

An exploratory study of the correlation between ISO 9001 certification and corporate performance of Italian companies

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Abstract

Purpose: The paper aims at verifying a possible relationship between Quality Management System certification according to ISO 9001 standard and risk of failure of Italian companies.

Design/methodology/approach: A synthetic index which summarize the most crucial economic/financial aspects of the studied companies is assumed as the response variable of a statistical model for studying the effects of three specific factors: certification, company size and regional development. The analysis is conducted on a sample of Italian companies belonging to different manufacturing sectors. The used data are obtained from the database Aida® by Bureau van Dijk and from the database of the Italian accreditation body Accredia. The study is based on ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) and Contingency Tables.

Findings: Preliminary results of ANOVA show that only company size and regional development can be considered fully significant. However, the major conclusion from the analysis of Contingency Tables is that ISO 9001 certification is connected to the risk of failure of a company. Hence, the scenario is quite variegated and a significant positive interaction between certification and corporate performance is not always confirmed.

Research limitations/implications: Although the research shows some interesting results, it is liable to extensions and improvements. In particular, at the current exploratory level, it is limited to a specific period of time and considers only the Italian sector, but it could be extended to a wider number of years and to European and international level.

Practical implications: The study opens a way for a number of important questions about the meaning, usefulness and effectiveness of ISO 9001 certification. In particular,

it may be time to ask whether the paradigm of certification actually needs a radical rethink.

Originality/value: This work represents a first exploratory attempt to correlate the risk of failure with the achievement of ISO 9001 certification. There are several similar works in literature which, however, focus mainly on sectorial aspects of the corporate background.

Keywords: ISO 9001, ISO 9000 standards, quality certification, corporate performance, risk of failure.