



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

**MANAGER'S INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION, FIRM RESOURCES AND
EXPORT READINESS IN THE FLORICULTURE INDUSTRY IN UGANDA.**

A CASE OF SELECTED FLORICULTURE FIRMS IN UGANDA

BY

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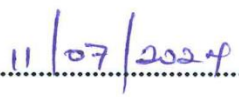
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JULY, 2024

DECLARATION

I **TWESIGYE WYCLIFFE** declare that this dissertation is my original work and has never been submitted to any University/Institution of higher learning for any award.

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this dissertation to my lovely parents who have worked tirelessly to see me through to where I am today, and to my supervisors, brother, and friends who have provided me with motivation and guidance throughout the whole research process through to the writing of the dissertation.

Thank you for all the love, prayers, support and encouragement.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

CEOs	Chief Executive Officers
CVI	Cronbach Validity Index
EU	European Union
SMEs	Small and Medium Enterprises
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Scientists
UFEA	Uganda Flowers Export Association
UK	United Kingdom
VIF	Variance Inflation Factor

ABSTRACT

This study examined the relationship between manager's international orientation, firm resources, and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. Specifically, the study aimed to establish the relationship between manager's international orientation and export readiness, firm resources and export readiness, manager's international orientation and firm resources as well as establishing the mediating effect of firm resources in the relationship between manager's international orientation and export readiness in selected floriculture firms in Uganda. The study employed a cross-sectional research design with quantitative methods to capture the relationship between each of the variables. A total of 65 officials from selected floriculture firms were targeted and 57 of these were sampled. Descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and mediation analyses were employed in the analysis. The correlation coefficient analysis revealed positive and significant relationships between manager's international orientation ($r=.675$, $p<.01$), firm resources ($r=.600$, $p<.01$,) and export readiness which imply that both variables are very significant in improving the level of export readiness in selected floriculture firms in Uganda. When controlling for firm resources, the direct effect of the manager's international orientation on export readiness reduced from $\text{Beta}=.505$ to $\text{Beta}=.376$ which remains significant. This is an indication that the relationship between manager's international orientation and export readiness is partially mediated by firm resources. The results were supported by previous studies, that is; there was a significant positive relationship between all pairs of the study variables. However, the relationship was stronger between firm resources and export readiness. The study recommends that it is important that the selected floriculture firms invest in obtaining adequate resources including raw materials, human capital and information technology. This is because the study established that there is a marginal lack among the firms studied. Regarding managers' international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda, there is a need to invest more in promoting awareness of international opportunities and foreign cultural awareness as this will render firms and managers more able to perform. This is because it is established that there is adequate unawareness of them. Further, there is a need to ensure that managers obtain the required awareness or knowledge of international opportunities available and foreign cultural practices so that the level of export readiness improves.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the study

The floriculture industry is considered one of the largest export earners for Uganda (Chege, Bundi, Kisingiri&Nekambi, 2021). Besides being a leading export earner for Uganda, the sector supports the livelihoods of over 40,000 individuals (Chege, Bundi, Kisingiri&Nekambi, 2021). Since 1995, the export volumes have increased from 1150 metric tonnes to 9500 metric tonnes in 2020 and the revenue has had a mixed growth and downfall (Europhyt, 2018). Directly, the industry employs about 10700 people (2021), most (70%) of whom are vulnerable women aged between 20 and 40 years of age. The sector therefore has a huge potential to contribute to the country's national economy, generate employment, stimulate infrastructural growth, and improve livelihoods.

Despite the notable contribution and the huge potential of the floriculture industry to Uganda's economy, the firms involved seem to be less competitive at the international level as evidenced by the continued rejection of the flower exports by the target foreign markets. For instance, some European Union markets rejected Ugandan roses following the discovery of moths in the roses (Chege et al., 2021; Europhyt, 2018). In addition, the firms involved have continued to perform marginally in their export markets when compared to other similar firms in Kenya, and Ethiopia. For instance, it's estimated that Kenya's flower exports generated revenue worth 58 million US dollars (Renner, 2020) and Ethiopia's 49 million US dollars in 2018 (Adebayo, Pam, Arsad, & Samian, 2020) which are a way far higher than that of Uganda which generated about 30 million US dollars in the same period (Guloba, Kakuru&Ssewanyana, 2021). Kenya's Total flower export earnings reached \$718 million in 2022 while in Ethiopia, the flower exports

reached USD 541 million surpassing expectations Uganda's flower earnings recorded \$200 million in 2022 which showed a reduction (Uganda Investment Authority, 2022).

The above scenarios have recently been attracting debate from policymakers and practitioners and the big question has been on whether the floriculture firms are ready to export. (Whitfield, Staritz, Melese, & Azizi, 2020). Export readiness can be defined as preparations undertaken by the firm to be able to sell its products or services to the international market (Rosnan et al., 2016). Such preparations include producing or manufacturing quality products and deciding on pre-shipment and post-shipment financing and marketing. Unfortunately, the flower exporting firms in Uganda are glaringly lacking in some of these parameters. For instance, only five companies have access to these local breeders and propagators, others obtain them from Kenya which is not friendly to Uganda's environment. In Uganda, there are no local breeders and just one freight forwarding company that provides cold chain logistics for 80% of the sector. Another challenge is complying with the phytosanitary export requirements to export to the EU. Only two floricultural firms can meet these requirements (Uganda Flowers Exporters Association, 2022). A third challenge, and perhaps the most onerous challenge, is the need for hard currency to undertake foreign transactions, with the volatility of the exchange rate putting local firms at a disadvantage in external trade (Nakaweesi, 2016). Lastly, over 70% of the firms lack the required capital to conduct research and this affects the level of innovativeness. These manifestations seem to suggest that perhaps the flower exporting firms are not yet ready to fully exploit the huge foreign market potential which greatly affects their export revenues.

Empirical studies have demonstrated that the international orientation of the Managers within the exporting firms greatly influences the readiness to export (Bakunda, 2004). Acedo & Jones (2017) define international orientation as a managerial capability that describes the positive attitude of

managers towards exporting and other international activities. Specifically, international orientation is a phenomenon in which firms have the desire to deepen their understanding of international markets; consumers, competitors, and the general business environment (Diego, et al., 2021). Firms attain market orientation by doing rigorous export market intelligence in the foreign markets where they intend to sell their products and services (Chugan& Singh, 2015; Eldik&Viviers, 2005). Besides, international orientation enables firms to better sieve opportunities, identify threats and devise means of mitigation of the threats in export markets. International orientation constitutes three related sub-variables: awareness of international product-market opportunities, commitment to exploiting international market opportunities, and cultural awareness and sensitivity (Bakunda, 2004).

Besides, other studies have indicated that possession of resources within a firm could greatly influence its readiness to export (Eldik&Viviers, 2015). Particularly, Lengnick-Hall et al., (2011) showed that assets are competencies when they are managed efficiently and effectively by people. In the same vein, a network of knowledgeable people is key in production advisory services for instance on the packaging of products to ensure that they conform to market entry requirements and are economical to ship (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2010). Firms with adequate assets and a network of knowledgeable staff are more likely to demonstrate readiness to export compared to those that lack such a capability (Eldik&Viviers, 2015).

Based on the above assertions, it's evident that the export readiness of firms is greatly influenced by the international orientation of managers and firm resources. However, the extent to which this view is true to Uganda's flower exporting firms that seem to be less competitive than their counterparts in Kenya and Ethiopia is not yet clear. This study therefore sought to empirically

test the significance of a manager's international orientation and firm resources on the export readiness of flower exporting firms in Uganda.

1.2 Statement of the problem

Despite the huge market potential internationally, most flower exporting firms in Uganda seem not to be ready to tap into this potential. For instance, UFEA statistics show that in 2018, Uganda exported 8,810 tonnes of flowers, down from the 12,364 tonnes recorded in 2017 (The East African 2021). The total earnings dropped from \$243 million in 2018 to \$200 million in 2022 (Uganda Investment Authority, 2022). This implies that the trend of exporting flowers has been going down. During this period, the revenue earned from the exports went down by 18.8 per cent; in 2018 the country realized \$46 million, and in 2019 this figure was down to \$38.7 million (Chege, et al., 2021). Some European Union markets rejected Ugandan roses following the discovery of moths in the roses. The trend of interception in Uganda's floriculture sub-sector has been rising between 2009 and 2019 due to *S. littoralis* and other HO in the period 2009 and June 2019. The highest numbers were reported in 2012–2014, with a peak in 2018. According to the EU, exporters from Uganda failed to comply with the phytosanitary certification requirements (Chege et al., 2021; Europhyt, 2018). This was further qualified amongst SMEs studied. Most firms are still characterized by poor-quality products and poor investment. This perhaps suggests that the flower exporting firms are not ready enough to export to international markets. While empirical studies associate firms' export readiness with the manager's international orientation (Ayuso&Navarrete-Báez, 2018) and firm resources (Genc, et al., 2019), this evidence is glaringly lacking especially among the flower exporting in the Ugandan industry.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to establish the relationship between manager's international orientation, firm resources and export readiness using a case of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

1.4 Objectives of the study

- i. To establish the relationship between the manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda
- ii. To establish the relationship between the manager's international orientation and firm resources of selected floriculture firms in Uganda
- iii. To establish the relationship between firm resources and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda
- iv. To establish the mediating effect of firm resources in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda

1.5 Research Questions

- i) What is the relationship between the manager's international orientation and the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda?
- ii) What is the relationship between the manager's international orientation and firm resources of selected floriculture firms in Uganda?
- iii) What is the relationship between firm resources and the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda?
- iv) What is the mediating effect of firm resources in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda?

1.6 Scope of the study

1.6.1 Conceptual scope

The study was limited to managers' international orientation and firm resources as independent variables and export readiness as dependent variables. These variables were mediated by firm resources.

1.6.2 Geographical Scope

The study targeted all the flower exporting firms in Uganda with a special focus on Rosebud Limited, Victoria Flower Limited, and Uganda Flowers Limited. This is because they form a mixture of best and poorly performing firms in the industry.

1.6.3 Time Scope

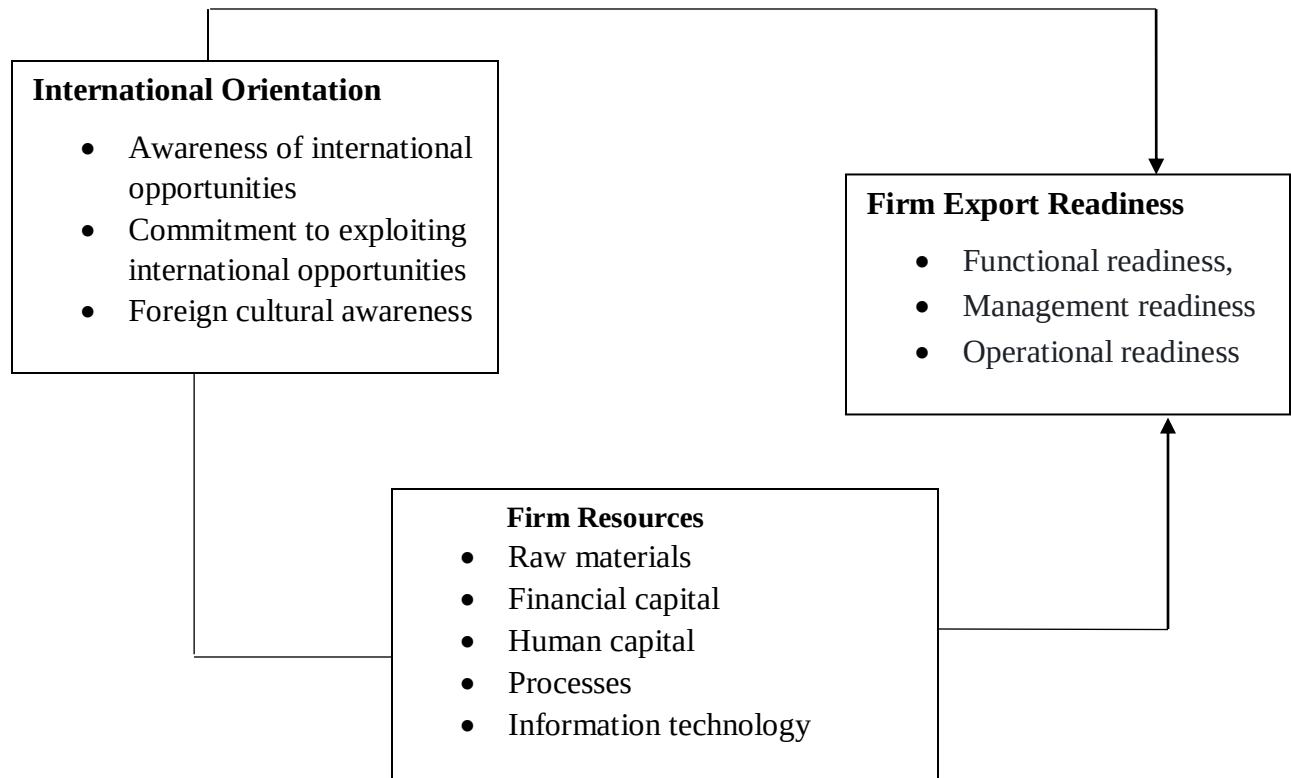
The study focused on a period from 2020 to 2022 because this is when floriculture firms were struggling to adapt to COVID-19 challenges in Uganda and globally.

1.7. Significance of the study

- i)** The study will provide guidelines on how international orientation and firm resources can be fueled or spearheaded by floriculture firms to achieve enhanced export readiness in Uganda.
- ii)** To policymakers, the study will help the Export Promotions Board with a clear picture of the actual role of international orientation and firm resources in fostering the export readiness of firms in the exporting industry in Uganda.
- iii)** To business owners, the study will act as a guideline for business practitioners in providing the central components for developing a successful international promotion framework for SMEs in Uganda.

iv) To future researchers and academicians, the study will act as a springboard from which to generate future research on the export readiness of firms and suggest direction for such studies.

1.8. Conceptual framework



Source: modified from Literature of Bankunda (2004);Kitonyi, et al., (2020) and Gerschewski (2009).

Figure 1.Conceptual framework

1.8.1 Explanation of the conceptual framework

International orientation leads to export readiness. International orientation and firm resources lead to firm resources. It was therefore hypothesized that there is a mediating effect of firm resources in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness. This is congruent with Bankunda (2004)who acknowledged that international orientation exhibited in the form of awareness of international opportunities, commitment to exploiting international opportunities and foreign cultural awarenessare central to export readiness. This is further evidenced by Kitonyiet al., (2020) who assert that the firm export readiness is dependent on firm

resources demonstrated in the form of raw material, financial capital, human capital, processes, and information technology. Finally, Gerschewski (2020) expressed that the role of SME international orientation towards export readiness is majorly achieved when they have the required firm resources.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter brings out the issues that have been explored and studied about export readiness, international orientation, and firm resources in different floricultural firms around the world and in Uganda in particular. A detailed literature search has been conducted and below is what has been established from a number of scholars.

2.2 The relationship between manager's international orientation and the export readiness of the firm

A number of studies have linked international orientation towards decision-making on export activity (i.e., Gerschewski, 2017; Gray & McNaughton, 2020; Kabagambe et al., 2012). Additionally, Calof& Beamish (2015) established that the majority (80%) of foreign market entry decisions were made based on an intuitive or gut-feel process on the part of the SME decision-maker. The study found that 24% of all export-related decisions that were made, the basis was the manager's belief that they were comfortable committing to developing export markets. Attitudinal commitment is an individual phenomenon which ultimately influences the commitment of resources as a pre-requisite to export readiness. According to Canabal& White (2018), there is a strong relationship between international orientation and export readiness. This is because a manager with a positive attitude to exporting is likely to carefully develop programs that will enable the firm to enter the export market. This is justified by the fact that management's predisposition to internationalization positively influences the firm's preparedness to engage in exporting. During the pre-internationalization phase, attitudinal

commitment behaviours exhibited by decision-makers as a response to stimuli include export commitment and international orientation (Ali & Ali, 2013).

International orientations are highly functional for individuals because they guide their perceptions, information processing, and behaviour which overall affects the organizational capacity of firms since decision-making is embedded into the founders' minds (Burnett, 2010; Fernández-Mesa & Alegre-Vidal, 2013; Gerschewski, 2007; Schienstock, 2009). International orientation also intervenes when selecting alternatives in the decision process considering that it consists of the direction given in response to the presence of the object. International orientation also allows the individual to make choices more quickly although the decision-making is subject to biases. It should however be noted that within an international context, we can expect that attitude toward internationalization will be linked to the speed with which the entrepreneur is eager to develop international activities (Ricard et al., 2013).

The age of a CEO could play an important role in internationalization and the subsequent entry of a firm into the international market. According to Andersson et al. (2014), younger CEOs see the world as a global marketplace. Often, they don't regard country borders as barriers to international activities and they decide to internationalize even further. By taking riskier decisions they can grasp the opportunities outside of their home market. Such perceptions of young CEOs could have been informed by the exposure to the international arena. According to Piaskowska & Trojanowski (2014), the high international orientation of a manager means high self-evaluation, which could lead to overconfidence in decision-making processes. This fact is explained as over-optimistic managers' perceptions towards international markets. The authors emphasize the importance and uniqueness of the international experience role in the formative years of a manager. Such experiences can evoke biculturalism. At the same time, the age of a

CEO in combination with high international orientation could negatively impact the internationalization readiness of a firm, as the risk threshold is very small.

A link between the educational level, age and international experience of top management teams and the international diversification of the company was identified by Herrman&Datta (2015). The results of their research show that managers with a higher educational level tend to have higher international diversification. The age of a manager is also an important factor to consider. Generally, the younger the manager is, the more active and flexible he is in seeking diversification. The experience of international operations is often associated with high levels of international orientation because of the possession by these managers of the skill set and market knowledge for successful internationalization.

Knowles et al. (2016) emphasize the importance of the managers' foreign language proficiency. They have empirically proved that successful managers tend to have higher foreign language proficiency than not-so-successful ones. But, according to the authors, foreign languages are not so critical to native English speakers, because authors haven't found a significant relationship between certain language skills and firm readiness. In other words, languages help to develop intercultural competencies and personal characteristics of a decision-maker. Another approach was taken by Williams &Chaston (2014). In their work, they have tried to identify the link between the linguistic capabilities of the export managers, their international experience, and their export marketing intelligence behaviour. The authors have identified three types of managers: managers-linguists, managers, who have experience of living or working abroad, and experienced managers, who are much more experienced in international operations execution. These three types of managers are not only different in their backgrounds but also in preferences for market intelligence techniques and decision-making behaviour. According to the authors,

living or working abroad affects the frequency of information-gathering and decision-making procedures. Those type of managers prefer to gather a greater amount of information about the market of their interest. The linguists focus more on active market intelligence techniques, i.e., visiting trade fairs, where they can use their differentiating language skills. Surprisingly, linguists are much more versatile than other types of decision-making behaviours. For example, they evaluate new markets for entry much more often or stop the firms' operation in a particular market. Experienced managers tend to use a contact-driven approach and rely on departmental market intelligence, which has been built in previous years of operations.

While Knowles et al. (2016) recognize the importance of the foreign language proficiency of exporting managers, Cahen et al. (2016) see the absence of other than native language proficiency as one of the main barriers to successful internationalization. At the same time, the authors note that the most important language for internationalization is English. This may not be the case for the developed markets, but for the developing economies foreign language proficiency could become a serious block for exporting activities. Taking into account the specifics of SMEs, where the CEO is often responsible for the exporting activities, the acquisition of the necessary language skills is a vital decision for successful exporting activities.

Hutchinson et al. (2016) suggest that travel experience and working abroad expose a manager to foreign cultures, which helps to build international experiential knowledge. Additionally, it helps managers to establish formal and informal networks in foreign markets. Informal networks play an important role during the initial internationalization phase while formal networks are dominant among internationally established firms. From the authors' point of view, retail SMEs could overcome the lack of knowledge of unfamiliar markets by establishing formal networks. The choice of degree and destination of internationalization of SMEs depends on the key

decision maker of a firm. Still, management expectations from internationalization were mostly influenced by market perceptions as well as by the current market knowledge.

Lastly, Game and Apfelthaler (2016) studied the motives of SMEs to choose a higher degree of internationalization commitment. The researchers found that SME internationalization behavior or export readiness is influenced by the attitudes of a decision-maker. The authors' model considers two types of characteristics: management characteristics and situational-specific factors. The key attitudes and characteristics of a manager were derived from the Calof and Beamish framework (1995), which included 5 factors: education, international experience, international commitment, risk attitude, and business culture knowledge. The model was applied to the sample of 224 Canadian SME decision-makers. As the result of the study, the authors have concluded that international experience, international commitment, business culture knowledge and perceived benefits greatly influence the choice of an internationalization mode.

2.3 The relationship between manager's international orientation and firm resources

A number of studies have linked international orientation towards firm resources to internationalization. Racela and Thoumrungroje (2014) explored that the way that managers think reflects the international strategies that have been adopted by their firms and subsequent readiness. Furthermore, the international orientation of the firm can lead to the promotion of opportunity-seeking in foreign markets among employees. Sorensen and Madsen (2012) conclude that an international orientation leads to a greater capacity to compile and interpret key information on international markets that can be used to make decisions to enter such markets. In the case of the floricultural sector, Knight (2020) notes that an international orientation allows these firms to develop strategic initiatives that are aimed at improving organizational performance. The author also argues that experience with internationalization and expansion to

different markets allows a firm to learn more about foreign markets and therefore ensure a greater possibility of readiness. In other words, the rapid internationalization demonstrates that their employees know the environment in which they operate. Therefore, their operations in export markets have become routine. The international orientation of the founders, managers and employees of the firm allows them to acquire the abilities that are necessary to maintain their competitive advantage. This makes them more willing to assume the risk when they expand into new markets and are best ready to export (Martin et al., 2018).

White et al. (2018) list the international orientation of the manager and firm resources as one of the basic six factors influencing export readiness in the floriculture sector, which includes firm characteristics, management attitudes, market characteristics, competitive or strategic advantage and strategic motivation. In the analysis, the authors used two variables of managers' international orientation: the number of business trips conducted per year and months spent outside the home country in international work assignments and three firm resources including recent IT resources, human resources and financial resources. The article suggests that determinants influencing the export readiness in manufacturing firms could be applied to the service companies and these are primarily international orientation and financial resources possessed by the firm.

Furthermore, the study by Lloyd-Reason & Mughan (2020) argues that decision-makers to a greater extent determine export readiness among SMEs. The study is mainly based on the LEONARDO project, which involved 8 SMEs from 4 EU countries. The authors emphasized that the international orientation of the decision-maker (his educational background, existing formal and informal contacts, language skills, knowledge of foreign competitors, experience of foreign cultures, etc.) is the key to the successful internationalization of a firm. This study

identified firm resources to have full mediation in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness of SMEs. If the decision-maker is not willing to embark on the strategy of internationalization and the SME is not willing to provide the resources in the form of expertise and finances, then it would be reflected in the failure of the firm to enter directly or indirectly in the international market. To illustrate this phenomenon, the authors have created a conceptual model of the “internationalization web”. According to the authors, supportive policies in the form of orientation and resources towards decision-makers, who are not globally oriented, will not give a sufficient result.

Furthermore, Kyvik et al. (2013) have observed the interplay between the international orientation of a manager and firm resources towards export readiness among small enterprises with 10-50 employees. The authors used the term “global mindset”, which included pro-internationalization of an owner, holistic and global vision of foreign markets, openness of an owner to foreign ideas and cultures, and willingness of an owner to work abroad. They have conducted a study of 215 Norwegian and 257 Portugal firms and have established that decision-making characteristics (cross-disciplinary collaboration skills, cognitive flexibility and networking capability) and work experience, including sales-marketing experience, general management experience, international work exposure, and international travel experience of decision-maker positively contribute to the forming of his global mindset. Resources including financial, raw materials, IT capability, adhering to the process and human resources were also identified as key in making the firm ready to directly or indirectly enter an international market. The authors argue that exposure to the international markets is the key determinant in forming the global mindset of small firm owners. Additionally, the global mindset of an owner influences the international behaviour of a firm.

2.3. The Relationship between firm resources and export readiness of a firm

The relationship between firm resources and export readiness of firms has been depicted in several studies. For instance, in a study done on Uganda-China trade focusing on the export readiness of oil-seed exporters, financial capability played a significant function towards export readiness (Ecel et al., 2013). The researchers concluded that financial capability is mainly associated with having access to timely working capital. This is because favourable or low-cost sources of financing to oil-seed exporters significantly improved Uganda's readiness in lucrative international markets. In addition, financial capability as a dimension of organizational capability looks at management being able to allocate sufficient funds for export activities. This is because firms that intend to engage in international export trade often require enough money to fund aspects such as product modification and other related operational costs such as pre-shipment and post-shipment, staffing, communication and travel expenses, all of which are necessary for the launch and sustainability of export business (Eldik&Viviers, 2005).

Studies showed that assets are competencies when they are managed efficiently and effectively by people (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Mabel & Rico, 2010; Ritter, 2006). In the same vein, a network of knowledgeable people is key in production advisory services for instance on the packaging of products to ensure that they conform to market entry requirements and are economical to ship (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2010). Firms with adequate assets and a network of knowledgeable staff are more likely to demonstrate readiness to export compared to those that lack such a capability.

Manning, Kannothea and Wissman-Weber ((2017) in a study done in South Africa showed how international firm resources contribute to global export trade readiness. The study showed that domestic firms that wish to venture into international business are offered targeted assistance and

an enabling environment. Domestic firms are given training and capacity building to enable them to gain insights into the requirements, competitor activities and the way they do their business. Through firm resources, firms also acquire new technologies, partnerships and product design which consequently increases the likelihood of being export-ready (Eldik&Viviers, 2005). According to Kabagambe et al. (2012), international firm resources had a strong relationship with the export readiness of firms in Uganda. Firm resources help domestic firms establish the existence and size of the markets for their products, prices, potential buyers, and competitors in foreign markets. In New Zealand, firm resources were also found to have a significant relationship with the market potential of polymer products by the Cape firm. Firm resources were conducted by undertaking research on product development, testing, and retesting as a mechanism of export readiness. Firm resources helped the Cape firm to develop products that met the customer requirements in the importing countries (Gerschewski, 2007).

In terms of human resources and expertise, a study by Xu et al. (2016) emphasizes the influence of managers' international experiential knowledge on the firm's internationalization readiness from the marketing point of view. According to them, international experiential knowledge, which is combined with cultural awareness, helps to identify future business trends. As Tan, the authors stand on the position that an experienced manager is a vital resource of a firm. Furthermore, the main responsibility of a firm is to transform this individual knowledge into the firm's shared knowledge. The international experience of the exporting manager is extremely important if the firm is a "late mover". Young companies do not have an international accumulated knowledge. Due to this lack of knowledge, executives are not able to exercise an effective international strategy. Even if such companies were able to enter the market many of them are not able to withstand the 18 competitions. As a result, such SMEs do not have an

incentive to start exporting activities and they commit themselves to their respective home markets (Cahen et al., 2016). Contrary to the importance of experiential international knowledge during the exporting phase, Ganotakis & Love (2012) have recognized the difference between the stages of entering the market and exporting itself. There are a lot of SMEs, which are merely present in international markets, but are unable to become a successful exporter. According to their view, managerial and international experience are vital to the decision to become an export firm. After that education has a positive effect on the export intensity. Generally, CEOs with higher levels of education tend to achieve higher levels of export readiness in the case of technologically advanced products.

2.5 The mediating effect of firm resources in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness

The relationship between international orientation, firm resources and export readiness has been reflected in numerous studies. For instance, an empirical study by Gray (2017) by the conduction of cluster analysis has identified three main groups of decision-makers in SMEs: international achievers, international strivers, and international pessimists. Achievers (26% of the total sample) have extremely positive attitudes towards international operations, possess better than average international business knowledge and skills, find international operations personally rewarding and have a higher level of global orientation. Strivers (54% of the total sample) differ from achievers only in the degree of global orientation and have less international marketing and business knowledge. Pessimists (20% of the total sample) have slightly better international marketing and business knowledge than the strivers but have low global orientation and aspirations for international operations. Achievers and strivers are concerned with psychic distance, but pessimists are not. Gray grounds his global orientation construct on the

Cateora&Keaveney approach. This means that gray's model of global orientation is a composition of international orientation and commitment, global and cultural awareness combined with the cultural sensitivity supported by required firm resources. The author has concluded that highly internationalized managers tend to work for better-performing companies, partly when provided with required firm resources. This means that there is a partial role played by firm resources in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness in floriculture firms. One major drawback of this empirical article is that it targeted only international marketing managers of New Zealand which calls for a current study like this to be conducted in Uganda to confirm the above findings in relation to the floricultural industry.

White et al. (2018) list the international orientation of the manager and firm resources as one of the basic six factors influencing export readiness in the floriculture sector, which includes firm characteristics, management attitudes, market characteristics, competitive or strategic advantage and strategic motivation. In the analysis, the authors used two variables of managers' international orientation: the number of business trips conducted per year and months spent outside the home country in international work assignments and three firm resources including recent IT resources, human resources and financial resources. The article suggests that determinants influencing the export readiness in manufacturing firms could be applied to the service companies and these are primarily international orientation and financial resources possessed by the firm.

Furthermore, the study by Lloyd-Reason &Mughan (2020) argues that the decision-maker to a greater extent determines export readiness among SMEs. The study is mainly based on the LEONARDO project, which involved 8 SMEs from 4 EU countries. The authors emphasized that the international orientation of the decision-maker (his educational background, existing

formal and informal contacts, language skills, knowledge of foreign competitors, experience of foreign cultures, etc.) is the key to the successful internationalization of a firm. This study identified firm resources to have full mediation in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness of SMEs. If the decision-maker is not willing to embark on the strategy of internationalization and the SME is not willing to provide the resources in the form of expertise and finances, then it would be reflected in the failure of the firm to enter directly or indirectly into the international market. To illustrate this phenomenon, the authors have created a conceptual model of the “internationalization web”. According to the authors, supportive policies in the form of orientation and resources towards decision-makers, who are not globally oriented, will not give a sufficient result.

Tan et al. (2017) have studied the influence of decision-makers' perception of stimuli and their attitudinal commitment towards internationalization inside the concept of internationalization readiness in the pre-export stage as a method for developing the Internationalization Readiness Index. The authors categorize the decision-makers attributes as a firm resource and emphasize their influence on the motivation and actions of internationalization. Acedo & Jones (2017) have studied the influence of managers' international orientation on the speed of internationalization regarding the proactivity, tolerance for ambiguity and risk perceptions of the managers. The authors have found that managers' international orientation generally leads to higher levels of proactivity and lower perception of risk, and this is further supported by the nature of the resources available. This explains the behaviour of highly internationalized firms, whose strategy is mainly shaped by the export managers and firm resources in place. The work of the export manager rotates on firm resources apportioned to the internationalized manager. As for the tolerance of ambiguity, the international orientation of a manager seems to have no effect if the

resources are not adequate. This means that firm export readiness is embedded in the presence of both an internationally oriented export manager and adequate firm resources.

Stoian & Rialp-Criado (2010) identified the decision-makers characteristics and perceptions and studied their influence on the export behaviour of a firm with the help of a case-study method. The authors have developed a research framework, which describes the managerial determinants of SMEs' Export Behavior. Their main assumption is that the export behaviour of a firm is shaped by the managerial characteristics, which include demographic factors (age and educational level), industry and management know-how, foreign language skills, risk tolerance, innovativeness and international experience, and managerial perceptions about export contribution towards firm readiness, growth/profit and about export stimuli and export barriers. At the same time, managerial perceptions are influenced by organizational, foreign market and domestic factors. They concluded that high educational level, foreign language proficiency, innovativeness and high-risk tolerance, strongly perceived export stimuli and low export barriers positively influence the export involvement and development of the 4 studied manufacturing SMEs in Spain. The authors argue that the export behavior of a firm can be explained with the managerial characteristics and perceptions rather than with the objective situation inside the company. The study would have been more relevant if the researchers had conducted a quantitative study. Due to the qualitative nature of the research methodology, the results cannot be extrapolated to a larger population.

Furthermore, Kyvik et al. (2013) have observed the interplay between the international orientation of a manager and firm resources towards export readiness among small enterprises with 10-50 employees. The authors used the term "global mindset", which included pro-internationalization of an owner, holistic and global vision of foreign markets, openness of an

owner to foreign ideas and cultures, and willingness of an owner to work abroad. They have conducted a study of 215 Norwegian and 257 Portugal firms and have established that decision-making characteristics (cross-disciplinary collaboration skills, cognitive flexibility and networking capability) and work experience, including sales-marketing experience, general management experience, international work exposure, and international travel experience of decision-maker positively contribute to the forming of his global mindset. Resources including financial, raw materials, IT capability, adhering to the process and human resources were also identified as key in making the firm ready to enter an international market directly or indirectly. The authors argue that exposure to the international markets is the key determinant in forming the global mindset of small firm owners. Additionally, the global mindset of an owner influences the international behavior of a firm.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter indicates how data for the study was collected, analyzed, and interpreted to answer the research questions meeting the purpose of this study. It therefore comprises the research design, study population, determination of sample size, sampling techniques, data collection methods and data collection instruments, validity and reliability analysis, data analysis, measurement of variables and ethical considerations.

3.2 Research Design

This study adopted a cross-sectional research design with a quantitative approach Kothari (2010). A cross-sectional design was preferred over the other designs like longitudinal and experimental since follow-up of the respondents was not necessary (Sufian, 2015). Thus, this design enabled the study to be carried out over a particular period and it is relatively quick and easy to conduct (no longer period of follow-up) and data on all variables was only collected once. A quantitative study approach was considered since it statistically enabled the researcher to compare two or more variables hence answering the research objectives.

3.3 Study Population

This study targeted a population of 22 flower-exporting firms in Uganda currently registered with the Uganda Flower Exporters Association (UFEA, 2022).

3.4 Determination of the Sample Size

Given that the population of this study was 22 firms, the sample size for the study was 19 firms as determined by Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table. In relation to the unit of analysis and inquiry, The Unit of Analysis was flower exporting firms because the study intended to investigate how

managers' international orientation and firm resources influence the export readiness of flower exporting firms. This study targeted at least 3 respondents from each firm, and these were our unit of inquiry whose views were aggregated at a firm level. Multiple respondents were used to reduce the possibility of single-respondent bias (Montabon, Daugherty & Chen, 2018). The study targeted the top managers in each firm. Studies indicate that senior people within the firm had the best view of the organization and therefore were well-positioned to provide the most accurate responses (Sharma, 2017).

3.5 Data source

This study obtained data from primary sources. This was because the study aimed at using a questionnaire to obtain the perception of individuals on the variables under study.

3.6 Data collection method

The main data source was primary, which was obtained using a closed-ended questionnaire. A questionnaire was used in this case because it had proved to be an invaluable method of collecting a wide range of information from a large sample (Sekaran, 2003) and the respondents filled them in at their convenience. The questionnaire had four sections. The first section indicated the biographic data of respondents including sex, age, level of education, and time spent in the company. The second section covered international orientation highlighting awareness of international opportunities, commitment to exploiting international opportunities and foreign cultural awareness. The third section was about firm resources (raw material, financial capital, human capital, processes and information technology) and the fourth had questions about export readiness (functional readiness, management commitment readiness and operational readiness). The questionnaire was designed with Likert-scale questions to make it easy to capture every response needed in the study.

3.7 Validity and Reliability Analysis

The validity of the study instruments was established using expert judgments (Oso&Onen, 2008). Experts included managers in selected floricultural firms. Three experts were contacted to assess and evaluate the validity of the instruments. The experts were requested to rate questions depending on their relevance. The Content Validity Index (C.V.I) was determined by dividing the number of items rated relevant and the total number of items. The CVI was greater than 0.7 for all the variables, hence the questionnaire was considered valid. A reliability test was also conducted to measure the extent to which data is without bias or error-free and hence ensures consistent measurement across time and the various items in the instrument. Therefore, internal consistency refers to the degree to which the items that make up the scale are all measuring the same underlying attribute (Field 2009). In the current study, Cronbach's alpha was employed to determine the internal consistency of the 5-Likert scales used to measure items of the study variables. In value with Field (2006), a certain number of items that were found to affect the reliability of the scales were deleted and the reliability increased to acceptable levels.

Table 1: Validity and reliability results

Variables	CVI'S	Cronbach's Alpha	No. of items
Manager's international orientation	0.755	.759	13
Firm resources	0.80	.847	14
Export readiness	0.85	.781	11

Both validity and reliability of the questionnaire were done and according to results in Table 2, all items measuring all variables under study were found to be valid and reliable since they had a coefficient above 0.70 set by Nunnally and Nunnally(1978)

3.8 Data Processing and Analysis

Data from the field was compiled, sorted, edited and coded to have the required quality, accuracy and completeness. The data was then entered into the computer using the Statistical Package for Social Scientists (SPSS version 20). During the analysis of data, descriptive statistics was used in presenting the results of the sample characteristics. Correlation analysis was used to determine the degree of relationship between international orientation, firm resources and export readiness. Linear regression was used to predict the export readiness in selected floriculture firms in Uganda. The mediating effect was calculated to establish the mediation role of firm resources, in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness.

3.8.2 Multicollinearity

Multicollinearity exists if the predictor variables correlate highly when regressed against each other. A collinearity diagnostic test under regression analysis was utilized. Under this procedure, two values are given, the tolerance and the variance inflation factor (VIF). The tolerance value is an indicator of how much of the variability of the specified independent variable is not explained by the other independent variables in the model. VIF is the inverse of the tolerance value. Based on the tolerance figures, various scholars indicate different cut-off points for the accept/reject standard. According to Menard (1995), if the tolerance values are below .2, that shows the existence of Multicollinearity. While VIF values above 10 indicate serious concern (Myers, 1990; Bowerman & O'Connell, 1990). The results in this study reveal tolerance values ranging from .8 and above. This is supported by VIF values below 10, therefore implying non-Multicollinearity among the variables, and thus the assumption was met (tolerance value above .2 and VIF below 10).

3.9 Measurement of Variables

The variables in this study were measured based on previous studies. International orientation was measured using awareness of international opportunities, commitment to exploiting international opportunities and foreign cultural awareness as measured by Bakunda (2004). Firm resources were measured using raw material, financial capital, human capital, processes and information technology measured by Kitonyi et al., (2020). Export readiness was measured in terms of functional readiness, management readiness and operational readiness as measured by Gerschewski (2020) respectively. Measurement items were anchored on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “strongly disagree” to 5 “strongly agree”

3.10 Ethical considerations

The major ethical problem anticipated in this study was the privacy of the subjects and the confidentiality of their information. To ensure privacy, the subjects were informed upfront that indeed their names were not required, that they had a right to leave questions unanswered for which they did not wish to offer the requisite information, and the researcher was not to put the respondents under pressure when this happened (Mugenda and Mugenda, 2003). To ensure confidentiality, the subjects were informed upfront that the information obtained was solely used for academic purposes and that data obtained on private matters were treated in confidence (Amin, 2005).

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS, AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the analysis of the data collected on the study variables to attend to the research objectives and consequently meet the purpose of the study. The analyses presented include correlation analysis and a test for mediation. The main analyses are presented according to the research objectives. The response rate of the study was 57 out of the 63 which had been targeted. This was calculated at 90.5% of the respondents.

4.2 Background information of respondents

Respondents were asked to provide information regarding their demographic profile which included gender, age bracket, level of education, and time spent at selected floriculture firms as follows.

4.2.1 Distribution by Gender of the Respondents

The Gender of the respondents was distributed as shown in Table 2

Table 2: Gender of the respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Male	33	57.9
Female	24	42.1
Total	57	100.0

Results in Table 2 indicate that the majority of the respondents were males (57.9%) and females were 42.1%. This implied that the study endeavoured to be gender sensitive which was very vital to establish their feelings towards manager's international orientation, firm resources, and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

4.2.2 Distribution by Age

The age of the respondents was distributed as shown in Table 3

Table 3: Age of the respondents

Variable	Frequency	Percent
19-29 years	18	31.6
30-39 years	27	47.4
40-49 years	10	17.5
Above 50 years	2	3.5
Total	57	100.0

The results in Table 3 indicate most of the respondents were above the age of 30-39 consisting of 47.4%, 31.6% were 19-29 years whilst 17.5% were 40-49 years and the remaining figure of 3.5% were above 50 years of age. This brought out a balanced picture in the investigation at selected floriculture firms since all existing ages were engaged in the study.

4.2.3 Distribution by education background

The education of the respondents was distributed as shown in Table 4

Table 4: Education background

Variable	Frequency	Percent
Bachelor's degree	30	52.6
Master's degree	15	26.3
Graduate	9	15.8
Certificate	3	5.3
Total	57	100.0

The results in Table 4 indicate most of the respondents were educated with a degree level and these took 52.6% whereas 26.3% had a master's degree. 15.8% were graduates and only 5.3% had obtained a certificate. This reflects that at least all existing education levels were engaged in the study.

4.2.4 Distribution by time spent in Selected Floriculture firms

Time spent working in selected floriculture firms was distributed as shown in Table 5.

Table 5: Time spent in Selected Floriculture firms

Variable	Frequency	Percent
1-5 years	5	8.8
6-10 years	33	57.9
11years and above	19	33.3
Total	57	100.0

The results in Table 5, indicate that the majority of the respondents had spent 6-10 years working with selected floriculture firms (57.9%) whereas 33.3% had taken 11 years and above and 8.8% had been there for at least 1-5 years. These had the required experience needed by this study to exactly inform the study about the manager's international orientation, firm resources, and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

4.3 Correlation Analysis

The correlation analysis was conducted to establish the relationship between the variables under study as summarized in Table 6. This analysis was particularly important in addressing the study objectives.

Table 6. Correlation analysis

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
International orientation (1)	1										
Awareness of international opportunities (2)	.744**	1									
Commitment to exploiting international opportunities (3)	.869**	.510**	1								
Foreign cultural awareness (4)	.871**	.400**	.689**	1							
Firm Resources (5)	.623**	.588**	.488**	.485**	1						
Raw materials (6)	.456**	.575**	.237	.328*	.797**	1					
Financial capital (7)	.546**	.468**	.478**	.425**	.847**	.698**	1				
Human capital (8)	.488**	.360**	.413**	.435**	.654**	.376**	.536**	1			
Processes (9)	.572**	.503**	.485**	.447**	.876**	.638**	.653**	.492**	1		
Information technology (10)	.369**	.450**	.244	.241	.784**	.580**	.507**	.236	.748**	1	
Export readiness (11)	.673**	.492**	.643**	.551**	.797**	.441**	.705**	.526**	.690**	.612**	1

***. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

Source: Primary data, 2023

4.3.1 Relationship between manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda

The results revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between a manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda ($r=.673$, $p<.01$). This means that any positive change in manager's international orientation is associated with a positive change in export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. This means that any improvement in awareness of international opportunities, commitment to exploiting international opportunities and foreign cultural awareness can always improve the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. This contributes to the understanding that with export readiness among exporting companies or firms, manager orientation on international

happening is key.

4.3.2 Relationship between manager's international orientation and firm resources of selected floriculture firms in Uganda

The results revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between a manager's international orientation and firm resources ($r=.623$, $p<.01$). This means that any positive change in a manager's international orientation is associated with a positive change in firm resources. This means that any improvement in awareness of international opportunities, commitment to exploiting international opportunities and foreign cultural awareness can always improve firm resources of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. This contributes to the understanding that firm resources can easily be mobilized with increased manager orientation towards what happens internationally.

4.3.3 Relationship between firm resources and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda

The results revealed that there is a positive significant relationship between firm resources and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda ($r=.797$, $p<.01$). This means that any positive change in firm resources is associated with a positive change in export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. This means that any improvement in raw materials, financial capital, human capital, processes and information technology does not necessarily improve on export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. This contributes to the understanding that for export readiness among exporting companies or firms, firm resources are a key component.

4.4 Regression analysis

Table 7: Model summary of Export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
(Constant)	.917	.279		3.286	.002
international orientation	.204	.069	.288	2.952	.005
Firm Resources	.569	.090	.617	6.331	.000
R Square		0.686			
Adjusted R Square		0.674			
F		58.940			
Sig.		0.000			

Dependent Variable: Export readiness

The predictive power of the model was found to be 67.4% (Adjusted $R^2 = 0.674$). This result indicates that the variation in the manager's international orientation and firm resources combined accounts for a 67.4% variation in the level of export readiness of selected floriculture firms. Nonetheless, considering the two predictors in this study, the results show that firm resources have a better contribution to the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda because it had (beta = .617, $p < .00$).

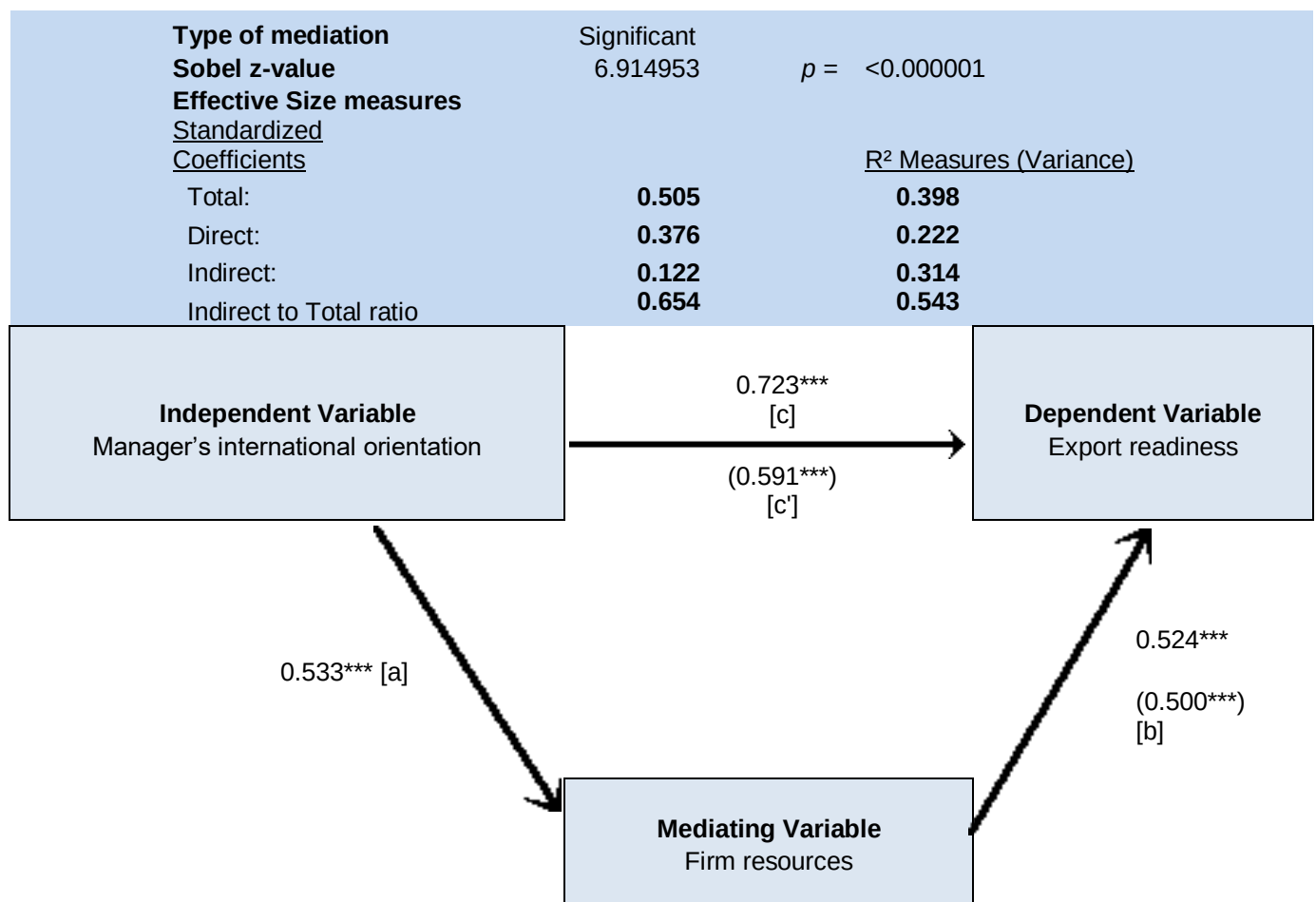
The findings in Table 8 showed that of all the predictor variables in the regression model of export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda, both manager's international orientation and firm resources (beta = .288, $p < .00$ and beta = .617, $p < .00$) were found to have a positive effect on export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. This implies that the higher the manager's international orientation and firm resources, the higher the level of export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. The regression model of export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda was found to be significant ($F = 186.126$, $p < .00$) and hence

well specified, which means that the manager's international orientation and firm resources were appropriate predictors of export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

4.5 Mediation effect

The test for mediation was conducted to find out if firm resources mediated the relationship between the manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

Figure 2: Mediation effect of firm resources in the relationship between manager's international orientation and Export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.



4.5.1 The mediating effect of firm resources in the relationship between manager's international orientation and Export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

The mediating effect of firm resources in the relationship between manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda; Baron and Kenny's (1986) mediation path analysis as shown in Figure 2 revealed the following:

- i) There was a significant direct effect of manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda (Beta=.723; $p < .05$).
- ii) There was a significant direct effect of the manager's international orientation and firm resources of selected floriculture firms in Uganda (Beta=.533; $p < .05$).
- iii) There was a significant direct effect on firm resources and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda (Beta=.524; $p < .05$).

When controlling for firm resources, the direct effect of the manager's international orientation on the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda reduced from Beta=.591 to Beta=.524 which remains significant. This is an indication that the relationship between the manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda is partially mediated by firm resources of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter was prepared to capture the summary of findings, conclusion and recommendation of the study carried out to establish the relationship between manager's international orientation, firm resources, and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. The chapter forms the final part of the research study highlighting the key findings of the study. The chapter is divided into four main sections including the summary of findings, conclusion, recommendations, and suggested areas for further study.

5.1 Discussion of findings

The study was carried out based on four important objectives; to investigate the relationship between the manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda; to investigate the relationship between the manager's international orientation and firm resources; to investigate the relationship between firm resources and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda; and to establish the mediating effect of firm resources in the relationship between manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

5.1.1 The relationship between manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda

Manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda were found to be positively related variables. This finding was true for the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda and all dimensions of the manager's international orientation. This implies that if selected floriculture firms and their managers have awareness of

international opportunities, commitment to exploiting international opportunities and foreign cultural awareness, then their rate of export readiness will be high. This finding implies that within selected floriculture firms, there is a need to ensure that managers' international orientation is fastened as it is key in achieving export readiness of these firms.

The finding of the current study about manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda is supported by for instance, Calof & Beamish (2015) established that the majority (80%) of foreign market entry decisions were made based on an intuitive or gut-feel process on the part of the SME decision-maker. The study found that 24% of all export-related decisions that were made, the basis was the manager's belief that they were comfortable with developing export markets. Attitudinal commitment is an individual phenomenon which ultimately influences the commitment of resources as a pre-requisite to export readiness. According to Canabal & White (2018), there is a strong relationship between international orientation and export readiness. This is because a manager with a positive attitude to exporting is likely to carefully develop programs that will enable the firm to enter the export market. This is justified by the fact that management's predisposition to internationalization positively influences the firm's preparedness to engage in exporting. During the pre-internationalization phase, attitudinal commitment behaviors exhibited by decision-makers as a response to stimuli include export commitment and international orientation (Ali & Ali, 2013).

International orientations are highly functional for individuals because they guide their perceptions, information processing, and behavior which overall affects the organizational capacity of firms since decision-making is embedded into the founders' minds (Burnett, 2010; Fernández-Mesa & Alegre-Vidal, 2013; Gerschewski, 2007; Schienstock, 2009). International orientation also intervenes when selecting alternatives in the decision process considering that it

consists of the direction given in response to the presence of the object. International orientation also allows the individual to make choices more quickly although the decision-making is subject to biases. It should however be noted that within an international context, we can expect that attitude toward internationalization will be linked to the speed with which the entrepreneur is eager to develop international activities (Ricard et al., 2013).

While Knowles et al. (2016) recognize the importance of the foreign language proficiency of exporting managers, Cahen et al. (2016) see the absence of other than native language proficiency as one of the main barriers to successful internationalization. At the same time, the authors note that the most important language for internationalization is English. This may not be the case for the developed markets, but for the developing economies foreign language proficiency could become a serious block for exporting activities. Considering the specifics of SMEs, where the CEO is often responsible for the export activities, the acquisition of the necessary language skills is a vital decision for successful exporting activities. Hutchinson et al. (2016) suggest that travel experience and working abroad expose a manager to foreign cultures, which helps to build international experiential knowledge. Additionally, it helps managers to establish formal and informal networks in foreign markets. Informal networks play an important role during the initial internationalization phase while formal networks are dominant among internationally established firms. From the authors' point of view, retail SMEs could overcome the lack of knowledge of unfamiliar markets by establishing formal networks. The choice of degree and destination of internationalization of SMEs depends on the key decision maker of a firm. Still, management expectations from internationalization were mostly influenced by market perceptions as well as by the current market knowledge.

5.1.2 The relationship between manager's international orientation and firm resources of selected floriculture firms in Uganda

The manager's international orientation and firm resources were found to be positively related variables. Like earlier results, this finding was true for firm resources and all dimensions of the manager's international orientation. This implies that if selected floriculture firms and their managers are aware of international opportunities, commitment to exploiting international opportunities and foreign cultural awareness, then firm resources will be enhanced to compete globally. This finding implies that within selected floriculture firms, there is a need to ensure that managers' international orientation and firm resources are fastened as it is key in achieving expert readiness of these firms.

The finding of the current study about manager's international orientation and firm resources is supported by for instance; Racela and Thoumrungroje (2014) explored that the way that managers think reflects the international strategies that have been adopted by their firms and subsequent readiness. Furthermore, the international orientation of the firm can lead to the promotion of opportunity-seeking in foreign markets among employees. Sorensen and Madsen (2012) conclude that an international orientation leads to a greater capacity to compile and interpret key information on international markets that can be used to make decisions to enter such markets. In the case of the floricultural sector, Knight (2020) notes that an international orientation allows these firms to develop strategic initiatives that are aimed at improving organizational performance. The author also argues that experience with internationalization and expansion to different markets allows a firm to learn more about foreign markets and therefore ensure a greater possibility of readiness. In other words, the rapid internationalization demonstrates that their employees know the environment in which they operate. Therefore, their

operations in export markets become routines. The international orientation of the founders, managers and employees of the firm allows them to acquire the abilities that are necessary to maintain their competitive advantage. This makes them more willing to assume the risk when they expand into new markets and are best ready to export (Martin et al., 2018).

White et al. (2018) list the international orientation of the manager and firm resources as one of the basic six factors influencing export readiness in the floriculture sector, which includes firm characteristics, management attitudes, market characteristics, competitive or strategic advantage and strategic motivation. In the analysis, the authors used two variables of managers' international orientation: the number of business trips conducted per year and months spent outside the home country in international work assignments and three firm resources including recent IT resources, human resources and financial resources. The article suggests that determinants influencing the export readiness in manufacturing firms could be applied to the service companies and these are primarily international orientation and financial resources possessed by the firm.

Furthermore, the study by Lloyd-Reason & Mughan (2020) argues that decision-makers to a greater extent determine export readiness among SMEs. The study is mainly based on the LEONARDO project, which involved 8 SMEs from 4 EU countries. The authors emphasized that the international orientation of the decision-maker (his educational background, existing formal and informal contacts, language skills, knowledge of foreign competitors, experience of foreign cultures, etc.) is the key to the successful internationalization of a firm. This study identified firm resources to have full mediation in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness of SMEs. If the decision-maker is not willing to embark on the strategy of internationalization and the SME is not willing to provide the resources in the form of

expertise and finances, then it would be reflected in the failure of the firm to fear entering directly or indirectly in the international market. To illustrate this phenomenon, the authors have created a conceptual model of the “internationalization web”. According to the authors, supportive policies in the form of orientation and resources towards decision-makers, who are not globally oriented, will not give a sufficient result.

5.1.3 The relationship between firm resources and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda

Firm resources and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda were found to be positively related variables. Similar to earlier results, these findings were true for the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda and all dimensions of firm resources. This implies that if selected floriculture firms utilize or obtain raw materials, financial capital, human capital, processes and information technology, then their level of export readiness will be high. This finding implies that within selected floriculture firms, there is a need to ensure that firm resources are availed as it is key in achieving the export readiness of these firms.

The finding of the current study about firm resources and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda is supported by for instance, Studies showed that assets are competencies when they are managed efficiently and effectively by people (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Mabel & Rico, 2010; Ritter, 2006). In the same vein, a network of knowledgeable people is key in production advisory services for instance on the packaging of products to ensure that they conform to market entry requirements and are economical to ship (Lengnick-Hall et al., 2011; Tan et al., 2010). Firms with adequate assets and a network of knowledgeable staff are more likely to demonstrate readiness to export compared to those that lack such a capability. Manning, Kannothen and Wissman-Weber ((2017) in a study done in South Africa showed how

international firm resources contribute to global export trade readiness. The study showed that domestic firms that wish to venture into international business are offered targeted assistance and an enabling environment. Domestic firms are given training and capacity building to enable them to gain insights into the requirements, competitor activities and the way they do their business. Through firm resources, firms also acquire new technologies, partnerships and product design which consequently increases the likelihood of being export-ready (Eldik&Viviers, 2005). According to Kabagambe et al. (2012), international firm resources had a strong relationship with the export readiness of firms in Uganda. Firm resources help domestic firms establish the existence and size of the markets for their products, prices, potential buyers, and competitors in foreign markets. In New Zealand, firm resources were also found to have a significant relationship with the market potential of polymer products by the Cape firm. Firm resources were conducted by undertaking research on product development, testing, and retesting as a mechanism of export readiness. Firm resources helped the Cape firm to develop products that met the customer requirements in the importing countries (Gerschewski, 2007).

In terms of human resources and expertise, a study by Xu et al. (2016) emphasizes the influence of managers' international experiential knowledge on the firm's internationalization readiness from the marketing point of view. According to them, international experiential knowledge, which is combined with cultural awareness, helps to identify future business trends. As Tan, the authors stand on the position that an experienced manager is a vital resource of a firm. Furthermore, the main responsibility of a firm is to transform this individual knowledge into the firm's shared knowledge. The international experience of the exporting manager is extremely important if the firm is a "late mover". Young companies do not have an international accumulated knowledge. Due to this lack of knowledge, executives are not able to exercise

an ineffective international strategy. Even if such companies were able to enter the market many of them are not able to withstand the competition. As a result, such SMEs do not have the incentive to start exporting activities and they commit themselves to their respective home markets (Cahen et al., 2016). Contrary to the importance of experiential international knowledge during the exporting phase, Ganotakis & Love (2012) have recognized the difference between the stages of entering the market and exporting itself. There are a lot of SMEs, which are merely present in international markets, but are unable to become a successful exporter. According to their view, managerial and international experience are vital to the decision to become an exporting firm. After that education has a positive effect on the export intensity. Generally, CEOs with higher levels of education tend to achieve higher levels of export readiness in the case of technologically advanced products.

5.1.4 The mediating effect of firm resources in the relationship between manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda

The findings of the current study about Baron and Kenny's (1986) path analysis indicate that at first, there was a significant relationship between manager's international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. In other words, there was a relationship to be mediated. Furthermore, the regression of the manager's international orientation and firm resources was also significant. This implies that the relationship between the manager's international orientation and the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda is partially mediated by firm resources. This can be interpreted to mean that the relationship between a manager's international orientation and the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda is not wholly affected by firm resources, however, it plays a significant part in achieving export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda and other factors remains

significant in that relationship. This means that firm resources should not be downplayed by selected floriculture firms if they want the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda to improve. This finding implies that within selected floriculture firms, there is a need to ensure that managers' international orientation is fastened as it is key in achieving export readiness of these firms.

In line with an empirical study by Gray (2017), the conduction of cluster analysis has identified three main groups of decision-makers in SMEs: international achievers, international strivers, and international pessimists. Achievers (26% of the total sample) have extremely positive attitudes towards international operations, possess better than average international business knowledge and skills, find international operations personally rewarding and have a higher level of global orientation. Strivers (54% of the total sample) differ from achievers only in the degree of global orientation and have less international marketing and business knowledge. Pessimists (20% of the total sample) have slightly better international marketing and business knowledge than the strivers but have low global orientation and aspirations for international operations. Achievers and strivers are concerned with psychic distance, but pessimists are not. Gray grounds his global orientation construct on the Cateora & Keaveney approach. This means that Gray's model of global orientation is a composition of international orientation and commitment, global and cultural awareness combined with the cultural sensitivity supported by required firm resources. The author has concluded that highly internationalized managers tend to work for better-performing companies, partly when provided with required firm resources. This means that there is a partial role played by firm resources in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness in floriculture firms. One major drawback of this empirical article is that it targeted only international marketing managers of New Zealand which calls for a

current study like this to be conducted in Uganda to confirm the above findings in relation to the floricultural industry.

Furthermore, White et al. (2018) list the international orientation of the manager and firm resources as one of the basic six factors influencing export readiness in the floriculture sector, which includes firm characteristics, management attitudes, market characteristics, competitive or strategic advantage and strategic motivation. In the analysis, the authors used two variables of managers' international orientation: the number of business trips conducted per year and months spent outside the home country in international work assignments and three firm resources including recent IT resources, human resources and financial resources. The article suggests that determinants influencing the export readiness in manufacturing firms could be applied to the service companies and these are primarily international orientation and financial resources possessed by the firm.

Furthermore, the study by Lloyd-Reason & Mughan (2020) argues that decision-makers to a greater extent determine export readiness among SMEs. The study is mainly based on the LEONARDO project, which involved 8 SMEs from 4 EU countries. The authors emphasized that the international orientation of the decision-maker (his educational background, existing formal and informal contacts, language skills, knowledge of foreign competitors, experience of foreign cultures, etc.) is the key to the successful internationalization of a firm. This study identified firm resources to have a full mediation in the relationship between international orientation and export readiness of SMEs. If the decision-maker is not willing to embark on the strategy of internationalization and the SME is not willing to provide the resources in the form of expertise and finances, then it would be reflected in the failure of the firm to enter directly or indirectly in the international market. To illustrate this phenomenon, the authors have

created a conceptual model of the “internationalization web”. According to the authors, supportive policies in the form of orientation and resources towards decision-makers, who are not globally oriented, will not give a sufficient result.

Tan et al. (2017) also studied the influence of decision-makers' perception of stimuli and their attitudinal commitment towards internationalization inside the concept of internationalization readiness in the pre-export stage as a method for developing the Internationalization Readiness Index. The authors categorize the decision-makers attributes as a firm resource and emphasize their influence on the motivation and actions of internationalization. Acedo& Jones (2017) have studied the influence of managers' international orientation on the speed of internationalization regarding the proactivity, tolerance for ambiguity and risk perceptions of the managers. The authors have found that managers' international orientation generally leads to higher levels of proactivity and lower perception of risk, and this is further supported by the nature of the resources available. This explains the behaviour of highly internationalized firms, whose strategy is mainly shaped by the export managers and firm resources in place. The work of the export manager rotates on firm resources apportioned to the internationalized manager. As for the tolerance of ambiguity, the international orientation of a manager seems to have no effect if the resources are not adequate. This means that firm export readiness is embedded in the presence of both internationally oriented export managers and adequate firm resources.

Stoian&Rialp-Criado (2010) identified the decision-makers' characteristics and perceptions and studied their influence on the export behaviour of a firm with the help of a case-study method. The authors have developed a research framework, which describes the managerial determinants of SMEs' Export Behavior. Their main assumption is that the export behaviour of a firm is shaped by the managerial characteristics, which include demographic factors (age and

educational level), industry and management know-how, foreign language skills, risk tolerance, innovativeness and international experience, and managerial perceptions about export contribution towards firm readiness, growth/profit and about export stimuli and export barriers. At the same time, managerial perceptions are influenced by organizational, foreign market and domestic factors. They concluded that high educational level, foreign language proficiency, innovativeness and high-risk tolerance, strongly perceived export stimuli and low export barriers positively influence the export involvement and development of the 4 studied manufacturing SMEs in Spain. The authors argue that the export behaviour of a firm can be explained with the managerial characteristics and perceptions rather than with the objective situation inside the company.

5.2 Conclusion

From the discussions above we can conclude as follows.

The export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda depends on the prevailing manager's international orientation in an organization. The lesson reflected above is that the more the organization is aware of international opportunities, commits to exploiting international opportunities and aware of foreign cultural experiences, the more export readiness it becomes.

Secondly, it can be concluded that a manager's international orientation is positively and significantly related to firm resources. This means that the more managers are aware of international opportunities, commit to exploiting international opportunities and improve their foreign cultural awareness, the more ready their company becomes to export globally.

Thirdly, it is learnt that firm resources are positively and significantly related to the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. This means that the higher the organization

utilize or obtains raw materials, financial capital, human capital, processes and information technology, the higher the exhibition of export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

It was learned that firm resources can partially mediate the relationship between manager's international orientation and the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda. This meant that selected floriculture firms could achieve export readiness with or without necessarily having firm resources. It meant that firm resources play a partial role in ensuring managers' international orientations.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the above conclusion, the following recommendations have been suggested.

- i) It is important that the selected floriculture firms invest in obtaining adequate resources including raw materials, human capital and information technology. This is because the study established that there is a marginal lack among the firms studied. This thus contributes to improving the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda since the role of raw materials, human capital and information technology has been found central.
- ii) Regarding managers' international orientation and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda, there is a need to invest more in promoting awareness of international opportunities and foreign cultural awareness as this will render firms and managers more able to perform. This is because it is established that there is adequate unawareness of them. This thus contributes to improving the export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda since the role of promoting awareness of international opportunities and foreign cultural awareness was found to be key.

- iii) Further, there is a need to ensure that managers obtain the required awareness or knowledge of international opportunities available and foreign cultural practices so that the level of export readiness improves. This is because it has been found key in the relationship.
- iv) Selected floriculture firms need to encourage managers' international orientation alongside mobilizing adequate firm resources if they can best achieve export readiness. This contributes to new knowledge in this field since the role of managerial international orientation is found imperative in achieving export readiness.

5.4 Areas of further study

In the process of carrying out this research, some areas could have triggered a sense of curiosity in the academic area and perhaps in practice hence the need to quench these curiosities by engaging in future research. These include among others the need to;

- i) Establish the relationship between international market intelligence and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.
- ii) Establish if there is a relationship between the capacity to supply and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.
- iii) Establish a study on the manager's international orientation, technical know-how, and export readiness of selected floriculture firms in Uganda.

5.5 Limitations of the study

Like any other research study, the researcher faced the following limitations during the study.

- i. There was a lack of cooperation among some respondents regarding revealing relevant information and filling out the questionnaires. This was overcome by ensuring confidentiality and voluntary participation.
- ii. The study being quantitative required extensive statistical analysis without in-depth qualitative analysis

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: QUESTIONNAIRE

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Dear Respondent,

This study seeks to generate data and information on *international orientation, firm resources and export readiness, in the case of Selected Floriculture Firms in Uganda*. You are requested to participate in this study because of the role you play in exports in particular. The information that you will provide is solely for academic purposes and will be treated with utmost confidentiality.

Thank you for participating and making this study a success.

SECTION A: Biodata(Tick where appropriate)

S/N	VARIABLE	Tick
	Gender	
1.	Male	
2.	Female	
	Age	
1.	19-29yrs	
2.	30-39yrs	
3.	40-49yrs	
4.	Above 50yrs	
	Level of Education	
1.	Bachelor's Degree	
2.	Master's Degree	
3.	PhD/Doctorate	
4.	Others (specify)	
	Time spent in Selected Floriculture Firms In Uganda	
1.	<5yr	
2.	6-10yrs	
3.	11 and above	

SECTION B: INTERNATIONAL ORIENTATION

The following statements below are about how you feel about international orientation. Please read each statement carefully and decide if your organization or manager behave accordingly. If the organization/firm behaves in the stated way, indicate **(by ticking)** the extent to which you agree with the following statement

	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
		1	2	3	4	5
	<i>Awareness of international opportunities</i>					
SC1	Our company has a marketing strategy/plan covering product unique selling proposition, pricing, distribution and promotion	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SC2	We have made personal visits to foreign markets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SC3	We have invested significantly in establishing and maintaining a physical presence in international markets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SC4	We have central trade offices, foreign distributors and overseas retailers	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
SC5	We have allied with several trading companies	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	<i>Commitment to exploiting international opportunities</i>					
IC1.	We appreciate the importance of exporting to foreign markets because we believe that exporting will contribute to the firm's overall performance	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IC2	We have a strong domestic base to support our export activities	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IC3.	The management has devoted enough time to exporting its products to foreign markets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IC4	We have incorporated exporting into the overall firm strategy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IC5	Our products comply with UNBS and or any other international standards and	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	specifications					
	Foreign cultural awareness					
PC1	We possess the required proficiency in foreign target languages	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC2	We have significant international operations experience	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC3	We have experienced people living abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC4	We have experience of travelling abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
PC5	The level of education of our team is relative to international market demands	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION C: FIRM RESOURCES

The following statements are about how you feel about firm resources. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever act in this way while at your job. If you have acted in the stated way, indicate (**by ticking**) the extent to which you agree with the following statement.

	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
	Raw materials	1	2	3	4	5
RM1	We have required raw materials to satisfy the size of the market abroad	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RM 2	All raw materials required can be sourced locally here	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
RM 3	We have a timely supply chain to enable us to access all required product inputs	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	Financial capital					
FC 1	We have access to adequate financial resources at a reasonable cost to support our export marketing	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	development program					
FC 2	We can afford to invest in adapting our product/packaging if required	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FC3	Our export turnover has grown over the last 2 to 3 years	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	<i>Human capital</i>					
HC1	We have the capacity and experience to develop an export marketing plan	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
HC2	We have access to the technical expertise required to ensure that our product is suited to international markets in terms of quality and function	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
H3	We regularly collect/gather information on competitors, their products and prices on an informal or formal basis	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	<i>Processes</i>					
P1	We have sufficient resources to handle administrative matters of exports efficiently	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
P2	The management has invested in production processes (equipment) to ensure continuous supply in both the domestic and export markets					
P3	We have a functional quality management/assurance/ control system in place					
	<i>Information technology</i>					
IT1	We have efficient communication					

	systems to handle export operations (telephone, internet, email, website, fax) or to respond to enquiries or complaints					
IT2	In this company, we generate a lot of information concerning trends (e.g regulations, technological developments, political, economic) in foreign markets					
IT3	We have information/knowledge on the size of the world market for our product(s)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

SECTION D:EXPORT READINESS

The following statements are about how you feel about export readiness at work. Please read each statement carefully and decide if you ever behaved the same way at your job. If you have behaved in the stated way, indicate (**by ticking**) the extent to which you agree with the following statement.

	EXPORT READINESS					
	Statements	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
	<i>Functional readiness</i>					
FR 01	We have identified and analyzed specific markets where to export our products	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FR 02	We have developed a specific export business strategy	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FR 03	Our company has adequate financial resources for export operations	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
FR 04	Our company has established	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	relationships with distributors in the export markets					
FR 05	We believe that the company has developed sufficient capacity to meet export market delivery schedules	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	<i>Management readiness</i>					
MC1	We are ready and able to commit a substantial amount of time to the development of an international market (exporting)	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MC02	Our company has sufficient knowledge about the export markets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MC03	Our company staff are familiar with export procedures and documents	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MC04	Our management is always committed to making decisions by periodical market changes	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
MC05	The management set up a separate desk to handle exports in the organization	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
	<i>Operational readiness</i>					
IC 01	We are convinced that exports are an important aspect of our company's future survival	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IC 02	We are prepared to rearrange	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

	the way the business operates to become internationally competitive					
IC 03	We believe that the quality of our product is good for the export market	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IC 04	Our company complies with and meets the required standards in export markets	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
IC 05	We periodically obtain ideas from clients to improve products and services	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

THANK YOU!

APPENDIX II:
TABLE FOR DETERMINING SAMPLE SIZE FROM A GIVEN POPULATION

<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>S</i>
10	10	220	140	1200	291
15	14	230	144	1300	297
20	19	240	148	1400	302
25	24	250	152	1500	306
30	28	260	155	1600	310
35	32	270	159	1700	313
40	36	280	162	1800	317
45	40	290	165	1900	320
50	44	300	169	2000	322
55	48	320	175	2200	327
60	52	340	181	2400	331
65	56	360	186	2600	335
70	59	380	191	2800	338
75	63	400	196	3000	341
80	66	420	201	3500	346
85	70	440	205	4000	351
90	73	460	210	4500	354
95	76	480	214	5000	357
100	80	500	217	6000	361
110	86	550	226	7000	364
120	92	600	234	8000	367
130	97	650	242	9000	368
140	103	700	248	10000	370
150	108	750	254	15000	375
160	113	800	260	20000	377
170	118	850	265	30000	379
180	123	900	269	40000	380
190	127	950	274	50000	381
200	132	1000	278	75000	382
210	136	1100	285	1000000	384

Source: Krejcie& Morgan (1970, as cited by Amin, 2005)

Note. —*N* is population size.