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The moderating effect of managerial networking on the export barrier-export performance relationship: A study of cocoa exporters in Cameroon.

Abstract Purpose - The purpose of this paper is to examine the literature on exporting, firm performance, and managerial networking to develop and test a conceptual framework. The framework explores the moderating effect of managerial networking on the export barrier – export performance relationship of small and medium-size (SMEs) cocoa exporters in Cameroon. Moreover, the paper explores the mechanisms through which such effect occur.

Design/methodology/approach – To test the framework, a mixed-method approach is used. The quantitative analysis involved 101 SME cocoa exporters using data collected through snowball sampling. The qualitative data involves an interview of 12 managers of SME cocoa exporters who also took part in the quantitative study.

Findings - The findings suggest the moderating effect of managerial networking was not significant and results from the interview suggest networking represents an export barrier. It also shows that export barriers have a positive effect on export performance for SME cocoa exporters. These findings are being supported with evidence from the interview of respondents by uncovering some unethical practices within the cocoa sector.

Originality/value – Research suggests a mixed result on the effect of export barriers on export performance and the need to explore factors that could moderate or mediate such relationship. With most prominent studies dominated by pure quantitative studies from the West and the need for empirical studies from developing economies, this paper response by adopting a mixed-method approach to explore the moderating effect of managerial networking on the export barrier – export performance relationship for SME cocoa exporters in Cameroon. The paper also examines the mechanisms through which such effect occur which suggest some unethical practices within the cocoa sector.

Key Words: Export Barrier, Export performance, Managerial Network, SME Cocoa exporters, and Cameroon.