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Foreign Market Networks and Export of Raw Cashew Nuts in Nigeria: The Moderating Role of Product Quality

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Abstract

This study centered on foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. It specifically examined the effects of information, market access and financial networks on the export of raw cashew nuts. The study also assessed the moderating role of product quality in the relationship between foreign market networks and export of raw cashew nuts. Cross-sectional survey research was adopted. Using the Taro Yamane formula, a sample size of 286 respondents was determined from a population of 1,008 personnel of registered raw cashew nut exporting companies. Proportionate sampling technique was applied to select respondents in the survey. Ultimately, primary data were obtained from 278 respondents through a structured questionnaire. The data obtained were descriptively analyzed while the hypotheses of the study were tested using multiple regression, and hierarchical regression in the SPSS software. The findings of the study revealed that information, market access, and financial networks had significant positive effects on export of raw cashew nuts, while product quality significantly and positively moderated the relationship between foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts. Based on the findings made, we recommended that Nigerian exporters need to intensify their utilization of information networks, particularly digital platforms, trade forums, and industry-specific databases, as strategic tools for enhancing the export of raw cashew nuts. It was also recommended that there is need for Nigerian cashew nut exporters to actively strengthen and expand their engagement with established market access networks, such as trade partnerships, industry associations, and international distribution channels to enhance the export of raw cashew nuts.

Keywords: Foreign Market Network, Agricultural Export, Internationalization of Firms, Cashew Export, Product Quality, International Trade.

Introduction

The export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria holds considerable economic potential, contributing to economic diversification, increased foreign exchange earnings, and employment generation (Olomu et al., 2020). Agricultural commodities, including raw cashew nuts, constitute Nigeria's second-largest export category and accounted for approximately 2.93 per cent of foreign earnings, valued at N1.24 trillion in 2023 (Jaiyesimi, 2024). This performance is partly underpinned by exporters' capacity to establish and sustain effective foreign market networks that facilitate internationalization (Agbim & Eluka, 2018; Ajayi, 2016). Foreign market networks represent a complex web of relationships and collaborations with key stakeholders (such as distributors, suppliers, partners, and regulatory bodies) that enable firms to identify opportunities, navigate regulatory environments, and meet global consumer demands efficiently (Wong & Wong, 2019). Through these networks, export firms gain access to international markets, develop strategic partnerships, manage trade regulations, secure distribution channels, and obtain valuable market intelligence (Müller & Schneider, 2022).

Given their pivotal role in global trade, export-oriented firms utilise various forms of foreign market networks; however, this study focuses on information, market access, and financial networks. Information networks comprise interconnected systems and partnerships that facilitate the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on market trends, consumer preferences, regulatory requirements, and competitive dynamics to support informed decision-making (Gupta, 2018). Market access networks consist of relationships and intermediaries that enable firms to penetrate foreign markets by leveraging local knowledge, infrastructure, and resources to overcome entry barriers and enhance competitiveness (Rahman & Abdullah, 2019). Financial networks encompass institutions and intermediaries that facilitate cross-border financial flows, enabling firms to access funding, manage risks, and execute international transactions (Al-Tal & Bani-Khalid, 2021). While these networks are instrumental in enabling export activities, their effectiveness does not automatically translate into market success when product quality is inadequate (Kim & Park, 2021). Product quality, in this context, refers to the degree to which a product meets regulatory standards and satisfies the expectations of international consumers, thereby ensuring competitiveness and acceptance in foreign markets (Verma & Desai, 2022). Exporting firms increasingly prioritise quality improvement, as higher-quality products enhance global competitiveness, facilitate compliance with stringent international standards, and attract discerning consumers (Gnangnon, 2024).

Moreover, consistent product quality fosters trust and long-term relationships with foreign buyers, reducing the likelihood of shipment rejection, financial penalties, and reputational damage while supporting sustainable market growth (Henn et al., 2020). Against this backdrop, examining the moderating role of product quality in the relationship between foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria is essential. Such analysis provides empirical insight into how exporters can leverage foreign market networks more effectively by prioritising product quality, thereby strengthening competitiveness, ensuring compliance with global standards, and expanding market reach. Accordingly, this study investigated the moderating effect of product quality on the relationship between foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Research Rationale

One of the major challenges undermining the export of agricultural products such as raw cashew nuts in Nigeria is the persistent lack of trust in their quality, largely driven by the perception that African products are inferior (James et al., 2024). This trust deficit is rooted in historical underinvestment in industrialization and technological innovation, which has limited the country's capacity for value addition, processing, and compliance with international standards (Tonuchi & Onyebuchi, 2019). Consequently, despite their natural quality and reliance on organic farming practices, Nigerian agricultural products often struggle to compete in global markets where consistency, safety, and strict quality compliance are prioritized. This negative perception not only constrains market acceptance but also weakens the ability of exporters to establish and sustain effective foreign market networks necessary for international expansion.

Importers and global supply chain actors increasingly prefer sourcing from regions such as Europe, the Americas, and parts of Asia, where agricultural exports are associated with higher and more consistent quality standards (Susanto et al., 2024). This challenge is further compounded by Nigeria's non-compliance with international sanitary and phytosanitary requirements, which has led to frequent export rejections and significant revenue losses (Aina, 2024). For instance, between 2023 and 2024, agricultural export rejections rose by 35 per cent, with approximately 23,000 metric tonnes of produce (including cashew nuts) rejected in key markets such as the European Union, the United States, and Asia due to issues such as pesticide residues, aflatoxin contamination, and poor packaging (Babajide, 2024). These setbacks have resulted in substantial financial losses, estimated at $420 million, and have contributed to Nigeria's declining position in global agricultural trade. Despite efforts to build foreign market networks, persistent quality concerns continue to undermine export performance, while empirical studies examining the moderating role of product quality in this relationship remain limited. This gap restricts the development of targeted strategies to improve quality perception, enhance competitiveness, and reduce export losses, thereby necessitating this study on the moderating role of product quality in the relationship between foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Foreign Market Networks

Foreign-market networks encompass a multifaceted web of relationships, collaborations, and affiliations with stakeholders such as distributors, suppliers, partners, and regulatory bodies in foreign markets working together to identify opportunities, navigate market regulations, and meet the demands of global consumers efficiently (Wong & Wong (2019). This entails that foreign-market networks serve as critical platforms for fostering mutual understanding, aligning diverse interests, and creating synergies among various stakeholders to achieve shared objectives. By leveraging these interconnected relationships, organizations can access localized expertise, which enhances their ability to adapt products and services to meet specific cultural, regulatory, and consumer preferences (Johanson & Vahlne, 2017). These networks also facilitate efficient resource allocation by enabling firms to streamline supply chains, share market intelligence, and develop innovative solutions collaboratively. Furthermore, they act as conduits for mitigating risks associated with foreign-market entry, such as regulatory compliance challenges or socio-political uncertainties, by providing firms with insights and support from established partners within the market ecosystem (Brouthers et al., 2018). In essence, such networks function as dynamic frameworks that empower businesses to remain competitive, resilient, and agile in the rapidly evolving global market. They serve as indispensable tools for shaping strategic decision-making and optimizing the outcomes of market entry initiatives (Verbeke & Kano, 2021).

Export of Raw Cashew Nuts in Nigeria

In Nigeria, raw cashew nut (RCN) exports involve harvesting, drying, and transporting the nuts to ports, primarily in Lagos and Port Harcourt, for shipment (Ibe & Onuoha, 2024). The export chain includes smallholder farmers, aggregators, processors, exporters, and regulatory bodies like the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC). Major exporters often collaborate with international buyers and certification agencies to meet global standards. In 2023, Nigeria exported approximately 468,601 metric tonnes of RCN, generating $351.6 million (Nairametrics, 2025). Key export destinations included Vietnam ($243 million), India ($77.9 million), and the United States ($7 million) (Nigerian Export Promotion Council, 2024). Despite its potential, Nigeria's cashew industry faces challenges such as inadequate processing facilities, limited access to finance for farmers, inconsistent quality standards, and logistical bottlenecks (Ajayi & Okunola, 2018). These issues hinder value addition and reduce competitiveness in the global market. However, the sector holds significant promise. With 19 states involved in cashew production and government initiatives aiming to boost exports to $500 million, there is a concerted effort to enhance processing capacity, improve quality control, and expand market access (Statista, 2024). As such, strategic investments and policy support could position Nigeria as a leading player in the global cashew industry (Adebayo & Adedokun, 2020).

Information Network and Export of Raw Cashew Nuts

Information networks comprise interconnected partnerships, systems, and channels that facilitate the collection, analysis, and dissemination of data on market trends, consumer preferences, trade regulations, and competitive dynamics to support informed decision-making in international trade (Gupta, 2018). They function as structured frameworks integrating relationships with industry stakeholders, governmental bodies, and research institutions, alongside advanced tools such as databases, analytics software, and digital communication platforms to generate and share critical market intelligence (Peng & Chang, 2023). Through these mechanisms, firms can track evolving consumer demands, understand cultural buying behaviours, and monitor regulatory developments, including tariffs, trade agreements, and compliance requirements, thereby enhancing their ability to respond to dynamic global market conditions (James et al., 2024). Consequently, firms increasingly embed information networks into their foreign operations to navigate the complexities of international trade, anticipate market shifts, adapt offerings to local preferences, and respond effectively to competitive pressures (Shukran et al., 2023; Beugelsdijk et al., 2023). In this regard, information networks enhance decision-making, improve customer satisfaction, optimise resource allocation, and support sustainable growth in foreign markets (Yilmaz & Recep, 2021). Empirical evidence further underscores their strategic importance, as studies have shown that information networks significantly influence firm internationalization and market expansion, including among Taiwanese FinTech companies and Indian manufacturing firms (Lin & Wu, 2020; Gupta, 2018). Hence, it was hypothesized that:

H_1: Information network has a significant effect on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Market Access Network and Export of Raw Cashew Nuts

A market access network refers to the interconnected relationships, institutional linkages, and infrastructural pathways that enable exporting firms to enter, operate, and compete effectively in international markets (Al-Tal & Bani-Khalid, 2021). It encompasses partnerships with local distributors, engagement with government trade agencies, integration with logistics providers, and affiliations with industry associations or chambers of commerce, all of which facilitate navigation of complex regulatory environments and alignment with foreign market expectations (Grewal et al., 2018). As a strategic enabler of international competitiveness, market access networks provide firms with critical market intelligence, credible entry channels, and real-time feedback, thereby reducing the risks and costs associated with entering unfamiliar markets while enhancing trust, visibility, and long-term sustainability (Al-Tal & Bani-Khalid, 2021; Li et al., 2024). Exporting firms typically develop these networks through deliberate strategies such as forming joint ventures, establishing distribution agreements, participating in international trade fairs, and leveraging support from export promotion agencies and diplomatic missions (Qutob & Ye, 2024). Through such integration, firms gain access to shared resources, policy support, and collaborative opportunities that streamline

operations, improve responsiveness to market dynamics, and foster enduring commercial relationships essential for sustained export growth (Beugelsdijk et al., 2023). Empirical evidence further supports this position, indicating that market access networks significantly enhance firm internationalization and market expansion, as demonstrated among Jordanian SMEs and Malaysian luxury hotels (Al-Tal & Bani-Khalid, 2021; Rahman & Abdullah, 2019). Hence, it was hypothesized that:

H_2: Market access network has a significant effect on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Financial Network and Export of Raw Cashew Nuts

A financial network refers to the interconnected system of financial institutions, service providers, credit agencies, and funding mechanisms that support cross-border transactions for exporting firms (Rahman & Abdullah, 2019). It encompasses banks, foreign exchange dealers, international payment systems, trade finance institutions, export credit agencies, and insurance providers, enabling access to essential services such as payment processing, currency risk management, trade financing, and insurance against non-payment or political risks (Anderson & Pira, 2021). As a critical backbone of international trade, financial networks reduce the complexities and uncertainties associated with cross-border operations by ensuring timely access to capital and liquidity. This is particularly important given the challenges of long payment cycles, multiple currency regimes, regulatory differences, and risks of delayed or default payments in export activities (Lee & Lee, 2020). Consequently, robust financial networks allow exporters to utilise instruments such as letters of credit, loans, invoice discounting, and trade insurance, thereby safeguarding them against financial losses while enhancing their credibility and trustworthiness in foreign markets (Rahman & Abdullah, 2019). Through active participation in these networks, firms gain access to tailored financial products and expert advisory services that streamline operations, reduce transaction costs, accelerate payment cycles, and minimize currency and political risks, ultimately strengthening their competitive position and supporting sustainable international expansion (Nguyen & Tran, 2022; Zhang & Wang, 2020). Empirical evidence further affirms their strategic importance, as financial networks have been shown to significantly enhance market expansion and foreign market entry among Malaysian luxury hotels and telecommunications firms in Türkiye (Rahman & Abdullah, 2019; Yilmaz & Recep, 2021). Hence, it was hypothesized that:

H_3: Financial network has a significant effect on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Product Quality as a Moderator

In the context of export trade, product quality refers to the degree to which a product meets international regulatory standards and satisfies the expectations of foreign consumers, thereby ensuring its competitiveness and acceptance in global markets (Verma & Desai, 2022; James et al., 2024). Beyond compliance, it reflects the product's fitness for specific market

requirements and consumer preferences across different international contexts. In marketing research, product quality is widely recognized as a critical moderating variable because it influences the strength and direction of relationships between key marketing constructs such as customer satisfaction, brand loyalty, and purchase intentions (Ochieng & Njoroge, 2019; Kim & Park, 2021; Verma & Desai, 2022). As a central determinant of consumer perception, it shapes how customers evaluate and respond to marketing efforts, thereby affecting the overall effectiveness of strategies related to pricing, promotion, and distribution (Hoang & Bui Thanh, 2021; Thammasiri & Chansukree, 2023). High product quality tends to reinforce the positive effects of these strategies by strengthening brand associations, enhancing satisfaction, and fostering loyalty, whereas poor quality can weaken their impact despite significant marketing investment (Kim & Park, 2021). Furthermore, product quality serves as a crucial link between consumer expectations and post-purchase behaviour, as alignment with or surpassing expectations leads to increased satisfaction, repeat patronage, and positive word-of-mouth (Hoang & Bui Thanh, 2021). Hence, it was hypothesized that:

H_4: Product quality has a significant moderating effect on the relationship between foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Theoretical Framework

This study was based on the network theory of internationalization, propounded by Johanson and Mattsson (1988); and the enticement-repellant theory of quality, propounded by Weller et al. (2002).

Network theory of internationalization (Johanson & Mattsson, 1988)

The network theory of internationalization, propounded by Johanson and Mattsson (1988), provides a comprehensive framework for understanding how firms expand across borders through the development and utilisation of inter-firm relationships embedded within networks. Unlike traditional models that emphasize incremental market entry and knowledge accumulation, the theory highlights the dynamic interplay of relationships, interdependencies, and interactions among connected actors in both domestic and international contexts (Johanson & Mattsson, 1988). It posits that firms are not isolated entities but operate within networks comprising suppliers, customers, competitors, and other stakeholders, with internationalization occurring through the expansion, deepening, or repositioning of a firm's role within these networks. Consequently, a firm's internationalization capacity depends on its existing network position, the strength of its relationships, and its ability to establish and sustain new connections in foreign markets (Johanson & Mattsson, 1988). This perspective is particularly relevant to this study, as it underscores the role of information, market access, and financial networks in facilitating the export of raw cashew nuts from Nigeria, while also supporting the examination of product quality as a moderating factor that may strengthen or weaken the influence of these networks on export performance.

Enticement-repellant theory of quality (Weller et al., 2002)

The enticement–repellant theory of product quality, developed by Weller et al. (2002), explains the relationship between product quality and consumer buying behaviour by positing that quality can either attract or deter consumers. Specifically, product quality functions as an enticement when it is high, encouraging purchase, repeat patronage, and positive word of mouth, but becomes a repellant when it is low, leading to customer withdrawal and negative word of mouth (Weller et al., 2002). In this sense, the theory conceptualizes product quality as the extent to which a product meets or exceeds customer expectations (Lee & Kim, 2017), and asserts that consistently high quality fosters long-term customer retention and brand loyalty, even in the presence of competing alternatives (Weller et al., 2002). The relevance of this theory to the present study lies in its emphasis on product quality as a critical determinant of market outcomes, particularly in shaping how foreign buyers respond to export offerings. Applied to the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria, high product quality serves as an enticement by enhancing credibility, ensuring compliance with international standards, and strengthening buyer trust, thereby amplifying the effectiveness of foreign market networks in driving demand and sustained patronage. Conversely, poor quality acts as a repellant, undermining these networks by discouraging buyers, generating negative perceptions, and weakening Nigeria's export reputation. Thus, the theory provides a robust framework for understanding how product quality moderates the relationship between foreign market networks and export performance by either reinforcing or diminishing their effectiveness.

Review of Empirical Studies and Conceptual Framework

The review of empirical studies (See Table 1) shows a strong and consistent agreement across studies that foreign market networks play a significant and positive role in firm internationalization and export-related outcomes. Studies from Nigeria, Europe, Asia, and the Middle East generally confirm that different forms of networks (including social, inter-firm, financial, information, and institutional networks) enhance firms' access to international opportunities, resources, knowledge, legitimacy, and competitive advantage (Iheanachor & Ozegbe, 2021; Agbim & Eluka, 2018; Rosén, 2020; Al-Tal & Bani-Khalid, 2021; Lin & Wu, 2020; Rahman & Abdullah, 2019; Gupta, 2018; Müller & Schneider, 2022). However, there are important differences in emphasis, as some studies identify business and information networks as more influential than social ties, while others highlight institutional or facilitating networks as dominant drivers depending on context (Iheanachor & Ozegbe, 2021; Lin & Wu, 2020; Aldibiki & El Ebrashi, 2023; Müller & Schneider, 2022). At the same time, studies on product quality consistently demonstrate that it strengthens the effect of various marketing and behavioural drivers such as promotion, word-of-mouth, and social media on performance outcomes like patronage, adoption, and loyalty (Hoang & Bui Thanh, 2021; Thammasiri & Chansukree, 2023; Kim & Park, 2021; Ochieng & Njoroge, 2019; Verma & Desai, 2022). Despite these parallel insights, a clear gap exists in the literature. Most network studies do not examine specific market network dimensions in relation to export of a particular commodity

(Agbim & Eluka, 2018; Ajayi, 2016; Gashi, 2021; Morrish & Earl, 2020), while product quality studies are largely disconnected from international trade or network contexts (Hoang & Bui Thanh, 2021; Thammasiri & Chansukree, 2023; Kim & Park, 2021; Ochieng & Njoroge, 2019; Verma & Desai, 2022). As a result, there is limited empirical evidence integrating foreign market networks with export performance while simultaneously testing the moderating role of product quality. This gap is particularly evident in the Nigerian context and in commodity-specific exports such as raw cashew nuts, where the interaction between network structures and product quality remains underexplored.

TABLE 1
Empirical review on foreign market networks, export, and moderating role of product quality

Author(s) & Year	Context / Country	Aim of Study	Methodology	Key Variables	Key Findings
Iheanachor & Ozegbe (2021)	Nigeria (MNCs)	Examine role of social and business networks in internationalisation	Qualitative; interviews (n=8); thematic analysis	Social networks, business networks, internationalisation	Business networks more influential than social networks; both critical for expansion
Agbim & Eluka (2018)	Nigeria (family businesses)	Assess effect of social networks on internationalisation	Survey (n=320); regression	Social networks, internationalisation	Positive significant effect; enhances access to partners, funding, markets
Ajayi (2016)	Nigeria (agric SMEs)	Examine networking capability and export performance	Survey (n=235); regression	Networking capability, EO, export performance	Strong positive relationship between networking and export performance
Rosén (2020)	Sweden (SMEs)	Explore networks in SME internationalisation	Interviews (n=35); thematic analysis	Networks, internationalisation	Networks provide opportunities, knowledge, trust; enhance competitiveness
Gashi (2021)	Finland (firms)	Investigate networking in internationalisation	Qualitative + interviews (n=15)	Networks, internationalisation	Networks create value, innovation, competitive advantage
Aldibiki & El Ebrashi (2023)	Egypt (SMEs)	Examine networks and capabilities on international performance	Survey (n=300); SEM	Institutional, interfirm, social networks; capabilities	Institutional networks significant; others insignificant directly
Morrish & Earl (2020)	Prague (wine firms)	Assess network and institutional effects	Interviews (n=25); observations	Personal & inter-firm networks	Inter-firm networks enhance legitimacy; personal networks support authenticity
Al-Tal & Bani-Khalid (2021)	Jordan (SMEs)	Examine foreign market networks and internationalisation	Survey (n=312); factor & canonical analysis	Inter-firm, financial, market access, social networks	All networks significantly enhance internationalisation
Lin & Wu (2020)	Taiwan (FinTech)	Analyse networks and international expansion	Survey (n=256); regression	Information, inter-firm, facilitating networks	Information & facilitating networks most influential
Rahman & Abdullah (2019)	Malaysia (hotels)	Examine networks and market expansion	Survey (n=198); PCA, regression	Financial, social, institutional, market access networks	All networks positively affect expansion

Author(s) & Year	Context / Country	Aim of Study	Methodology	Key Variables	Key Findings
Gupta (2018)	India (vehicle firms)	Analyse network capabilities and internationalisation	Survey (n=275); regression	Inter-firm, information, facilitating, social networks	All network types positively influence expansion
Müller & Schneider (2022)	Germany (construction firms)	Examine global network building	Survey (n=227); SEM	Trade, facilitating, information, personal networks	All networks significantly enhance internationalisation
Yilmaz & Recep (2021)	Türkiye (telecom firms)	Assess market networks and foreign entry	Survey (n=298); regression	Financial, B2B, information networks	Significant positive effect on foreign market entry
Hoang & Bui Thanh (2021)	Bahrain	Examine promotional mix and patronage with moderation	Survey (n=350); regression	Promotional mix, product quality	Product quality strengthens relationship
Thammasiri & Chansukree (2023)	Thailand	WOM and adoption with moderation	Survey (n=218); regression	WOM, product quality	Product quality strengthens adoption effect
Kim & Park (2021)	South Korea	Social media and purchase with moderation	Survey (n=256); SEM	Social media, product quality	Product quality amplifies purchase intention
Ochieng & Njoroge (2019)	Kenya	Influencer marketing and loyalty	Survey (n=411); regression	Influencer marketing, product quality	Product quality strengthens loyalty
Verma & Desai (2022)	India	Packaging and patronage with moderation	Survey (n=356); SEM	Packaging, product quality	Product quality enhances effect on patronage

Source: Literature review

Based on the gaps identified in existing relevant studies, the present study investigated the moderating role of product quality on the relationship between foreign market networks and export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. The independent variable (foreign market network) comprised three (3) dimensions, namely: information, market access and financial networks. Whereas the dependent variable (export of Nigerian agricultural products) was decomposed into the parameters: market access, export attractiveness, ease of export and export volume (Ochieng & Njoroge, 2019; Verma & Desai, 2022). Information network was decomposed into: market research firms; government agencies; personal networks; diaspora communities; digital platforms; legal/regulatory advisers; customs/trade compliance consultants; port and customs clearance agents; language support system; and insurance service providers (Lin & Wu, 2020; Gupta, 2018; Müller & Schneider, 2022). Market access network was decomposed into: trade promotion agencies; export management firms; agricultural marketing agencies; local market representatives; wholesale partners; distribution partners; trade fairs/exhibitions; online marketplaces; and third-party delivery services (Al-Tal & Bani-Khalid, 2021; Rahman & Abdullah, 2019). Also, financial network was decomposed into: international banks; export credit agencies; foreign exchange service providers; investment guarantee agencies; microfinance institutions; venture capital firms; credit rating agencies; trade finance institutions; international leasing companies; and currency hedging firms (Al-Tal & Bani-Khalid, 2021; Rahman & Abdullah, 2019; Yilmaz & Recep, 2021). As seen in FIG. 1, the a priori expectation is that product quality plays some role in moderating the relationship between foreign market networks and export of Nigerian agricultural products.

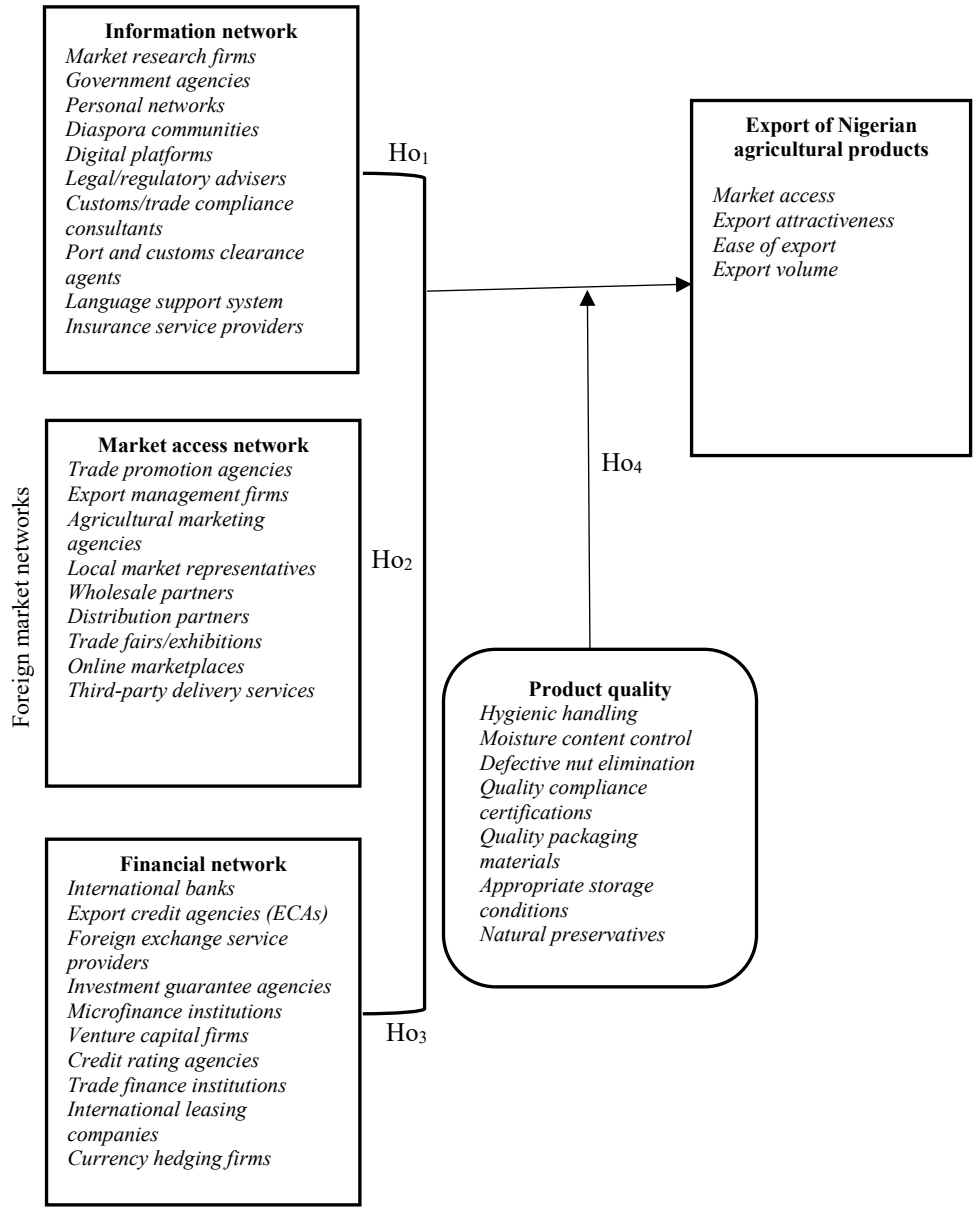


FIG. 1: Conceptual model of the study

Source: Parameters of independent variables adapted from Lin and Wu (2020); Gupta (2018); Müller and Schneider (2022); Al-Tal and Bani-Khalid (2021); Rahman and Abdullah (2019); Yilmaz and Recep (2021). Parameters of dependent variable adapted from Eze et al. (2024); Edeh et al. (2020). Parameters of moderating variable adapted from Ochieng and Njoroge (2019); Verma and Desai (2022)

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research design

This study adopted a cross-sectional survey research design to obtain primary data at a single point in time from a diverse sample of respondents to enable an analysis of patterns, relationships, and variations among the variables of interest. This research design was deemed suitable for the particular context of this study because it allowed for the collection of data on the relationship between foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria within a defined time frame.

Population and sample

The target population of this study included all export operations personnel of registered companies involved in the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. According to the National Cashew Association of Nigeria (NCAN), this population comprises 1008 personnel (see TABLE 2). Specifically, they include export managers, supply chain/logistics personnel, compliance officers, quality assurance teams, finance managers, and marketing executives of 18 raw cashew nuts exporting companies located across Nigeria.

TABLE 2
Study population

SN	Company name	No. of export operations personnel	Location
1	WACOT Limited	95	Lagos
2	Globexia	48	Lagos
3	Sunbeth Global Concepts (SBC)	76	Lagos and Ondo
4	Foodpro Group	41	Lagos
5	Enkay Indo Nigerian Industries Ltd	50	Lagos
6	Foodpro Group	96	Lagos
7	Elephant Group Plc	86	Lagos
8	Colossus Investments	49	Lagos
9	Luli Logistics Nig Ltd	42	Lagos
10	Victor Oliver Agro Allied Nigeria	37	Lagos
11	Olam Nigeria Ltd	58	Lagos
12	De Big Rich Concept	24	Lagos
13	Dynamic Sea Logistics International	61	Lagos
14	Anugboba Nigeria	46	Lagos and Edo
15	Balinga Enterprises Nigeria	58	Ogun
16	Olafive International Resources	37	Lagos
17	Parvenu Ventures Exports	49	Oyo
18	Gombella Integrated Services Limited	55	Lagos
		1,008	

Source: NCAN (2025)

Having established the population to comprise 1008 respondents, the Taro Yamane procedure was applied to determine the sample size. The sample size determination procedure follows thus:

$$n = \frac{1{,}008}{1+1{,}008\,(0.05)^2}$$

$$= \frac{1{,}008}{1+1{,}008\,(0.0025)}$$

$$= \frac{1{,}008}{1+2.52}$$

$$= \frac{1{,}008}{3.52}$$

$$= 286.36$$

∴ n = 286 export operations personnel approximately

Sampling techniques

The sampling technique adopted in this study was the proportionate stratified sampling technique, which involved dividing the entire population into 18 distinct strata based on shared characteristics relevant to the research objectives (see TABLE 3). From each stratum, a sample was drawn such that the size of the sample from each stratum was proportional to the size of that stratum relative to the total population. This sampling technique was deemed suitable for this study because the population comprised 18 distinct strata; hence, it ensured that each subgroup was represented in the sample in proportion to its actual size in the population. In applying the proportionate stratified sampling technique, the following formula was used:

$$n_h = \frac{Nh}{N} \times n$$

Where:

n_h = Sample size for stratum h

N_h = population size of stratum h

N = total population size

n = Study sample size

TABLE 3

Proportionate stratified sampling process

SN	Export companies	Personnel population	Sample	
1	WACOT Limited	95	$\frac{95}{1{,}008} \times 286$	$= 26.95 \approx 27$
2	Globexia	48	$\frac{48}{1{,}008} \times 286$	$= 13.62 \approx 14$
3	Sunbeth Global Concepts (SBC)	76	$\frac{76}{1{,}008} \times 286$	$= 21.56 \approx 22$
4	Foodpro Group	41	$\frac{41}{1{,}008} \times 286$	$= 11.63 \approx 12$
5	Enkay Indo Nigerian Industries Ltd	50	$\frac{50}{1{,}008} \times 286$	$= 14.19 \approx 14$
6	Foodpro Group	96	$\frac{96}{1{,}008} \times 286$	$= 27.23 \approx 27$

SN	Export companies	Personnel population	Sample	
7	Elephant Group Plc	86	$\frac{86}{1,008} \times 286$	= 24.40 ≈ 24
8	Colossus Investments	49	$\frac{49}{1,008} \times 286$	= 13.90 ≈ 14
9	Luli Logistics Nig Ltd	42	$\frac{42}{1,008} \times 286$	= 11.92 ≈ 12
10	Victor Oliver Agro Allied Nigeria	37	$\frac{37}{1,008} \times 286$	= 10.49 ≈ 10
11	Olam Nigeria Ltd	58	$\frac{58}{1,008} \times 286$	= 16.45 ≈ 16
12	De Big Rich Concept	24	$\frac{24}{1,008} \times 286$	= 6.80 ≈ 7
13	Dynamic Sea Logistics International	61	$\frac{61}{1,008} \times 286$	= 17.30 ≈ 17
14	Anugboba Nigeria	46	$\frac{46}{1,008} \times 286$	= 13.05 ≈ 13
15	Balinga Enterprises Nigeria	58	$\frac{58}{1,008} \times 286$	= 16.45 ≈ 16
16	Olafive International Resources	37	$\frac{37}{1,008} \times 286$	= 10.50 ≈ 11
17	Parvenu Ventures Exports	49	$\frac{49}{1,008} \times 286$	= 13.90 ≈ 14
18	Gombella Integrated Services Limited	55	$\frac{55}{1,008} \times 286$	= 15.60 ≈ 16
		1,008		**286**

Source: Researchers' computation (2025)

Data collection, instrument validity and reliability

We obtained primary data from respondents using a structured questionnaire made up of predetermined, standardized statements regarding the research variables. The questionnaire was administered to respondents online, since the survey took place in several locations in Nigeria, without the researcher's physical presence. In this circumstance, an online questionnaire enabled the researcher to bridge the distance gaps, minimize time, and transportation costs that could have been borne in physical travel, allowing for more efficient data collection across multiple locations. The research instrument comprised two unique sections: Section A (which obtained respondents' demographic details, like age, gender and marital status) and Section B (containing relevant statements drawn from the study's variables). Being a structured questionnaire, it used a 5-Point Likert scale to gauge the opinion of respondents as follows: 5 = Strongly Agree; 4 = Agree; 3 = Undecided; 2 = Disagree and 1 = Strongly Disagree.

Subsequently, the questionnaire was content validated before field administration. Reliability was also confirmed through the Cronbach's reliability procedure. Using the data obtained from a pilot survey, Cronbach's alpha reliability analysis was conducted with the aid of the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS version 26). The results of the reliability analysis are presented in TABLE 4, showing the individual Cronbach's alpha values for the questionnaire scales. Based on the criterion for internal consistency, the questionnaire scales

were deemed reliable and included in the study because their Cronbach's alpha coefficients were not less than the acceptable threshold of 0.7 (Tavakol & Dennick, 2011).

TABLE 4
Questionnaire reliability test results

SN	Scale	No. of item	Cronbach's alpha
1	Information network	10	.837
2	Market access network	9	.797
3	Financial network	10	.713
4	Product quality	7	.850
5	Export of raw cashew nuts	4	.770
		40	

Source: Researchers' analysis via SPSS 2025

Data analysis techniques

The primary data obtained from the questionnaire survey were analyzed statistically and interpreted using descriptive statistics. The null hypotheses developed for this study underwent statistical testing using multiple and hierarchical regression methods. Hypotheses one, two and three were tested using multiple regression to determine the effects of information, market access and financial networks on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. Whereas hypothesis four was tested using hierarchical regression to determine the moderating role of product quality on the relationship between foreign market networks and export of raw cashew nuts. The regression model for this study is stated as follows, indicating the role of the moderator in the relationship between the predictor and outcome variables:

Step 1: Base model (main effects)

Showing the main predictor variables' direct effects on the dependent variable (Y):

$$Y = a + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + e$$

Step 2: Inclusion of the moderator (independent effect)

Include the moderating variable (M) to examine its direct contribution:

$$Y = a + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5M + e$$

Step 3: Add key interaction terms (moderation effect)

Include the interaction term(s) between the moderator (M) and one or more key predictor variables (X_1, X_2, …) to test for moderation:

$$Y = a + \beta_1X_1 + \beta_2X_2 + \beta_3X_3 + \beta_4X_4 + \beta_5M + \beta_6 (X_k . M) + e$$

Where:

Y: Dependent variable (export of raw cashew nuts)

X_1, X_2, X_3, X_4: Predictor variables (information, distribution, supplier and facilitating networks)

M: Moderating variable (product quality)

X_k . M: Interaction terms for the key predictor (X_k) and the moderator (M)

a: Constant (intercept)

β_1, β_2, β_3, β_4: Coefficients of the predictors (X_1-X_4)
β_5: Coefficient of the moderator (M)
β_6: Coefficient of the interaction term
e: Error margin (5 percent)

ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

During the questionnaire survey, a total of 286 copies of the questionnaire were administered to export operations personnel of registered companies involved in the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. Out of the 286 copies administered, 278 copies (or 97.2 percent) were correctly completed and valid for analysis, while 8 copies (or 2.8 percent) could not be retrieved. Hence, this analysis is based on the responses of 97.2 percent (278 respondents) of the intended sample (286 respondents). The study's null hypotheses were subjected to statistical testing thus:

Hypothesis one:

Ho: Information network has no significant effect on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Hypothesis two:

Ho: Market access network has no significant effect on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Hypothesis three:

Ho: Financial network has no significant effect on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Predictor variables: Information network, market access network and financial network
Outcome variable: Export of raw cashew nuts
Decision rule: If the p-value is less than 0.05, reject the null hypothesis; otherwise, accept it.

TABLE 5
Model summary of the effect of foreign market networks on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.685[a]	.470	.464	.55919

a. Predictors: (Constant), Information network, market access network and financial network
b. Dependent Variable: Export of raw cashew nuts
Source: Researchers' analysis via SPSS 2025

TABLE 6
Analysis of variance (ANOVA) of the effect of foreign market networks on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	75.906	3	25.302	80.918	.000[b]
	Residual	85.677	274	.313		

	Total	161.583	277

a. Dependent Variable: Export of raw cashew nuts

b. Predictors: (Constant), Information network, market access network and financial network

Source: Researchers' analysis via SPSS 2025

TABLE 7

Coefficients of the effect of foreign market networks on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria

Model		**Unstandardized Coefficients**		**Standardized Coefficients**	**t**	**Sig.**
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	8.118	.330		24.601	.000
	Information network	1.144	.086	.591	13.286	.000
	Market access network	.371	.063	.456	5.932	.000
	Financial network	.013	.079	.310	5.164	.001

a. Dependent Variable: Export of raw cashew nuts

Source: Researchers' analysis via SPSS 2025

Tables 5, 6, and 7 present the multiple linear regression results of the effect of foreign market networks on the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. Table 5 shows that the model has a correlation coefficient (R) of 0.685, which means there is a strong and positive relationship between foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts. The R^2 value is 0.470, indicating that 47 percent of the changes or variations in the export of raw cashew nuts can be explained by foreign market networks. Table 6 presents the ANOVA results, which explain whether or not the overall regression model is statistically significant. The significance (Sig.) value is 0.000, which is less than the level of significance (0.05). This entails that the regression model is statistically significant. Table 7 provides further details about each predictor. The standardized beta coefficients show that all three variables contribute positively to the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria, with the information network (.591) having the strongest influence, followed by market access network (.456), and financial network (.310). All variables have significant t-values (13.286, 5.932, and 5.164 respectively), and each of their significance (p) values is less than 0.05 (0.000, 0.000, and 0.001). This means each network (information, market access, and financial) has a statistically significant and positive effect on the export of raw cashew nuts. In summary, the findings strongly support the rejection of all three null hypotheses and confirm that foreign market networks positively and significantly influence the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Hypothesis four:

Ho: Product quality has no significant effect on the relationship between foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria.

Independent variable: Foreign market network (FMN)
Dependent variable: Export of raw cashew nuts (EXP)
Moderating variable (W): Product quality (PQ)
Test statistic: Hierarchical regression via SPSS Process Macro
Decision criteria: Accept the alternative hypothesis if (P < .05) and reject the null hypothesis, if otherwise.

TABLE 8
Model summary of the moderating role of product quality on foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria

R	R-square	MSE	F	df1	df2	P
.5100	.3601	.4363	32.1145	3.0000	274.0000	.0000

Source: Researchers' analysis via SPSS Process Macro 2025

TABLE 9
Model showing main effects and interaction

	Coefficients	SE	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
Constant	13.5433	2.8341	4.7787	.0000	7.9640	19.1227
FMN	9.2265	.8005	4.0305	.0001	4.8024	1.6505
PQ	8.2727	.8618	2.6371	.0008	3.9693	.5761
Int_1	5.7225	.2431	2.9725	.0002	.2440	1.2011

Product terms key: Int_1: FMN x PQ
Source: Researchers' analysis via SPSS Process Macro 2025

TABLE 10
Test(s) of highest order unconditional interaction(s)

	R2-change	F	df1	df2	P
X*W	.3239	8.8356	1.0000	274.0000	.0002

Focal predict: FMN (X)
Mod var: PQ (W)
Source: Researchers' analysis via SPSS Process Macro 2025

TABLE 11
Conditional effects of the focal predictor at values of the moderator(s)

PQ Level	Effect (B)	SE	t	P	LLCI	ULCI
2.7143 (Low PQ)	0.4395	0.1739	2.5277	.0122	0.0972	0.7818
3.1429 (Medium PQ)	0.9556	0.1033	9.2550	.0000	0.7523	1.1589
3.8571 (High PQ)	1.2653	0.1669	7.5806	.0000	0.9367	1.5939

Source: Researchers' analysis via SPSS Process Macro 2025

The hierarchical regression analysis conducted using the SPSS Process Macro reveals a statistically significant moderating effect of product quality (PQ) on the relationship between

foreign market networks (FMN) and the export of raw cashew nuts (EXP) in Nigeria. Table 8 presents the overall model summary, with an R-value of .5100 and an R^2 of .3601, indicating that approximately 36 per cent of the variation in export performance is explained by FMN, PQ, and their interaction; the model is statistically significant (F = 32.1145, p = .0000), thereby supporting further interpretation. Table 9 reports the main and interaction effects, showing that FMN (B = 9.2265, p = .0001) and PQ (B = 8.2727, p = .0008) both have significant positive effects on export performance, while the interaction term (FMN × PQ) is also positive and significant (B = 5.7225, SE = .2431, t = 2.9725, p = .0002), indicating the presence of moderation. The significance of this moderating effect is further confirmed in Table 10, where the interaction contributes a substantial R^2 change of .3239 (32.39 per cent) with a corresponding F-value of 8.8356 (p = .0002), demonstrating that the inclusion of the interaction term significantly improves the explanatory power of the model. Table 11 presents the conditional effects of FMN at varying levels of product quality, revealing that FMN has a positive and statistically significant effect on exports at low (B = 0.4395, p = .0122), medium (B = 0.9556, p = .0000), and high (B = 1.2653, p = .0000) levels of PQ, with the strength of the relationship increasing progressively. This pattern indicates that higher product quality amplifies the positive effect of foreign market networks on export performance. Overall, the findings confirm that product quality significantly and positively moderates the relationship between FMN and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria; consequently, the null hypothesis is rejected, and the alternative hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

Information network and export of raw cashew nuts

The result of hypothesis one indicates that information networks have a significant positive effect on the export performance of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. While this aligns with Lin and Wu (2020), who observed similar effects in Taiwanese FinTech internationalisation, and Gupta (2018), who reported that information networks enhance market expansion and supply chain optimisation in Indian manufacturing, the Nigerian cashew context provides a more nuanced explanation of this relationship. One possible interpretation is that information networks do not only improve access to market knowledge but also reduce the uncertainty that typically characterises agricultural export markets in developing economies. In the Nigerian cashew sector, exporters often face volatile price signals, inconsistent quality standards, and weak institutional coordination. In this case, information networks act as a stabilising mechanism by reducing information asymmetry between exporters, foreign buyers, and intermediaries. This suggests that the value of information networks is not merely in supporting market entry, but in reducing transaction risk and improving decision predictability under uncertain trade conditions.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding strengthens network theory arguments that external linkages function as strategic resources rather than simple communication channels. It suggests that in resource-constrained environments, such as Nigeria's agricultural export

system, information networks may substitute for weak formal institutions by providing informal governance structures that support export coordination. This extends existing literature by showing that the effectiveness of information networks is context-dependent and may be more pronounced where institutional inefficiencies exist. However, the finding may also reflect uneven access to high-quality information across exporters. Larger or more established exporters are more likely to benefit from structured information systems, while smallholders may rely on fragmented or informal sources. This raises an important implication: the observed positive effect may mask underlying inequality in access to information infrastructure, which could limit broad-based export growth. Overall, the result suggests that information networks are not simply supportive tools but critical enablers of export competitiveness in the raw cashew nut sector, particularly in environments characterised by uncertainty, weak regulation, and fragmented market structures.

Market access network and export of raw cashew nuts

The result of hypothesis two shows that market access networks have a significant positive effect on the export performance of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. While this is consistent with Al-Tal and Bani-Khalid (2021), who found similar effects among Jordanian SMEs, and Rahman and Abdullah (2019), who reported improved market expansion in Malaysian luxury hotels, the Nigerian cashew export context suggests a deeper structural explanation beyond simple market expansion. A key interpretation is that market access networks function as a "gateway mechanism" that determines who gets connected to profitable international value chains and who remains excluded. In the Nigerian cashew sector, access to export markets is not only a matter of production capacity but also depends heavily on relationships with buyers, aggregators, export agents, and logistics intermediaries. Therefore, market access networks reduce the friction of entry into global trade by lowering search costs, improving buyer identification, and increasing transaction reliability. This implies that export performance is not only driven by competitiveness in production, but also by relational positioning within the market structure.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding strengthens the argument of network theory and internationalisation models that emphasise the role of relational embeddedness in market entry. It suggests that firms do not enter export markets purely through internal capabilities but through access to externally controlled distribution channels. In this sense, market access networks act as a structural advantage that shapes export opportunities, particularly in developing economies where formal export facilitation systems are weak or inconsistent. However, a more critical view shows that strong market access networks may also create dependency on intermediaries, which can reduce exporter bargaining power. This means that while networks improve export flow, they may simultaneously reinforce unequal value distribution within the supply chain. Smaller exporters or farmers without strong connections may still be excluded even in a growing export market, which limits the inclusiveness of the observed positive effect. Essentially, the finding indicates that market access networks are not

just facilitators of export activity but are central determinants of whether firms can participate meaningfully in international trade, especially in structurally constrained agricultural export systems like that of Nigeria.

Financial network and export of raw cashew nuts

The result of hypothesis three shows that financial networks have a significant positive effect on the export performance of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. This is in line with Rahman and Abdullah (2019), who found similar effects in Malaysian luxury hotels, and Yilmaz and Recep (2021), who reported that financial networks support foreign market entry of telecommunications firms in Türkiye. However, in the Nigerian cashew export context, the role of financial networks goes beyond simple access to funding and reflects deeper structural constraints in agricultural export financing. A key explanation is that financial networks act as a risk absorption mechanism in an environment characterised by high uncertainty in production cycles, price volatility, and weak formal credit systems. In Nigeria's cashew export sector, many exporters face limited access to affordable finance, while commercial banks often perceive agricultural exports as high-risk. As a result, financial networks (such as informal credit arrangements, trade finance partnerships, buyer credit, and relationships with export finance institutions) become essential in sustaining export operations. This suggests that export performance is not only a function of financial availability but also of financial trust embedded in relational networks.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding reinforces the resource dependence view, which argues that firms rely on external actors to access critical resources they cannot generate internally. It also extends network theory by showing that financial networks do not merely provide capital but also reduce perceived risk and improve liquidity flow across the export chain. In this sense, financial embeddedness becomes a strategic asset that enables firms to stabilise operations and engage continuously in international trade. However, a more critical interpretation suggests that reliance on financial networks may also introduce structural vulnerabilities. Exporters who depend heavily on informal financing arrangements may face higher repayment pressures or unfavourable trade terms imposed by financiers or buyers. This can reduce long-term profitability even if short-term export volumes increase. It also implies that access to financial networks may not be evenly distributed, meaning that larger or more established exporters are more likely to benefit than small-scale actors, thereby reinforcing inequality within the export system. Overall, the finding indicates that financial networks are not only supportive mechanisms for export activity but fundamental enablers of export survival and continuity in the raw cashew nut value chain, particularly in contexts where formal agricultural finance systems remain underdeveloped and restrictive.

Moderating role of product quality on the relationship between foreign market network and export of raw cashew nuts

The result of hypothesis four shows that product quality has a significant positive moderating

effect on the relationship between foreign market networks and the export performance of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. This is consistent with Hoang and Bui Thanh (2021), Thammasiri and Chansukree (2023), and Kim and Park (2021), who all demonstrate that product quality strengthens the impact of different marketing and communication variables on consumer-related outcomes. However, in the context of Nigerian cashew exports, the role of product quality appears to operate in a more fundamental and constraint-driven way than in consumer-facing studies. A deeper interpretation of this finding is that foreign market networks alone are not sufficient to guarantee export success unless they are supported by consistent and internationally acceptable product standards. In the cashew export value chain, foreign market networks may create access to buyers, trade partners, and distribution channels, but product quality determines whether these connections translate into actual trade transactions and repeat purchases. This suggests that product quality functions as a "conversion mechanism" that turns potential market access into realised export performance. Without meeting quality expectations, network connections may exist in principle but fail in practice.

From a theoretical perspective, this finding strengthens contingency theory by showing that the effect of networks on performance is conditional on internal capability factors, in this case product quality. It also extends network theory by demonstrating that relational advantages are not self-sufficient; they require complementary operational strengths to generate value. In other words, networks provide opportunity, but quality determines legitimacy and competitiveness within international markets. A more critical implication is that poor or inconsistent product quality can weaken even strong foreign market networks, leading to reputational damage and reduced buyer trust. In agricultural exports such as cashew nuts, quality variation arising from poor post-harvest handling, weak storage systems, or inadequate processing standards may limit exporters' ability to fully benefit from established market linkages. This means that firms with strong networks but weak quality control may experience unstable or declining export performance over time. Essentially, the result suggests that product quality is not just an operational input but a strategic condition that determines how effectively foreign market networks translate into export success. It highlights that sustainable competitiveness in the Nigerian cashew export sector depends on the alignment between relational access to markets and consistent delivery of internationally acceptable product standards.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

This study examined the moderating role of product quality on the relationship between foreign market networks and the export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. It was motivated by concerns that weak product quality limits how effectively exporters can benefit from foreign market connections. Using a cross-sectional survey of export personnel from registered cashew exporting firms and regression analysis, the study found that information, market access, and financial networks each have a significant positive effect on export performance.

It also found that product quality significantly strengthens the relationship between foreign market networks and export performance.

However, the findings should be interpreted with caution due to the cross-sectional design and limited sample, which restrict causal interpretation and broader generalisation, especially to informal exporters not included in the study. Despite these limitations, the results suggest that foreign market networks are more effective when supported by strong product quality that meets international standards. In conclusion, improving both market networks and product quality appears important for enhancing cashew export performance in Nigeria, though further longitudinal research would help confirm the stability of these relationships.

Recommendations

Informed by the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Nigerian exporters need to intensify their utilization of information networks (particularly digital platforms, trade forums, and industry-specific databases) as strategic tools for enhancing the export of raw cashew nuts. By actively engaging with these networks, exporters can establish connections with prospective international buyers, stay abreast of dynamic market trends, and obtain critical insights necessary for informed export decisions.
2. There is need for Nigerian exporters to actively strengthen and expand their engagement with established market access networks (such as trade partnerships, industry associations, and international distribution channels) to enhance the export of raw cashew nuts. By doing so, they can better understand global demand dynamics, ensure compliance with international standards, and improve their visibility and competitiveness in foreign markets, thereby boosting the export of raw cashew nuts.
3. Nigerian exporters should deepen their engagement with international financial networks (such as trade finance institutions, export credit agencies, and cross-border payment systems) to streamline export transactions, reduce currency exposure, and enhance the overall efficiency and volume of raw cashew nut exports. This will enhance the export of raw cashew nuts by improving payment security, reducing transaction costs, and enabling timely and efficient cross-border trade, thereby boosting Nigeria's competitiveness in the global trade of raw cashew nuts.
4. It is critical for Nigerian exporters to invest in training programmes, modern processing technologies, and quality control systems that ensure hygienic handling, moisture content control, defective nut elimination, quality compliance certifications, superior packaging materials, appropriate storage conditions, and the use of natural preservatives to meet international standards. This approach will enhance their reputation for consistently high-quality products, fostering trust and stronger relationships with foreign market networks, thereby increasing the demand and ease of exporting raw cashew nuts from Nigeria to global markets.

Contribution to Knowledge

This study contributes to existing knowledge on networks and internationalization by demonstrating the critical roles of information, market access and financial networks in enhancing the export of raw cashew nuts from Nigeria to global markets. Interestingly, the study has been able to bridge the research gap regarding the moderator effect of product quality on the relationship between foreign market networks and export performance. It definitively confirms that product quality has a significant positive moderating effect on foreign market networks and export of raw cashew nuts in Nigeria. Additionally, this study makes theoretical contributions by affirming the relevance of the network theory of internationalization and the enticement-repellent theory of quality in the context of raw cashew nuts exports. For instance, the network theory of internationalization is confirmed in the context of raw cashew nuts exports, highlighting the critical role of information, market access, and financial networks in facilitating international trade. This study further extends the theory by demonstrating how these networks directly influence export performance in emerging economies like Nigeria. Similarly, the study affirms the relevance of the enticement-repellant theory by demonstrating that high product quality enhances the positive influence of foreign market networks on raw cashew nut exports in Nigeria to global markets. As such, the findings suggest that product quality acts as an enticement, reinforcing consumer demand and supporting export performance in international markets.

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