

## THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EXPERIENCE, EXPORT-PRENEURIAL BEHAVIORS, AND BUSINESS OUTCOMES

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### Abstract

The work argued that foreign market opportunities, firm resources and entrepreneurial ideologies influenced business performance of export firms but queried the exporter experience. Three hundred and ninety-five owner-managers of selected non-oil export firms were surveyed after selecting them purposively. A validated questionnaire was utilized to collect primary data, after reliability testing was conducted. Hierarchical regression analysis was conducted to determine the moderating effect of export experience on the export-preneurial behaviours and business performance. From the results, the study concludes that export experience does not significantly moderate the relationship between export-preneurial behaviours and business performance. The paper recommends that managers should focus efforts on adaptation and adopting of export-preneurial behaviours in engendering improved business performance.

### Introduction

Business performance ascent has remained a universal dilemma for entrepreneurial firms. With the saturation of home-based markets, entrepreneurs tend to seek foreign markets through exports by leveraging on customer needs and opportunities with value-addition as a driving force (Gatawa and Dalhatu, 2017) to improve business performance indices. On the economic front, developing countries have been seen to channel incentives backed by public policies instruments to drive active internationalization (Gilaninia, Monsef, & Mosaddegh, 2013a; Nik & Nnabuike, 2017) and enhance performance. Yet performance in sales seems largely driven by an expansion in customer base that is conditioned on entrepreneurial ideology, improved network interactions along the value chain, trust and market knowledge gained from experience (Asghari & Rostami, 2017; Kabagambe, Ogutu, & Munyoki, 2017; Nuseir, 2016).

The glaring declining performance is a challenge for the Nigerian export-preneurs and over time has been attributable to lack of understanding of the customers' expectation, uncompetitive and unattractive packaging, distrust, thereby resulting in the erosion of customer base and a corresponding decline in sales parameters (Monogbel & Okah, 2017). Nworu (2017) added incapacitations within the distribution and logistics of delivery processes as well as bureaucratic delays in the social networks from support context. Despite the studies (Alexandra & Orlando, 2018; Josee, Mark, & Armand, 2013; Kamitewoko, 2013; Nik & Nnabike, 2017; Nuseir, 2016; Sanjo & Ibrahim, 2017; Yazeed, 2017) that have reviewed business performance stimulators from various divergent view-points, Ahimbisibwe and Abho (2013); Darus, Yunus, and Rahman (2017) and Mbaegbu (2016) identified a gap in literature on the moderating role of export experience on the entrepreneurial behaviours and business performance relationship.

In addition, concerted government efforts through policy formulations with the enactment of the Export (incentives and miscellaneous provisions) act (1992) which brought about the Export Expansion Grant (EEG), Export Adjustment Scheme Fund (EASF) and Export Development Fund (EDF) geared towards non-oil exports, a truncation occurred in 2013 due to misappropriation of the grants (Monogbe & Okah, 2017; Okon, 2018). This singular action was identified by Okon (2018) as instrumental to the declining sales since then. The Real Sector Support Facility (RCCF) in 2014 and the Small and Medium Enterprises Investment Schemes (SMEIS) also in 2014 have not been seen to make any progressive impact either (Monogbe & Okah, 2017; Okwu, Dada, & Owolabu, 2013). The x-raying of data from National Bureau of Statistics (2017) indicated a general decline in total exports in Nigeria from ₦15,262bn (2013) to ₦8,835.60bn (2016), and a paltry sales figure of ₦1,130.2bn recorded in 2013 for non-oil exports which further dipped to ₦656.8bn in 2016.

The general view that experience would drive growth in customer base and sales has also failed to orchestrate itself in this Nigerian context (Mbaegbu, 2016). Hence, this study sought to investigate the relationship between export-preneurial behaviours (measured as entrepreneurial orientation, social networks, distribution logistics, entrepreneurial mindset, packaging and trust) and business performance, as well as examine the moderating

effect of export experience on this relationship. This position is to challenge and expand existing knowledge in the field and authenticate the claims export-experience is vital to business performance in South-Western Nigeria. Following the introduction, section two of the paper considered the review of literature; section three reflected the methodology; section four captured the data analysis, results and discussions; and section five contained the conclusion and recommendations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Export-preneurial behaviours have been described by Hamilton (2015) and Nuseir (2016) as the practices and tactics which export desiring entrepreneurs adopt and display. Earlier scholars (Michael & Araujo, 1985; Reid, 1981) have defined export-preneurial behaviours as attitudinal dispositions targeted at export-market entry and growth in export performance arising from an agile response to the orientation and mind-set of the entrepreneur. Cadogan, Morgan, and Story (2006) however expanded this definitional discourse from the foreign market-context with reference to customer base growth, opportunity oriented moves capable of engendering general success of the export enterprise. Export-preneurial behaviours have been classified into two: the export entrepreneurial-oriented behaviour and the export market-oriented behaviour (Pickernell, Jones, Thompson, & Packham, 2016).

According to Miocevic and Crnjak-Karanovic (2011), the export entrepreneurial-oriented behaviour which are largely owner manager specific attitudes and capabilities exhibited by the firm owner to disarm competition due to its distinct qualities. Academic positions of various scholars (Abiodun & Rosli, 2014; Pickernell, et al., 2016) have described this export entrepreneurial-oriented behaviour as influenced by the entrepreneurs' vision, bundle of heterogeneous skills, and communication capabilities. Prominent export entrepreneurial-oriented behaviours as highlighted by Boehe (2013) and Boso, Cadogan, and Story (2012) are foresightedness, experience gained from field relations, innovativeness, mind-set, risk-taking propensity. Others include trust-worthiness, individual's knowledge and skills, commitment, social network relations, communication capability, and cultural tolerance (Bouazza, Ardjouman, & Abada, 2015; Murray, Gao, & Kotabe, 2011).

This study classified export entrepreneurial-oriented behaviours as entrepreneurial orientation (EO), social networks (SN), entrepreneurial mind-set (EM), and trust (TR). Amongst these entrepreneurial-oriented behaviours constructs, entrepreneurial orientation and mind-set are person-specifics. However, the social networks and trust were looked upon as relational behaviours, with social networks addressing the relationship existing between the suppliers as the sources of export products, and governmental institutions that provide export advice and support for documentary requirements, whereas trust speaks to the relationship which engenders reliability and dependability of agreements and contracts entered into.

On the other hand, export market behaviours are the behaviours that allow swift response by firms to foreign market needs and preferences (Boso, *et. al.*, 2012). It offers superior value creation for foreign market customers and keeps the export-preneur ahead of other less market-oriented foreign market rivals (Murray, *et. al.*, 2011). Some of these export market behaviours are pricing, product packaging, market-space product promotion through online marketing, logistics, distribution, brand visibility (Kwon, & Arenius, 2010; Murray, *et. al.*, 2011). Export market behaviours are itemized as distribution logistics (DL) and packaging (PG). Distribution logistics was seen as the delivery mode and the logistic infrastructure which facilitate the movement of products to the foreign buyers' while packaging deals with the protective covering which attracts buyers and provides requisite information that can aid export sales. Hence, the study opines that export-preneurial behaviours is the combination of export market behaviours and entrepreneurial-oriented behaviour targeted at enhancing foreign market entry.

### Business performance

The concept of business performance has been defined as the extent of a firm's financial objective achievement (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). Rogo, Shariff and Hafeez (2017) and Wilden, Gudergan, Nielsen, and Lings (2013) have expanded this definition to incorporate the meeting of profitability and sales goals, as well as non-financial measures considered from the standpoints of competitors. In the same vein, other scholars (Pulka, Ramli, & Bakar, 2018; Richard, Devinney, Yip & Johnson, 2009) have argued that it is the whole gamut of financial performance, product market performance and shareholders' return expectations. This study examined business performance from the outlook of export performance. Internationalization literature (Jalali, 2012; Nusier, 2016; Roxo, 2014; Shamsuddoha & Ali, 2006) has little consensus for a uniform export performance definition. Where Jalali (2012) considers it as a significant measure to predict the direction of operations towards the success of entrepreneurs in a foreign market, Roxo (2014) posited it as the spontaneous effect of export-preneurial behaviours when firm-specific and environment-specific circumstances are combined together. Nusier (2016) views it as measure of adaptability, effectiveness and efficiency unveiled by an entrepreneur in comparison to rivals in the export market.

Kabagambe, Ogutu, and Munyoki, (2017) defined export business performance based on the strategic and financial measures; and management satisfaction arising from their views of the characteristics which are related to monetary indicators such as sales income, profit margins, market share as stated by Nik & Nnabuike (2017). Export business performance helps to breed confidence to the investors, and various stakeholders of the company when it is incremental in nature (Kabagambe et al., 2017). It maintains and improves competitive advantage of a firm; and is known to improve the brand visibility of the firm and goodwill too. Export business performance of firms within a nation has been known to contribute positively to the foreign reserve of the receipt country for the foreign inflows. Despite its inherent benefits, if it is not properly managed, could lead to loss of valuable resources, and goodwill. For this study, export business performance shall be investigated from sales growth, profitability, firm size and customer base. Consequently, this study defines business performance as the efficient use of unique heterogeneous resources by export firms to that can guarantee maximum output across sales, returns and profitability, as a result of attained competitive advantage.

### **Export experience**

Export experience, according to Yeoh (2004) is the knowledge and learning accretion gathered over a given time frame within a firm. Navarro, Losada, Ruzo, and Diez (2010) defined export experience as the directional compass utilized by firms in information gathering on foreign market operations. Other scholars (D'Angelo, Majocchi, Zucchella, & Buck, 2013; Di Maria & Ganau, 2014) have regarded export experience as the combination of idiosyncratic and explicit knowledge gain as result of repeated export relations, with little regard for the firm age. According to internationalization literature, export experience is assessed as a combination of gained work experience, a grasp of foreign cultural demands, and past knowledge of a country's export process gathered over time (Rahimnezhad & Alipour, 2015).

D'Angelo, *et. al.* (2013) and Love, Rope, and Zhou (2016) have revealed that number of years in export may be an indirect indicator of export experience. The export experience concept presents a quagmire in literature similar to the "chicken-egg" riddle as Love et al. (2016) explain that knowledge is only gained from continuous export over a time frame, while a firm's age in export is only confirmable when it has remained in export operation over time in order to acquire knowledge that forms experience. Export-preneurial firms irrespective of their unique resources depend on fore-knowledge of the international market to get into serviceable export contracts, as the lack of export experience stifles business performance opportunities (Rahimnezhad & Alipour, 2015; Roper, & Malshe, 2013). Following the aforementioned prescriptions, this study defined export experience as the number of years in export capable of engendering practical knowledge accumulation.

### **Export-preneurial behaviours, export experience and business performance**

Roberts and Ingram (2002) explained that a positive significance was observed when knowledge transfers moderated the relationship between the business performance and export-preneurial behaviours measured as supplier social networks, as improvement was observed across sales growth indices of the wine companies in New Zealand and Australia.

Positive relations were also observed in the relationship export-preneurial mind-set and internationalization performance when influenced by the combination of export experience measured as bias and tacit knowledge (Perks & Hughes, 2008). A mixed result was observed in the study of enterprises in Yorkshire and Humberside carried out by Laforet (2012). The study observed that when export experience moderated the export-preneurial orientation and performance relations, but found no significant effect of export experience (firm age) on export-preneurial innovative behaviour and business performance outcomes (customer base and market share) (Laforet, 2012).

Chugan and Singh (2014) indicated that information availability within the business network predicted firm-level export performance. The study further highlighted the importance of knowledge gained as result of repetitive action and information gained as seen as a unique resource rare, non-substitutable, and valuable to a firm's performance. A divergent result from the study of Hagsten and Kotnik (2014), revealed export experience measured as age of the firm, played no moderating role in mind-set and sales performance relationship, as it found that the younger firms grew their the export numbers more, when compared to older firms expected to have more export experience and knowledge of the foreign markets. It also showed that the age variable indicates that the younger the firm the larger the exports (export intensity/ performance). Other studies revealed positive moderating effects of export experience on the relationship between organizational factor (firm size, trade experience and export commitment) significantly affected export performance (Gilaninia, Ganjnia & Jelodarloo, 2012) and firm characteristics (entrepreneurial orientation, social relationship, and mind-set), environmental characteristics (distribution logistics network), international experience and international commitment on higher levels export performance (Erdil & Özdemir, 2016).

Pickernell, Jones, Thompson, and Packham (2016) results showed that positive moderating determinants of exporting of SMEs measured with firm age on the relationship between the owner-manager behaviours of the exporters (measured with innovativeness, human capital investments, and intellectual property) on export performance, while the moderated effect of firm age with export-preneurial innovativeness and business performance showed no growth focus in terms firm size from the firm turnover context. Martinović and Matana (2017) found that entrepreneurial export experience influenced the relationship between export-preneurial behaviours from the institutional government trade support view-point and business performance of the respective firms in Croatia. Export experience, export distribution channel and export performance from the context of sales growth and profitability indicated significant positive relations, after an investigation by Rahimnezhad & Alipour (2015) of tea companies in Iran.

The influence of experience reveals from theory, a continuous unique deployment of capabilities in completing of processes tending to adopt a repetitive approach capable of affecting performance as proscribed by the Experience effect theory (Day & Montgomery, 1983). Henderson (1974) explained that the repetitive action intentionally improves performance by a factor referred to as progress ratio. This has been seen to be effective in enhancing growth in performance as the theory embraces cost reduction, technological adoption in processes, product redesign, network effects, labour efficiency, and resource capability mix change differences (Henderson, 1973). The practicality of the results of the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) are similar to the adoption of export-preneurial behaviours viewed from the lenses of entrepreneurial orientation, social networks, distribution logistics, entrepreneurial mind-set, trust and packaging, which embrace learning and engender improved performance.

**METHODOLOGY**

Cross-sectional survey research design was adopted to obtain perception-based data from the various stakeholders, in investigating the moderation effect of export experience on the relationship between export-preneurial behaviours and business performance. This design is consistent with the following studies: Ajayi (2016); Holtgrave and Onay (2017); and Navarro-García, (2016). Three hundred and ninety-five firms (395) owner/managers of active non-oil firms in South-Western Nigeria were the unit of analysis of the study. This region holds 73.7% of active registered non-oil export firms in Nigeria (NEPC, 2017), with the busiest ports/borders in terms of international boundaries (Apapa seaport, Tin-can Island seaport, Port Terminal Marine Ltd (PTML), Idiroko land border, Owode-Apa land border, Seme border, and the first international airport, Muritala Mohammed International Airport, Ikeja).

Complete census method was utilized, due to the meager population for the study and desire to increase the confidence level of the sample size. The respondents’ selection criterion was anchored on owner/managers mainly because they are responsible for export decisions. The adapted questionnaire was informed from diverse literature (Agbawodikeizu, 2018; Arokodare, 2018; Cates, 2007; Covin& Wales, 2011; Gilaninia, Monsef, & Soleymani, 2013; Hoang, 2015; Holtgrave & Onay, 2017; Ogunnaike & Kehinde, 2013; Williams, 2011; and Zhou, 2002) along the constructs with sections covering demographic data, export-preneurial behaviour predictors and business performance indicators using a six-point likert scaling from *very high* (6) to *very low* (1).

The content validity was carried out and constructs determined through Kaiser-Meyer Olkin (KMO)> 0.5, Barlett’s test> 0.05, Composite reliability > 0.7 and Average Variance Extracted> 0.5 and the reliability established with scores from Cronbach’s Alpha Coefficients> 0.7 after a pilot testing. The retrieved data from the three hundred and ninety-five owner/managers by field enumerators that were well training on effective data collection methods and the objective of the study was subjected to various diagnostic tests of normality, homoscedascity and multi-collinearity to reduce possible errors, as well as confirm the statistical fitness of the model. The econometric model developed along the dependent, moderator and independent constructs of the study and the data was analysed using hierarchical regression analysis.

**3.1 Econometric Model Specification of the study**

$BP = f(EB, EE)$  -----Functional Equation

$BP = (SG, PR, CB, FS)$

$EB = (EO, SN, DL, TR, EM, PA)$

$BP = \beta_0 + \beta_1EB + \beta_2EE + \beta_3EB*EE + \mu_i$  -----Model of the study

Where

BP: Business Performance

EB: Export-preneurial Behaviours

EE: Export Experience

EO: Entrepreneurial Orientation

- SN: Social Networks
- TR: Trust
- PA: Packaging
- CB : Customer Base
- EB\* EE = Interaction between export-preneurial behaviours and export experience
- $\mu_i$  = Capturing other variables not explicitly stated in the model (Error term)
- $\beta_0$ = Intercept of the regression equation
- $\beta_1$ - $\beta_3$ = Regression coefficients estimates which showed the effect of EB, EE and EB\*EE on BP respectively.

Export-preneurial behaviours is represented as a blend of entrepreneurial orientation (EO), social networks (SN), distribution logistics (DL), entrepreneurial mindset (EM), trust (TR) and packaging (PG). These constructs ( $x_1, \dots, x_n$ ) as earlier stated interact in this study to explain the engendering of business performance with export-preneurial behaviours although export experience is seen to moderate this relationship. Hence, prevailing knowledge is tested and enlarged with the assumption of this study which is represented as ( $BP = \alpha_0 + \beta_1 EB + \beta_2 EE + \beta_3 EB*EE + \mu_i$ ). The Experience effect theory explains the moderating interaction which experience in exporting could have as a catalyst to export-preneurial behaviours-performance relationship amongst the non-oil export enterprises. Hence, this study utilized econometric models prescribed in hierarchical regression form as it will depict the catalytic role of experience in the relationship between the predictor and the output variable, as well as its strength and direction. As such, the apriori expectation is that if results reveal a  $p \leq 0.05$  and  $\beta_i \neq 0$  (where  $\beta_i$  represents  $\beta_1, \beta_2, \beta_3, \beta_4, \beta_5,$  and  $\beta_6$ ); a rejection of the hypothesis would be favoured.

Ethical considerations was observed in conducting this research as secrecy and anonymity were ensued strictly during the design of the questionnaire to encourage voluntary responses. Also, benefits to the respondents were clearly outlined, while efforts to ensure the avoidance of plagiarism were adopted to make for originality of the research work. Despite the obvious limitations inherent in the choice of methodology used (time-constraint, confidentiality and adapted questionnaire), it was mitigated by the use of trained field enumerators to ensure faster coverage, moral suasion in order to ensure that more respondents attend to the questionnaire, and pilot testing to confirm relevance of the instrument to the study, in order to further minimize any biases that could have arisen, thereafter.

**DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

As previously stated, the objective of this work was to investigate the moderating effect of experience on the relationship between export-preneurial behaviours and business performance. Of 395 respondents surveyed, only 52.7% response rate was recorded and confirmed satisfactory as Boso et al. (2016) observed similar response rate of 49.4% in his study of owner/managers. 19.7% had export experience of less than or equal to 5 years, 24.5% had 6-10 years export experience, 21.6% had export experience of 11-15 years, 16.3% had 16-20 years, and 17.8% had export experience of above 20 years. The formulated econometric model was subjected to tests using hierarchical regression analysis. The results are as presented in Table 1 respectively.

*Table 1 Regression Results for the Moderating Effect of Export Experience on the Relationship between Export-preneurial Behaviours and Business Performance*

N	Model	$\beta$	Sig	R Square	Adjusted R <sup>2</sup>	R <sup>2</sup> $\Delta$	F Statistics
208	Constant	.016	.978	.199	.195	.199	51.048
	EB	.938	.000				(1, 206)
	Constant	.044	.937	.235 <sup>b</sup>	.227	.036	
	EB	.845	.000				31.443
	EE	.130	.002				(1, 205)
	Constant	-.498	.648	.236 <sup>c</sup>	.225	.001	
	EB	.971	.000				21.006
	EE	.348	.358				(1, 204)
	EB*EE	-.050	.562				

*Predictors: (Constant), Export-preneurial Behaviours*

*Predictors: (Constant), Export-preneurial Behaviours, Export Experience*

*Predictors: (Constant), Export-preneurial Behaviours, Export Experience, Export-preneurial Behaviours\*Export Experience*

*Dependent Variable: Business Performance*

*Source: Author's Computation, 2018; underlying data from Field Survey*

Table 1 illustrates the summary of the hierarchical regression results of the export experience moderating effect on the relationship between export-preneurial behaviours and business performance of selected enterprises in South-Western Nigeria. The model 1 reveals export-preneurial behaviours regressed on business performance of selected enterprises in South-Western Nigeria and the results are as stated at ( $R^2 = 0.199$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). It indicates that export-preneurial behaviours accounts for 19.9% of the variability in business performance of the selected non-oil enterprises, while the balance is accounted for by other variables not considered in this study.

Furthermore, Table 1 shows  $\beta = 0.938$ ,  $p < 0.05$  when export-preneurial behaviours is in the model alone. These results indicate that for every unit increase in export-preneurial behaviours, business performance of selected enterprises increased by 0.938. The overall model was also positively significant ( $F = 51.048$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). In model 2, export experience was introduced, and a significant improvement of the effect of export experience on the relationship between export-preneurial behaviours and business performance of selected enterprises ( $R^2 = 0.235$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Export-preneurial behaviours and export experience explain 38.6% of the variation in business performance of selected export-enterprises. The  $F$  value was positive and statistically significant ( $F = 9.685$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) and the influence of the independent variable and the moderators were significant in the model. Table 1 shows  $\beta$  of export experience ( $\beta = 0.130$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); and export-preneurial behaviours ( $\beta = 0.845$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ); that is for every unit increase in export experience and export-preneurial behaviours; business performance of selected enterprises increases by 0.130 and 0.845 respectively.

The interaction term (export-preneurial behaviours\*export experience\*business performance) was introduced in the model 3. All the variables of export-preneurial behaviours, export experience, the interaction term and business performance were entered in the regression model. Table 1 revealed a change in  $R^2$  from 0.235 to 0.236 ( $R^2 \Delta = 0.001$ ) after the introduction of the interaction term. The change was not statistically significant as the  $p$ -value = 0.562 > 0.05.

From Table 1, the results depict statistically insignificant relationship between export-preneurial behaviours and export experience and the interaction term ( $F_{(1,204)} = 21.006$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ). The  $F$  changed from 31.443 to 21.006 showing a drop when the interaction was introduced. The  $F$  ratio shows that the regression of export-preneurial behaviours and export experience on business performance of selected enterprises is not statistically significant. The  $\beta$  values reveals that  $\beta$  of the model parameters are negative and statistically insignificant at more than 0.05 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The results in Table 1 (Model 1) show statistically significant regression  $\beta$  for export-preneurial behaviours ( $\beta = 0.938$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) indicating that there exists a linear dependence on business performance of selected enterprises on export-preneurial behaviours. In model 2, export experience was also statistically significant knowledge ( $\beta = 0.130$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). With the addition of the interaction term,  $\beta$  was -0.050 meaning that for every unit change in interaction term, performance of selected SMEs decreases by 0.050. Furthermore, the interaction term showed a negative effect ( $\beta = -0.050$ ,  $p > 0.05$ ) that was not statistically significant. The established econometric equation from the results is stated as follows:

$$BP = -0.498 + 0.971EB + 0.348EE - 0.050EB*EE \dots\dots\dots \text{Working Regression Model}$$

Where:

BP = Business Performance

EB = Export-preneurial Behaviours

EE = Export Experience

EB\*EE = Interaction of Export-preneurial Behaviours and Export Experience

The results indicate that export experience has no statistically significant moderating effect on the relationship between export-preneurial behaviours and business performance of the selected enterprises in South-Western Nigeria. The results are consistent with the findings of Laforet (2012) who studied 96 managers in Yorkshire, and Humberside and observed that export experience had no significant moderating effect on export-preneurial behaviours from the innovativeness outlook; on business performance.

The divergence in the results has been seen in studies carried out by many scholars (Haghighi, Firouzian & Najafi, 2008; Haluk, Köksal, & Özgü, 2010; Neneh, 2012; Pickernell, Jones, Thompson, & Packham, 2016; Roberts & Ingram, 2002), whose views portrayed various indicators of export-preneurial behaviours. Haghighi, Firouzian and Najafi (2008) investigated export food stuff production companies in Tehran province and indicated significant moderation of export experience on the relationship between direct export distribution channels and business performance. Köksal and Özgü (2010) also observed that experience gained from acquired knowledge positively moderated the packaging, conceptualized as brand image and product quality, which influenced export profitability. Furthermore, Neneh (2012) after investigating SMEs in South-Africa posited that entrepreneurial mind-set and performance relationship was moderated by export experience garnered through continuous education. Pickernell, Jones, Thompson and Packham (2016) found that age of the

firm and formal education moderated the export orientation and performance relationship after examining in the United Kingdom. They explained from their findings that graduates tended to have better entrepreneurial orientation targeted at export and required in enhancing SMEs' export performance. Roberts and Ingram (2002) explained that a positive significance was observed when knowledge transfers moderated the relationship between the business performance and export-preneurial behaviours measured as supplier social networks, as improvement was observed across sales growth indices of the wine companies in New Zealand and Australia.

Based on the results of the study as at the time, it implies that export experience is not a facilitator for application of export-preneurial behaviours that can engender incremental business performance. It suggests that while export experiences may be viewed as an edge which firms may be used as an advantage in enhancing the export-preneurial behaviours and business performance relationship; this may not be applicable in the Nigerian context with the South-Western Zone in particular. This may be as a result of differences in the representation of indicators which measure the concepts of the study or even the geographical location. Although according to theory, the repetitive tendency of an action enables an export-preneur adopt enhanced behaviour that can improve performance, this study challenges the theoretical assumptions as it negates its tenets.

In Nigeria, there is a genuine and urgent need to drive non-oil exports and so entrepreneurs who understand the needs in any foreign market, may not necessarily need experience gained based on continuous repetitive action. As such, export-preneurs with clear understanding of the expectations of the foreign buyers in terms of preferences, specifications and packaging, who have been able to build trust, leverage on their social capital along the export value chain, and can effectively manage their distribution logistics may be able to improve their businesses and grow their sales, customer base, profitability and expand their firm size as performance measures.

## CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The study sought to investigate the moderating effect of export experience on the relationship between export-preneurial behaviours and business performance. The result from this study challenges the finding of previous literature on the moderating role of export experience plays in the adoption of export-preneurial behaviours utilized by firms to improve their performance. The study observed that export-preneurial behaviours are imperative for business performance of export firms but found a negative and insignificant relationship, in the interference of export experience in the relationship. Hence, export-preneurs who already have idiosyncratic knowledge do not need to have previous experience based on the number of years in export, as it is seen as irrelevant in engineering business performance in South-Western Nigeria as at the time of the study. In addition, export-preneurs do not require prior experience to win a customer, make sales, expand firm size or even improve on its profitability.

From the aforementioned conclusions, the paper acknowledged the need for adopting export-preneurial behaviours in driving the performance of non-oil export firms, but advocated for export experience as evident in theoretical and empirical contributions suggested. In addition, entrepreneurial orientation and mindset, social capital enhanced by network, trust, and packaging could have been the behaviours driving performance of the non-oil export firms, instead of export experience. The results of this study could also have been affected by the environment in which it was carried out, and as such may not make for generalization in other developed economies. Thus, this paper suggests further studies be carried out to investigate the role of governmental support and system trust in engendering business performance.

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