

**MEHMET NACI SONMEZ  
İLKNUUR UNCÜOĞLU YOLCU**

## **The role of competitive intelligence and knowledge management in international market selection and export performance<sup>1</sup>**

### **Abstract**

**Research background and purpose:** This study examines the effects of competitive intelligence (CI) and knowledge management (KM) on international market selection and export performance in the Turkish furniture sector. Using data collected from 464 exporting firms, the research investigates how CI and KM influence firms' ability to identify appropriate foreign markets and achieve higher export performance. The findings highlight the mediating role of international market selection and emphasize the strategic importance of information-based capabilities in competitive international environments.

**Design/methodology/approach:** A quantitative research design was employed to analyze the relationships among CI, KM, international market selection, and export performance. Data were gathered through a structured questionnaire administered to firms listed among Türkiye's top 1,000 exporters. Validated scales were used, and the analyses were conducted with SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 25. Confirmatory factor analysis assessed construct validity, while structural equation modeling tested direct and mediating effects. Reliability indicators, AVE values, and model fit indices confirmed the robustness of the measurement and structural models.

**Findings:** The results show that CI and KM significantly and positively influence both international market selection and export performance. International market selection also mediates these relationships. Strong SEM fit indices support the proposed theoretical framework. Overall, the findings indicate that firms utilizing intelligence-based insights and effective knowledge management processes are better positioned to select suitable foreign markets and enhance their export performance.

**Value added and limitations:** This study contributes by integrating CI and KM into a unified framework explaining export performance, demonstrating how these capabilities jointly improve market interpretation, reduce uncertainty, and support strategic international decisions. The research also highlights



<sup>1</sup> This article is based on the doctoral dissertation by Mehmet Naci Sönmez, entitled "The Role of Competitive Intelligence and Knowledge Management in Export Performance and International Market Selection: An Application on Exporting Firms in the Furniture Sector". This article is based on the author's doctoral dissertation completed at Zonguldak Bülent Ecevit University (2024).

the practical importance of data-driven decision-making, organizational learning, and advanced analytical technologies such as AI and data mining in strengthening firms' long-term competitiveness. However, the study is limited to Turkish furniture exporters and relies on cross-sectional, self-reported data, which may affect generalizability. Future research should explore additional sectors, incorporate longitudinal designs, include objective performance indicators, and examine moderating variables such as firm size or international experience to deepen understanding of sustainable international competitiveness.

**Keywords:** *competitive intelligence, knowledge management, international market selection, export performance*

**JEL**

**Classification:** M15, D83, F23, F14, L25

**Received:** 2025-12-15; **Revised:** 2026-04-02; **Accepted:** 2026-04-15

## 1. Introduction

Rapid technological development and globalization have intensified competitiveness in global marketplaces. This has pushed businesses – particularly those in emerging economies – to leverage information-based capabilities for long-term success. In such environment, international enterprises must effectively analyze themselves, their competitors, and the external environment to gain and sustain a competitive advantage. Preventing imitability and anticipating competitors' strategies have become essential components of strategic positioning – both of which are made possible through the effective use of intelligence. Originating with Adam Smith and evolving into a recognized field of study, intelligence has become a central topic under the concept of competitive intelligence, which continues to attract scholarly attention. In this highly competitive environment, the ability to ensure a timely and effective flow of market information and to accurately identify competitive factors is critical. The emergence of competitive intelligence reflects this need, as it facilitates the systematic collection, analysis, and structuring of external information to support strategic decision-making. Competitive intelligence enables firms to analyze competitors, market dynamics, and the external environment in depth, helping them to respond quickly and strategically to changes. Therefore, many companies now adopt competitive intelligence practices to support their long-term goals (Vriens, 2004, p. 5).

Competitive intelligence (CI) is defined as the systematic and ethical process of collecting, analyzing, and disseminating actionable information about competitors, customers, and the broader market environment (Calof & Wright, 2008; Dishman

& Calof, 2008). Competitive intelligence is a process that transforms information into actionable strategic decisions. For businesses to remain strong in competition, they must identify their shortcomings and continuously renew themselves. This approach also forms the basis of strategic management goals such as increasing efficiency, establishing corporate vision, and enhancing performance (Mete, 2023). When competitive intelligence and knowledge management are used effectively, the appropriate knowledge is sent to the right decision-maker in the right way at the right time. The goals of knowledge management and competitive intelligence are identical, despite the fact that their scopes and activities differ greatly. Knowledge management and competitive intelligence are components of a whole in this regard (Gündüz, 2017).

International markets are becoming even more significant since exporting is one of the most crucial ways for companies and nations to create added value. Export performance is defined as the degree to which firms achieve their strategic and economic objectives and is considered as an outcome of the interaction between the firm's internal resources and environmental conditions (Ayar & Erdil, 2018).

During internationalization, firms obtain knowledge chiefly from experience, and such knowledge is gathered progressively and cumulatively as the firm broadens its presence in overseas markets across time (Martin et al., 2022). Exporters with less experience tend to perceive greater uncertainty regarding the risks and returns of international markets, which can negatively impact their decision-making processes. However, as export experience increases, firms perceive less uncertainty, better understand foreign market dynamics, establish international networks, and consequently develop and implement more effective export marketing programs. Therefore, it is expected that firms with greater export experience will demonstrate higher performance compared to their less experienced counterparts (Katsikeas et al., 1996, p. 14). In particular, the use of intelligence-based information in international market research supports faster and more cost-effective access to appropriate markets. Aligning export activities with strategic decisions based on competitive intelligence in target market selection is essential for maintaining long-term competitiveness.

Although the selection of which foreign market(s) to enter represents a critical threshold immediately after a firm decides to pursue international expansion, the selection of which foreign market(s) to enter has not been extensively studied in academic literature. The decline in scholarly interest in International Market Selection (IMS) stems not from a lack of strategic importance, but rather from the significant difficulty in empirically validating the various frameworks and operational models developed to optimize IMS decisions (Brouthers & Nakos, 2005).

*“According to Villar et al. (2014), the internationalization of firms, especially in the context of exports, is frequently explained through the theoretical lenses of the Resource-Based View and the Knowledge-Based View. The Resource-Based View views*

*organizations as bundles of tangible and intangible resources, suggesting that valuable and difficult-to-imitate resources enable superior competitive positions. The Knowledge-Based View further emphasizes knowledge as the most strategically significant organizational resource for international competitiveness. However, this view's static approach led to its evolution into a more dynamic view. The dynamic capabilities view (DCV) complements findings in export behavior research as it can also encompass export performance and internationalization processes"* (Villar et al., 2014). This context was deliberately selected to adapt the Resource-Based View (RBV), Knowledge-Based View (KBV), and Dynamic Capabilities View (DCV) to emerging economies, test the mediating effects involved, and provide original evidence for firms in such economies - thereby offering contributions to the international literature beyond a merely local case study.

Although research on competitive intelligence, knowledge management (KM), international market selection (IMS), and export performance (EP) has expanded, few studies integrate these domains within a unified framework, especially for export sectors in emerging economies. This study addresses this gap by examining the Turkish furniture sector, which provides an appropriate empirical context for several reasons. Turkey represents a significant emerging market economy with substantial export activity and an institutional environment characterized by moderate institutional quality, information asymmetries, and market uncertainties - conditions that make competitive intelligence particularly critical for international market decisions and performance outcomes. Second, despite Turkey's importance as an emerging economy exporter, research on competitive intelligence practices among Turkish firms remains limited compared to developed country contexts, representing a notable research gap. Third, Turkey's geographic and economic position linking Europe, the Middle East, and Asia provides a relevant setting to examine how firms operate across diverse international markets. Thus, the Turkish context offers an appropriate setting to advance understanding of how emerging market firms leverage competitive intelligence for international success. The Turkish furniture sector specifically offers a compelling case, as it is undergoing a transition from a labor-intensive structure to one that is knowledge and design-intensive while facing intense global competition, sustainability pressures, and cost fluctuations. However, the adoption of competitive intelligence practices in this sector remains limited (Seviçin, 2005), creating a strategic application gap that requires empirical investigation.

This study addresses this gap by examining the role of competitive intelligence and knowledge management in international market selection and export performance within the Turkish furniture sector. It extends existing theories of competitive advantage, knowledge-based view, and strategic management by demonstrating that sustainable competitiveness requires not only internal capabilities but also the

systematic and timely analysis of external environments and market dynamics. By emphasizing the integration of intelligence-based information into strategic decisions, this research reinforces the notion that actionable knowledge - sourced both internally and externally- functions as a key strategic asset. Focusing on the Turkish context, the study provides original insights into how firms in developing economies can strengthen their global positions through structured intelligence and knowledge management practices, offering valuable contributions to both theory and practical implementation.

## 2. Literature review

While prior research has examined pairwise relationships among these variables, integrated empirical studies simultaneously investigating the four constructs of competitive intelligence, knowledge management, international market selection, and export performance remain notably scarce in the literature. Given the paucity of empirical research in the competitive intelligence domain, the systematic examination of the interrelationships among these four constructs represents a significant research gap. The following sections first present the theoretical foundations underpinning this study, introducing the key constructs and embedding them within RBV, KBV and DCV. Subsequently, a dedicated Hypotheses Development section presents the specific interrelationships among the variables and the resulting research hypotheses.

### 2.1. Theoretical foundations: Knowledge-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities

This study is theoretically grounded in the RBV, KBV and DCV, which together provide a coherent framework for understanding how firms leverage information-based capabilities to achieve superior international performance. The RBV posits that firms compete based on valuable, rare, and inimitable resources (Barney, 1991). The knowledge-based theory of the firm, an outgrowth of the resource-based view, posits that knowledge represents the most strategically significant organizational resource and constitutes the critical input in production as well as the primary source of value creation (Grant, 1996). Within this framework, CI and KM can be conceptualized as knowledge-intensive organizational resources: CI enables firms to interpret external environments and reduce uncertainty in international market decisions (Calof & Wright, 2008), while KM facilitates the assimilation and effective use of organizational knowledge (Villar et al., 2014).

However, the inherently static nature of the KBV has led scholars to develop a more dynamic extension. The DCV, as originally conceptualized by Teece et al. (1997), emphasizes firms' capacity to sense, seize, and reconfigure resources in response to changing market conditions. Applied to international business, Villar et al. (2014)

demonstrate that knowledge management practices function as dynamic capabilities that enable firms to reconfigure their knowledge base and adapt to evolving international market demands. In line with this perspective, CI can be understood as a sensing capability that enables firms to systematically monitor the competitive environment and identify foreign market opportunities (Calof & Wright, 2008; Yıldız, 2019), while KM serves as a coordinating and reconfiguring capability that ensures organizational knowledge is captured, updated, and effectively deployed to foster innovation and enhance performance (Darroch, 2005; Wolor et al., 2024). The quality and timeliness of international market selection decisions are therefore shaped by the extent to which firms possess and deploy these dynamic capabilities (Martín et al., 2022). Export performance, as the downstream outcome of these capability-driven processes, is ultimately determined by how effectively firms translate CI and KM into well-informed market entry decisions (Brouthers & Nakos, 2005; Gündüz, 2017). By situating CI and KM within this RBV/KBV/DCV framework, this study provides a theoretically coherent and empirically grounded basis for the relationships examined in the following sections.

## 2.2. International market selection

The IMS process, which refers to how firms identify foreign countries or regions as their geographic target markets, is one of the fundamental components of international trade (Brewer, 2001, p. 155). When conducting marketing activities in global markets, companies must evaluate potential markets based on their demographic, economic, sociocultural, and political-legal environments, and develop appropriate pricing and distribution strategies for each target market (Kotler & Keller, 2012).

For firms entering international markets for the first time or seeking to expand their existing operations, one of the primary concerns is selecting one or more countries as target markets (Papadopoulos & Denis, 1988, p. 38). Kumar et al. (1994) define international market selection as a process involving the establishment of criteria for selecting country markets, the evaluation of market potential, the classification of markets based on predefined criteria, and the determination of which markets should be prioritized for entry and which ones can be developed at a later stage (cited in Andersen & Strandkov, 1998, p. 67).

Recent studies show that smaller enterprises predominantly rely on cognition-based and qualitative models in the international market selection process, while medium-sized firms tend to employ quantitative approaches that emphasize macroeconomic indicators to carry out the IMS process more effectively (Deaza et al., 2020, p. 33). This indicates that the scale of the enterprise plays a significant role in determining the methods applied in international market selection and decision-making.

Several studies have examined the CI-IMS relationship in applied contexts, demonstrating its practical relevance for exporting firms, with notable contributions from the Turkish context. Mete (2015) examined Turkey's olive oil export data along with export agreements and quotas with EU countries, and determined target markets by analyzing data obtained from the 'Market Access Database' and 'International Trade Center' databases within the scope of international market selection. Altunok (2015) proposed a model for competitive intelligence-based exploratory market research in international marketing, conducted an application on cherry exports for determining international target markets using competitive intelligence-based information, and provided a roadmap proposal for firms seeking to export.

### 2.3. Export performance

Research indicates that EP studies have shown spectacular growth, with sustained and growing interest in the field (Aksoy et al., 2024). Research on export performance dates back to the pioneering study of Tookey (1964), and over the years, various definitions have emerged. According to Özdemir (2007), export performance is of vital importance for ensuring the sustainability of firms in global markets and for gaining a competitive advantage over rivals. In a similar context, Cadogan, Cui, and Li (2003) define export performance as the degree of efficiency with which firms achieve favorable outcomes from their activities in international markets.

The attainment of successful export performance is a strategic priority for both corporate decision-makers and public policy makers. From a firm-level perspective, it reflects the extent to which a company accomplishes its economic and non-economic objectives in an international setting at a given point in time. Furthermore, export performance serves as an indicator of how well the chosen export strategy aligns with current market dynamics (Beleska-Spasova, 2014). Firms that are able to analyze international markets more accurately and implement efficient strategies often exhibit superior export performance compared to their competitors (Cengel, 2008, p. 69).

In essence, EP embodies the tangible outcomes of firms' efforts to remain competitive and sustainable in the global business environment. Strong export performance is closely linked to international competitiveness, and it can also have a positive influence on overall business processes and organizational performance (Sarihan, 2023, p. 229).

The direct impact of competitive intelligence on export performance has been widely recognized as a key determinant of firms' international success and competitive advantage. Brouthers and Nakos (2005) demonstrated that SMEs' systematic approaches to determining export target markets directly affect their export performance. Similarly, research conducted by Salles (2006), Nasri (2012), and Lackman and Lanasa (2013) supported this finding by establishing that new international markets reached through

the information provided by competitive intelligence positively affect overall export performance by increasing export diversity. In particular, the findings revealed that the utilization of competitive intelligence in firms' strategic decision-making processes enables them to be more effective in international markets, and this situation contributes to export growth. Akdeniz and Aydın (2024), focusing on leading exporters in Turkey as an emerging market context, observe in their study that higher levels of intellectual capital are associated with superior export performance, emphasizing the critical role of intellectual capital in enhancing value-added creation, export performance, and sustainable production.

The role of knowledge management in enhancing export performance has been emphasized in recent literature, particularly in terms of its contribution to firms' dynamic capabilities and competitive positioning in international markets. Villar et al. (2014), in their study on Spanish and Italian manufacturing companies in the ceramic tile industry, reveal that implementing knowledge management practices alone is necessary but insufficient to improve exports, requiring dynamic capabilities to reconfigure these capabilities. The effective implementation of knowledge management processes enables firms to gain a competitive advantage in global markets.

## 2.4. Competitive intelligence

The original text contained historical inaccuracies (5000 BCE for Sun Tzu) and cited an incorrect page number (p. 176). The revised text provides a historically accurate timeline ( $\approx 2,400$  years ago) and updates the citation to the correct page (p. 718) from the same source (Calof & Wright, 2008). As societies evolved, the notion of competition began to gain prominence, particularly during the Industrial Revolution. The dissolution of the feudal system and the rise of new political and economic structures transformed competition into a fundamental element within emerging market economies. This shift gave rise to an unprecedented competitive environment, which has continued to intensify over time (Baltacı et al., 2012, p. 3).

Globalization, especially after the Cold War era, further reshaped market structures by compelling companies to increase efficiency and productivity through innovation and the adoption of new insights. Competition and innovation thus became central to firms' ability to secure a competitive advantage in increasingly interconnected global markets (Porter, 1990, p. 77). Fourie (1999) notes that Porter's contributions to strategic management and competitiveness have significantly influenced the academic development of competitive intelligence as a distinct discipline.

Until the 1980s, competitive intelligence was primarily concerned with gathering information to support decision-making processes. However, during the 1970s and 1980s, competitive intelligence began to institutionalize in the United States as an official organizational function (Begg & Du Toit, 2007, p. 2). This professionalization

culminated in the establishment of the Strategic and Competitive Intelligence Professionals (SCIP) association in 1986, which gave the field a formal and recognized status.

In recent decades, the interplay between innovation and competition has increasingly emphasized the importance of knowledge management capabilities for both individuals and firms. The ability to effectively harness competencies and convert acquired knowledge into applicable skills has become a critical source of competitiveness in modern markets. As a result, businesses and nations alike strive to expand market share and secure their positions in global markets (Altay & Gürpınar, 2008, p. 257). Competition today is an inseparable part of the business environment, with sustainable success hinging on the ability to gain and maintain a competitive advantage.

A crucial factor in achieving competitive advantage is minimizing the risk of imitation by competitors. To do so, firms must identify and analyze their rivals' operational processes, disrupt these processes when feasible, and formulate proactive response strategies. The success of these actions hinges on a well-structured intelligence system capable of generating, analyzing, and applying strategic insights in a timely and effective manner – typically through the implementation of a Competitive Intelligence System (Seviçin, 2005, p. 181). In this context, competitive intelligence plays a vital role by enabling managers to navigate dynamic market conditions through informed strategic planning and decision-making. It supports organizations in improving distribution efficiency, establishing performance benchmarks, and identifying potential market threats by systematically gathering and interpreting competitor data (Dinu et al., 2022, p. 42).

The academic and professional literature offers numerous definitions of competitive intelligence. Among these, Miller's widely cited definition describes CI as "a systematic and ethical program for collecting, analyzing, and managing data that influences a firm's strategic planning, decision-making processes, and operational activities" (Miller, 2009, p. 1209).

More recently, the convergence of digital technologies and competitive intelligence has fundamentally transformed how firms collect, process, and utilize strategic information. Competitive intelligence now encompasses not only traditional data gathering but also advanced planning, analytical techniques, internal communication, and comprehensive knowledge management across organizational units (Fleisher & Bensoussan, 2015, p. 17). The rise of big data, social media, and sophisticated analytical tools has empowered firms to monitor competitors in real time and extract actionable insights more effectively. Contemporary definitions thus view competitive intelligence as "the process and forward-looking practices used in producing knowledge about the competitive environment to improve organizational performance," involving the coordinated and ethical management of multiple data sources (Calof & Wright, 2018, p. 182). This progression marks a shift from reactive to proactive intelligence capabilities,

integrating CI into formal strategic management rather than relegating it to peripheral or ad hoc functions.

Beyond direct effects, the mediating role of international market selection in the relationship between competitive intelligence and export performance represents a critical mechanism through which firms can enhance their international success. Salles (2006) demonstrates that competitive intelligence provides a positive impact on export performance through improved international market selection. The study reveals that new international markets reached through the information provided by competitive intelligence increase export diversity, thereby positively affecting overall export performance. Calof and Wright (2008) establish that competitive intelligence strengthens the relationship between international market selection and export performance, consequently increasing export profitability. The study demonstrates that effective use of competitive intelligence in market selection decisions enhances both market choice quality and financial outcomes, supporting more informed and strategic market entry decisions. Nasri (2012) reveals that competitive intelligence positively influences international market selection and export performance by enabling firms to reach new international markets, thereby increasing export diversity and overall export performance. Gündüz (2017), in his study, reveals that competitive intelligence enhances export performance through improved international market selection, positioning it as a critical component of international marketing strategy, and emphasizes that systematic market intelligence gathering improves the quality of market selection decisions and leads to superior export outcomes.

## 2.5. Knowledge management

Although the concept of KM is relatively new in academic discourse, it has been examined by scholars across various disciplines and has recently garnered increased quantitative attention compared to many other research areas (Alvesson & Kärreman, 2001, pp. 995–1018). For many researchers, KM is not merely a transient trend; rather, it is regarded as a strategic field whose significance is expected to grow substantially with future scholarly contributions (Hull, 2000, p. 49). Beyond academia, studies within the business sector also emphasize the centrality of KM, recognizing it as a prerequisite for attaining and sustaining competitive advantage (Earl, 1999).

Knowledge management refers to the application of a set of managerial tools and practices aimed at creating or enhancing value through knowledge. These tools encompass the accumulated experience, expertise, and judgment of organizational leaders (Hellriegel et al., 2001, p. 428). In this context, KM emerges as a pivotal driver of business development, enabling firms to make informed decisions, foster innovation, and maintain competitiveness in global markets. It empowers managers to confidently

explore new opportunities while enhancing organizational capacity and performance (Vásquez-Bernal et al., 2023, p. 171).

The literature presents various definitions of KM, including the production, acquisition, and dissemination of knowledge (Bradburn & Sugden, 2004); the process of creating, acquiring, and utilizing knowledge to improve organizational performance (Bassi, 1999); and the integration of processes and strategies that facilitate the internal diffusion of knowledge to create value (Rumizen, 1998).

According to Wolor et al. (2024), effective KM in Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) entails more than the adoption of digital technologies. It requires a comprehensive transformation in organizational structures, processes, and cultures, emphasizing the cultivation of intellectual capital as a strategic intangible asset. In practice, this transformation begins with identifying and systematically managing critical knowledge domains – such as product expertise, market intelligence, internal processes, and customer insights – that are vital for driving innovation and ensuring long-term competitive advantage.

Similarly, recent studies have highlighted the indirect pathways through which knowledge management influences export performance, with international market selection serving as a crucial intermediary mechanism in this relationship. Saputra et al. (2020), in their study on export-oriented SMEs in Indonesia, reveal that knowledge management affects export performance both directly and indirectly through the internationalization process. The research findings demonstrate that the indirect effect of knowledge management on export performance is significant, with the internationalization process playing an important mediating role in this relationship. These findings indicate that firms strengthen their internationalization processes, such as systematic market selection and entry mode decisions, by developing knowledge dissemination and knowledge storage practices, consequently enhancing their export performance. Martín et al. (2022), in their study on Australian SMEs, reveal that foreign market entry knowledge does not directly affect international performance, but has an indirect effect through systematic international market selection. The findings show that firms with knowledge conduct more systematic market research and selection activities, and this systematic approach positively influences international performance. This mediating effect emphasizes that firms transform knowledge gained from previous experiences into performance by reducing uncertainty and making more informed decisions.

### 3. Hypotheses development

Building on the theoretical foundations established in the preceding sections, this section develops the research hypotheses that guide empirical analysis. The KBV and DCV frameworks provide the theoretical basis for the proposed relationships: CI and

KM, as dynamic capabilities, are expected to directly enable more effective international market selection and enhance export performance. Furthermore, international market selection is proposed to mediate the relationship between these capabilities and export performance, reflecting the sequential pathway through which CI and KM generate competitive advantage in international markets.

The relationship between competitive intelligence and international market selection has been extensively examined in the literature, demonstrating its strategic importance in expanding market reach and export diversity. Tian and Tobar (2000) demonstrated a positive relationship between competitive intelligence and international market selection, revealing that this relationship consequently increases export diversity. Lackman and Lanasa (2013) revealed that competitive intelligence activities positively strengthen the relationship between international market selection and export diversity. Yıldız (2019) highlights that the competitive intelligence process makes it considerably easier for companies to identify the correct target market, adopt the appropriate strategy, and engage in the right commercial activities. Examining SMEs in industrial markets, Firat (2025) reveals that competitive intelligence plays a determining role in international target market selection. From a DCV perspective, CI as a sensing capability allows firms to identify and evaluate foreign market opportunities more systematically, reducing uncertainty in market entry decisions. Thus, hypothesis H1 is proposed:

*H1. Competitive intelligence has a positive and significant effect on international market selection.*

Knowledge management practices have emerged as critical organizational capabilities that enable firms to make more informed and systematic international market selection decisions. Costa et al. (2016) establish that KM practices play a critical role in SMEs' internationalization decisions, particularly in market selection processes. Pellegrino and McNaughton (2017) demonstrate that SMEs utilizing systematic learning and KM processes achieve more effective IMS outcomes. Consistent with the KBV, KM as a reconfiguring capability ensures that accumulated market knowledge is continuously updated and applied to IMS decisions. Accordingly, hypothesis H2 is proposed:

*H2. Knowledge management has a positive and significant effect on international market selection.*

The direct impact of competitive intelligence on export performance has been widely recognized. Brouters and Nakos (2005) demonstrated that SMEs' systematic approaches to market selection directly affect export performance. Salles (2006), Nasri (2012), and Lackman and Lanasa (2013) established that new international markets

reached through CI information positively affect export performance by increasing export diversity. As a dynamic sensing capability, CI enables firms to identify competitive advantages, anticipate market shifts, and implement more effective export strategies, thereby directly improving export outcomes (Teece et al., 1997). Therefore, hypothesis H3 is proposed:

*H3. Competitive intelligence has a positive and significant effect on export performance.*

Knowledge management contributes to export performance through its role as a reconfiguring dynamic capability. Villar et al. (2014) reveal that KM practices, when combined with dynamic capabilities, improve export outcomes in international markets. Zorçelik (2020) established that KM has a positive and significant effect on firm performance. Within the KBV framework, firms that systematically capture, share, and utilize organizational knowledge are better positioned to develop competitive export strategies and sustain performance advantages in international markets (Grant, 1996). Based on this, hypothesis H4 is proposed:

*H4. Knowledge management has a positive and significant effect on export performance.*

The mediating role of international market selection in the CI–export performance relationship represents a critical mechanism within the DCV framework. Salles (2006) demonstrates that CI provides a positive impact on export performance through improved IMS. Calof and Wright (2008) establish that CI strengthens the relationship between IMS and export performance, increasing export profitability. Gündüz (2017) reveals that CI enhances export performance through improved IMS, positioning it as a critical component of international marketing strategy. These findings demonstrate that CI's value as a dynamic capability is fully realized when directed through the strategic process of international market selection. Therefore, hypothesis H5 is proposed:

*H5. International market selection mediates the relationship between competitive intelligence and export performance.*

Similarly, the mediating role of international market selection between knowledge management and export performance reflects the KBV pathway through which internal knowledge assets generate international competitive advantage. Saputra et al. (2020) reveal that KM affects export performance both directly and indirectly through the internationalization process, with market selection playing a critical intermediary role. Martín et al. (2022) demonstrate that foreign market entry

knowledge indirectly affects international performance through systematic IMS. These findings indicate that KM's value as a reconfiguring capability is channeled through more systematic and informed market selection decisions. Consequently, hypothesis H6 is proposed:

*H6. International market selection mediates the relationship between knowledge management and export performance.*

#### 4. Methods

In this section, information regarding the research methodology employed in this study will be presented.

This study aims to examine the competitive position of Turkish furniture products in international markets by focusing on the roles of competitive intelligence and knowledge management. Unlike broad interpretations of international competitiveness, this research emphasizes information-based capabilities as key drivers of sustainable export performance and strategic market selection.

The analysis targets firms exporting under HS Code 9 – specifically subcategories 9401, 9402, 9403, and 9404 – representing core segments of Turkey's furniture industry. By exploring the interactions among competitive intelligence, knowledge management, export performance, and international market selection, the study contributes to the literature on sustainable internationalization.

In this study, the relationships among competitive intelligence, knowledge management, international market selection, and export performance were investigated. The research model incorporates a total of four variables: two independent variables, one mediating variable, and one dependent variable. The model developed for testing the hypotheses is presented in Figure 1.

This study focuses on Turkish furniture firms exporting products under HS codes 9401, 9402, 9403, and 9404 – key subcategories of the global Harmonized System, known in Turkey as GTİP. This classification ensures consistency in international trade statistics (Aytekin, 2019, p. 6).

To enhance the study's validity, the sample includes firms listed among Turkey's top 1,000 exporters (TIM). Data were collected between December 2022 and April 2023, yielding 464 valid responses. Respondents were primarily export managers; where unavailable, marketing or senior executives involved in international operations were surveyed.

This sampling approach supports the aim of research examining how competitive intelligence and knowledge management affect sustainable export performance.

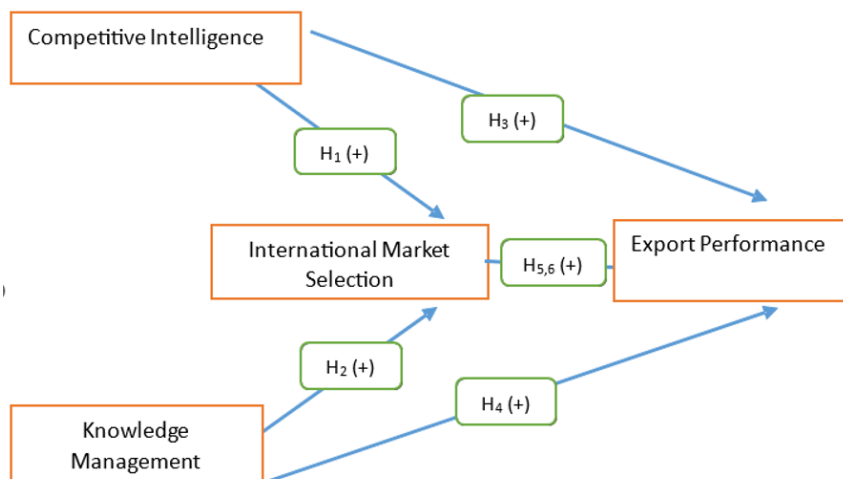


Figure 1. Research model

Source: own study

Data were collected using a structured survey developed from validated scales in the literature: Export performance (Ayar & Erdil, 2018), international market selection (Brouthers & Nakos, 2005), and knowledge management & competitive intelligence (Pellissier & Kruger, 2011).

Table 1 presents the psychometric properties of the measurement scales employed in this study. All scales were adapted from validated instruments in the literature and assessed using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA).

Table 1. Summary of measurement scale properties

| Scale                          | Items | Source                     | Cronbach's $\alpha$ | CR     | AVE    |
|--------------------------------|-------|----------------------------|---------------------|--------|--------|
| Competitive Intelligence       | 5     | Pellissier & Kruger (2011) | 0.781               | 0.781  | 0.420  |
| Knowledge Management           | 8     | Pellissier & Kruger (2011) | 0.856               | 0.856  | 0.432  |
| International Market Selection | 6     | Brouthers & Nakos (2005)   | 0.812               | 0.812  | 0.422  |
| Export Performance             | 6     | Ayar & Erdil (2018)        | 0.814               | 0.814  | 0.424  |
| Recommended threshold          | –     | –                          | > 0.70              | > 0.70 | > 0.50 |

Source: own study

As shown in Table 1, Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.781 to 0.856, and composite reliability (CR) values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.70 for all constructs (Hair et al., 2019), indicating satisfactory internal consistency. Although AVE values are marginally below the conventional 0.50 threshold, convergent validity is still supported given the high CR values (Fornell & Larcker, 1981).

The survey was distributed online via email and WhatsApp, and offline through face-to-face interviews with printed forms. It included two parts: firm demographics and Likert-scale items (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree).

Collected data were analyzed using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 25 and structural equation modeling (SEM) was employed to test the proposed hypotheses.

## 5. Analysis and key findings

To ensure the validity and reliability of the measurement model, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 25. Given that all scales were previously validated in the literature, CFA served to confirm their construct validity in the current context. Composite Reliability (CR) and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were examined to assess internal consistency and convergent validity.

Following these assessments, structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test the hypothesized relationships between variables. All statistical analyses were performed using SPSS 26.0 and AMOS 25.

Regarding the demographic profile of the participants, 192 were Foreign Trade Managers, 183 were Import/Export Specialists, 30 were Marketing Managers, 27 were General Managers, and 32 were Company Owners. In total, 80.8% of respondents held roles directly related to international trade functions, enhancing the relevance and credibility of the findings.

### 5.1. Validity and reliability analyses

To assess the structural validity of the scales used in this study, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted using AMOS 25.0. Model fit was assessed using fit indices such as  $\chi^2/df$ , GFI, AGFI, RMR, and RMSEA.

In assessing the structural equation modeling (SEM) results, the goodness-of-fit criteria were evaluated based on widely accepted thresholds in the literature (Kelloway, 1998; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Şimşek, 2007). Specifically, CMIN/DF values below 3 indicate good fit, while 3–5 are acceptable. RMSEA and RMR values under 0.05 denote good fit, with 0.05–0.08 acceptable. Likewise, GFI values of 0.95 or higher reflect good fit, with 0.90–0.95 considered acceptable. Finally, AGFI values above 0.90 indicate good fit, while 0.85–0.90 are deemed acceptable.

Based on modification indices and factor loadings below acceptable thresholds ( $<0.50$ ), several items were removed to improve model fit and ensure construct clarity. Specifically, 3–4 items were removed from each scale while maintaining content coverage and theoretical consistency.

The modifications made to the scales are presented in Table 2.

The results confirm the one-dimensionality of the scale.

The model demonstrates an acceptable fit across all constructs. CMIN/DF values remain below the critical threshold of 3, RMR values are minimal (ranging from 0.012 to 0.021), and both GFI ( $>0.95$ ) and AGFI ( $>0.90$ ) exceed conventional benchmarks. RMSEA indicates a close fit for export performance (0.047) and international market selection (0.038), while Competitive Intelligence (0.062) and knowledge management (0.055) reflect a reasonable fit.

Table 2. Goodness of fit values for scales

| Goodness of Fit Values | Export Performance | International Market Selection | Knowledge Management | Competitive Intelligence |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------|
| CMIN/DF                | 2,011              | 1,666                          | 2,398                | 2,781                    |
| RMR                    | 0,021              | 0,012                          | 0,017                | 0,019                    |
| GFI                    | 0,987              | 0,989                          | 0,980                | 0,988                    |
| AGFI                   | 0,970              | 0,975                          | 0,954                | 0,965                    |
| RMSEA                  | 0,047              | 0,038                          | 0,055                | 0,062                    |
| AVE                    | 0,424              | 0,422                          | 0,432                | 0,420                    |
| CR                     | 0,814              | 0,812                          | 0,856                | 0,781                    |

Source: own study

CR values, ranging from 0.78 to 0.85, demonstrate satisfactory internal consistency across all constructs, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2019). Although the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values are slightly below the conventional cutoff of 0.50 (ranging from 0.42 to 0.43), Fornell and Larcker (1981) note that convergent validity can still be established when CR values exceed 0.70, even if AVE values are marginally lower. In this study, the consistently high CR values thus provide sufficient evidence of convergent validity, indicating that the constructs are measured with acceptable reliability despite modest AVE values.

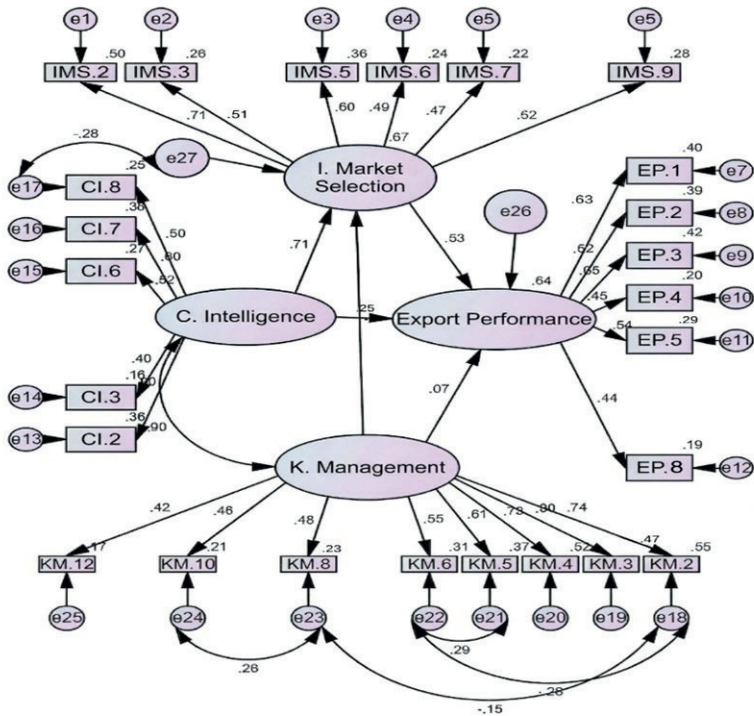


Figure 2. Structural model

Source: own study

This structural equation model illustrates the relationships among competitive intelligence, knowledge management, international market selection, and export performance. The model suggests that competitive intelligence and knowledge management positively influence international market selection, which in turn enhances export performance. Furthermore, knowledge management also exerts a direct effect on export performance, while competitive intelligence shows an indirect contribution through market selection. The standardized factor loadings and error terms indicate that the measurement model demonstrates adequate construct validity and reliability.

Table 3. Results of Confirmatory Factor Analysis

|                                       | Factor Loading | Standard Error | t Value |
|---------------------------------------|----------------|----------------|---------|
| <b>Competitive Intelligence</b>       |                |                |         |
| CI.2-                                 | ,563           | -              | -       |
| CI.3                                  | ,434           | ,099           | 7,417   |
| CI.6                                  | ,556           | ,101           | 9,272   |
| CI.7                                  | ,589           | ,085           | 10,342  |
| CI.8                                  | ,491           | ,091           | 8,739   |
| <b>Knowledge Management</b>           |                |                |         |
| KM.2                                  | ,719           | -              | -       |
| KM.3                                  | ,684           | ,064           | 14,007  |
| KM.4                                  | ,729           | ,060           | 14,600  |
| KM.5                                  | ,617           | ,073           | 12,324  |
| KM.6                                  | ,544           | ,068           | 10,227  |
| KM.8                                  | ,438           | ,065           | 9,051   |
| KM.10                                 | ,472           | ,059           | 9,270   |
| KM.12                                 | ,394           | ,065           | 8,430   |
| <b>International Market Selection</b> |                |                |         |
| IMS.2                                 | ,691           | -              | -       |
| IMS.3                                 | ,469           | ,074           | 9,738   |
| IMS.5                                 | ,625           | ,061           | 11,345  |
| IMS.6                                 | ,545           | ,056           | 9,297   |
| IMS.7                                 | ,460           | ,051           | 8,891   |
| IMS.9                                 | ,529           | ,057           | 9,962   |
| <b>Export Performance</b>             |                |                |         |
| EP.1                                  | ,655           | -              | -       |
| EP.2                                  | ,616           | ,099           | 10,559  |
| EP.3                                  | ,677           | ,096           | 10,869  |

|      |      |      |       |
|------|------|------|-------|
| EP.4 | ,445 | ,094 | 8,110 |
| EP.5 | ,510 | ,090 | 9,408 |
| EP.8 | ,411 | ,088 | 7,928 |

Source: own study

Table 3 presents the results of the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) conducted in this study. CFA was performed to assess the validity and reliability of the measurement model. The table includes four primary factors: competitive intelligence, knowledge management, international market selection, and export performance.

For each factor, the factor loadings, standard error values, and t-statistics are provided. Factor loadings indicate the degree to which each variable represents the associated factor, while t-values test the significance of these variables. Generally, factor loadings above 0.40 suggest an acceptable level of construct validity (Jolliffe, 2002).

Table 4. Correlation table between variables

|                                |                                 | Competitive Intelligence | Knowledge Management | International Market Selection | Export Performance |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|
| Competitive Intelligence       | The correlation coefficient (r) | 1                        | ,606**               | ,558**                         | ,576**             |
|                                | p-value                         |                          | ,000                 | ,000                           | ,000               |
| Knowledge Management           | The correlation coefficient (r) | ,606**                   | 1                    | ,568**                         | ,580**             |
|                                | p-value                         | ,000                     |                      | ,000                           | ,000               |
| International Market Selection | Correlation Coefficient (r)     | ,558**                   | ,568**               | 1                              | ,580**             |
|                                | p-value                         | ,000                     | ,000                 |                                | ,000               |
| Export Performance             | The correlation coefficient (r) | ,576**                   | ,580**               | ,580**                         | 1                  |
|                                | p-value                         | ,000                     | ,000                 | ,000                           |                    |

Note. \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source: own study

Table 4 presents the relationships between competitive intelligence, knowledge management, international market selection, and export performance. According to the results of the Pearson Correlation Analysis, all variables exhibit positive and significant correlations ( $p < 0.01$ ). Competitive Intelligence is strongly correlated with knowledge management ( $r = 0.606$ ), international market selection ( $r = 0.558$ ), and export performance ( $r = 0.576$ ). Similarly, the correlation between knowledge management and export performance ( $r = 0.580$ ) is one of the highest values observed. These findings suggest that effectively managing competitive intelligence and knowledge management processes can positively influence international market selection and export performance. The strong relationships between variables highlight the importance of integrating these factors within a holistic strategic management approach.

## 5.2. Testing of the hypotheses

In this section, the hypotheses developed based on the literature review were empirically tested using statistical methods. The aim was to evaluate the relationships between competitive intelligence, knowledge management, international market selection, and export performance. Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was employed to assess both the direct and mediating effects proposed in the conceptual model. The statistical significance and direction of each hypothesis were evaluated using standardized path coefficients and p-values. The findings were interpreted considering the theoretical framework and existing literature to ensure consistency and validity.

Table 5. **Model fit indices of the structural equation model between CI, KM, EP and IMS**

| Measurement | Model Fit Goodness | Acceptable Fit                | Good Fit                      |
|-------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| CMIN/DF     | 1,941              | $3 < \text{CMIN/DF} < 5$      | $< 3$                         |
| GFI         | 0,917              | $> ,90$                       | $> ,95$                       |
| AGFI        | 0,898              | $> ,85$                       | $> ,90$                       |
| RMR         | 0,026              | $0.05 < \text{RMR} \leq 0.08$ | $0 \leq \text{RMR} \leq 0.05$ |
| CFI         | 0,920              | $> ,90$                       | $> ,95$                       |
| RMSEA       | 0,045              | $< ,08$                       | $< ,05$                       |

Source: own study

The goodness-of-fit criteria for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) were established based on generally accepted values in the literature. The values in the table above were

specifically derived from the following sources: Kelloway (1998); Hu and Bentler (1999); Şimşek (2007).

Table 5 shows the goodness-of-fit indices calculated for the Structural Equation Model (SEM) examining the relationships between competitive intelligence, knowledge management, export performance and international market selection. The CMIN/DF ( $\chi^2/df$ ) value is 1.941, which meets the  $<3$  criterion, indicating good fit. The GFI (0.917) and CFI (0.920) values exceed the 0.90 threshold, indicating an acceptable level of fit, while the AGFI (0.898) also meets the  $>0.85$  criterion, indicating an acceptable fit. Additionally, the RMR (0.026) and RMSEA (0.045) values satisfy the good fit criteria, demonstrating that the model has a strong structure. These findings suggest that the model provides a good fit to the data overall and offers reliable results.

Table 6. Hypothesis results

| Hypothesis | The content of the hypothesis                                                                                     | Result   |
|------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|----------|
| H1         | Competitive Intelligence Has a Positive and Significant Effect on International Market Selection.                 | Accepted |
| H2         | Knowledge Management Has a Positive and Significant Effect on International Market Selection.                     | Accepted |
| H3         | Competitive Intelligence Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Export Performance.                             | Accepted |
| H4         | Knowledge Management Has a Positive and Significant Effect on Export Performance.                                 | Accepted |
| H5         | International Market Selection Mediates the Relationship Between Competitive Intelligence and Export Performance. | Accepted |
| H6         | International Market Selection Mediates the Relationship Between Knowledge Management and Export Performance.     | Accepted |

Source: own study

The results obtained are consistent with supporting findings in the literature for the proposed research hypotheses. These findings indicate that for firms to effectively operate in competitive environments and achieve sustainable growth, they must prioritize competitive intelligence and knowledge management processes. It can be concluded that these findings support the validity of the hypotheses and underline their strategic importance for businesses.

## 6. Discussion

This study examined the effects of competitive intelligence and knowledge management on international market selection and export performance within the Turkish furniture sector. The empirical findings confirm that both competitive intelligence and knowledge management have significant positive effects on international market selection and export performance, with international market selection playing a crucial mediating role. These results offer significant insights into the strategic drivers of sustainable export success and align with, yet also extend, existing theoretical and empirical literature.

The positive influence of competitive intelligence on international market selection and export performance is consistent with prior studies (e.g., Amiri et al., 2017; Maune, 2014; Yıldız, 2019), which demonstrate the value of systematic external analysis for navigating complex international environments. In the context of the Turkish furniture industry – a sector characterized by intense competition, design sensitivity, and cost pressures – competitive intelligence provides the necessary foresight to anticipate competitor moves, regulatory shifts, and evolving consumer preferences, thereby enabling more strategic and less speculative market entry decisions.

Similarly, the significant contribution of knowledge management to both market selection and export performance resonates with the findings of Darroch (2005), Zorçelik (2020), and Wolor et al. (2024). Effective knowledge management ensures that critical insights from past export experiences, customer interactions, and operational processes are systematically captured, shared, and utilized, reducing the ambiguity and risk associated with internationalization.

A particularly noteworthy result is the mediating role of international market selection, which indicates that the benefits of competitive intelligence and knowledge management on export performance are substantially channeled through informed and accurate market choices. This finding reinforces earlier work by Brouthers and Nakos (2005) and Gündüz (2017), underscoring that strategic market selection acts as a critical link transforming intelligence and knowledge into tangible export success.

From a theoretical perspective, this study integrates and extends the RBV, KBV, and DCV by demonstrating the role of competitive intelligence and knowledge management in driving export performance through the strategic choice of international market selection. The findings are consistent with the KBV argument that knowledge constitutes the most strategically significant organizational resource for international competitiveness (Grant, 1996; Villar et al., 2014). More importantly, the results align with the DCV perspective: CI and KM are not merely static knowledge stocks but dynamic capabilities that enable firms to sense emerging market opportunities, seize favorable positions, and reconfigure their resource base in response to competitive pressures (Teece et al., 1997). In particular, CI functions

as a sensing capability that allows firms to systematically monitor the competitive environment and identify foreign market opportunities (Calof & Wright, 2008), while KM serves as a reconfiguring capability that ensures organizational knowledge is captured, updated, and deployed to support strategic international decisions (Darroch, 2005; Wolor et al., 2024). The mediating role of international market selection provides direct empirical support for this capability-driven pathway, showing that the value of CI and KM is realized primarily through their application to strategic market entry decisions. The empirical support for H1–H6 collectively validates this DCV-grounded conceptualization.

Comparing the present findings with existing research reveals both convergence and extension. Regarding H1, the positive effect of CI on international market selection is consistent with Tian and Tobar (2000), who showed that CI increases export diversity through more informed market selection, and extends Firat (2025), who confirmed CI as a primary determinant of international target market decisions in the context of Turkish SMEs. Regarding H2, the positive effect of KM on IMS aligns with Costa et al. (2016) and Pellegrino and McNaughton (2017), yet this study extends previous findings by testing the same relationship in a large-scale sample, reinforcing the KBV argument that KM constitutes a strategically significant resource for international market selection. For H3, the direct relationship between CI and export performance is consistent with Amiri et al. (2017) and Yıldız (2019), while the present study extends these findings by embedding CI within a broader capability-driven framework. For H4, the positive KM–export performance relationship aligns with Darroch (2005) and Zorçelik (2020), but this study extends these findings by situating KM explicitly within KBV, thereby offering a more theoretically grounded explanation of how knowledge management practices contribute to export performance. The mediation findings (H5, H6) extend Gündüz (2017) and Martín et al. (2022) by simultaneously testing both CI- and KM-based mediation pathways within a unified SEM framework, rather than examining them in isolation. Taken together, these comparisons affirm the robustness of the results while highlighting the incremental theoretical and empirical contributions of this study.

This study makes several distinct contributions to the existing body of knowledge. Theoretically, it advances the KBV and DCV literature by providing the first integrated empirical test that simultaneously conceptualizes both CI and KM as dynamic capabilities and traces their effects through international market selection to export performance in an emerging economy context. Methodologically, the use of SEM with CFA on a large and representative sample of Turkish furniture exporters ( $n = 464$ ) provides robust evidence that complements and extends prior qualitative and small-sample quantitative studies. Practically, the findings carry direct implications for managers and policymakers: institutionalizing CI and KM as strategic priorities and systematically embedding them into IMS processes are essential conditions

for achieving sustainable export performance. For Turkish furniture sector firms specifically, these findings underscore the urgency of transitioning from experiential and reactive internationalization toward intelligence- and knowledge-driven strategic decision-making.

Overall, this study highlights that sustainable export success in competitive global markets is not incidental but stems from a coherent strategic system in which competitive intelligence and knowledge management are effectively harnessed and directed through astute international market selection.

## 7. Conclusion

This study emphasizes the pivotal role of competitive intelligence and knowledge management in enhancing export performance and strategic decision-making within the furniture sector firms operating in international markets. CI provides firms with critical insights into competitors' pricing, marketing, and operational strategies, enabling them to secure competitive advantages, anticipate market shifts, and reduce risks associated with foreign market entry. Meanwhile, KM facilitates the effective capture, dissemination, and utilization of organizational knowledge, strengthening customer relationships, improving product and service quality, and fostering continuous innovation – factors that collectively elevate a firm's international competitiveness and adaptability.

The intermediary role of international market selection elucidates the synergistic effect of CI and KM in guiding firms toward more accurate and effective strategic decisions. By leveraging these complementary capabilities, firms are better equipped to assess complex market dynamics, regulatory requirements, and customer preferences, enabling them to select the most promising markets for expansion. Empirical findings indicate that firms integrating CI and KM frameworks are more aligned with evolving market demands and are therefore more capable of sustaining competitive advantages and achieving long-term growth.

To fully capitalize on these benefits, firms must invest strategically in ongoing training and capacity-building programs aimed at enhancing employees' skills in competitive analysis, data interpretation, and knowledge utilization. Such programs foster a culture of data-driven decision-making and organizational agility, which are essential in today's fast-paced and unpredictable global markets. Concurrently, the adoption and integration of advanced technological infrastructures- such as big data analytics, artificial intelligence (AI), machine learning, and data mining - are indispensable for processing vast and complex market data, detecting emerging demand trends, and driving product and service innovation. For instance, data mining techniques can uncover nuanced shifts in customer behavior and preferences across

different markets, empowering firms to develop timely and customized offerings that meet specific regional needs.

Nevertheless, several challenges must be addressed to ensure successful implementation of CI and KM initiatives. High initial costs, scarcity of specialized expertise, and organizational resistance to change can impede progress, particularly in small and medium-sized enterprises. Overcoming these barriers requires fostering a supportive organizational culture that values learning and innovation, investing in targeted skills development, and establishing strategic collaborations with technology providers and research institutions.

In conclusion, the strategic integration of competitive intelligence and knowledge management - supported by advanced technological tools - enables furniture sector firms to operate more effectively in complex international markets. This integrated approach not only mitigates risks and improves export performance but also enhances organizational resilience and flexibility, which are critical to sustaining long-term success in the increasingly competitive and dynamic global marketplace. As firms continue to adapt and evolve, leveraging CI and KM will remain indispensable components of sustainable international business strategies.

Despite these contributions, this study is subject to several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the cross-sectional research design precludes causal inferences and does not allow for the observation of changes in competitive intelligence, knowledge management, international market selection, or export performance over time. Longitudinal designs in future studies would provide stronger causal evidence. Second, the study is limited to the Turkish furniture sector, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other industries or country contexts. Third, the sample was drawn from Turkey's top 1,000 exporters, which means the findings may not fully reflect the experiences of smaller or less internationally active firms. Fourth, all variables were measured through self-reported perceptual scales, which may affect generalizability; future research should include objective performance indicators such as actual export volumes or financial data to complement perceptual measures. Future studies should examine a broader range of firm sizes and sectors, adopt longitudinal research designs, and explore the moderating effects of variables such as firm size, international experience, and institutional environment to deepen understanding of the mechanisms through which competitive intelligence and knowledge management drive sustainable international competitiveness. Furthermore, extending the analytical framework beyond export performance to alternative internationalization strategies, such as foreign direct investment, may provide deeper insights into the broader role of competitive intelligence and knowledge management in fostering sustainable global competitiveness.

## Authors' contribution

**M.N.S.:** theoretical content of the article, research methods applied, conducting the research, data collection, analysis and interpretation of results, draft manuscript preparation. **İ.U.Y.:** article conception, theoretical content of the article, draft manuscript preparation.

## Declaration of Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process

During the preparation of this work the authors did not use Generative AI and AI-assisted technologies in the writing process.

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