

Strategies for Agricultural Produce Exports by Nigerian Firms

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Abstract

This study dwelt on the strategies for agricultural produce exports by Nigerian firms. The specific objective was to identify the most significant and commonly adopted strategies for agricultural produce exports by Nigerian exporting firms. Survey research method was used for the study with structured questionnaire used for data collection. The data gathered was analyzed using Factor Analysis. Findings show that 13 out of 21 components of 5 factors such as product adaptation, pricing adaptation, promotion adaptation, distribution adaptation and other related exporting strategies were the most significant and commonly adopted strategies for exporting agricultural produce by Nigerian export firms. These other related strategies include market scope, technology strength, brand name, export experience, retention capacity, face-to-face marketing, product service quality, market position, competitive pricing; export marketing attitude, channel development, policy, and size of the exporting firm. It was concluded that exporting agricultural produce from Nigeria can only be successfully done if strategies like product adaptation strategies; pricing adaptation; promotional adaptation, distribution adaptation and other related exporting strategies are adopted. To the prospective exporting firms and individuals, it is recommended that they plan their exports around these strategies to enhance success in the export market.

Keywords: Agricultural Produce, Strategies, Exports, Nigerian Firms

1. Introduction

Globalization and economic treaties both increasingly intensify the internationalization of businesses (Morgan, Katsikeas & Vorhies, 2012). Exporting is one of the means through which businesses that were once operating within domestic markets can gain new access to international market space (Leonidou & Katsikeas, 2010). As of 2008, exports accounted for over 25% of the world's gross domestic product (World Bank, 2008). Despite the growth in exporting business, there are risks and barriers of different kinds that pose challenges against exporting performance (Jensen & Davis, 1998).

Many years ago, it used to be difficult for companies especially manufacturers to export their goods to countries abroad because there were several protectionist policies, including local tariffs and quotas but in recent years, however, countries have been removing the tariff barriers consequent to the increasing rate of trade liberalizations and economic treaties signed among countries of like-minds. Despite this, exporting firms are still faced with some trade barriers referred to as 'technical' or 'non-tariff' barriers which are basically national technical requirements arising from local laws, regulations and standards, together with conformity certification schemes all of which may affect the design, manufacture, markings and use of some products in the concerned target country. Many of these technical barriers to trade have not been put up to eliminate exports, but are either an inherent part of the make-up of the importing country or the consequence of a historical situation. In most cases, these barriers are

not in any way new and have existed for some time. They have become more pronounced in the last decade due to the substantial increase in trade between nations and the associated growth in competition for the markets involved.

Competition has also been the challenge facing exporting businesses – especially among most African exporting firms. They export mainly agricultural products that are hardly differentiable like cocoa, rubber, beans, cashew nuts among others, all at competitive pricing. Scores of other barriers that face most exporting firms include buyers' awareness or attitudes about the product in the foreign market, export country product regulations, import restrictions (Jensen & Davis, 1998; Robino, 1980; Moini, 1997; Barker & Kaynak, 1992), financial and market risk barriers such as lack of proper market research or trade leads, exchange rate risk, or inability to obtain financing for export have also been cited as barriers to exporting (Shoham & Albaum, 1995; Bauerschmidt, Sullivan, & Gillespie, 1985; Bodur, 1986; Cavusgil, 1984; Howard & Borgia, 1991; Katsikeas, 1994; Kedia & Chhokar, 1996). Nigerian export firms are not excluded from these challenging experiences in export businesses.

In overcoming these barriers, many exporting firms adopt a variety of strategies such as export marketing budget allocations (Francis & Collins-Dodd, 2000); selling force efficacy, product adaptation and service levels development (McGuinness & Blair, 1981; Czinkota & Johnson, 1981); export marketing commitment (Dean *et al.*, 2000); and several others. These strategies have been broadly adopted because of their performance generating potencies (Gomez & Valenzuela, 2006). Bringing these down to Nigerian export business level, recently, the Nigerian government lamented citizens' overdependence on imported goods. The government now engages in the promotion of exports and local content consumption, a paradigm shift that is targeted toward gradual diversification of the Nigerian economy, away from oil to agriculture (Oyeniyi, 2009). The chances of the prospective exporting firms succeeding in this new move, considering the scores of barriers awaiting them in international markets majorly depends on the various strategies the existing ones have been adopting. This current study, therefore, seeks to determine the most common and significantly adopted strategies for exporting agricultural produce by Nigerian firms.

2. Objective of the Study

The primary objective of this study is to address strategies for agricultural produce exports by Nigerian firms. Specifically, the study seeks to identify the most significant and commonly adopted strategies for agricultural produce exports by Nigerian export firms.

3. Review of Literature

3.1 Conceptualizations

Strategy is defined merely as a plan of action or an elaborate and systematic plan of action. In the military, it is described as a military intelligence used in command, planning and conduct of a war. In managerial economics, resources meant to achieve organizational goals are in limited supply. Therefore, strategy is needed for setting realizable goals and to determine actions for achieving the goals and lastly, mobilize resources for executing the actions (Freedman, 2015; Simandan, 2018). In other words, strategy is a comprehensively planned guide to achieving some set goals.

Blending this ultimate meaning into the context of this current study, strategy for agricultural produce exports or export strategy for agricultural products – merely refers to the systematic plan of action for taking agricultural produce from one country to international markets. Before elaborating on this, it is worthy first to examine the concept of export. From international marketing literature, the term export merely refers to the process of taking goods and services from one country to another for sale. Export is a broad subject. It covers a wide array of activities that require diverse skills. On a broader basis, before resolving to take goods and services to international markets, exporting companies need to address specific factors including their reasons for wanting to export all regarding

- Strategy – Why Do They Need To Export Their Goods Or Services;
- Research – How To Get To Know The Various Marketplaces Abroad;
- Sales And Marketing – Identifying The Customers And Markets For The Goods To Be Exported;
- Finance – Ensuring Payment For Goods Supplied;
- Freight And Documentation – Ensuring That Delivery Is Not Delayed; And
- After-Sales Support – Providing For Spares, Servicing, Warranty Claims Among Others.

The ‘strategy’ mentioned in (i) above is different from the concept of ‘Export Strategy’ referred to in this current study. This strategy is referring to the firm’s business strategy (i.e., finding a new market for their product usually as a result of stiff competition in the domestic market).

However, the concept of ‘Export Strategy’ refers to the approach or planned method of entering the international market (Adegbuyi, 2011). Ideally, knowing where to begin from is usually the hardest part of exporting. Often, this is influenced by the degree of awareness or knowledge the exporting company has about the international market together with its understanding of the world demand for its product and also with its ability to spot new market opportunities in the international marketplace (Morgan *et al.*, 2012). The next stage is to initially test and confirm the market potential for its product and then convert the information garnered into a working plan that can be meaningful and worthwhile for the export business.

There is no single strategy described as the golden rule for exporting goods and services. Research authors and scholars of international trade have advocated for diverse strategies for exporting which may form part of the strategies Nigerian exporting firms too are adopting for exporting agricultural products. To know more about these, a thorough review of existing studies would be required.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical thinking regarding the use of appropriate strategies for exporting agricultural produces as purportedly driven by this current study has been approached from different perspectives in past studies. Some authors use the Resource-Based View (RBV) while some use the Dynamic Capability View (DCV) (Alegre, & Pla-Barber, 2014). However, Cieslik, Kaciak and Thongpapanl(2015) propose that an exporting firm’s success depends not only on its given portfolio of resources and capabilities as argued by the resource-based view (RBV) but also on its capacity and ability to continually change and adjust to international uncertainties. Hence they complement RBV with the DCV (Teece, Pisano & Amy, 1997). Another suitable growing theory for describing internationalization strategies is the Uppsala model which postulates that the traditional internationalization pattern of every first timer exporting firm should have a narrow-to-broader market scope. According to Kuivalainen *et al.*, (2012), the firms should gradually increase the number and diversity of the markets they serve.

These three theories are useful and suitable for this study especially in this period that the Nigerian government is encouraging domestic agribusiness to go international. The Uppsala model is a suitable theory for explaining the strategy of entry for prospective exporting firms. The Dynamic Capability View and the Resource-Based View are both useful for explaining the strategies existing exporting firms can adopt just as Cieslik *et al.* (2015) proposed.

2.3 Empirical Reviews

Quite some studies have been done on export marketing strategies. Some authors explored various strategies exporting firms adopt about their performance while some authors assess the strategy implementation as it drives the firms’ performance. While the focus of this current study is on the formal taxonomy of research works, Cieslik *et al.* (2015) studied the effect of export experience and market scope strategy on export performance drawing evidence from Poland. Findings indicate that a firm’s export experience and performance have an inverted S-shaped relationship, i.e., performance is increasing at low and high levels but decreasing at moderate levels of experience. Findings also indicate that the relationship between the increase in the number of export countries and export performance is initially positive, but becomes negative over time. Third, over time the growth of a firm’s share of the primary export market is found to be negatively related to export performance.

Zeriti, Robson, Spyropoulou and Leonidou (2014) is yet another essential study carried out on a sustainable export marketing strategy fit and performance. Their findings indicate that sustainable export marketing strategy adaptation requires adequate fit with this macro- and micro-environmental factors such as competitive intensity, economic and technological conditions, stakeholder pressures and customer characteristics. Leonidou, Katsikeas and Samiee (2002) also did a study on a meta-analysis of marketing strategy determinants of export performance. Findings indicate that marketing strategy variables have positive effects on overall export performance but, the relationship is not always significant.

Oyeniya (2009) studied the effect of marketing strategy on export performance drawing evidence from Nigeria. Findings reveal that the overall export performance was related to marketing strategies adaptation, including product adaptation, promotion adaptation and firm market position. However, the uniqueness of product features was negatively related to product and promotion adaptation which can be attributed to another variability outside the scope of the study. Top management commitment was also directly related to the higher level of price competitiveness.

Oyeniya, Obamiro and Ogunnaike (2008) also did a study on marketing strategy and performance with evidence from Nigerian export companies. Their findings indicate that the firms' product adaptation, promotion adaptation and firm marketing position affect the firm's export performance. Still, on export strategies, Adegbuyi (2011) also researched on the marketing strategies and performance of agricultural marketing firms in Nigeria focusing on the conceptual and empirical integration. The study examines the application of contemporary marketing strategies and their impact on agricultural marketing firms performance in South-West Nigeria. Findings show that there is a combined contribution of Transaction Marketing (arms-length, marketing mix, functional marketing and internal capacity) in predicting customers' acquisition. The study also revealed that there is a significant difference in generating retention capacity as well as improved market share between agricultural marketing companies with high adoption of database marketing and those with low adoption of database marketing. It was also observed that agricultural marketing firms with high and low use of face-to-face and dyadic relationship marketing have a significant difference in sales value and volume. The results equally show that agricultural marketing firms with high and low penetration of network marketing have a significant difference in market share.

2.4 Gaps in the Reviewed Literature

Some gaps can be identified from the reviewed academic studies. First, it can be deduced that there are few or small studies on export strategies not to talk of the ones carried out in the context of Nigerian exporting firms. Among those studies previously carried out in Nigeria, only Adegbuyi (2011) approached export strategies from the contemporary practices and be as well carried out on export of the agricultural product. One limitation of Adegbuyi's (2011) study is that it was carried out in South-west Nigeria and its findings cannot be generalized on all exporting firms from the entire six (6) geopolitical zones in the country. Therefore, there is still a need for a replica of this study in South-east Nigeria.

2.5 Meta-Analysis of Strategies Adopted For Exports

From the studies reviewed in the preceding section, some export strategies were studied, some of which might form part of the strategies adopted for agricultural produce exports by Nigerian firms by Nigerian firms. A cursory analysis of the approach of each of these authors shows that the strategies commonly adopted for export depend on the marketing mix elements such as product strategy, pricing strategy, promotional strategy and place/distribution strategy. Oyeniya's (2009) study among others testified to this. Importantly, the authors agree on adaptation strategy. From these strategies, therefore, a list of strategies was extracted for measuring the strategies adopted for agricultural produce exports by Nigerian firms (see appendix I).

3. Methodology

Survey research method was adopted for this study. The study was carried out in southeast Nigeria. Specifically, among Nigerian exporting firms. A sample of 70 exporting firms was selected for this study across the five (5) southeast states using snowball sampling technique. The Nigerian Export Promotion Council was the starting point for identifying the export firms. In line with Adegbuyi (2011), a structured questionnaire was used for data collection. The questionnaire was validated using content validity method and its reliability was ascertained using Cronbach's alpha method of testing internal consistency. Principal Component Analysis which is a method of Factor Analysis was used to test the hypothesis formulated for this study.

4. Results and Discussion

Out of the 70 copies of questionnaire administered on the exporting firms' owners in southeastern states in Nigeria, four copies were not returned. Only 66 copies were returned and this gives a success response rate of 94.29%. The demographic data of the respondents is presented and analyzed in appendix II.

Appendix II presents the demographic data of the respondents (exporting firms' owners). Their gender distribution data indicates that 48(72.7%) are males while 18(27.3%) others are female export firm owners. The number of exporters captured across the Southeast Nigeria States showed that 15(22.7%) of them are from Abia State, 12(18.2%) of them are from Anambra State, 17(25.8%) are from Ebonyi State, 13(19.7%) are from Enugu State while 9(13.6%) are from Imo State. As for their educational qualification, none of them is presently a First School Leaving Certificate Holder but 2(3.0%) of them said they are O'Level (i.e., GCE/SSCE) holders, 16(24.2%) are holders of OND/NCE, 37(56.1%) of them said that they are BSc/HND holders while 11(16.7%) others are Postgraduate degree holders. The exporters' years of experience showed that 7(10.6%) of them have < 5years of experience, 19(28.8%) have 5 – 9years experience, 26(39.4%) have 10 – 14years experience, while 14(21.2%) have \geq 15years experience. The implication of the educational qualification and years of experience of the exporters indicate that majority of them are learned and are well experienced in exporting business.

4.1 Test of Hypothesis

To identify the most significant and commonly adopted strategies for agricultural produce exports by Nigerian exporting firms, the responses gathered from the exporting firms' owners in southeast Nigeria were used and were subjected to test using Principal Component Analysis method of Factor Analysis using SPSS version 17.0. The result of the test is presented in appendix III.

Appendix III presents the total variance explained using an Eigen-value of ≥ 0.5 . Out of the 21 components measured, only 13 components could be explained with a cumulative variance of 91.186%. The implication of this is that 13 out of 21 components explain 91.186% cumulative variance. Eight others are invariably not significant. They do not carry heavy factor loading. Hence, they are insignificant.

Out of the 21 components measured, only 13 components were extracted as the most significant and commonly adopted strategies for exporting agricultural produce by Nigerian firms. As orderly extracted, the components include – Market scope; Technology Strength; Brand Name; Export Experience; Retention Capacity; Face-to-face Marketing; Product Service Quality; Market Position; Low/Competitive Pricing; Export Marketing Attitude; Channel Development; Policy; and Size of the Exporting Firm. These components are further classified under each factor as thus;

Product Adaptation Strategies

Product/Service Quality

Policy

Brand Name

Pricing Adaptation

Low/competitive pricing

Promotional Adaptation

Retention capacity

Distribution Adaptation

Face-to-face marketing

Channel development

Others

Export Experience

Market Scope

Size of the Exporting Firm

Export Marketing Attitude

Technology strength

Market Position

Based on this result, it can be deduced that the exports strategies found significant include: product adaptation strategies; pricing adaptation; promotional adaptation distribution adaptation and other exporting strategies as obtained from existing studies. These findings are consistent with existing studies like Adegbuyi (2011), Cavusgil (1983), Oyeniyi (2009) and many others.

5. Conclusion and Recommendation

This study has empirically investigated the various strategies Nigerian exporting firms commonly adopted for exporting agricultural produce. Findings have clearly shown that marketing mix adaptation strategies are the gateways for successful exporting of agricultural produces. It can now be concluded that exporting agricultural produce from Nigeria can be successfully done if strategies like product adaptation strategies; pricing adaptation; promotional adaptation distribution adaptation and other related exporting strategies are adopted. To the prospective

exporting firms and individuals, it is recommended that they plan their exports around these strategies if they must succeed at all.

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Appendix

Appendix I: Meta-Analysis of Export Strategies

Authors	Exporting Strategies
Cieslik, Kuciak and Thongpapanl (2015)	Export Experience, Market Scope
Zeriti <i>et al.</i> (2014)	Sustainable export marketing strategy fit
Sousa and Bradley (2008), Theodosios and Katsikeas (2001)	Pricing Strategies
Kaynak and Kuan (1993)	Size, Export Volume, Export Marketing Attitude
Aaby and Slater (1989)	technological strength, Age of the firm, and experience
Omer (1986)	Marketing adaptation involves manipulation of marketing mix components (product, promotion, price and distribution)
Rosenbloom, Larsen and Mehta (1997) (Christensen, da Rocha and Gertner 1987)	Product Adaptation
Lages (2000) Sholam (1996); Donthu and Kim (1993)	Product Adaptation strategies include: product quality, service, policy brand name, packaging, styling, appeal, warranty, color and design
Cavusgil (1983)	Company offering, Role of Distributors and Agents, Promotion function, Price/Selling Terms
Douglas and Craig (1983); Cooper and Kleinschmidt (1985); Kirpalani and MacIntosh	Product adaptation, promotion adaptation, channel development and competitive pricing Strategies

(1980)	
Oyeniya (2009)	Marketing Plan, Marketing Mix, Market Adaptation/Standardization
Oyeniya, Obamiro and Ogunnaike (2008)	Export Firms' Product Adaptation, Promotion Adaptation and Marketing Position
Adegbuyi (2011)	Transaction Marketing: arms-length, Marketing mix, functional Marketing and internal capacity, Retainership Capacity, adoption of database marketing, high and low use of face-to-face for making dyadic relationship marketing, network marketing

Source: Compiled by the Researchers

Appendix II: Respondents' Demographic Data

	Frequency	Percent		Frequency	Percent
<i>Gender Distribution</i>			<i>Years of Experience in Exporting Business</i>		
Male	48	72.7%	< 5yrs	7	10.6%
Female	18	27.3%	5 – 9yrs	19	28.8%
Total	66	100.0%	10 – 14yrs	26	39.4%
			≥ 15yrs	14	21.2%
			Total	66	100.0%
<i>Education Qualification</i>			<i>Exporters Captured from Southeast</i>		
FSLCert.	0	0.0%	Abia	15	22.7%
O'Level	2	3.0%	Anambra	12	18.2%
OND/NCE	16	24.2%	Ebonyi	17	25.8%
BSc/HND	37	56.1%	Enugu	13	19.7%
Postgraduate	11	16.7%	Imo	9	13.6%
Total	66	100.0%	Total	66	100.0%

Source: Field Survey.

Appendix III: Total Variance Explained

Component	Total	Initial Eigenvalues		Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings		
		% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	5.473	26.062	26.062	5.473	26.062	26.062
2	2.788	13.274	39.336	2.788	13.274	39.336
3	1.634	7.782	47.118	1.634	7.782	47.118
4	1.487	7.081	54.199	1.487	7.081	54.199
5	1.389	6.614	60.813	1.389	6.614	60.813
6	1.277	6.080	66.893	1.277	6.080	66.893
7	1.058	5.037	71.930	1.058	5.037	71.930
8	.902	4.294	76.224	.902	4.294	76.224
9	.770	3.665	79.889	.770	3.665	79.889
10	.688	3.278	83.167	.688	3.278	83.167
11	.602	2.864	86.031	.602	2.864	86.031
12	.572	2.723	88.754	.572	2.723	88.754
13	.511	2.432	91.186	.511	2.432	91.186
14	.416	1.979	93.165			
15	.346	1.649	94.815			
16	.289	1.376	96.190			
17	.255	1.213	97.403			
18	.181	.864	98.267			
19	.149	.711	98.978			
20	.124	.590	99.567			
21	.091	.433	100.000			

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Extracted Components

	Component												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Product/Service Quality	.269	.511	.007	-	.019	.225	.792	.125	-	.097	-	.129	.245
Policy	.268	.272	.622	.148	.143	.401	-	-	-	.070	.258	.460	.329
Brand Name	.174	.023	.783	-	.051	.238	-	-	.182	-	-	-	-.199
Packaging	.449	.463	.054	-	-	-	.362	.292	-	-	.151	-	.001
Product Appeal	.680	-	-	.228	-	-	.325	-	.019	-	-	-	.053
Warranty	.651	.406	.015	.301	-	-	-	.214	.169	.038	-	.017	-.054
Product feature – colour and design	.597	.347	.013	.299	-	-	-	.266	-	-	-	.177	.064
Low/competitive pricing	-	-	-	.225	.194	.418	.191	.019	.546	.005	-	-	.231
Retention capacity	-	-	.057	.255	.647	-	.130	.609	-	.159	-	-	-.109
Network marketing	.179	.031	-	-	.225	.207	-	-	.084	-	-	.281	-.199
Face-to-face marketing	.602	.337	-	.309	.003	-	.192	.172	.022	.026	.065	-	-.298
Database marketing	.363	.527	-	.349	.114	.027	.109	.006	-	.093	.230	.099	-.037
Channel development	.749	-	.007	.178	-	-	.202	-	-	.442	.039	-	-.037
Export Experience	.734	-	.041	-	.154	.026	.110	-	-	.409	.565	.100	.019
Market Scope	.634	.354	-	.015	.667	.016	-	.071	-	-	.200	-	.168
Size of the Exporting Firm	.634	.030	.237	.667	.184	.053	.373	.071	.063	.125	.200	.200	.162
Export Volume	.766	-	-	-	.037	-	-	-	.058	.038	.041	.335	.162
Export Marketing Attitude	.723	.311	.042	.156	.037	.163	.093	.008	.197	-	.053	-	.650
Technology strength	.723	.312	.124	.223	.308	.088	.119	.038	.197	.122	.090	.090	.650
Market Position	.686	-	.125	-	.227	-	.145	-	.219	-	.144	.022	-.008
Internal capacity	.686	.306	.125	.132	.227	.195	.145	.200	.219	.295	.144	.022	-.008
Technology strength	-	.666	.196	.224	.102	-	.149	-	.137	.613	.087	.229	-.062
Market Position	.296	-	-	-	.037	-	-	-	.058	.038	.041	.335	.162
Internal capacity	.296	.666	.196	.224	.102	-	.149	-	.137	.613	.087	.229	-.062
Technology strength	-	.698	.098	.124	.074	-	.200	-	.234	.078	.104	-	.050
Market Position	.162	-	-	-	.037	.353	.200	.304	.234	.078	.104	.109	.050
Internal capacity	-	-	.237	.082	-	.189	.198	.675	.279	.044	.306	.196	-.102
Technology strength	.145	.429	.237	.082	.557	.189	.198	.675	.279	.044	.306	.196	-.102
Internal capacity	-	.035	-	-	-	-	-	.176	.361	.232	.000	-	.060
Technology strength	.089	.035	.113	.523	.188	.395	.480	.176	.361	.232	.000	.193	.060

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

a. 13 components extracted.

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