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**EXPORT ORIENTATION AND ITS EFFECT ON THE GREEK SMALL  
AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES PERFORMANCE AND VIABILITY  
DURING AN ECONOMIC DEPRESSION**

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**Abstract**

Export Orientation, as a growth Strategy adopted by the SMEs, has great importance for their performance and viability. On the other hand, declined firms due to recent economic crisis, that incorporate this strategy, into their strategy mix for stabilization and growth, have also significant expectations for recovery. While increasing competition could lead to lower prices and reduced profitability, for those SMEs are facing significant fall for their products and services demand due to an economic depression, it is crucial to dedicate more research, focusing on their expansion through the export orientation strategy. Therefore, within the aims and the scope of this study, the effects of the Greek SMEs export orientation have been analysed in relation with performance improving and viability achieving as well. The empirical research has been focused to a sample of Greek SMEs and its results may help to explain why export orientation could be a significant factor, leading Greek SMEs to a better performance rate ensuring at the same time their viability.

**Keywords:** Export Orientation, Strategic Planning, SMEs Performance and Viability, Greek SMEs, Economic Depression, Turnaround Strategies.

**1. Introduction**

The means through which business organizations seek to achieve their aims and objectives is undoubtedly their strategic planning on the one hand and their strategic adaptation on the other. A considerable amount of research by many researchers has so far been devoted to the widely recognized importance of strategic planning as a significant factor that affects the business organizations' attainment for high organizational performance (Robert and Peter, 2012). Export orientation, as a significant factor that positively affects the SMEs performance and viability, and furthermore the increasing importance for the SMEs' presence in the global markets, has

been noted and studied by many researchers (Kiran *et al.*, 2013; Parginos, 2019). According to World Trade Report 2016, SMEs use one or more internationalization types or modes, for direct or indirect trade, which is often considered to be the first step towards engaging in international markets. Thus, SMEs targeting to internationalization benefits need to undertake specific actions in order to penetrate in foreign markets. By this point of view, SMEs contribute to their countries exports depending on the sector they operate. Greek economy has recently experienced the effects of the deep economic recession that has engulfed the country. During this period the country's SMEs and specifically, micro small and Medium-Sized enterprises (micro SMEs) have suffered the greatest blow from this continuous recession (OECD, 2009 annual report). The role and importance played by SMEs in both the global economy and the Greek economy have been reported by many authors and researchers (Avlonitis and Salavou, 2007). For the Greek reality, the Greek SMEs play an important and active role becoming the backbone for the national economy. Thus, this paper aims to study the impact of the Export Orientation, as a strategy adopted by the SMES, on their performance and viability during an economic depression. The adoption and implementation by the SMEs of an optimal strategy such as Export Orientation depends on a number of internal and external factors. The more the SMEs' external business environment is responsible for declined business organizations, due to an economic or financial crisis, the more the SMEs have to enhance their innovation and market strategies by investing (Robbins and Pearce, 1992). On the other hand, export-oriented SMEs need to adopt and implement a specific strategy mix which will take into consideration factors such as the crisis effect on the SMEs, the competition intensity, the SMEs' organizational level and change, as well as their owners or managers personal profile characteristics.

This paper is based on a quantitative research approach, while this empirical survey, focusing on a sample of Greek SMEs which consist of export and non-export-oriented SMEs that implemented turnaround strategies, studies the effects of export orientation on the Greek SMEs' performance and viability during an economic depression. The paper is organized as follows. In section 2, a literature of SME export orientation and growth during an economic depression is reviewed by highlighting turnaround strategies adopted and implemented by the Greek SMEs. Section 3 analyses the methodological approach regarding the definition of SME export orientation and growth, specifically, after a turnaround process as a procedure for recovery. Section 4, is dedicated to the survey results analysis of the export-oriented and the non-export-oriented SMEs in Greece, by examining business characteristics (SME characteristics, SMEs owners or managers personal profile characteristics), turnaround strategies adopted by them for recovery, growth strategies including innovation and market strategies (export orientation is considered as one of market strategies). Furthermore, section 4 provides an analysis regarding the impact of the export orientation, as a growth strategy, on the employed by the SMEs' turnaround strategies as well as on their performance and viability during an economic depression. Finally, the findings of this study, the conclusions and limitations as well as future research on this topic are presented in Section 5.

## **2. Literature review**

SMEs are characterized as vulnerable business organizations according to an OECD report in 2009. Factors deriving from the external or internal business environment, seriously affect their performance leading them to decline. The successful implementation of a Turnaround Process, with the use of an appropriate Turnaround Strategies Mix, is the requirement for performance recovery and consequently, the SMEs' survival and sustainability. Turnaround Literature suggests specific Turnaround Strategies which can help declined organizations to cope with

financial crisis. These Turnaround Strategies have been categorized into several categories, such as: Organizational Change, Retrenchment vs Investment, Market Strategies, and Innovation Strategies. During the last three decades a large number of studies have focused on Turnaround Strategies used by SMEs', making up a great portion of the literature on Turnaround Management (e.g., Arogyaswamy et al., 1995; Barker and Duhaime, 1997; Castrogiovanni and Bruton, 2000; Cater and Schwab 2008; Chathoth et al., 2006; Chu and Siu, 2001; Filatotchev and Toms, 2006; Hambrick and Schecter 1983; Harker, 1998; Jeyavelu, 2009; Li et al, 2011; Lohrke et al., 2004; Murphy, 2008; Rasheed, 2005; Robbins and Pearce, 1992; Shapiro, 1989; Sundarsanam and Lai, 2001; Tikici et al., 2011).

SMEs in Greece, compared with those in the European Union, differ in two essential characteristics: 1) The average number of employees which is approximately 2 employees per enterprise (Wymenga et al., 2011) and 2) Greek SMEs belong mostly to the Family Business type (Zopounidis, 2006) which is associated with the special characteristics and problems analysed in the study of Cater and Schwab (2008). According to Cater and Schwab (2008) research approach, specific strategies should be employed during the first stage of a Turnaround Process, namely: top management level change or hiring of external management expertise (in the case of small and very small-micro SMEs) and organizational retrenchment. Human capital is a very important strategic resource for modern businesses as it contributes substantially to the creation of intangible capital and business capabilities, such as innovation, new product development and diversification (through research and development) and the development of workforce skills. The United Nations (2013) Annual Report states that the adoption and development of other systems of knowledge management within the organization is essential and critical for the preservation of intangible capital and for the success of recovery.

Export Orientation is considered, by many researchers, as a growth strategy that should be employed by the firm after a successful Turnaround Process for recovery and expansion (Barker and Duhaime, 1997; Chathoth et al., 2006; Chu and Siu, 2001; Li et al, 2011; Lohrke et al., 2004; Murphy, 2008; Rasheed, 2005; Sundarsanam and Lai, 2001; Tikici et al., 2011). According to Atabay (2008), Export Performance could be defined as the degree of the achievement of the objectives expected on foreign markets. External and internal factors have been categorised by several researchers as determinant factors that have a significant impact on the Export Performance (Beleska-Spasova, 2014; Carneiro, Rocha and Silva, 2011; Torrens *et al.*, 2014). Firm competencies, product diversification and characteristics, firm characteristics, organizational structure and management perception could be categorised as internal factors, while sector's or industry's characteristics, competition intensity, local and foreign markets characteristics could be categorized as external factors (Chen *et al.*, 2012).

According to Balabanis and Katsikea (2003), entrepreneurial orientation is positive associated with export performance, though this relationship could moderate by contextual variables such as organizational and environmental factors. This positive relationship has also been indicated by several researchers, pointing out, not only the positive association between entrepreneurial orientation and export performance but also with technological innovativeness as well (Aaby and Slater, 1989; Zou and Stan, 1998). SMEs' owners or managers personal profile characteristics such as adaptive cognition and risk propensity play a crucial role regarding the export orientation levels for their business organizations (Parginos, 2015). According to Ibeh (2004), entrepreneurs with high levels of orientation are those that pursue product-market innovations and opportunities without being affected by several risks or disincentive that are related with their operation. By this point of view the SMEs' owners or managers export orientation level is a determinant factor for their export performance. Thus, the argument of this paper is that SMEs' export orientation is more likely to have a positive impact on their

performance and viability and furthermore a significant impact (positive) on the adopted by them turnaround strategies, such as organizational change strategies, investment vs retrenchment strategies, innovation strategies and market strategies, contributing to a successful turnaround process. Thus, this research aims to answer the following questions:

- How the SMEs' owners or managers personal profile characteristics affect the Export Orientation of an SME?
- Is the Crisis Effect on SMEs a significant factor that enhance the SMEs' Export Orientation profile?
- What are the Turnaround Strategies that could positively affect the SMEs' Export Orientation?
- Has the Export Orientation a significant (positive) impact on the SMES' Performance and Viability?

### **3. Methodology and Research Design**

Literature research suggests that SMEs' Export Orientation in Greece, specifically during economic depression circumstances, need further research while the impact of the employed turnaround strategies by the SMES on their performance and viability need to be studied. By this point of view the research has been designed to be able to answer these questions aiming to evaluate the relationships between the variables of the proposed research model. Research model is presented below as seen in figure 1.

Based on the foregoing analysis and the research model as well, the formulated research hypotheses are the following:

*Hypothesis 1:* SMEs owners or managers' whose adaptive cognition is one of their personal profile characteristics, is more likely to be exporters than those they don't, while Crisis Effect on SMEs is a condition that could lead SMEs to be Export Oriented. Furthermore, SMEs that adopt and implement the Turnaround Strategies: Organizational Change, Investment vs Retrenchment and Innovation is more likely to be Export Oriented.

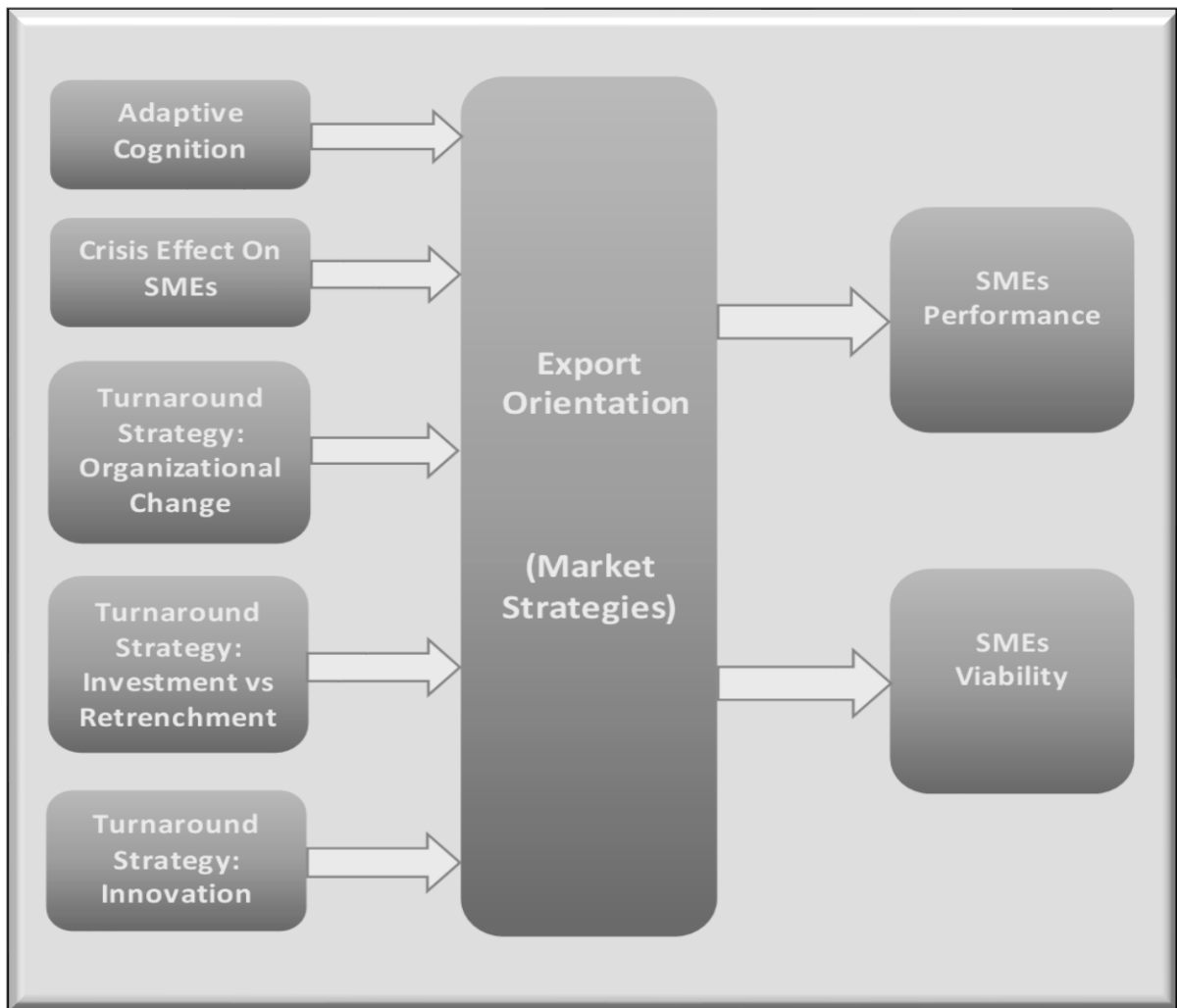
*Hypothesis 2:* SMEs Export-Oriented is more likely to significantly improve their performance rate than those they are not Export-Oriented.

*Hypothesis 3:* SMEs Export-Oriented is more likely to achieve and ensure their Viability than those they are not Export-Oriented.

#### **3.1 Measures – Research Instrument**

The questionnaire created to collect the necessary primary data for the purposes of this survey based on a series of published and tested for reliability, construct validity internal consistency and factorability measurement instruments (scales). The Measurement Instrument to measure the SMEs' owners or managers personal profile characteristics (Adaptive Cognition) which used by this present research is the scale of the Haynie and Shepherd (2009) consisting of 36 items. The scale used to measure the Crisis Effect on the SMEs is the scale of Lopez *et al.* (2011). The scale used to measure the Turnaround Strategies impact on the SMEs Export Orientation, is the TSMI measurement instrument consisting of 36 items (Parginos, 2015). Scales to measure the SMEs' Viability (Current and future Viability) were taken from Parginos'

**Figure 1: Research Model**



s (2019) doctoral thesis. Finally, the scale that used to measure the SMEs' Performance was the scale of Roach (2011) consisting of eight (8) items. These scales were included into an open type questionnaire which was distributed to the formulated research sample for that purpose.

### 3.2 Sample

The survey was conducted from October 2013 to February 2014. A random stratified sample of 550 Greek SMEs operating in the Ionian Islands region was created by the researcher and 550 questionnaires -that included the scales' items- were distributed to SMEs from different business sectors. The survey yielded 209 usable responses, providing a response rate of 38%. These responses include 48 companies from the services sector (22.97%), 5 from constructions (2.39%), 16 from manufacturing (7.66%), 6 from fisheries (2.87%), 35 from tourism (16.74%), 61 from retail (29.19%), 14 from wholesale (6.70%), 10 from transportation (4.78%), and 14 from other business sectors (6.70%). Regarding the respondents' gender, 164 were male (78.47%) and 45 were female (21.53%). The distribution of the respondents according to age was: 17-25 (2.4%), 26-35 (28.4%), 36-45 (25.0%), 46-55 (24.0%), and 56 or above (20.2%). The distribution of the respondents' educational background according to orientation was: Legal (1.0%), Economics/Management (31.4%), IT/New Technologies (6.3%), Classical

(1.3%), Positive Sciences (7.7%), Medical/Paramedical (4.3%), Polytechnic (5.8%), Technological (15.0%), General Education (15.9%) and Other (11.1%).

**Table 1: Sample's demographics**

		Frequency (n=209)	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	164	78.5
	Female	45	21.5
Age	17 - 25	5	2.4
	26 - 35	59	38.2
	36 - 45	51	24.9
	46 - 55	50	23.9
	55 or more	43	20.1
	missing	1	0.5
Education	Highschool	97	46.40
	University	85	40.66
	Master/MBA	26	12.44
	PhD	1	0.50
Monthly Income	up to 1200€	69	33.00
	1201 - 1700€	36	17.20
	1701 - 2200€	21	10.00
	2201 - 2700€	14	6.70
	2701 - 3200€	22	10.50
	3201 - 4200€	16	7.70
	4201 - 5200€	11	5.30
	more than 5200€	17	8.10
	missing	3	1.40

As seen in Table 1, the vast majority of the SMEs' owners/managers respondents were male (78.47%). while 21.53% (valid percentage) of the respondents were female. The relative percentages of the respondents' age showing that the majority of the respondents (valid percentage) were ages from 17 – 45 years old, while the largest portion was between the ages of 26 – 35 (28.2%) and 36 – 45 (24.9%) years age, respectively. Table 1 also depicts that 112 out of 209 (53.60%) of the respondents are holders of a Bachelor's, Master's or a PhD degree, which means that they have the required possibilities for absorbing Adaptive Cognition (Haynie 2009). The majority of the respondents has a monthly income up to 1.200,00€. As a general conclusion of the demographic analysis, based on the formulated for this research sample, it is obvious that includes well educated, mostly young participants, that belong to the 26 – 35 age interval earning a low-income level.

### 3.3 Findings

The collected data with the use of the survey's questionnaire were processed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). The measurement instruments were tested

under a Cronbach's Alpha reliability analysis. Reliability analysis is essential for the correct calculation of the variables composite scores. According to Robson (2002), in order for this calculation to be meaningful, scales have to achieve an acceptable level of reliability.

**Table 2: Cronbach Alpha Reliability Analysis**

Scale / Instrument	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items	Reliability Assessment
Adaptive Cognition (Haynie and Shepherd, 2009)	0.843	36	Good
Adaptive Cognition (Factor 1) (Haynie and Shepherd, 2009)	0.901	5	Excellent
Adaptive Cognition (Factor 2) (Haynie and Shepherd, 2009)	0.883	11	Good
Adaptive Cognition (Factor 3) (Haynie and Shepherd, 2009)	0.792	8	Acceptable
Adaptive Cognition (Factor 4) (Haynie and Shepherd, 2009)	0.808	5	Good
Adaptive Cognition (Factor 5) (Haynie and Shepherd, 2009)	0.903	7	Excellent
Financial Crisis Effect on SME's (Lopez <i>et al.</i> , 2012)	0.949	21	Excellent
Turnaround Strategies - Investment vs Retrenchment (Original)	0.852	14	Good
Turnaround Strategies - Organizational Change (Original)	0.734	7	Acceptable
Turnaround Strategies - Export Strategies (Original)	0.954	7	Excellent
Turnaround Strategies - Innovation (Original)	0.918	6	Excellent
SME Performance (Factor 1) (Roach, 2011)	0.876	3	Good
SME Performance (Factor 2) (Roach, 2011)	0.739	4	Acceptable
Export Orientation (Original)	0.977	9	Excellent
Perceived Current Viability - Human Resources (Original)	0.747	5	Acceptable
Perceived Current Viability - Capital Goods (Original)	0.769	6	Acceptable
Perceived Current Viability - Capital Adequacy (Original)	0.869	7	Good
Perceived Current Viability - Production Capacity (Original)	0.741	4	Acceptable
Perceived Current Viability - Market Position (Original)	0.776	6	Acceptable
Perceived Current Viability - Financial Performance (Original)	0.862	5	Good
Perceived Future Viability - Human Resources (Original)	0.730	5	Acceptable
Perceived Future Viability - Capital Goods (Original)	0.952	6	Excellent
Perceived Future Viability - Capital Adequacy (Original)	0.807	7	Good
Perceived Future Viability - Production Capacity (Original)	0.889	6	Good
Perceived Future Viability - Market Position (Original)	0.774	5	Acceptable
Perceived Future Viability - Financial Performance (Original)	0.980	5	Excellent

Table 2 depicts the results of the conducted reliability analysis. All measurement instruments (scales) were reliable under the Cronbach's Alpha reliability test analysis as their scores were above the 0.70 cut-Off point which proves the reliability of the scale. After the successful reliability test for the scales that used, a multiple linear regression analysis conducted in order to test the survey's hypotheses. Furthermore, in order to determine the impact of export orientation as a significant factor for the export and non-export-oriented SMEs on the survey's model key-variances a one-way ANOVA analysis conducted to test each one of them. Testing

the hypothesis 1, a multiple linear regression analysis was conducted whose results are depicted in the following Table 3, which reveals the significant (positive) impact of the Adaptive Cognition, Crisis Effect on SMEs, Organizational Change, Investment vs Retrenchment and Innovation on the SMEs Export Orientation, showing that each one of them exerts a significant influence, for the development and improvement, on global market expansion by the SMEs.

**Table 3: Model Summary, DV: Export Orientation IVs: Adaptive Cognition, Crisis Effect on SMEs, Organizational Change, Investment vs Retrenchment and Innovation**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.754a	.569	.558	.65576

a. Predictors: (Constant), Adaptive Cognition, Crisis Effect on SMEs, Organizational Change Investment vs Retrenchment and Innovation

Summary statistics also reveal how important is a successful completed Turnaround process on growth strategies and specifically on the SMEs' Export Orientation. The coefficient of correlation (R) = 0.754; the coefficient of determination (R<sup>2</sup>) = 0,569; and the standard error of estimate 0.65576, indicate that 56,9% of the SMEs Export Orientation profile perception is associated with the SMEs' owners or managers personal profile characteristics and the adopted by them Turnaround Strategy Mix, while P value (sig.) showing the significance of the model is smaller than 0.05.

**Table 4: ANOVA, DV: Export Orientation IVs: Adaptive Cognition, Crisis Effect on SMEs, Organizational Change, Investment vs Retrenchment and Innovation**

Model	Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	135.259	5	45.086	41.644 .000b
	Residual	221.946	203	1.083	
	Total	357.205	208		

a. Dependent Variable: Export Orientation

b. Predictors: (Constant), Adaptive Cognition, Crisis Effect on SMEs, Organizational Change Investment vs Retrenchment and Innovation

As seen in Table 4 and the following Table 5 there is a significant effect of Adaptive Cognition, Organizational Change, Investment vs Retrenchment and Innovation on Export Orientation at the  $p < 0.05$  level for the six conditions [ $F(5,203) = 41.644, p < 0.000$ ].



**Table 5: Coefficients, DV: Export Orientation IVs: Adaptive Cognition, Crisis Effect on SMEs, Organizational Change, Investment vs Retrenchment and Innovation**

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-0.084	0.467		-0.181	0.857
	Turnaround Strategy: Organizational Change	0.170	0.042	0.225	4.071	0.000
	Turnaround Strategy: Investment vs Retrenchment	0.230	0.071	0.176	3.225	0.001
	Turnaround Strategy: Innovation	0.330	0.043	0.438	7.643	0.000
	Crisis Effect on SMEs	0.131	0.045	0.143	2.895	0.004
	Adaptive Cognition	0.226	0.076	0.155	2.959	0.003

a. Dependent Variable: Export Orientation

Hypothesis 2 was tested by conducting a linear regression analysis as well whose results are depicted in the following Table 6 which reveals that there is a significant (positive) linear relationship between Export Orientation and SMEs Performance.

**Table 6: Model Summary, DV: SMEs Performance IV: Export Orientation**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.489a	.239	.228	1.09884

a. Predictors: (Constant), Export Orientation

Summary statistics confirm the significant impact that the SMEs' Export Orientation exert on their Performance. The coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) = 0.228; and the standard error of estimate 1.09884, indicating that 22.80% of SMEs Performance is explained by the model, while P value (sig.) showing the significance of the model is smaller than 0.05.

**Table 7: ANOVA, DV: SMEs Performance IV: Export Orientation**

Model		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	77.882	1	25.961	21.500	.000b
	Residual	247.528	207	1.200		
	Total	325.410	208			

a. Dependent Variable: SMEs Performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), Export Orientation

As seen in Table 7 and the following Table 8 there is a significant effect of Export Orientation on the SMEs' Performance at the  $p < 0.05$  level for the three conditions [ $F(1,207) = 21.500$ ,  $p < 0.000$ ].

**Table 8: Coefficients, DV: SMEs Performance IV: Export Orientation**

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.200	0.514		8.163	0.000
	Export Orientation	0.287	0.105	0.227	2.732	0.007

a. Dependent Variable: SMEs Performance

Finally, Hypothesis 3 was also tested by conducting a linear regression analysis whose results are depicted in the following Table 9. Results confirm that there is a significant (positive) linear relationship between Export Orientation and SMEs Viability (Current and Future).

**Table 9: Model Summary, DV: SMEs Viability IV: Export Orientation**

Model	R	R <sup>2</sup>	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.721a	.520	.510	0.55006

a. Predictors: (Constant), Export Orientation

As seen in Summary statistics, there is a significant impact of the SMEs' Export Orientation on the SMEs Viability (Current and Future). The coefficient of determination ( $R^2 = 0.510$ ); and the standard error of estimate 0.55006, indicating that 51.00% of the SMEs Viability (Current and Future) is explained by the model, while P value (sig.) showing the significance of the model is smaller than 0.05, confirming that Export Orientation is a significant Factor that positively affect the SMEs' Viability (Current and Future).

**Table 10: ANOVA, DV: SMEs Viability IV: Export Orientation**

Model		Sum of Squares	DF	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	66.812	1	16.703	55.204	.000b
	Residual	61.725	207	0.303		
	Total	128.537	208			

a. Dependent Variable: SMEs Viability

b. Predictors: (Constant), Export Orientation

As seen in Table 10 and the following Table 11 there is a significant (positive) impact of Export Orientation on the SMEs' Viability (Current and Future) at the  $p < 0.05$  level for the three conditions [ $F(1,207) = 55.204, p < 0.000$ ].

**Table 11: Coefficients, DV: SMEs Viability IV: Export Orientation**

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.805	0.296		9.461	0.000
	Export Orientation	0.109	0.054	0.137	2.032	0.043

a. Dependent Variable: SMEs Viability

#### 4. Discussion

The study's formulated hypotheses were studied by using linear regression analysis for the first hypothesis while linear regression analysis was used for hypotheses 2 and 3. Export Orientation ANOVA analysis was also conducted to compare the impact of Export Orientation on the SMEs Performance and Viability (Current and Future). The results of the tested hypotheses are presented in the following Table 12. Taking into consideration, the results of the multiple linear regression analysis that used to test hypothesis 1 (Tables 3, 4 and 5), showed that all five independent variables were found to have a significant (positive) relationship on the SMEs Export Orientation. Thus, the Hypothesis 1 is supported.

**Table 12: Results of the tested Hypotheses**

HYPOTHESES		RESULT
H1	There is a positive relationship between Adaptive Cognition, Crisis Effect on SMEs, Organizational Change, Investment vs Retrenchment, Innovation and Export Orientation	Supported
H2	There is a positive relationship between Export Orientation and SMEs Performance	Supported
H3	There is a positive relationship between Export Orientation and SMEs Viability (Current and Future)	Supported

A linear regression analysis was used to test the hypothesis 2 (Tables 6, 7 and 8) as well as the Export Orientation ANOVA analysis (Table 13) for the export and non-export-oriented SMEs on the SMEs Performance and Viability (Current and Future), showed that Export Orientation was found to have a significant (positive) relationship on the SMEs Performance. Thus, the Hypothesis 2 is supported. Finally, a linear regression analysis was used to test hypothesis 3 (Tables 9, 10 and 11) as well as the Export Orientation ANOVA analysis (Table 13) for the export and non-export-oriented SMEs on the SMEs Performance and Viability (Current and Future), showed that Export Orientation was found to have a significant (positive) relationship on the SMEs Viability (Current and Future). Thus, the Hypothesis 3 is supported. Furthermore, the Export Orientation ANOVA analysis, as shown in the following Table 13, confirmed that when an SME is export oriented, then there is a positive impact on its Performance and Viability. Moreover, the results suggest that when an SME is export oriented, higher performance rates could be achieved so that to ensure its Viability during an economic depression.

## **5. Conclusions and Implications**

The study examined the impact of the SMEs' Export Orientation on their Performance and Viability during depression circumstances. Furthermore, also studied how a Turnaround Strategies Mix adopted by the SMEs during a Turnaround Process towards with their owners or managers personal profile characteristics could have a positive impact (enhance) their Export Orientation. Taking into consideration that the export oriented Greek SMEs of the formulated survey's sample accounted up to a percentage of 42,10% on the total and based on the findings, the study concluded that for the Greek SMEs there is still a way to go in order to be considered as Export Oriented. Furthermore, research's results also confirmed that Crisis Effect on SMEs is a significant factor which positively affects the SMEs' Export Orientation profile. Although this is an easily understood issue, there are however, a lot of obstacles that Greek SMEs have to overcome in order to obtain an Export Orientation profile. Since access to banking or any other kind of financing is almost non-existent for Greek SMEs, while at the same time suffering from a serious lack of resources, then securing the necessary requirements for Investment Strategies implementation is, in fact, extremely difficult. This is the reason why export-oriented Greek SMEs are mainly in the tourism sector, and, especially, the hotel industry. For the Greek SMEs, it would not be an exaggeration to claim that Export Orientation, as a part of the market strategies, is the main spearhead in an attempt for them to achieve survival and viability. Although the placement of products and services produced by the Greek SMEs' in foreign markets is a complex and targeted process, that mostly requires the adoption of Investment Strategies for the integration of innovation into these products and services, nevertheless, during economic or financial crisis circumstances, it is the antidote to the shrinking domestic market. Regarding future implications, this study has succeeded in evaluating the effect of the Greek Ionian Islands SMEs Export Orientation profile on their Performance and Viability in the volatile environment of recession in Greece. Thus, this research could be used in other regions of Greece, or even in other countries that also face recession circumstances. It doesn't only serve the purpose of explaining, but also helps with choosing Turnaround Strategies that could lead SMEs to develop and improve their Export Orientation profile, in order to return to profitable outcomes. The proved reliability of the Instruments can be very useful for research on SMEs' and their growth Strategies. On the other hand, the present study's results as those obtained by the use of the proposed model, could be used by other Greek regions SMEs' or even by other countries SMEs' that cope with financial or economic crisis circumstances.

**Table 13: SMEs Export Orientation ANOVA Analysis**

<b>The SMEs' Export Orientation Effect on Performance Descriptives</b>								
SMEs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confid Interval		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Non Export Oriented SMEs	121	4.2665	1.30053	0.11823	4.0324	4.5006	1.00	6.75
Export Oriented SMEs	88	4.6222	1.15470	0.12309	4.3775	4.8668	1.00	7.00
Total	209	4.4163	1.25079	0.08652	4.2457	4.5868	1.0	7.00
<b>The SMEs' Export Orientation Effect on Performance ANOVA</b>								
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.			
Between Groups	6.443	1	6.443	4.182	<b>0.042</b>			
Within Groups	318.966	207	1.541					
Total	325.409	208						
<b>The SMEs' Export Orientation Effect on Viability (Current and Future) Descriptives</b>								
SMEs	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confid Interval		Minimum	Maximum
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound		
Non Export Oriented SMEs	121	4.8272	0.84235	0.07658	4.6756	4.9788	2.62	6.71
Export Oriented SMEs	88	5.0892	0.67715	0.07218	4.9458	5.2327	3.09	6.59
Total	209	4.9375	0.78611	0.05438	4.8303	5.0447	2.62	6.71
<b>The SMEs' Export Orientation Effect on Viability (Current and Future) ANOVA</b>								
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.			
Between Groups	3.499	1	3.499	5.792	<b>0.017</b>			
Within Groups	125.038	207	0.604					
Total	128.537	208						

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