political conditions that could halt export operations in a variety of ways. Legal standards and procedures differ greatly across markets, affecting products import. Cultural risks and consumers behavior may vary from market to market. Also, operating risks that are linked to logistics, customs, and taxation. Lastly, financial risks are arising due exchange rates fluctuation or customer's credit risk.

By doing their homework and identifying the potential sources of a risk, they follow a robust process of risk management to secure their business is in the strongest possible way to manage with whatever risks they may come up against. Staying up to date for the political and economic situation of the countries they trade, they manage to take all the necessary measures earlier than the occurrence of a loss. So, they secure payments the earliest possible and intensify sales to other locations. By seeking advice from lawyers, bankers, insurers, and accountants they try to outsource the risks, thus they manage to have a better response to risks. Continuous product development is one of company's main concern, giving them a competitive advantage in relation to the competition.

The company was able to improve its efficiency through product differentiation, increasing the ties between the company and its customers, thanks to the implementation of a strong risk management strategy. The step-by-step procedures on risk assessment and management allowed us to be more sufficient in our projects, ensuring our development and empowering our strategic goals.

Crisis management is important aspect of company's survival. Stakeholder engagement allows for the creation of consensual and relational communication systems, allowing participants to build a common view of risks. Through the application of proper communication, the company wish to inform all parties about the risks, stimulate behavioral change and taking protective measures.

5.1.8. Ta Nisiotika

A salesperson of "Ta Nisiotika" responded: "We export our products not only in Europe but also in USA and New Zealand. Our products are in two categories frozen goods and sauces. The main risks we face are economic, political and transportation. The fluctuation of political environment reflects negative to our sales. The financial risk is high when dealing with new customers. On the other hand, the transportation risk arises in case of a failure of transportation mean or delay on delivery due to the short expiration date of our products. To protect our company from fraud, we make extended research on new customers. To protect ourselves from political and economic risk, we tend to spread your sales to the best of our ability. The company was able to improve its efficiency through product differentiation and risk management. For example, now are product has a multi-language packaging making them accessible in many countries with high standards".

Most of their exports are end up to Europe, so a crisis on the peninsula would have negative reaction. Through proper research and development, they improved their product line up by adopting the necessary standards and packaging.

The implementation of a risk management program allowed the company to improve sideways; internally in terms of employment training and production and externally with improved reputation.

As crisis management plays a significant role in crisis management, they tend to hear the aspect of all parties. By fortifying their relations with the stakeholders, they minimize the threats and improve their compliance.

5.1.9. Elvial

Elvial's export Sales consists of 75% of their revenue, exporting in more than 30 countries. As their Marketing Manager of Elvial responded when asked what kind of risks their company is facing: "Our export Sales consists of 75% of our revenue, exporting in more than 30 countries. The main risk we must tackle are economic, political, legal and transportation. The changing political climate has a negative impact on our revenues. Different laws exist in many countries for the same products. When working with new clients, the financial risk is high. The products Also, during transportation there is a risk of wearing down."

When asked what are the actions that the company takes to mitigate losses she responded "We are trying continuously to work out with the management of risks. So, we diversify our sales in many countries, so we won't be affected significantly. We are vigilant for any new law updates, implementing at the same time in production level. When working with new clients, we ask for a financial insurance or fully pre-payment. Lastly, packaging has been enforced to protect product transportation." Such a case is the market of India and the impact of Covid-19. Even though, the market exposure was low, the perspective was significant. This occurrence will have negative effect on the overall growth. They are vigilant for any new law updates, implementing at the same time changes in production level. When working with new clients, they ask for a financial insurance or fully pre-payment. Lastly, packaging has been enforced to protect product transportation.

Risk management plan is a top management task, and the information is not shared with the company's staff. Top management is the shareholder at the same time. Nonetheless, the company was able to improve its product and sales efficiency through differentiation, preventing the effect of arising risk due to competition and cultural and law differences.

The direct contact of shareholders to the interested parties especially customers had improved company's efficiency and development. Communication strategy needs to be improved as to include more interest parties.

5.1.10. Inart

The marketing Manager of "Inart" responded: "We are a company that aims at wholesale trade, with customers mainly in Europe. Political and economic factors may arise that have negative reaction to our sales. As company's product portfolio is not necessity products, in case of a crisis with political or economic background, sales will be jeopardized. Transportation risks are in stake as Inart depends on road transportation with narrow deadlines. Also, legal risk occurs due to the strictly signed contracts."

To address political and economic risks, the company track the performance of the markets by minimizing purchase of goods. Thus, maintaining low stocks in case of a crisis. The company has signed insurance policies to protect against the risks involved in transporting products. To avoid product returns as described in the contracts by large customers, the company examines customer proposals, new trends to maximize product absorbency.

With steady steps and a risk management plan, inart tries to convert threats to opportunities. Risk identification and assessment helped the company to improve its efficiency and meet its strategic goals.

The stakeholder engagement allows the company to implement its decision in a way that improve its efficiency and its performance. With a communication plan, the company wishes to engage and influence stakeholders. While at the same time consult them often to minimize risks. Paying attention to enforcing relationships, company plans, executes and access having stakeholders as the epicenter of its decision board.

5.1.11. Isomat

The export manager of "Isomat" mentioned" "Isomat is a Greek multinational company which develops and manufactures building materials. It's export activity covers almost 50% of its annual revenue (>50mil. €). Even though its significant sized (compared to average Greek Businesses) and although it has increased export activities, exporting in over 80 countries it doesn't have a structured risk management process nor a risk department at place."

Company's manager highlighted that: "the most important risk on its export activities is the increasing competition from companies with lower production costs. Second, the Language and Cultural Risk in foreign subsidiaries and sales to multiply countries make it difficult to operate." As it exposed in sales to many countries economic risks arise in the concept of exchange rates and payments. Political risks are not characterized as important, but they keep their significance as they influence construction market in general.

Although a structured plan is not at place, they are keeping up on constant communication with shareholders to advocate risks. Searching for new suppliers, distributions channels and product differentiation are the main actions to address risks.

5.1.12. Alfa Wood

The export officer of Alfa Wood stated that: “We are a waste wood processing company based in Larisa, Greece. Our export activity exceeds 60% of its revenue (>50mil. €). Our company has a business risk management plan and a devoted team to support it.”

Refering about risks he mentioned: “Competition risks have a significant importance in exports due to the diversity, production excellence and quantities of competitors. Difficulties on exchange rates and payments are constant and we are trying continuously to minimize our exposure to them. Political risks come along with financial sanctions that make for example sales and product transportation obstacles.”

Having at place a structure risk management plan, shareholders engagement is crucial to scheduling, identifying and advocate risks. As per their reaction to crisis such as Covid-19, the search of new suppliers and distribution channels had moderate performance.

5.1.13. Jannis

An export manager in “Jannis” stated that: “We are a well know Greek business in Sesame bars. Our consumer products are addressed to many countries abroad. Our export activity exceeds 40% of its revenue (<50mil. €). The company has a business risk management plan and a devoted team to support it.”

According to our interviewee: “Competition risk is the most important risk “Jannis” is facing when exporting its goods. The main reason is the variety of similar products abroad. Legal risks are of high importance as regulations in food industry are differentiating product requirements per country. Economic risks linked with clients’ payments are fluently meet. The less important risk is the political risk as the kind of product and retail price do not make it worthwhile in this type of risk.”

As a business risk plan is on track, shareholders engagement is vital for pre-scheduling and mapping risks and responses. Best reaction in crisis like Covid-19 was customer expansion and product differentiation but the results were not as successful as it were originally thought.

5.1.14. K&N Efthymiadis

An export officer of "K& N Efthymiadis" said that: "Our company is one of the most innovative companies in the sector of agriculture. With a revenue over 50mil € our export activity is almost 20% of total sales, our main export activities are in Balkans. We consider the importance of business risks, and we have a risk management plan supported by a team.

He continued saying that: "Agriculture products are heavily affected by economic sanctions and political instability that's why our company characterized Political and Economic risk as the most important ones. Shareholders' engagement is significant in the forming, identifying, and responding risks."

5.1.15. Diopas

The owner of "Diopas" during our interview said that: Our company is specialized in producing nets for a variety of use in fishery, sports etc. A rather small business in terms of revenue (~ 6 mil. €) exporting in many countries abroad an almost 20% of our production. Understanding the significance of risk management, the company has at place a risk management plan."

He continues in stating that: "As the market is vast and the companies that are active are many, Diopas faces high competition. Investing in new technologies and diversifying our product line were the necessary steps to overcome the obstacles."

The company keeps an open communication with its Shareholders but not in an organized manner. Diopas is searching rigorously for clients and suppliers to address its mainly risks. As mentioned by the interviewee during the Covid-19 crisis the company didn't face notable risks.

5.1.16. Souriti

Souroti is based on northern Greece, and it is one the most important bottling companies. Only 20% of its total sales are exported products (rev. ~12mil. €). The company doesn't have a structure plan on risk management as stated by the interviewee.

According to the export officer: "The bottling business is characterized as a harsh environment with many companies and product pluralism. In that kind of environment of high competition, our company operates in product differentiation. Economic risks are high in terms of clients' payments and Souroti wishes to keep low balances on new customers while leaving margins only to the most dedicated. Since, bottling products are in food sector different legal rules are arise in export countries."

Souroti keeps a basic communication between its shareholder without a structure form in order not being able to predict, prevent and properly respond on upcoming risks. Setting as example the Covid – 19 crises had a negative impact on exports and even though some types of measures has been taken (new clients & distribution channels) the output was negative in comparison with the goals.

5.1.17. Avakian

Avakian is a company in production, packaging and distribution of dried nuts and fruits. Although Avakian is a small company with few employees, it has a risk management plan at place according to an export officer. This mean that the follow specific steps to identify and address risks. This is done in managerial level and not through a dedicated department.

The export officer highlighted that: "The market is flared with American and middle east companies, Avakian strives to compete abroad. Our unique products and quality are the main advantages that copes with competition. Price and quantities are negative factors in further expansion. Clients' confidence is always at stake and prepayment is almost required as precaution measurement."

As in the rest of the companies mentioned above in food industry special rules may arise per market. Product alteration to comply all the regulations without jeopardizing production efficiency. Modification on the rules in exports cause delays in the delivery time.

As it was mentioned during the interview, Avakian doesn't follow rigorous plan in identifying, assess and confront risks. A step-by-step learning strategy is followed. Shareholders engagement in risks management is low.

As per the reaction of a crisis like Covid – 19; their footprint was negative, and their reaction was weak (seeking for new suppliers) without any results.

5.1.18. Kri Kri

Kri kri is a well-known milk industry. Producing sales mainly in Greece, they are exporting in 24 countries focusing mainly on Europe. With a revenue over >150mil. €, Kri Kri export activity is 40%. An export officer was approach to conduct the interview and state that: "The company doesn't have a roadmap on risk management neither the resources (human) to maintain such scenarios."

Continued by highlighted the company's risks: "Legal risks are those who had the most importance regarding doing business in abroad for our company. The restrictions on product transportation and lifespan require strict rules on product preparation and preservation laying down many obstacles on exporting products. Economic risks specific sanctions have negative effect in export sales. For example, sanctions in Russia and Ukraine war have negative effect on sales and distribution channels. Language & Cultural Risks arise in terms of difficult to communicate properly and different cultures. Such a case is exports in China."

Although the absence of a risk management plan is setting difficulties on proper risk management, Kri Kri keeps a momentum of interaction with its' shareholders to be vigilant.

To diversify against risks the company has a continuous plan to seek for new distribution channels, in this way to avoid any risk or overexposure its sales in a client or a country.

5.1.19. Thermodynamiki

Thermodynamiki is specialized on heating products maintaining a broad range of commercial and industrial clients throughout Europe. The company doesn't operate in a risk management framework.

The main risks they face are economic, political, and legal. Financial risks are high when dealing abroad. Political instability and fluctuation in the economies on export countries has negative impact on consumer behavior. Foreign clients' credibility and reliability are always an issue.

Word of mouth and bilateral communication with similar Greek companies are used as a precaution measure in approach of new markets and customers. No additional attempt is at place to engage shareholders in risk management.

Even though crisis like Covid – 19 has a negative effect on business mainly due to the construction seizure, the attempts to address the losses no effect.

5.1.20. Melas – Epidaurus Olive Oil Domain

Melas company has an olive oil production unit with an annual production capacity of 650 tons. With a revenue less than 2 mil € its export activity is at 80% of sales. According to the company employee (sales officer) a risk management plan is at place to address any issues while doing business abroad. A consulting company is hired to support them.

"The main issues we address is competition as olive oil business abroad is dominated by Italian and Spanish business with larger production capacity and fully developed distribution channels. The excellence in product quality is used as a trojan horse to enter markets. In this concept, a constantly plan to diversify our product line and a series of excellence awards are used as a sales booster. Wholesalers and clients abroad are approached in caution as in the past there were numerous of failure of payments or disloyalty. As in food industry, transportation and product legal requirements exist when selling abroad. Unification of requirements in final product is always a goal to achieve production efficiency."

A constant communication plan with shareholders is not part of its risk management plan.

5.1.21. Cair

Cair is a well-known brewery in Greece based on the island of Rhodes. Its fine wines are travelling all over the world. With only 20% of revenue in exports, the company doesn't have a risk management plan as said by the company's marketing manager.

Company's executive highlighted that: "As brewery business is booming in Greece, only in the last ten years the breweries have increased from 800 to 1400. So, competition of Greek wines exporting is high without calculate the thousands of companies abroad. Legal risks apply as insurance agreements, customs clearance, labelling. Cultural and labor risks are in place."

There is no structure communication plan among shareholders to support risk management procedures.

5.1.22. Thrace Marble

Thrace Marble is one of the oldest companies in cutting, processing, trading, and exporting marbles. Their export experience extends more than 35 years, and the major export countries are the following: S. Arabia, U. A. E., Lebanon, Syria, Kuwait, Spain, Germany, Armenia, Russia, Libya, Tunis e.t.c. Their export activity covers 80% of total sales. Despite their vast experience in export sales, a female sales officer said that a construct risk management plan doesn't exist. Although dedicate employees are addressing and advocating risks.

Accordingly, she continued highlighting the risks that company advocates: "Economic risks are high especially with cases of untrustworthy customers who claim product defects to pay less. Changing the payments terms at last minute is also an issue. Strictly payment terms, enforced transportation packaging, transportation insurance is needed to advocate risks. Communication problems are often presented with customers based on different culture or a lack of information. In order to address these issues, we follow a strict procedure of pre – sales, while continuous updating to address any issue in the past." As Greece is placed in the geography beside Turkey the larger exporter of marble, Greek companies are in perfect competition with Turkish companies as transportation costs to main European markets are equal.

A moderate approach is shareholders communication in adopted fragmentary and not in total. During Covid – 19 crisis the company has been affected negative and the search of new suppliers and new clientele allowed the company to retrieve from its losses.

5.1.23. Critida

Critida is a centenarian family business with tradition in olive oil production. Through the years it developed significant export activities (80% of its total revenue) in international markets in Europe and Asia.

A male sales officer responds on company risk advocation experience: “As a business with great experience in exports, we realize the necessity of a structure risk management plan and a team to support it. The biggest risk that our company faces is the massive competition not only from companies abroad but also for Greek companies. Our strategy is to differentiate our product such as organic, olive oil for kids and other delicatessen products to attract the market to the main products. Economic risks arise for many reasons such transportation issues, exchange rates differences especially in sales in Asia, clients’ insolvency. To address such issues~~,~~ and ensure our deliveries, we prefer to be paid in Euro than the local client’s currency and pre-payment is mandatory. A proper shareholders plan is at place to ensure continuity of the risk management plan.

5.1.24. *Nico Lazaridi*

Nico Lazaridi is an exception winery in Greece. With its fine selection of wines gain the brand awareness of wine industry. It’s offering its wines abroad with distinction of quality and taste. Our interview was with a male export officer who stated that: “The years of trading abroad made us clear the necessity of a risk management plan as to overcome the obstacles of doing business abroad. A risk management plan is managed in house to secure our export sales.” The main issues being faced when exporting are the following.

“Economic risks located in price competition and client payments. We confront such cases by securing sales in quantities and by credit controlling clients especially new ones. Legal grounds are also an issue due to legislation to every import country that delays a lot the product delivery. Local subcontractors are used as a bypass to fulfill all the necessary procedures to minimize custom time. As the market of wine is vast and the companies antagonize a lot to take the proper post in the market, special deals are needed with wholesalers to enter the market. Unfortunately, many times gross profit is at risk in big markets and to ensure market establishment. We improve our procedures from production to delivery as to eliminate our company’s losses of gross profit. ”

A shareholder’s plan is followed but periodically rather than continuously. The reason for that is the pour resources on such a cause.

5.1.25. *Papantonis Winery*

Papantonis Winery is a small winery in Argos focusing on quality rather that quantity to distinguish itself. A small portion of every year’s product is exporting, about 30%. At this case an export officer addressed our questions. “Knowing the risk that exists when selling abroad, we follow specific routine rather than a robust risk management plan. The reason for that is we are focusing on specific market and specific clients that eventually minimize our negative exposure but at the same place they are vulnerable to changes.”

Nonetheless, the risks are the same as it was described in the rest companies above doing business in wine sector. Economic risks, legal risks and competition risks are the ones that have been presented.

5.2 Findings

According to the intervewees, all business questioned are familiar with risks on their export activities. Addressing risks factors is critical to the companies' success. Most of them recognize the importance of risk management plan. The way they advocate risk may differ. The importance on risk planning and strategic management is not clear and it may be traced in only the bigger sized companies, due to the resources needed spending. The companies perceive Risk Management as a procedure to minimize losses rather than a complete plan to be incorporated in company's strategy.

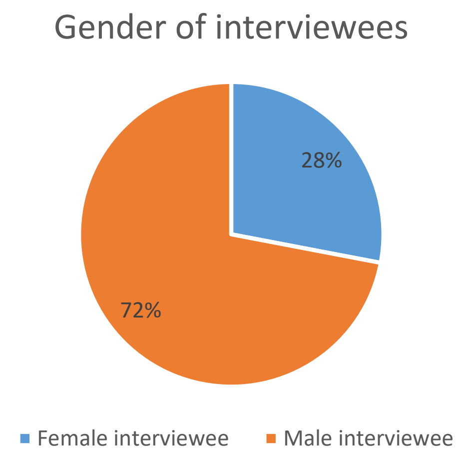
Companies assess their risks mainly by their experience in foreign business. The assessment is strongly related with previous losses such as failure of payments, market restriction that exclude them from specific markets etc. Businesses freely discussed the risks their facing, highlighting the ones most important and frequently appeared. When a response formed or discovered a metric on the success cannot be extracted. The reason for that is the potential profit on an unchanged market isn't measured rightly or the focus is rotated in the recovering measures.

Shareholders engagement while is an important step on risk management planning. According to the case studies in most companies use them as a practice for market insight and improvements rather than a roadmap to risk avoidance.

As per Covid – 19 crisis response most of the companies reported that have been affected negatively and their performance was negative to moderate.

Below there is extended research on extracted data from case studies. These data were gathered through personal interviews from the 25 companies studied in chapter 5.1. It is important to understand our sample and find similarities among the research companies and risk management.

Demographics



Most of the reviewers were male, this does not justify any discrimination but they were the most suitable people to address to your research.

Figure 2: Gender of Intervewees

Figure 3: Job position of interviewees

Interviewers job position cover mostlyall the areas of a company's business management. Most prominent group is that of Exports & Sales who are the first risk receivers

Industry

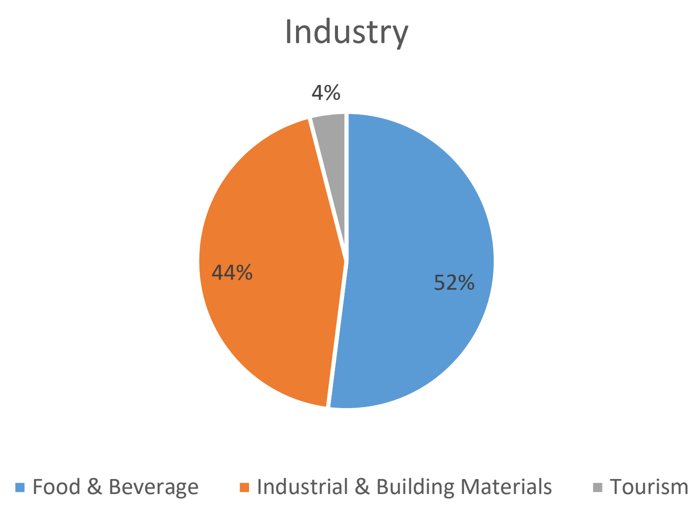


Figure 4: Industry of companies

Company grouping in industries is based on the categorization of Enterprise Greece (https://www.enterprisegreece.gov.gr/). 52% of our sample is in Food & Beverage sector, 44% in Industrial Materials and 4% with one company in Tourism.

Revenue

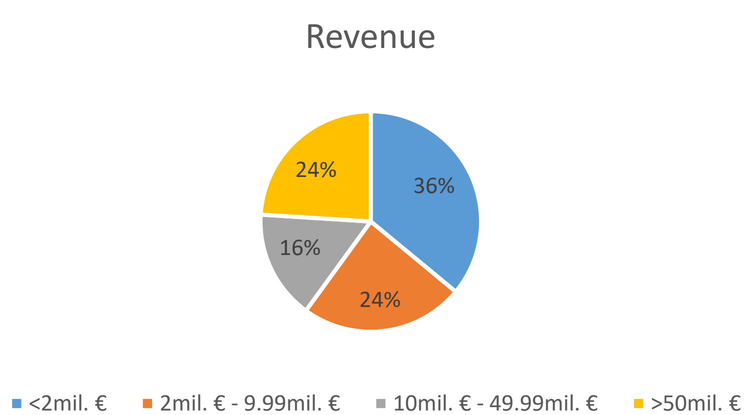


Figure 5: Revenue of companies

The categorization of businesses per revenue is based on the European Union definition of SMEs (User guide to the SME Definition, European Union, 2020). 36% of the sample has revenue below

2 mil. €, 24% between 2 mil. € and 10 mil. €, 16% between 10 mil. € and 50 mil. €, and 24% over 50 mil. €.

Risk management plan

Figure 6: Existence of Risk Management Plan

According to the study companies states that a risk management plan is at place by 68%.

Shareholder Engagement

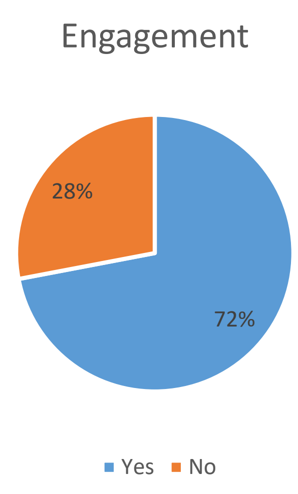


Figure 7: Shareholders Engagement Plan

Regarding the existence of Shareholder Plan, 72% of the companies state yes and 28% no.

Risk Types

	1st Choice	2st Choice	3rd Choice
Political	5	6	5
Economic	**9**	8	**6**
Legal	3	**9**	5
Competition	8	0	**6**
Cultural	0	2	3

Table 1: Risk Type significance

According to the case studies the three most risk for Greek Export Companies is Economics Risks. Second to follow Legal Risks and third Competition Risks.

Risk Management Plan vs Industry

Is there any relevance between Risk Management Plan and Industry?

Food & Beverage	**52%**
Yes	69%
No	31%
Industrial & Building Materials	**44%**
Yes	64%
No	36%
Tourism	**4%**
Yes	100%

Table 2: Risk Management Plan vs Industry

Data oriented. 69% of Food & Beverage industry companies and 64% of Industrial & Building Materials companies have a Risk Management Plan. There is not major significance per business sector.

Risk Management Plan vs Revenue

Likewise, is the revenue important factor for the existence of a Risk Management Plan?

<2mil. €	**36%**
Yes	89%
No	11%
2mil. € - 9.99mil. €	**24%**
Yes	50%
No	50%
10mil. € - 49.99mil. €	**16%**
Yes	75%
No	25%
>50mil. €	**24%**
Yes	50%
No	50%

Table 3: Risk Management Plan vs Revenue

As we can see in the table above smaller companies adopt Risk Management Plan more often. A reason to this diversification is that smaller companies are eager at risk rather than bigger in revenue companies. Production capacity or clientele (size) exposure may justify it.

Chapter 6
Conclusions and discussion

6.1. Conclusion

Concluding, the significance of risk management was well understood from important literature studied in this paper and the research that followed. Link between risk management and strategic planning has been highlighted to enforce the importance of pro-crisis planning. Following the literature, we tried to focus on the impact of successful risk management on the performance of the export companies in Greece. How these businesses mitigate risks and the resulting impact on its employees. Four basic questions have been extracted from theory to measure reactions and how they consequence on their strategic development. One question was “What kind of risks is your company facing?”. Second was “What are the actions that your company takes to mitigate losses?” third was “How do you think that risk management in your company will help company enhance performance?” and final was “How does your company manage to increase stakeholder’s engagement?”. Details about the results of interviews on those exports companies are in the previous chapter.

The aim of risk management is to reduce a company's risks to the lowest possible level. This allows the organisation to stick to a strategy of only participating in export business projects if the associated costs are less than the anticipated benefits. It can either look at its risk exposure as a whole and take the stance that the risks in the export sector cannot be higher than the rewards, or it can restrict itself to export business that does not jeopardize the company's survival. The way a company manages its export risks is related to its risk tolerance and competitive advantage.

Companies whose products are in high demand in international markets and face little competition would be better positioned to escape risky business activities than those whose products are poorly differentiated and face fierce competition. Companies with aggressive growth goals and owners who are willing to take risks face greater risks than companies who are comfortable with their market positions and do not mind taking significant losses.

All companies regardless their size face several threats endangering their sustainability and resilience. For the 25 companies we understudied it is evident that risk exposure has an opposite function to their size. SMEs, on the other hand, are less prepared to handle risks, and institutional support for them is limited. Small and medium-sized businesses all over the world, particularly in developed and emerging economies, lack strong risk management, business continuity, and crisis management cultures and systems (Asgary, Ozdemir & Özyürek 2020).

Best Practices

Switzerland Global Enterprise alongside with Swiss universities had created a free of charge simple xRisk tool, to assist businesses in properly assessing the risks associated with exporting. The assessment grid is included in the export risk management tool XRisk. the available information sources are available. Each source of information includes a note of whose institution the information is prepared and what it includes. (Lehmann,2013).

XRisk

Assessment of Export Business

Name	Chess
Designation	Chess
Product	Board Game
Client	Müller GmbH
Country	Germany

Expected export revenue (in CHF)	30,000
Expected marginal income (in CHF)	15,000
Extraordinary income/expenses (+/– in CHF)	–500
Total expected gains (in CHF)	**14,500**

Risk types		**Source**	**Maximum loss (in CHF)**	**Probability of occurrence**	**Expected loss (in CHF)**
Commerical risks	Currency losses	www.eulerhermes-aktuell.de/de/laenderinformationen/laenderinformationen.html	7000	High (70%)	4900
	Inflation	http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.DEFL.KD.ZG	0	Unlikely	0
	Recession	http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/NY.GDP.MKTP.KD.ZG	0	Unlikely	0
	Currency shortage		0	Unlikely	0
	Obstacles in currency exchange	www.heritage.org/index/heatmap			0
	Blocking of VAT				0
	Tax increases	www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploretopics/paying-taxes			0
	Customs increase	www.wto.org/english/res_e/statis_e/statis_bis_e.htm?solution=WTO&path=/Dashboards/MAPS			0
Legal risks	Change in product requirements				0
	Legal uncertainty	http://worldjusticeproject.org/rule-of-law-index			0
	Inadequate enforceability of contracts	**www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploretopics/enforcing-contracts**			0
	Corruption	www.transparency.ch/de/publikationen/Les_indices_de_TI/index.php	0	Unlikely	0
Sales risks	Loss of distribution partners		0	Unlikely	0
	Change in customer requirements		0	Unlikely	0
	Payment defaults	www.atradius.co.uk/creditmanagementknowledge/publications/europeanpaymentbehaviour.ht			0
	Cancellation of orders				0
Competition risks	Product copies	**www.internationalpropertyrightsindex.org/ranking**			0
	New competitors				0
	Substitution of products				0
Personnel risks	Legal violations				0
	Head-hunting	www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploretopics/employing-workers	0	Unlikely	0
	Blocking		0	Unlikely	0
	Injury	www.controlrisks.com/Riskmap/Pages/RiskMap.aspx	0	Unlikely	0
	Disloyalty		0	Unlikely	0
Political risks	Unrest	www.controlrisks.com/Riskmap/Pages/RiskMap.aspx		Unlikely	0
	Terrorism	www.eda.admin.ch/eda/de/home/travad/travel.html		Unlikely	0
	Trade embargos	www.seco.admin.ch/themen/00513/00620/		Unlikely	0
	Import restrictions			Unlikely	0
	Nationalisation	www.heritage.org/index/heatmap	0	Unlikely	0
Natural hazards	Earthquakes	**http://earthquake.usgs.gov/earthquakes/map/**	0	Unlikely	0
	Epidemics	www.who.int/research/en/	0	Unlikely	0
	Volcanic eruptions	http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/category.php?cat_id=12&m=03&y=2013	0	Unlikely	0
	Floods	http://earthobservatory.nasa.gov/NaturalHazards/category.php?cat_id=9&m=03&y=2013	0	Unlikely	0
	Landslides	www.emdat.be/	0	Unlikely	0
	Storms	http://severe.worldweather.wmo.int/	0	Unlikely	0
Product risks	Malfunction		0	Unlikely	0
	Liability		0	Unlikely	0
	Misuse (dual-use goods)	www.efbs.admin.ch/fileadmin/efbs-dateien/transportguideline/d-SECO-Dual-use-Gueterkontrollverordnung-2008.pdf	0	Unlikely	0
Distribution risks	Delays	www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploretopics/trading-across-borders#sub-menu-item-link	0	Unlikely	0
	Transit damage		0	Unlikely	0
	Loss of goods in transit		0	Unlikely	0
	Incomplete deliveries		0	Unlikely	0
	Customs formalities	www.doingbusiness.org/data/exploretopics/trading-across-borders#sub-menu-item-link	500	Very high (90%)	450
	Incomplete documents		0	Unlikely	0
Other			0	Unlikely	0
			0	Unlikely	0
			0	Unlikely	0
			0	Unlikely	0
			0	Unlikely	0
			0	Unlikely	0
			0	Unlikely	0
			0	Unlikely	0
			0	Unlikely	0
			Total expected losses (in CHF)		**5350**

The Doing Business project measures the freedom of business transactions in various countries. This indicator measures the efficiency of the legal system in the resolution of disputes of a commercial nature.

The International Property Rights Index (IPRI) is the first international comparative study on protection of ownership.

Real-time earthquake map from the U.S. Geological Survey

Figure 8:Evaluation of trade risks with the xRisk tool

A period is calculated to evaluate the opportunities and risks based on how the export market is described. If the organisation evaluates each project, the profit and loss over the entire project period may be calculated. Each year it will conduct a risk- and opportunity evaluation as it identifies clients or markets as examples of export sector.

Such a tool by Greek authorities or exports organisation is missing. A similar tool which adapts the Greek's companies data, it would be to their advantage. Greek authorities are limited to export guidelines and periodic analysis on product categories by economic and commercial affairs offices of relevant Greek embassies around the world (AGORA).

Another solution for SMEs to deal more properly with risks and crisis management would be partnership deals between companies. A cost-effective solution like that would give the opportunity for partner companies to access and deal with risks at more efficient way.

These two choices would help companies to level down their exposure to risks.

Suggestion for improvement

Internationally successful businesses run a very structured method of receivable management and no time is lost when payments are late. By trading in future and buying foreign currencies, they protect each other against currency fluctuations. In different stages of growth and economic cycles, the companies diversify their export sector into markets. By reducing costs and / or improving efficiency, they improve their competitive position. Goods are marketed by carefully selected resellers who buy and sell themselves. They move manufacturing to low-wage locations and define the terms of use of their goods and define what assurances are granted, the extent of their duty and jurisdiction.

The research interview showed that Greek export companies are facing a handful of challenges in their export activities. However, crisis is not a sole circumstance.

Gleissner (2011) states that a company's risk reduction strategies are focused on a particular expectation level:

- Some people will not tackle the risks of their business before it is a loss
- Some only ensure the biggest risks for defence against bankruptcy
- Some constantly track all business risks
- While some consider their corporate risks Risk Management Masters look at a wide variety of different risk styles, nominate top-level risk managers and build a corporate risk culture (Culp, 2011).

This shows that risk management is important to a corporate culture of an organisation. The above method of export risk management may be as follows: management defines the pre-selection requirements for an export company subject to risk management.

As previously mentioned, these can be defined as critical markets or critical sales volume values, in the terms and conditions of business.

The export executives (export managers, sales representatives, company representatives) evaluate and determine if the companies must be subject to management of export risk in relation to these parameters.

If the risks of an export company are calculated to be higher than their odds, the person in charge creates and submits a risk management plan to the management who decides whether to conduct the business.

For a company to reach the critical region, the export managers periodically review the plot of the export businesses in the matrix and report to management.

Management reviews periodically the risk exposure of the company to the export business and verifies whether more steps in risk management are required. In its year-end financial statement, management also provides the matrix for export risks to assess how the organisation is handling the risks resulting from export activity.

This institutionalizing control of export risk does not stand in the way of managing control of managers and risk management, because there would otherwise be conflicts of interest. However, it takes advantage of the sales department's export business experience to determine the appropriate opportunity and risk. It also assumes that if the losses occur, it is not in the interest of export operators to set a risk rating too low.

Into the future, we expect the market conditions to improve. In addition, the economy is looking to pure and sustainable materials and for export companies their quality and production elements will play a big part on consumer choice.

Management Approach

The first step for the export companies is developing a comprehensive structure for risk management and to be able to have a concrete understanding of the potential implications of a crisis for an organisation. Crisis prevention should be seen as a high priority and businesses should consider the threats faced by their organisations in a holistic manner to prevent these challenges from being problems or crises.

When a company faces a crisis, it would be much more likely to effectively tackle this challenge when effective contingency steps and response plans are put in place. When the company has developed a culture of crisis preparedness through regular practice and training rehearsals, workers can respond in a secure atmosphere and learn from their experience, the successful execution of these plans is enhanced.

When a crisis is not well handled, then it will damage an organisation's profitability and would certainly have an immediate negative impact on its share prices. Organisations that handle a crisis poorly can never recover and sometimes see a steady medium-term decline in shareholder value. It opens more risks for the company, such as hostile takeovers. On the other hand, companies that handle a crisis also recover rapidly their share prices before the crisis, and often see their share prices grow in the medium term.

6.2. Discussion

Research carried showed that Greek export sector is familiar to risks. Risk’s existence is greater in export companies. Companies take the risks doing business abroad as they want to reap greater benefits from selling their products.

Greek export companies deal with a handful of challenges. Such as:

- ***Economic Risks***

  Exchange Rate difference and untrustworthy customers are the main risks in selling products abroad. Unfavorable currency fluctuations are an unavoidable risk of doing business abroad and may result in loss of income or benefit. Distance sales pose the risk of payment reliable without insurance. Respondents quoted that Export companies can cover themselves by quoting dollars only or taking a currency exchange facility that allows company to hold their currency show in exchange rates. In support of the above Kedia and Mozumdar (1999) analyse the role of debt foreign currency in the risk management operations of export companies in USA in currencies. They noticed a clear link between aggregate foreign exchange exposure and foreign currency denominated debt in a sample of large US firms. This relation between exposure and debt denominated for foreign currency also exists at the level of the individual currency. Lodder and Pichler (2000) published a study of Swiss Export Corporations' Risk Management Activities. Study investigated whether Swiss export businesses are aware of their currency exposure. They found that less than 40% of businesses can quantify their risk. There are two key reasons why businesses do not quantify their foreign-currency exposure-risk is difficult to calculate and businesses believe their exposure is low. Study found that the main reasons for managing currency risk are guaranteeing cash flows, reducing borrowing costs, simplifying planning, avoiding losses, and rising taxes. In the same context, Christie, and Marshall (2001) address the effect on the management of foreign exchange risk of UK multinationals by the adoption of Euro. The research was based on primary and panel data from 49 major UK multinationals. The study has shown that Euro is certainly influencing the risk management of foreign exchange in many of the UK MNCs, given the decision of the UK governments not participating in the EMU. The survey shows that 55 percent think the euro has high their exchange risk exposure. Therefore, it is easily concluded that the way to mitigate currency risks is to use dollars or euros or a currency that is relatively stable in fluctuations.

Greek export companies are dealing with exchange rate difficulties when trading in non-Euro countries. To address the issue several companies, ask to be paid in Euro, but such solution its not always accepted. Several countries have specific procedures on wire transfer delaying the payments and affecting cash flow mainly on small enterprises. Payment is reliability is a risk for Greek export companies. Presales check on credit control could be a solution. Unfortunately, legal procedures are extreme high to persuade losses.

- ***Legal Risks***

  Legal obligations arise since many countries have different regulations on food & beverage or manufacturing products even within the European Union. A different approach for the same product it may needed. Greek Companies special those on Food & Beverage sector are involved in long procedures to certify products and delivery delays on importing. Product certification may need alteration of production and a new production line or different packaging.

- ***Political Risks***

  Economic Sanctions due to political decision threatens to reduce demand. While political unrest creates concerns on transportation of people and goods. Political uncertainty may result in payment failures, property and asset confiscations, and earnings transfer blocks. In fact, literature deals with political risks' importance in export business. Obaseki,P.J.(2005) in his seminal study refers to the political situation in Western Africa countries and their impact in the exports of companies there. Greek export businesses face the political risks related to economic sanctions such as in Russia. Evident of political risks that impose threats to consumption during locked downs in Covid – 19 crisis.

- ***Competition Risks***

  Counterfeit products, intensive competition cause pressure to product prices and therefore sales and profit margins. Greek export companies especially those trading olive oil are facing counterfeit products from Italian companies selling Italian oil as Greek. The reason behind this fraud is the exceptional quality of Greek products. Another issue of Greek export companies is price competition due to high production costs comparing to companies in countries with lower ones.

- ***Staffing Risks***
  Managing staff is often difficult to coordinate especially when they are foreigners abroad. Lack of culture and mentality apposes difficulties on communication and business. When trading abroad Greek companies facing staff issues in procedures necessity and foreign language barriers.

It is understood that these types of risks are consistent with the literature.

Small businesses do not follow the structure of a risk management model. They focus mainly on traditional risk model, by building their response upon the experience of the past; being reluctant on doing business in uncertainty. SMEs do not share economic, political risk by expanding in more countries, mainly for two reasons: low production capacity and avoidance of new risks. Trapping themselves in few markets that makes them vulnerable to changes. SMEs in many cases support their response or approach to risks on similar companies knowledge, without assessing and evaluating risk themselves.

Not all the companies have a solid plan of assessment and evaluating response with strategic goals. Risk management requires precision planning and costs that small and medium-sized companies are unable to afford. Lack of knowledge is also an important factor.

Respondents also stated that to turn risks into opportunities, companies must take serious steps and actions. Those actions described are knowledge sharing, innovation, and training of personnel. Agndal, H., & Nordin, F. (2009) after having interviewed 28 managers and employees in export companies noted that knowledge sharing, and innovation are the key factors that allow companies to mitigate risks and create an advantage of the company. Coras, and Tantau, (2013) also agree that innovation is the main driver for companies to reduce and mitigate losses arising from corporate risks.

Respondents highlighted that risk management is an intercompany project that demands the constant monitoring of risks, causing better reaction and performance in the future. The continuous improvement of products and procedures allows the organisations boost its position in the market converting risks to opportunities. Innovations plays an important role.

The most important factors of risk management program in exports companies are the combination of identification and mitigation of risks through a continuous monitoring. Even though role assignment is crucial to risk management program, small businesses (as most of the export businesses in Greece – 20.000, ELSTAT) use employees as multi-role players (Herath, 2017).

As per the impact of shareholders' value in time of crisis, remaining stock is one of the biggest risks for exports companies.

The overall performance of organisations has been improved. Trading and competing abroad is harsh but expose organisations to new ideas and approaches. Implementing new ideas to surpass risks facilitate their growth. Without the implementation of risk management process exports companies undoubtedly, they could not survive.

According to interviewees, it was not possible to derive measurable results regarding employee's performance aligned to risk management processes. The reason for that is lack of KPIs connecting performance and risk management. But as it was highlighted in the literature performance and risk management aligned to teamwork, an effective communication system, and learning. Under this perspective the employee's performance can be justified in the interviewed companies.

6.4. Limitations of study

This study is narrowed by the fact that very few researches have been developed in the subject of crisis management in export companies that could be used as an opportunity for the organisations.

Furthermore, the research included interviews with Greek export firms. This on its own is a limitation since the sample was small because less than a handful of company representatives accepted to reply to the interview.

The pandemic on its own created some barriers of communication with the market participants in the area. As a result, the research had some limitations to capture somehow confident number of findings to what was originally planned.

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