

MAKERERE



UNIVERSITY

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

**QUALITY MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS OF
COFFEE EXPORTING FIRMS IN UGANDA**

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**A DISSERTATION SUBMITTED TO MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS
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FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE AWARD OF DEGREE OF
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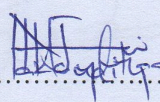
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DECLARATION

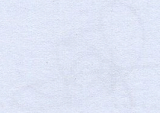
I, Nakayinga Judith, do hereby declare that this dissertation is entirely my own composition and has not been submitted for any other research study for a degree or award in other university before. All references made to works of other persons have been duly acknowledged.

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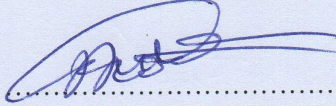
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APPROVAL

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DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my aunt Ms. Barbara Hoegen, my mum Ms. Nakubulwa Mercy, Mr. Daniel Peers -Hoegen, Ms. Jenneke Hoegen, my grandparents Mr. & Ms. Kabuye Joseph and my young sister Daniella Nakayenga for the over whelming support, comfort, guidance and encouragement given to me during the research process. May God bless you all.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

Customer Relationship Management	CRM
Export Competitiveness	EC
National Agricultural Advisory Services	NAADs
National Coffee Policy	NCP
National Coffee Research Institute	NACORI
Quality Management Practices	QMPs
Small medium enterprises	SMEs
Uganda Coffee Development Authority	UCDA

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between Quality Management Practices and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda. The research problem was that Uganda's coffee exports are still characterized by low quality and limited value addition. This may be attributed to low prices, low revenue, and low exchange earnings for the firms involved and the country despite the various initiatives by the Uganda government to improve the coffee sector which have not translated into tangible results to date. Hence, the study objectives were; to determine the relationship between customer focus and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda, to determine the relationship between SRM and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda, to determine the relationship between process control and export competitiveness of coffee export firms in Uganda and to determine the relationship between top management support and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda. Cross-sectional research design was used with a quantitative approach. From the population of 38 licensed coffee exporting firms, a sample of 34 was determined for the study. A questionnaire was used to collect data. Findings show that there is a strong, positive, and statistically significant relationship between customer focus and export competitiveness ($r = .761, p < .01$), there is a notably strong and statistically significant relationship between SRM and export competitiveness ($r = .814, p < .01$), there is a robust, positive, and significant correlation between process control and export competitiveness ($r = .741, p < .01$) and that there is a moderate yet statistically significant correlation between top management support and export competitiveness ($r = .564, p < .01$). Based on these findings, it was recommended that: firms should invest in advanced CRM systems, as well as SRM Software. They should also conduct Regular Supplier Audits for Quality Assurance, institutionalize continuous training programs focused on process control, invest in leadership development programs and put in place a comprehensive performance monitoring system.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

This chapter includes the background to the study, the problem statement, the purpose of the study, research objectives and questions, the significance of the study and the conceptual framework.

1.1 Background to the study

International trade is viewed as a potential stimulus for economic growth whose policies are aimed at promoting economic development by increasing GDP of a country (Banga, 2015; Deniva, 2005; Olyanga, 2022; Morrissey *et al.*, 2003;). Export-led growth is perceived as one of the promising avenues to promoting economic growth in developing countries (Hakobyan, 2017). Exporting provides the opportunity to expand production, reduce unit costs, boost employment, and increase incomes. With the current escalation of globalization, liberalization of trade and financial services, intensification of world trade flows, emergence of new competitors and increased Foreign Direct Investment (FDI), firms are faced with stiff competition in both domestic and foreign markets (Browne, 2011; Klaus, 2017; UBOS, 2013; UNCTAD, 2005) . The intense competition requires firms to improve on their Quality Management Practices which has a significant influence on the firms since it allows organizations to build competencies and skills necessary to compete at both national and international level (Powel, 1995).which increases the level of productivity, resulting into increased export competitiveness (Sunanda, 2010; Topalova & Khandelwal, 2007; UNCTAD, 2005).

Export competitiveness is the ability of a country or firm to produce and sell goods and services in foreign markets at price and quality that ensure long term viability and sustainability (Adriana, 2010; Gaglio, 2015; Hausmann, 2007; UNCTAD, 2005, Olyanga, 2022). It is considered a key indicator of success for firms through increased export of value-added goods and services (Atkinson, 2013). To attain sustainable growth in GDP of an economy, the firms participating in international trade should increase their export competitiveness (Alon *et al.*, 2011; UNIDO, 2007; World Bank, 2008). This can be through increased value addition by improving on quality management practices leading to increased profitability and by extension, economic growth (Hermiyanty & Wandira, 2012; Ketels, 2010; Latruffe, 2010; OECD, 2018; Porter, 2012; UNCTAD, 2016). Operationally, QMPs are conceived to reflect customer focus, SRM, process control, top management support, and customer focus, process control (Sadikoglu & Oclay, 2014). The adoption of QMPs by firms is a source of competitiveness since they allow organizations to build the competencies and skills necessary to compete at both national and international level (Powel, 1995).

While the benefits of export competitiveness are well documented worldwide, it has been observed that Uganda's coffee exporting firms are still less competitive on international markets as they still fetch low revenues for both the country and the farmers involved (UCDA, 2021). For instance, in 2021, Uganda's coffee exports fetched about \$838.54 Million; which is quite marginal compared to other coffee exporting countries such as Brazil which fetched \$9.4 Billion, Vietnam \$2.34 Billion, Colombia \$3.22 Billion, and Ethiopia \$1.4 Billion. Besides, The East African report (2023) indicates that Uganda exported an estimated 447162. 60 kg bags of coffee valued at \$ 62.1 million in 2022 at an average price of \$2.39 per kg lower than the average global price \$2.45 per kilogram. The low prices and revenues from coffee exports have largely been attributed to the inability of exporting firms to add value and improve the quality of coffee (Monitor, 2023). Moreover, it has been

reported that most farmers still depend on archaic ways to grow the crop largely relying on rain, and working without fertilizers which ultimately affect the overall coffee quality. While the above submissions seem to suggest that export competitiveness could be a function of QMPs, there is limited empirical evidence on the relationship in the Ugandan context. Hence, this research intends to narrow this knowledge gap.

1.2 Problem statement

In the context of globalization, highly competitive markets, continuous technological advancement, and increasingly demanding customers, quality management has become one of the strategies that augment export competitiveness (Ismaylis & Moschidis, 2015). Uganda is among the top ten coffee producer's worldwide (UCDA, 2021). However, empirical research has observed that her exports are still less competitive on international markets and her earnings from the crop are still marginal compared to other coffee producers. (UCDA, 2022) This is partially associated to poor quality and limited value addition relative to other coffee exporting countries (UCDA, 2022). This is most likely responsible for low prices, low revenue, and low foreign exchange earnings. For example, 2021/22 market price for Uganda coffee was \$2.39 per kg against the average global price of \$2.45 per kilogram (UCDA, 2022). Extant literature associates better performing countries to effective quality management practices (Jaafreh & Al- Abedallat, 2012). Therefore, the study examines the relationship between quality management practices and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda.

1.3 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study was to examine the relationship between Quality Management Practices and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda.

1.4 Objectives of the study

- i. To determine the relationship between customer focus and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda.
- ii. To determine the relationship between SRM and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda.
- iii. To determine the relationship between process control and export competitiveness of coffee export firms in Uganda.
- iv. To determine the relationship between top management support and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda.

1.5 Research Questions

- i. What is the relationship between customer focus and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms?
- ii. What is the relationship between SRM and export competitiveness of export firms in Uganda?
- iii. What is the relationship between process control and export competitiveness of Coffee export firms in Uganda?
- iv. What is the relationship between top management support and export competitiveness?

1.6 Scope of the Study

1.6.1 Geographic scope

The study was conducted within the central region of Uganda. This is because most of these coffee exporting firms are located within the central region (UCDA, 2016).

1.6.2 Time scope

The study was conducted for a period of five months. That is from the months of June 2023 to October 2023.

1.6.2 Content scope

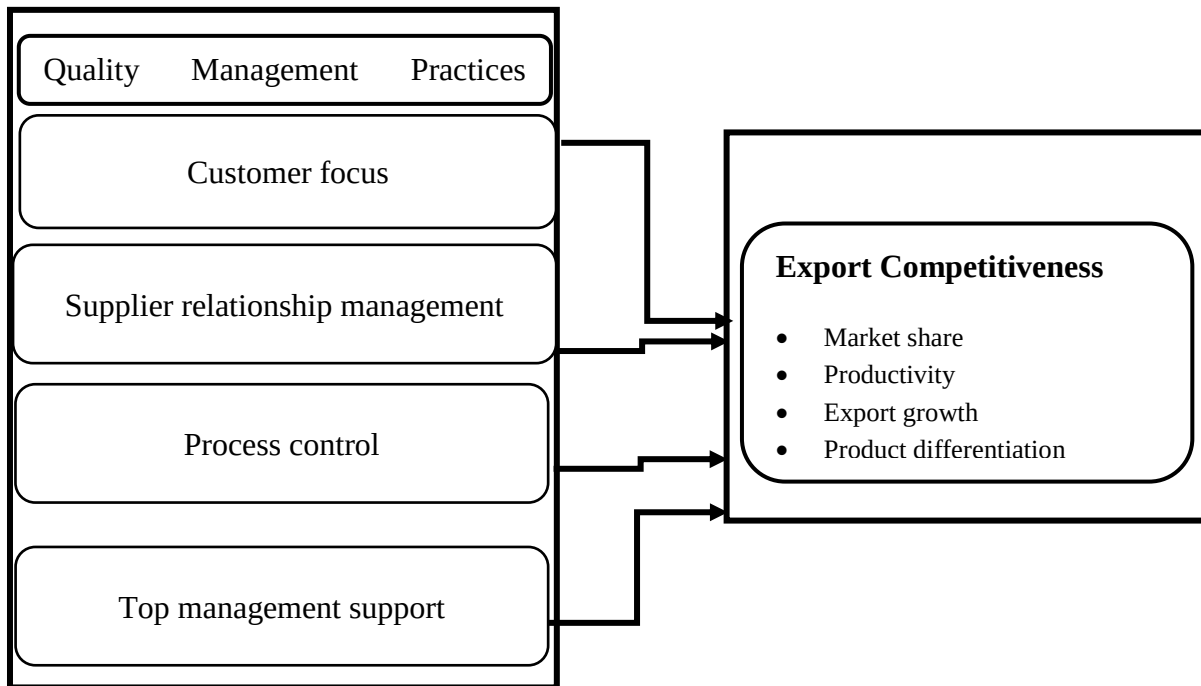
The study covered quality management practices as the independent variable and export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda as the dependent variable.

1.7 Significance of the study

The study is significant to coffee exporting firms and to the government in the following ways;

- i. The study findings may guide the government in formulating relevant policies that will boot export competitiveness in the coffee sector.
- ii. The study results may enable quality controllers in coffee exporting firms to produce better quality products that respond to quality aspirations of the current and prospective customers.
- iii. The study may also supplement the existing literature, and is an invaluable tool for students, academicians, institutions, and individuals who want to know more about the QMPs.

1.8 Conceptual framework



Adopted and modified from empirical literature; ES ISO 9004:2018, Alotabi et al, (2013).

From figure 1, export competitiveness is the dependent variable explained by market share, Productivity, export growth, and product differentiation. The predictor variable is QMPs measured using customer focus, SRM, process control and top management support. The frame work suggests a relationship between QMPs and export competitiveness.

CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction

This chapter covers literature review of the study. This includes; literature on export competitiveness and QMPs. The chapter further consist of the relationships between QMPs and export competitiveness. Thus, the chapter carried out synthesis of past literature in relation to research objectives and discusses several key empirical studies by other scholars in related fields of study.

2.1 Theoretical review on export competitiveness

A number of frameworks that attempt to explain the determinants of export competitiveness such as the Porter (1990) “diamond”, the “pyramid”, the triangle and the “12 pillars” of World Economic Forum`s Global Competitiveness Index have been used. This implies that the concept of export competitiveness exhibits a multidimension structure which may not be adequately explained by a single theory. Scholars have used various theories, frameworks and models such as absolute advantage theory, comparative advantage theory, factor abundant or Heckscher-Ohlin (H – O) theory, product life cycle trade theory, new trade theory and new-new trade theory and the economic complexity theory to explain export competitiveness between firms, industries and countries (Debashi, 2009; Smit, 2010; Olyanga, 2022).

The attempt to use a number of frameworks to explain export competitiveness, implies that it exhibits a multidimensional structure that may not be explained by a single theory. It involves dynamic gains in the productive export sector, competitive advantage, greater economies of scale, better capacity resource utilization, knowledge dissemination, resource reallocation, technical progress, firm heterogeneity and networking in a dynamic system (Farole, Reis &

Wagle, 2010). For better understanding of how the concept of export competitiveness of firms can be applied in this multifaceted setting, it requires the guidance of relevant theories that address the complex phenomenon of international trade in developing countries. Practically, export competitiveness is based on imperfect competition and for a theory to be deemed relevant; it should be able to explain the practical phenomena at hand (Bacharach, 1989; UNCTAD, 2005; Weick, 1995; Whetten, 1989). The multifaceted nature of export competitiveness requires an explanation of multiple theories to offer a deeper understanding of the factors that contribute to it for policy considerations. For purposes of this study, one theory of Economic Complexity Theory was applied to build a framework by which the export competitiveness concept can be explained.

The Economic Complexity Theory (Hausmann *et al.*, 2013; Olyanga, 2022), posits that it is in dynamic interaction and adaptive orientation of a system that new phenomena such as export competitiveness, new properties and behaviors emerge; that new patterns are developed and old ones change through technological innovations to create novel entities (Antonelli, 2011; Cristelli *et al.*, 2015; Goldstein *et al.*, 2010). Through networks, markets allow firms to access the vast amounts of productive knowledge required to make a product. Some products require more knowledge than others which requires individuals and firms with different capabilities to interact (Abbasi, 2014; Arthur, 2013; Cristelli *et al.*, 2015; Hausmann *et al.*, 2013). Export competitiveness cannot be explained by given key factors but these factors are embedded in a system such as production value chains, resulting in novel outcomes (UNCTAD, 2005)

2.2 Export Competitiveness

Competitiveness is a diffuse concept with no one agreeable definition. Latruffe (2010) argues that there is no agreement on the term competitiveness but it is the ability to sell products that

meet demand requirements and at the same time ensure profits over time that enable the firm to survive. Klaus (2013) conceptualizes competitiveness as set of institutions, policies and factors that determine the level of productivity of an economy, which in turn sets the level of prosperity that the economy can achieve. Similarly, WEF (2014) suggests that competitiveness is a set of factors that include policies, institutions, strategies and processes that determine the level of sustainable productivity of a region, nation, industry or firm. They argue that competitiveness centers on productivity, which is the result of efficiency with which an economy uses available inputs to produce outputs.

On the other hand, UNCTAD (2005) argues that competitiveness is the ability of the firm to consistently and profitably deliver products and services which customers are willing to purchase in preference to those of competitors. Atkinson (2013) indicates that export competitiveness is the ability of a firm or country to export more value-added terms than imports. Broadly conceptualized. Export Competitiveness is the ability of a country or firm to produce and sell goods and services in foreign markets at a price and quality that ensure long-term viability and sustainability (Gaglio et al., 2015; Olyanga, 2022). Hence, export competitiveness may be conceived as the capability to produce and sell goods and services at the required place at competitive prices when compared to other suppliers (Sharples & Milham, 1990). A country's level of export competitiveness is crucial for its effective participation in international trade and eventual management of balance of trade sheet (Eberhard-Ruiz & Calabrese, 2018). In my opinion export competitiveness can be understood as the ability to undercut the prices or offer of better quality than the competitors.

2.3 Quality Management Practices

Quality management is conceived as an integrated approach to achieving and sustaining high quality output focusing on the maintenance and continuous improvement of processes and defect prevention at all levels and in all functions of the organization in order to meet or exceed customer expectations (Flynn, 1994). On the other hand, it can also be conceptualized as a philosophy that is basically about continuous organizational success through the employment of customer satisfaction, and by basing it on the contribution of all the employees constantly working to enhance processes, services and products (Al-Asiri, 2004). QMPs among SMEs have been widely studied both in developed and developing economies. Generally, they are a set of activities adopted and modified by managers to improve firm operations necessary to meet customer expectations (Jaafreh & Al- Abedallat, 2012; Onyinyi & Kaberuka, 2019). Shenawy (2007) argue that no research explicates the key dimensions of QMPs. Due to this inconsistency in previous research it is difficult to identify the exact dimensions of TQM (Hoang et al., 2006).

An extensive literature review of the previous studies on QMPs have examined its constituents and considered them key practices for the success in effective management of quality in competitive environment (Fotopoulos & Psomas, 2010; Sadikoglu & Zehir, 2010; Al-Marri et al., 2007; Yang, 2006; Sila, 2007; Sila & Ebrahim pour, 2005; Karia & Asaari, 2006; Ju et al., 2006; Hafeez et al., 2006; Zhang et al., 2000). The study by Fotopoulos & Psomas (2010) identified leadership, strategic quality planning, employee management and involvement, supplier management, customer focus, process management, continuous improvement, information and analysis and also knowledge and education as a set of QMPs to form a structural relationship with the organizational performance in ISO 9001:2000 certified Greek companies.

2.4 Customer focus and export competitiveness

Due to today's competitive business environment, customer satisfaction has increasingly become an important component of an effective organization and competitiveness of firms (Berry & Parasuraman, 1992). Customer focus is the extent to which an organization continuously satisfies customer needs and expectations (Zhang, 2000). Customer focus is also described as the set of beliefs that put the customers' interest first, while not excluding those of all other stakeholders such as owners, managers, and employees, in order to develop a long-term profitable enterprise" (Deshpande, 1993). Customer- focus is also considered as organizations' concerns with their customers' needs, wants, and expectations (past, present, and future); and their strong commitment to understand and satisfy them in a proactive manner for long-term growth (Bartley *et al.*, 2007).

Customer satisfaction has been a key driver of firms' long- term profitability and market value (Gruca & Rego, 2005). The importance of customer loyalty as a means to achieve long-term competitive advantages in the context of competitive global markets has been emphasized by Aksoy (2013). There is strong relationship between customer-focus and overall profitability (Appiah-Adu and Singh, 1998; Agarwal *et al.*, 2003). Customer focused strategy helps organization in enhancing overall performance and building competitive advantages. The practice of customer focus has been identified as pivotal for any organization seeking to reach a level of sustainable performance (Mokhtar, 2013). Without customer focused strategy, organizations should not expect survival, let alone success, in the long-term (Silla, 2007).

In order to ensure business success, customers must be at the center of organization and the products and services have to be created based on the needs of customers. According to Hackman & Wageman (1995), focusing on customers is one of the most frequently used practices in obtaining information about the current and potential clientele. Sila (2007); Brah

et al., (2002) claim that the success of any organization in near future would depend upon the satisfaction of its customers' needs efficiently and effectively on continuous basis. The competitive approaches outline the need for organizations to focus on producing high quality products and selling them at higher prices so as to cater for their quality achievement efforts (Rothaermel, 2018). Competitiveness rests on the notion that cheap labor is ubiquitous and natural resources are not necessary for a good economy. Competitiveness is necessary for satisfied customers who seek value for money on sustainable basis (Rose, Abdullah & Ismad, 2010).

2.5 Supplier relationship management and export competitiveness

Due to the growing complexity of technologies, global competition and the need for competitive advantage, firms require a more collaborative relationship between buyers and suppliers notwithstanding business volumes (Liao et al., 2010). Hence, it is important to involve the supplier at the early stages of need for companies to achieve export competitiveness. SRM is the conventional practice that offers how relationships with suppliers are developed and maintained (Lii & Kuo, 2016). It also occurs when suppliers and buyers seek a competitive advantage in the marketplace, tapping into each other's resources because of the supplier relationships (Lii & Kuo, 2016; Liao et al., 2010). According to supply chain experts, SRM is a comprehensive design of specifying what they demand from a supplier and managing the connectivity between the companies to reach the required necessities (Matunga et al., 2021; Onyinyi & Kaberuka, 2018) adds that it's a set of activities supply organizations should comply with to ensure quality supplies

Suppliers can contribute to quality performance and competitiveness of firms through selection of a small number of suppliers and establishing a long-term relationship with them as this ensures supplies based on quality considerations, rather than cost (Matunga et al.,

2021). Companies with a relationship with suppliers characterized by inter- dependence and cooperation establish links for systematically exchanging information. For example, supplier certification or qualification programs provide a means of conveying manufacturers' quality expectations to suppliers, as well as providing assurance about the quality of incoming materials and parts which enhance competitiveness of firms (Juran, 1978). Generally, the strong relationships with suppliers have been regarded as one major factors for the Japanese industrial competitiveness (Sako, 1992).

According to Lii & Kuo (2016); Liao et al. (2010), the collaborative methods are critical to gaining a competitive edge in the global supply chain environment, which is growing increasingly competitive. Similarly, Enz & Lambert (2012) post that collaborative relationships with key suppliers can co-create value. Its proper implementation has helped organizations gain access to valuable resources and supplies, reduce costs, enhance their flexibilities, ensure quality, implement technology successfully, and improve overall supply chain performance. It is recommended that such firms find and implement SRM practices to ramp up their supply chain efficiency (Matunga et al., 2021).

2.6 Process control and export competitiveness

Process control is contextualized as monitoring existing process conditions to ensure stability and consistent performance (Juran & Godfrey, 1999). Process control can also be understood as a step in process management that consists of analyzing and monitoring processes to identify problems and possibilities for improvement.(Onyinyi & Kaberuka, 2018) have also defined it as precautionary approaches to quality management intended to achieve consistent results .With high exposure to the global markets, the consumer of today is exerting intense demand for quality goods at low prices .To enhance export competitiveness, firms must quickly and effectively produce product with little waste and eliminate causes of variations

through process control. Process control focuses on identifying and removing defects and reducing process variation (Juran, 1992). To be able to predict performance and determine the process ability to meet customer expectations, the operations processes should detect and eliminate assignable causes of variation to augment firm competitiveness in the export market (Oak land, 2003). Employees increase their ability to identify defects because of the learning that occurs from actively performing the same recurring tasks (Repenning & Sterman, 2002). Process control can reduce the need for rework, thereby favorably impacting process cycle time and efficiency (Hackman & Wageman, 1995; Klassen & Menor, 2007).

2.7 Top management support and export competitiveness.

Top management support has been discussed by researchers in different terms, such as export commitments, top management commitments, or managerial commitment (Lages & Montgomery, 2004). Management commitment is the general willingness to aggressively pursue market opportunities, avoid market threats and implement effective marketing strategies that enhance market success (Lu & Julian, 2007). Management commitment is a measure of how the firm management is willing to allocate internal resources for export purposes (Cadogan et al., 2005). Thus, effectiveness and efficiency resource allocation can provide the necessary stimulus in improving export competitiveness. Without the proper allocation of resources, companies will not make significant progress in improving their performance in the export market. Empirical studies suggest a significant positive relationship between management commitment of the firm and export competitiveness (Cavusgil, 1994) Hence forth, managers should commit to providing exports that meet quality standards of the international market (Julian, 2003).

Top management support encourages the practices and behaviors that lead to quality performance and competitiveness throughout the organization. For example, top management

encourages the development of strong customer relationships through the provision of resources for customer plant visits by employees, inviting customers to visit the plant, requiring the solicitation of detailed information about customer needs and specifications, and requiring the inclusion of customer representatives on product design teams. Strong relationships with suppliers are also nurtured by top management de-emphasizing price considerations in evaluating supplier selection and retention, providing the purchasing department with the tools needed to assess supplier quality levels, encouragement of long-term contracts with suppliers and requiring suppliers to be certified for quality (Schonberger, 1985.) El Makrini & Chaibi (2014) emphasize that there is a significant positive relationship between management commitments to export competitiveness. Therefore, companies should consider the implementation of top management commitment as an important role in the organization because this practice contributes to export competitiveness (Mokhtar & Yusof, 2010).

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter covered the research process which included the research design, study population and sample size, sources of data, methods of data collection, data processing, analysis and presentation, and measurement of study variables.

3.1 Research approach and design

The study was carried out using a cross-sectional and quantitative designs. A cross-sectional survey is the detailed investigation into the characteristics of a population as expressed at a particular point in time or over a relatively short time span. It involved the collection of data about the attitudes and beliefs, opinions, practices and perceptions related to the study. Given that export competitiveness is dynamic in nature, a cross sectional design serves the purpose of the study. Besides, the quantitative research design allows for generalization of results from an appropriate sample (Creswell, 2013; Amaratunga *et al.*, 2002). Further, it allows for relationship testing between the variables under study in view of the set objectives (Creswell, 2013).

3.2 Study population and Sampling Size

According to UCDA (2021), Uganda has a total of 38 licensed coffee exporting firms. The study determined a sample size of 34 coffee exporting firms according to Krejci and Morgan (1970).

3.4 Sampling design and procedure

The study used stratified sampling technique to determine the sample. This is because the respondents were individuals from the same sector (coffee sector) but with different characteristics. This helped in choosing the relevant respondents for the study. For purposes of optimizing response rate, we purposively selected ten staff who included 5 quality controllers and 5 export managers because they have relevant information concerning firm export competitiveness and quality management practices. Each individual firm was presented by ten questionnaires that were filled in by the respondents and the data was later aggregated to firm level.

3.5 Sources of data

3.5.1 Primary data

Primary data was collected directly from the respondents. This was done through administering a self-administered questionnaire to the respondents since they would give information that was certainly accurate from different firms and with the help of a research assistant.

3.6 Data collection methods

3.6.1 Self-administered structured questionnaire

This study's data collection instrument involved the researcher in preparing a set of questions pertaining to the field of enquiry. The choice of a self-administered questionnaire is justified by the fact that responses were obtained in a uniform way and it implied that information was objective and certainly was more accurate than personal interviews. Besides, that the questionnaire was used because the respondents are educated people who can understand, and

interpret and give relevant information. The responses were based on 1-5point Likert scale and the questions related to export competitiveness and quality management practices.

3.7. Measurement of the Variables

Table 3.1: Operationalization and Measurement of variables

Variable	Measures	Author
QMPs	Customer focus	(Zang, 2000; Sadikoglu, 2010; Kaynak, 2003; Aksoy,2013; Agarwal etal, 2003; Mokhtar, 2013)
	Supplier relationship management	(Sadikoglu & Oclay, 2014; Kaynak, 2003; Liao etal, 2010; Matunga etal ,2021)
	Process control	(Sadikoglu &Oclay, 2014; Onyinyi & Kaberuka, 2018; Oakland, 2003)
	Top management support	Flynn, 1994; Lages and Montgomery, 2004; Lu &Julian,2007; Cavusigil etal 1994; Kaynak, 2003).
Export Competitiveness	Market share Productivity product differentiation	(Latruffle ,2010; Atkinson, 2013; Bang, 2015; Olyanga, 20022; Gaglio, 2015; UBOS, 2012; Adriana, 2010)

3.8 Validity of the instrument

Validity refers to how well the results of a study measure what they are intended to measure (Sauro, 2014). Validity is used to check whether a questionnaire is measuring what it purports to measure. The questionnaire was subjected to expert face validity and theoretical content validity tests. A Content Validity Index (CVI) is a measure of the degree to which the instrument corresponds to the concept it is designed to measure.

Table 3.2: Content Validity Index (CVI Results)

Expert	CVI Score
Expert 1	0.874
Expert 2	0.741
Expert 3	0.805
Expert 4	0.729

Source: primary data

As seen in the table above, the results for CVI were above 0.5 which indicates validity of items in the questionnaire.

3.9 Reliability of the data collection instruments

An instrument is reliable if it produces the same results whenever it is repeatedly used to measure trait or concepts from different sets of respondents. It is the extent to which an instrument of research results to homogenous conclusion of data after repeated attempts (Meyers et al., 2006). It refers to soundness, dependability and authenticity of the research instrument. This was done by determining the association in between scores obtained from different administration of the scale. A test is considered reliable when it measures what it is meant to measure consistently. While undertaking the pilot study the researcher adopted the test-retest technique to test reliability of the questionnaires. The questionnaires were administered to the respondents. After administration of the questionnaires, the reliability of the data collection tool was done using the Cronbach's test, which ranges from 0 to 1, where a Cronbach's alpha of 0.7 or greater is considered as sufficiently reliable (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994). Reliability results are shown below in table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Reliability Results

Variable	No of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Quality Management Practices	28	.935
Export Competitiveness	29	.926

Source: primary data

As seen in the table above, the results for Cronbach alpha were above 0.7 which indicates validity of items in the questionnaire.

3.10 Data processing and analysis

The data generated from questionnaires was scrutinized, formatted, arranged and computer coded to minimize duplication to enable analysis. The data was then analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) 20.0, which was helpful in generating tables, graphs, charts that allowed for ease of interpretation, and finally conclusion and recommendations. The data was then summed up using frequencies and outlined in tables before correlation analysis and multiple regression was conducted.

3.11 Unit of analysis and unit of inquiry

The unit of analysis was coffee exporting firms in Uganda. Therefore, each individual firm was a unit of analysis. The respondents represented units of inquiry. They were perceived to have superior understanding of export competitiveness and the underling QMPs practices by the exporting firms.

3.12 Ethical Considerations

The study was conducted after obtaining official permission from MUBS and I was also able to get permission from UCDA as it had become a challenge to access information from some of the big firms and then proceed to the selected coffee exporting firms. All efforts were made to ensure that no harm is inflicted upon voluntary participants and that all participants made the decision to participate after receiving full information as to what is required and what, if any, potential negative consequences may arise from such participation. Those who chose not to participate were given the same information with which to make their decision not to be involved and were not be disadvantaged by not participating. For all information

pieces received, confidentiality and anonymity were highly upheld and after analysis and compilation of results, the results were communicated to all the respondents

3.13 Limitations of the study

Respondents un willingness to disclose information. This created data collection problems which affected the reliability of the findings. This was mitigated through assuring the respondents that the study was not an audit of exporting firms but purely academic endeavor which was not going to affect their career at the respective exporting companies.

Some respondents were reluctant to give full information for fear of disclosing sensitive information. The researcher assured respondents of utmost confidentiality and showed them the introductory letter from Makerere University business school.

The researcher faced time constraints during the process of data collection. This is because the respondents had to spare time from their busy schedule to provide the relevant information needed for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR

PRESENTATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter contains presentation, interpretation and analysis of the findings of the study in accordance with the study objectives. The presentation in this chapter shows the response rate, demographic characteristics, and correlation and regression results.

4.1 Response Rate

Not all the targeted respondents provided information. As indicated in the sampling size, we purposively selected ten staff who included five (5) from the quality department and five (5) from the export department. Out of 340 respondents from 34 companies, only 210 from 21 were complete and fit for analysis. This represents a response rate of 61.8 percent. Since the average response rate obtained in previous research surveys in Uganda (Briggs, 2009; Sejjaaka, 2010) is 60 percent, the response rate obtained is considered sufficient for the study given that it is above the threshold.

4.2 Demographic Characteristics

4.2.1 Characteristics of the firms

The study sought information on the firms. Results are shown below in table 4.1:

Table 4.1: Characteristics of the Firms

Parameter	Frequency	%
Number of years in the business		
less than 5 years	1	4.8
5-9 years	6	28.6
10-14 years	8	38.1
15 years and above	6	28.6
Total	21	100.0

Source: primary data

From Table 4.1, the majority of the firms (38.1%) have been in the business for a duration of 10-14 years, followed by firms that have been operational for 5-9 years and 15 years and above, each accounting for 28.6% of the sample. Only a small fraction, 4.8%, have been in the business for less than 5 years. The implication of these results to this study suggests a relatively mature business landscape, where the majority of firms have substantial experience in their respective fields. This level of business maturity is likely to influence the firms' export competitiveness positively, as more extended operational years often correlate with better-established processes, stronger supplier relationships, and more effective top management support, among other factors integral to export competitiveness.

4.2.4 Characteristics of the Respondents

The study also sought information on the respondents regarding the gender, age, education level and how long they have worked in the respective organizations. Results are in tables 4.2 to 4.5 below:

Table 4.2: Gender of the respondents

Parameter	Frequency	%
Male	121	57.6
Female	89	42.4
Total	210	100.0

Source: primary data

From Table 4.2, the researcher outlines the gender distribution among the 210 respondents from the coffee exporting firms. It reveals that males comprise 57.6% of the sample, while females make up 42.4%. This ratio reflects a relatively balanced gender distribution in employment, suggesting that both male and female perspectives are well-represented in the survey data. The gender balance may be attributed to a more nuanced understanding of Quality Management Practices and their impact on export competitiveness.

Table 4.3: Age of the Respondents

Parameter	Frequency	%
18-30 years	12	5.7
41-50 years	101	48.1
51-60 years	61	29.0
61 years and above	36	17.1
Total	210	100.0

Source: primary data

From table 4.3, the age distribution shows a concentration in the middle-age brackets, with 48.1% of respondents aged between 41-50 years and 29% in the 51-60 age range. Only a small fraction (5.7%) fall in the 18-30 age group, and 17.1% are aged 61 or above. This distribution suggests that the majority of respondents have significant work experience, which could inform the maturity of their views on Quality Management Practices and export competitiveness.

Table 4.4: Education Qualifications of the Respondents

Parameter	Frequency	%
Certificate	3	1.4
Diploma	30	14.3
Bachelor's degree	117	55.7
Master's degree	40	19.0
PhD	20	9.5
Total	210	100.0

Source: primary data

From table 4.4, educational qualifications among respondents are predominantly at the Bachelor's degree level, accounting for 55.7% of the sample. Master's degree holders constitute 19%, and a smaller fraction has a PhD (9.5%). Only a negligible 1.4% hold a certificate, and 14.3% have a diploma. This high educational attainment generally implies a competent and skilled workforce, which could positively affect the quality of management practices in these firms.

Table 4.5: How long they have worked in the organization

Parameter	Frequency	%
Less than 2 years	10	4.8
2-5 years	82	39.0
6-10 years	80	38.1
More than 10 years	38	18.1
Total	210	100.0

Source: primary data

The data in table 4.5 reveals that 39% of respondents have worked for their current organization for 2-5 years, closely followed by 38.1% who have served for 6-10 years. A lesser percentage (18.1%) have been in the organization for more than 10 years, and only 4.8% have been there for less than 2 years. This distribution indicates a relatively stable workforce with varying degrees of organizational experience, which can provide diverse insights into the relationship between Quality Management Practices and export competitiveness.

Each of these parameters—sex, age, qualifications, and tenure in the organization—offers valuable contextual information that aids in interpreting the primary variables under study, namely Quality Management Practices and export competitiveness.

4.3 Pearson's Correlation Results

Pearson one tailed correlations test was performed to establish whether or not associations existed between variables. According to Hair et al. (2010), the association between direct hypotheses should be positive to allow execution of high order statistical analysis including regressions. The correlations results are shown in Table 4.6.

Table 4.6: Pearson Correlation Results

Variable/Indicators	1	2	3	4	5
1. Customer Focus	1				
2. Supplier Relationship Management	.788**	1			
3. Process Control	.730**	.758**	1		
4. Top Management Support	.519**	.473**	.453**	1	
5. Export Competitiveness	.761**	.814**	.741**	.564**	1

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

Source: Primary data.

The correlation results indicate a positive and significant association between QMPs and export competitiveness. This means that changes in QMPs result into changes in export competitiveness. After posting impressive correlation results between QMPs and export competitiveness, proceeded to perform a multiple regression analysis as depicted in Table 4.7.

4.4 Multiple Regression Analysis

In order to ascertain the predictive power and combined effect of the independent variables on the dependent variable, a multiple regression was run using SPSS version 26. The results are presented below.

Table 4.7: Regression Results

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Collinearity Statistics	
		B	Std. Error	Beta			Tolerance	VIF
1	(Constant)	.720	.154		4.665	.000		
	Customer Focus	.142	.048	.198	2.977	.003	.311	3.217
	Supplier Relationship Management	.371	.055	.442	6.703	.000	.316	3.161
	Process Control	.164	.055	.177	2.988	.003	.390	2.567
	Top Management Support	.152	.040	.165	3.794	.000	.723	1.382

a. Dependent Variable: Export Competitiveness

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.851 ^a	.724	.718	.35328

a. Predictors: (Constant), Top Management Support, Process Control, Supplier Relationship Management, Customer Focus.

Source: primary data.

The data underwent tests to check for multicollinearity assumptions to determine if there might be any underlying issues. As observed in Table 4.7, the multi-collinearity statistics revealed that the VIF factors for all study variables were acceptable, and even below 5.00. Specifically, the VIF customer focus is 3.22 is 3.623, supplier relationship management is 3.16, Process control is 2.57 and for Top Management Support it is 1.38. Given that the accepted threshold for this value is 10.000, as noted by Field (2009), it was determined that collinearity did not pose any challenges for the study.

4.4.1 Relationship Between Customer Focus and Export Competitiveness

With reference to objective one of the studies, the regression results mirror a positive and significant relationship between customer focus and export competitiveness ($\beta=.198$, $p < .01$). These findings suggest that an enhanced focus on customer needs and preferences is closely linked with increased export competitiveness among coffee exporting firms in Uganda. In other words, firms that excel in understanding their customer requirements are more likely to be competitive in export markets. This predictive potential may manifest in factors such as product differentiation, market share growth, and productivity.

4.4.2 Relationship Between Supplier Relationship Management and Export Competitiveness

Pertaining to the second objective, the table 4.7 indicates statistically positive and significant relationship between SRM and Export Competitiveness ($\beta=.442$, $p < .001$). The results underscore the importance of effective supplier relationships in achieving higher levels of export competitiveness. Companies that successfully manage their supplier relationships are likely to experience benefits in various aspects of export competitiveness such as market share, export growth, and productivity.

4.4.3 Relationship Between Process Control and Export Competitiveness

Consonant with the third objective, the data in table 4.7 shows positive and significant relationship between process control on export competitiveness ($\beta=.177$, $p < .01$). This highlights that firms with stringent and effective process controls are likely to witness elevated levels of export competitiveness. The efficient control of internal processes, therefore, appears to contribute positively to market share, productivity, and export growth.

4.4.4 Relationship Between Top Management Support and Export Competitiveness

In line with the fourth objective, Table 4.7 displays a statistically significant predictive power of Top Management Support on export competitiveness ($\beta=.165$, $p < .001$). This implies that supportive and involved top management contributes to a firm's export competitiveness, albeit to a somewhat lesser extent compared to the other variables. Effective leadership and support from the top management can positively influence facets of export competitiveness like product differentiation and market share.

Each of these relationships confirms the critical role that QMPs play in influencing the export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda. These results are consistent with the general literature on the subject, affirming that better management practices, encompassing

customer focus, SRM, process control, and top management support, can significantly bolster a firm's competitive standing in export markets.

As observed in Table 4.7, the four independent variables in combination predict 71.8% of the variance in export competitiveness of coffee exporting firms in Uganda (Adjusted R Square = .718). This implies that the remaining 28.2% of the variance in export competitiveness is explained by factors other than the independent variables under study. Furthermore, the table reveals that the correlation between the dependent variable and the model is statistically significant, with an R value of .851.

Among the independent variables, SRM has the highest Beta value (.442), implying that it has the most substantial impact on export competitiveness among the coffee exporting firms in Uganda. This suggests that while all QMPs are important, SRM may hold a particularly significant role in influencing export competitiveness.

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CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses findings conclusions and recommendations. It has five sections. Section one deals with discussion in of the findings. The second section is the conclusions while the third section presents recommendations. Section four is limitations to the study and section five covers areas for further research.

5.1 Discussion of Findings

This section discusses the findings according to the study objectives as laid out in the first chapter of this dissertation. The researcher lays out the findings and finds support or contradiction among the scholars, if any.

5.1.1 Relationship between Customer focus and export competitiveness

In alignment with the first objective of the study, the regression results show that customer focus has a significant predictive potential on export competitiveness. The findings imply a relationship between firms that emphasize customer needs and their competitive edge in export markets. Specifically, organizations with a keen focus on customer preferences and requirements demonstrate elevated levels of export competitiveness, perhaps manifesting in market share, productivity, and product differentiation.

Turning to the literature, multiple scholars underscore the importance of customer focus in achieving competitiveness and profitability. Berry and Parasuraman (1992) accentuate customer satisfaction as an imperative component in today's competitive business environment. This concurs with Zhang (2000), who defines customer focus as a continuous

pursuit to meet customer expectations. Furthermore, scholars like Gruca and Rego (2005) and Aksoy (2013) affirm the role of customer satisfaction and loyalty in securing long-term profitability and competitive advantages.

Comparing the findings with recent research, Mokhtar (2013) acknowledges customer focus as pivotal for any organization aiming for sustainable performance, while Sila (2007) and Brah et al. (2002) advocate for incessant focus on customer needs for future organizational success. These notions further corroborate the findings of the current study. Nonetheless, not all scholars may concur. Irani et al. (2004) and Powell (1995) advocate for a more balanced approach, emphasizing not only customer focus but also other quality management practices for improved export competitiveness. This might imply that focusing solely on customer needs could overlook other vital aspects, offering a divergence from the current study's results.

Regarding theoretical foundations, the findings echo Rothaermel's (2018) competitive theory approach, which emphasizes high-quality products sold at higher prices to reflect quality efforts. This fits together with the study's assertion that customer focus is positively associated with variables like product differentiation, contributing to export competitiveness. Similarly, Rose, Abdullah & Ismad (2010) maintain that competitiveness rests on delivering higher value to satisfied customers, which can only be achieved by a well-organized production process and minimized costs.

In light of the above, the researcher is of the view that the strong, positive correlation between Customer Focus and export competitiveness validates the critical importance of understanding customer needs. The findings enrich the extant literature by empirically showcasing that customer focus is not just an ethical or customer-relational imperative but also a strategic lever for enhancing export competitiveness in the context of Uganda's coffee

exporting firms. This fact adds a dimension that potentially affects the way customer focus is operationalized and prioritized in quality management practices aimed at enhancing export competitiveness.

5.1.2 Relationship between Supplier relationship management and export competitiveness

In reference to the second objective, the findings show that SRM is also a significant predictor of export competitiveness. The inference can be drawn that skilled management of supplier relationships plays a pivotal role in enhancing export competitiveness across various dimensions such as market share, export growth, and overall productivity.

The findings are in alignment with several scholars. Lii & Kuo (2016) and Liao et al. (2010) expound that fostering collaborative relationships between suppliers and buyers can nurture a competitive advantage in the increasingly complex global market. Matunga et al. (2021) further endorse this view, positing that SRM is not a mere occupational practice but a comprehensive approach to inter-organizational connectivity aimed at fulfilling mutual necessities. Juran (1978) provides a historical backdrop, emphasizing that effective SRM, characterized by supplier certification programs, can assure quality and therefore competitiveness. Interestingly, the academic discourse also cites Japanese industrial competitiveness as evidence of the strength of supplier relationships (Sako, 1992).

While the study affirms the widely held academic view of the positive influence of SRM, it also opens the floor for further inquiry into how the quality of SRM is assessed and its impact on export competitiveness. Therefore, the relationship between SRM and export competitiveness is neither linear nor guaranteed but contingent upon various qualitative factors that need to be meticulously managed.

From a theoretical standpoint, these findings align well with the Resource-Based View (RBV) of the firm, which posits that firm-specific resources and capabilities, such as effective SRM, can be a source of sustained competitive advantage. In the context of export competitiveness, this translates to better market share, higher growth, and enhanced productivity.

5.1.3 Relationship between Process control and export competitiveness

The empirical analysis conducted in accordance with the third objective reveals a compelling, positive, and statistically significant predictive potential of process control on export competitiveness. This empirical evidence aligns closely with existing scholarly contributions that advocate for the salient role of process control in improving various facets of export competitiveness, such as market share, productivity, and export growth. Essentially, the effective implementation and rigorous monitoring of internal processes serve as instrumental levers in boosting export competitiveness.

The results are in agreement with the work of Juran and Godfrey (1999) who defines process control as the vigilant oversight of process conditions to assure steady performance. This operational vigilance is substantiated by Juran (1992), who stresses the importance of reducing process variation to enhance export competitiveness. Oakland (2003) furthers this argument by highlighting how process control is instrumental in increasing efficiency through the removal of assignable causes of variation. Additionally, Hackman and Wageman (1995) along with Klassen and Menor (2007) emphasize that process control is particularly potent in mitigating the necessity for rework, hence positively impacting cycle time and overall efficiency. These propositions offer a comprehensive body of academic agreement supporting the observed relationship between process control and export competitiveness.

However, it is important to also consider perspectives that contradict these findings. While the majority of literature underscores the benefits of stringent process control, the mechanism through which this affects export competitiveness is still debated. Some scholars, such as Reppenning and Sterman (2002), argue that the primary impact of process control may stem from employees' increased ability to identify defects through repetitive tasks, which is a more localized interpretation than the general principle of efficiency optimization. It is refreshing to note that empirical evidence is consonant with extant academic narratives, thereby reinforcing the vital role of process control in advancing export competitiveness. This academic harmony warrants further research to explore the underlying mechanisms and practical applications that could even more firmly entrench process control as a cornerstone for firms seeking to enhance their competitive stance in export markets.

In the context of theoretical underpinnings, the strong correlation between process control and export competitiveness can be viewed through the lens of the Resource-Based View (RBV). This theory suggests that firms achieve and sustain competitiveness through the deployment of valuable, rare, and non-substitutable resources, among which efficient processes stand paramount.

5.1.4 Relationship between Top management support and export competitiveness

In accordance with the fourth objective, a statistically significant predictive potential was observed between Top Management Support and export competitiveness. This finding points to the contributory role of top management in enhancing aspects of export competitiveness like product differentiation and market share. Though this variable might not have as pronounced an impact as others in the study, it still holds substantial significance.

The importance of top management support in achieving export competitiveness is corroborated by an array of academic literature. In prior work, concepts such as export commitment, managerial commitment, and the willingness to aggressively pursue market opportunities have been emphasized (Lages & Montgomery, 2004; Lu & Julian, 2007). The extant literature reviewed also points to empirical evidence linking top management commitment and export success (Cavusgil et al., 1994; El Makrini & Chaibi, 2014; Mokhtar & Yosuff, 2010).

Another important side covered in the literature is the role of top management in building strong relationships with customers and suppliers (Schonberger, 1985). El Makrini and Chaibi (2014) and Mokhtar and Yusof (2010) reinforce the connection between top management support and export competitiveness.

From a theoretical standpoint, the findings align well with the Resource-Based View, which posits that internal capabilities such as top management commitment can be leveraged as a competitive advantage in external markets. Recent theoretical work by Nelson and Winter (2023) expands on this, suggesting that top management serves as a "dynamic capability" that allows firms to adapt more quickly to the changing conditions of international markets.

5.2 Conclusions

In conclusion, the empirical analysis substantiates a compelling and statistically significant relationship between customer focus and export competitiveness, particularly within the realm of Uganda's coffee exporting firms. The research thereby emphasizes that a heightened understanding of customer needs and preferences is intrinsically linked with bolstered export competitiveness. Such a relationship manifests in key performance indicators like market

share growth, product differentiation, and productivity, aligning closely with existing literature and theoretical frameworks.

The empirical evidence decisively substantiates the strong and significant correlation between SRM and export competitiveness. This corroborates existing academic literature that emphasizes the strategic importance of SRM in driving various aspects of export competitiveness, such as market share, export growth, and productivity. As such, effective SRM emerges as an indispensable asset for firms aiming to bolster their presence in export markets.

The empirical evidence distinctly validates the consequential relationship between process control and export competitiveness. The data corroborates a robust, positive, and significant correlation, which is well-supported by existing scholarly literature. This confluence of empirical and theoretical perspectives illuminates the criticality of employing effective process control mechanisms for firms aiming to enhance their competitive edge in export markets. The alignment with the Resource-Based View further substantiates that process control is not merely an operational necessity but a strategic resource that can catalyze competitive advantage on a global scale.

In summary, the moderate yet statistically significant correlation between Top Management Support and export competitiveness substantiates the integral role that effective leadership plays in shaping a firm's competitive standing in export markets. This relationship is corroborated by both historical and recent academic literature, aligning well with theoretical frameworks like the Resource-Based View. Given the nuanced influence of top management on multiple facets of export competitiveness, including product differentiation and market share, its importance cannot be understated.

5.3 Recommendations/Policy implications

5.3.1 To firms

It is crucial for coffee exporting firms to establish systematic customer feedback loops specifically tailored for export markets. By doing so, firms can garner direct insights into customer preferences and needs, thereby fine-tuning their offerings to enhance competitiveness.

Given the significance of customer focus in influencing export competitiveness, firms should invest in advanced CRM systems. These systems enable efficient data analytics to track customer behavior and preferences, thus aiding in the formulation of export strategies that are more customer-centric and consequently more competitive.

Companies should invest in SRM Software. Given the complex nature of managing multiple supplier relationships, investment in sophisticated SRM software can streamline the process, thereby enhancing both efficiency and effectiveness in the supply chain, which in turn augments export competitiveness.

They should also conduct Regular Supplier Audits for Quality Assurance. Ensuring quality through supplier relationships is crucial for sustaining competitiveness. Regular audits will serve as a preventive measure to detect and rectify any quality issues, thereby maintaining and possibly increasing export competitiveness.

In light of the compelling relationship between process control and export competitiveness, companies would benefit from investing in advanced process control technologies. Embracing such technologies will enable real-time monitoring and proactive problem-solving, thereby conferring a competitive advantage in export markets.

Concurrently, it would be prudent for organizations to institutionalize continuous training programs focused on process control. By doing so, employees will be better equipped to manage and optimize processes, further reinforcing the firm's competitive positioning in export markets.

Organizations should invest in leadership development programs specifically designed to hone skills necessary for achieving export competitiveness. This would ensure that top management is equipped to make informed decisions that positively impact the firm's standing in international markets.

Firms should implement a comprehensive performance monitoring system that evaluates the impact of top management's decisions on export competitiveness. By doing so, the organization can continually refine its strategies to optimize its competitive edge in the global market.

5.3.2 To policymakers

Policymakers should encourage firms to deepen their supplier engagement strategies, given the strong correlation between supplier relationship management and export competitiveness. This could involve offering incentives for firms that adopt Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) systems or engage in long-term supplier contracts.

Given the robust relationship between process control and export competitiveness, it would be beneficial for policymakers to fund training programs aimed at implementing stringent and effective process controls in firms, thereby improving market share, productivity, and export growth.

Given the moderate yet significant relationship between top management support and export competitiveness, it is crucial for government policy to facilitate executive education

programs focusing on the strategic importance of export markets. Such initiatives could help top management understand the need to allocate sufficient resources for export-related activities.

Policymakers should consider rewarding firms that display a strong customer-centric approach, given its positive association with export competitiveness. Tax incentives or grants could be offered to firms that actively engage in market research, customer satisfaction surveys, or customer retention programs to enhance their focus on customer needs.

5.4 Areas for further study

In the methodology section of the current research, a cross-sectional design was employed to examine the relationships among customer focus, SRM, process control, and top management support with export competitiveness at a particular moment. This design has its limitations when it comes to capturing the dynamic evolution of these variables over time. For a more nuanced understanding, future research may find it beneficial to use a longitudinal design that allows for the tracking of these relationships over extended time frames.

Moreover, it is recommended for subsequent studies to consider additional independent variables not explored in this research that could influence export competitiveness in coffee exporting firms in Uganda. The regression analysis from this study suggests that the variables under consideration do not fully account for export competitiveness, thereby indicating the possible presence of other influential factors.

Further research in diverse settings such as government-run exporting firms, multinational export organizations, or other sectors within private industry could offer valuable insights. Such studies would determine the extent to which the relationships among the variables

under investigation hold or differ in various contexts.

Lastly, a more focused investigation on specific segments within the coffee exporting industry in Uganda could be highly informative. Research targeting firms specializing in particular export markets or niches might reveal unique dynamics that are pertinent to those sectors. Such specialized focus would facilitate a more detailed comprehension of how customer focus, SRM, process control, and top management support influence export competitiveness in specific sub-sectors.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX: I

QUESTIONNAIRE

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL FACULTY OF GRADUTE RESEARCH STUDIES QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear respondent

I am **NAKAYINGA JUDITH** an MIB student of MUBS carrying out research entitled **Quality Management Practices and Export Competitiveness of Coffee Exporting Firms in Uganda**. You have been chosen for this purpose and am kindly requesting you to complete this questionnaire. Kindly spare a bit of your time to provide response to questions listed below. Please be assured that information provided in this questionnaire is purely for academic purpose and therefore would be treated with utmost **CONFIDENTIALITY**. The results from this research are intended for the award of a degree of master of international business of Makerere University. If there are any questions or concerns please call me directly on 0772818848/0758926074.

Your invaluable time and cooperation are highly appreciated.

Thank you.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETION OF THE FORM

Please read each question and tick the statement or choose the number that clearly reflects your view, you can also express your views where necessary.

QUESTIONNAIRE

Appendix II: Research Questionnaire

PART A: Demographic and Respondents Profile

1. Name of the respondent (optional)
2. Name of your organization (optional).....
3. Sex/ gender: M ☐ F ☐
4. Age

18-30years	31-40years	41-50years	51-60years
☐	☐	☐	☐

What is your highest academic qualification? (Tick as applicable).

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Certificate | ☐ |
| b) Diploma | ☐ |
| c) Bachelor's Degree | ☐ |
| d) Master's Degree | ☐ |
| e) PhD | ☐ |

6. How long have you worked with the company?

- | | |
|------------------|--------------------------|
| a) Less than two | ☐ |
| b) 2-5 years | ☐ |
| c) 6- 10 years | ☐ |
| d) Over 10 years | ☐ |

For how long has the firm been in existence?

a) Under 5 years

☐

b) 5 to Under 10

☐

c) 10 to Under 15 years

☐

d) 15 years and above

☐

Part B: EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS

To what extent has your company experienced the following outcomes as a result of practicing TQM? Use 1. Very low extent; 2. Low extent; 3. Moderate extent; 4. Great extent; 5. Very great extent

	EXPORT COMPETITIVENESS	1	2	3	4	5
	MARKET SHARE					
1	Our company has gained market share over time					
2	Our company number of markets have increased					
3	Our company exports in foreign markets have increased					
4	Our company has better negotiating power with suppliers and distributors than other companies.					
5	We sell a larger quantity of our product in the market than other companies					
6	Our company is focused on generating customer loyalty for our products					
7	Our company is implementing new technologies for accessing customers for our products					
	PRODUCTIVITY	1	2	3	4	5
1	Our costs of production have reduced compared to our competitors					
2	The overall quality of the product that our company provides is excellent					
3	Our company trains its employees to increase productivity					
4	Our company implements many improvements in our current products					
5	Our company practices specialization so that to get the best product					

6	Our product produces quality products to various markets					
7	Our company invests in process automation to increase the productivity of its goods produced.					
	EXPORT GROWTH	1	2	3	4	5
1	Our exports have increased as compared to our competitors					
2	Our exports have value addition					
3	Our exports have increased our profitability					
4	Our company has an established presence in the export industry domestically					
5	We do advertise to promote our products in foreign markets					
6	Our company has staff who are experienced in export marketing and sales					
7	Our top management is committed to exporting as a new and expanded area of activity					
8	Our company's product is price-competitive in both domestic and foreign markets					
9	Our product competes favorably with both domestic and foreign competitors					
	PRODUCT DIFFERENTIATION	1	2	3	4	5
1	Our company carries out product survey to gather feedback from customers					
2	Our company uses best practices for creating the right product survey from customers					
3	Our company focuses on showcasing a product or business's distinctive attributes to different markets					
4	Customers are always willing to pay more for a product when they believe it is special, exceptional, or exclusive					
5	Our company is flexible in pricing the products for the market					
6	Our company spends money on R&D to investigate cutting-edge technology to enhance customer satisfaction					

Part C: Quality Management practices

To what extent has the following total quality management practices been implemented in your company? Use 1) Strongly disagree; 2) Disagree; 3) Neutral 4) Agree; 5) Strongly Agree

	CUSTOMER FOCUS	1	2	3	4	5
1	The company actively and regularly seeks customer input to identify their needs and expectations					
2	We are frequently in close contact with our customers.					
3	The company has effective process for resolving customer complaints					
4	Customer complaints and grievances are used to improve on product and service quality					
5	Our customer gives us feedback on quality and delivery performance					
6	Our company gives quality attention to customers					
	Focusing on customers needs is everyone's responsibility					
	SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIP MANAGEMENT	1	2	3	4	5
1	Quality is our number one criterion in selecting suppliers					
2	We rely on small number of high quality suppliers					
3	Our company strives to establish long term relationship with suppliers					
4	Our suppliers allow mutual sharing of risks					
5	Our suppliers are certified or qualified for quality					
6	Our organization works closely with suppliers to improve product quality					
7	Our organization involves suppliers in quality training programs					
8	Our organization gives timely feed back to suppliers regarding the quality of products received.					
	PROCESS CONTROL	1	2	3	4	5
1.	Our company invests in automation					
2.	Our company has an audit that takes care of all the processes					
3.	Our company constantly checks on variations during production process					

4.	Our company dedicates a portion solely for maintenance					
5	Our company authorizes labor to stop production for quality problems					
6	Our company has clear instruction manuals that guides employees during work					
7	Our company regularly checks supplier quality compliance to established standards					
8	Our Organization regularly monitors employees' compliances with laid down quality regulations					
	TOP MANAGEMENT SUPPORT	1	2	3	4	5
1	Senior managers actively encourage change					
2	Leadership proactively pursue continuous improvement					
3	Top management clearly understands the fundamental spirits and principles of quality management					
4	The departmental heads accept responsibility for quality of goods					
5	The company's plan always incorporates external customers, suppliers and other stakeholders					
6	Management views activities in our organization as a whole in order to create synergy, interdependence and interconnections					

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

APPENDIX: 2

MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research (FGSR) DISSERTATION/PROJECT/THESIS SUBMISSION CLEARANCE FORM (To be filled in duplicate)

Name: NAKAYINGA JUAITH REG. NO: 2021/14210127864
PROGRAMME: MASTER IN INTERDISCIPLINARY BUSINESS RESEARCH PLAN (circle) A : B : N/A
~~PARTIAL CLEARANCE BY ACCOUNTS~~

I confirm that the candidate named above has fully paid all the following fees:

Item	Tuition fees	Functional fees	Balance
Year 1 A/Y	~~Paid*~~ / ~~Not paid*~~	~~Paid*~~ / ~~Not paid*~~	UGX: <u>nil</u>
Year 2 A/Y	~~Paid*~~ / ~~Not paid*~~	~~Paid*~~ / ~~Not paid*~~	UGX: <u>nil</u>
Extension fees (payable by students who fail to complete studies on time)			UGX: <u>nil</u>
TOTAL FEES PAYABLE			UGX: <u>nil</u>

*Please circle as appropriate. BALANCE (if any) clear (OR NIL)

Certified by: (Name of Officer) Kusur Date and stamp 16/10/2023
Signed [Signature] [Stamp]

~~DISSERTATION/PROJECT/THESIS SUBMISSION~~
I confirm the candidate named above has duly completed the course work component of the programme (otherwise, indicate any retakes or pending course)

Please list all retakes/pending courses (where appropriate). Indicate the course code

--

Certified by: (Name of Officer)

Signed: Date and stamp:

Copies: 1: (Student's file) 2: (Student's copy for future reference)

APPENDIX:3



MAKERERE UNIVERSITY BUSINESS SCHOOL

Plot 21A, New Portbell Road, P. O. Box 1337, Kampala - Uganda
General Line: +256-414-338120; Fax: +256-414-505921

Faculty of Graduate Studies & Research

September 21, 2023

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: NAKAYINGA JUDITH

MIB

2021/HD10/2786U

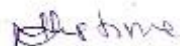
The above named is a student of Makerere University Business School pursuing studies leading to the award of Master of International Business of Makerere University.

She has completed the course work component and is currently carrying out research on the topic

"Quality Management Practices and Export Competitiveness of Coffee Exporting Firms in Uganda."

Any assistance rendered to her will highly be appreciated.

Yours faithfully


Nanziya Christine
Senior Administrator



Email: deangre@mubs.ac.ug

f @mubsfgsr

G @mubsfgsr

Website: www.mubs.ac.ug

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