**Firm heterogeneity in Export Behaviour**

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**Abstract.** New trade theories have emphasized firm heterogeneity as a source of comparative advantage. A growing body of literature, in fact, has analysed the relationship between firms' productivity and export status to consider whether higher productivity induces exporting (*self-selection hypothesis*) or exporting causes learning (learning-by-exporting, or *LBE, hypothesis*) and increases productivity. Many empirical studies (e. g. Bernard and Jensen, 1998; Robert and Tybout, 1997; Bernard and Wagner, 1997) find evidence of self-selection, while evidences of learning-by-exporting are mainly found in less developed or in developing countries that can benefit more through *catching-up* from trade with developed counterparts.

While previous literature has considered the differences between exporters and non-exporters in terms of firms’ characteristics, concentrating mainly on the determinants of firm internationalisation choices whether through trade or FDI, heterogeneity between international firms have not received the same level of attention.

The aim of this study is to fill this gap by looking at the heterogeneity between those firms that are involved in international activities. In this direction, in this paper we build on the above mentioned new trade theories and complement them with some well-known theories in international business management and entrepreneurship. In particular, we specifically focus on the Uppsala model (Johanson and Vahlne, 1977) and the Innovation-Related Internationalization model (I-M model) (Bilkey and Tesar, 1977; Czinkota, 1982; Cavusgil, 1980; Reid, 1981).

The Uppsala model and the I-M model are behavioural dynamic models that describe internationalization as an incremental path. In the first one internationalization is considered as a gradual learning process where firms gain market knowledge (*experiential knowledge)* through experience in foreign markets. In the second one, internationalization is seen as an innovative process where firms change, following incremental stages, their way of organizing activities.

Using this theoretical framework, here we exploit the standardized version of the Enterprise Survey data collected by the World Bank to perform an empirical microeconometric analysis of the heterogeneity between exporting firms.

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