

Entrepreneurial Alliances and Export Performance of Cocoa Processing Companies in Ondo State

Zekeri Abu¹, Kayode Muhammed Ibrahim^{1*} and Rafiu Orire Rahaman¹

¹ Department of Business and Entrepreneurship, Faculty of Management & Social Sciences, Kwara State University, P.M.B. 1530, 23431, Malete, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT

Cocoa processing firms face several constraints in enhancing their export rates due to a lack of close relations with firms in the exporting country. Access to superior processing technologies and high product quality standards is necessary to stay competitive in many affected areas. This research, therefore, examines entrepreneurial alliances and the export performance of cocoa processing firms in Ondo State, focusing on strategic partnerships, resource sharing, and information exchange. The study used a descriptive survey design. The population of the study is, therefore, said to be infinite. Thus, Krejcie and Morgan's (1970) Table formula was employed with a sample size of 278, comprised of export managers, operations managers, and strategic alliance managers, using a '5-point Likert scale' close-ended questionnaire. The results show that strategic partnerships, resource sharing, and information exchange significantly improve the export performance of exporting firms. The study emphasises the importance of strengthening the alliances to increase resource integration, enhance access to technology, and improve market competitiveness. The research findings reveal that the best strategies for addressing these barriers include strengthening alliances between local firms and foreign markets, integrating resources, and improving communication within alliances. The study recommends that, for economies interested in enhancing cocoa processors' export performance to increase sustainable economic growth, policymakers and business development agencies should support these connections and ensure the utilisation of efficient information exchange channels.

Keywords: Entrepreneurial Alliances, Export Performance, Strategic Partnership, Resource Sharing

1. INTRODUCTION

Entrepreneurial alliances are considered a strategic means of fostering growth, innovation, and competitiveness within and across global and regional contexts (Manning & Vavilov, 2023). Such alliances allow firms, particularly those from emerging economies, to overcome such resource constraints and risks while gaining access to new markets (Lanivich et al., 2024). However, entrepreneurial alliances create a clear plan for Nigerian businesses, especially those in the agriculture and manufacturing sectors, to counteract the structural problems typically associated with the domestic business climate. Through strategic alliances, one firm can acquire inputs from another without incurring as much energy and time, thereby achieving economies of scale in the international market (Lanivich et al., 2022).

*Corresponding Author: ibrahim.kama93@gmail.com

Entrepreneurial alliances, therefore, are particularly relevant to Nigerian cocoa processing firms, as knowledge of the international market's competitive nature and the general need for improvement is crucial to their survival and growth (Otchere et al., 2013). Export performance is a key measure of a company's performance in the export market, especially for firms seeking to expand globally (Barbieri et al., 2024). There is a need to enhance the export performance of Nigerian cocoa processing companies since Nigeria is one of the largest cocoa producers in the world today. The country is one of the world's largest cocoa producers, contributing about 20% of global cocoa production. Additionally, Ondo state contributes more than 40% to Nigeria's cocoa production (Sb et al., 2024). Despite this potential, cocoa processing in the region faces several challenges, including outdated processing equipment and technology, poor product quality, inadequate and inefficient supply chain management, and limited access to international markets. These factors hinder companies' ability to market their products effectively in the global market, resulting in lower export efficiency and profitability (Kongor et al., 2024). Thus, enhancing export performance through strategic partnerships and modernisation is critical for sustaining and strengthening the competitiveness of these firms.

Entrepreneurial alliances offer a realistic possibility for local cocoa processors. Through linkages with chocolate manufacturers, cocoa processors can access new technologies to process cocoa in line with international standards and to increase efficiency and quality in production, which are key drivers of export performance (Harya et al., 2023). Also, strategic partnerships help local firms overcome barriers to international trade and meet the quality standards that importers often expect from overseas suppliers. According to Nwokocha and Madu (2020), companies engaged in strategic networks usually benefit from increased innovation capabilities, lower barriers to entry, and improved ability to manage operational risks. Such alliances could be a new source of growth for cocoa processors in Ondo State and a shift to a higher level of regional international competitiveness. Some factors, however, constrain the export performance of cocoa processing firms in Ondo State despite the benefits of entrepreneurial alliances.

One major challenge is the absence of strong linkages with foreign firms that enable them to source modern processing technologies, ideas, and foreign market connections. Hence, local firms cannot match the high-quality functionality expected by the global markets. Another issue is that resource integration between local cocoa processors and their buyers remains low. This hampers the prospects of parallel expansion of operations, knowledge, and skill, and the necessary achievement of scale, which are essential for effective pricing strategies. Additionally, cocoa processors experience difficulties in communicating and sharing information with their alliance partners. This results in failure to access the flow of information on best practices to adopt, emerging trends, and regulatory requirements necessary for effective participation in international markets. Moreover, poor collaboration and communication between local firms and their partners can lead to system confusion and prolonged product delivery times, hindering the strategic prerequisite of long-term export partnership formation.

The primary objective of this study is to examine entrepreneurial alliances and the export performance of cocoa processing companies in Ondo state. The specific objectives are to investigate the influence of strategic partnerships on export performance, to determine the role of resource sharing in export performance, and to analyse the role of information exchange in the export performance of cocoa processing companies in Ondo State.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Concept of Entrepreneurial Alliances

Entrepreneurial alliances refer to strategic collaborative relationships formed between firms to obtain benefits that would be difficult or costly to achieve independently (Oh et al., 2024). Such alliances are especially vital for small and medium enterprises (SME), as they provide access to critical resources including capital, technology, managerial expertise, and new markets (Ramírez-Solis et al., 2022). According to Chen (2022), entrepreneurial alliances offer firms strategic options that enable them to adapt to risks associated with market expansion and innovation. Through these partnerships, firms can leverage complementary capabilities to introduce new products and services and expand more efficiently into international markets (Farida & Setiawan, 2022). However, the success of international alliances depends on many factors, including strategic alignment, trust, and relationship management between the two parties. Nneji and Asikhia (2021) explain that differences in objectives and organisational structures between alliance partners may create conflicts that negatively affect operational effectiveness and reduce the strategic value of the partnership. Similarly, Dhaundiyal and Coughlan (2022) argue that the effectiveness of sustainable alliance relationships depends on the firms' effectiveness in these relationships. Hence, the risks associated with these types of alliances can be even more profound in settings such as Nigeria, due to institutional volatility and economic instability; therefore, firms should undertake rigorous partner selection and proactive relationship management to maximise alliance benefits (Medase et al., 2023).

2.2 Strategic Partnership

A strategic partnership is a strategic business relationship formed to create mutual value while allowing the participating firms to remain legally and operationally independent (He et al., 2020). Choi et al. (2022) assert that strategic partnerships are beneficial because they enable firms to access resources such as technology, expertise, and distribution channels, thereby strengthening competitive advantage at both local and international levels. For cocoa processors in Ondo State, such partnerships are essential for gaining access to export markets, improving mechanical operations, and achieving high-quality production standards that comply with international requirements (Akinlabi et al., 2019). These collaborations allow firms to share risks, reduce operational costs, and jointly develop products, thereby expanding market reach and enhancing profitability. Furthermore, strategic partnerships offer flexibility, enabling firms to respond effectively to market fluctuations and strengthening their competitiveness in the cocoa export sector. However, strategic partnership arrangements operate under specific conditions, meaning that successful implementation is not guaranteed and depends on several factors, including the compatibility of organisational objectives, corporate culture, and managerial practices between partners (Castaner & Oliveira, 2020). When partners' interests diverge or when one party dominates the relationship, the intended harmony of the partnership may be undermined by conflict, thereby reducing its strategic effectiveness (Musili & Deya, 2023).

2.3 Resource Sharing

Resource sharing can be described as the exchange of capital, technology, or expertise among firms to achieve collective objectives that would be challenging to accomplish independently (Takyi et al., 2022). This practice is especially important in industries with high entry barriers, such as SMEs, which experience resource constraints. In the cocoa processing industry in Ondo State, there is potential benefit in sharing resources and technology, given the current barriers that firms face, including inadequate infrastructure and restricted access to international markets (Musili & Deya, 2023). By seeking external support and utilising available resources, firms are in a position to advance the current ways of producing goods and services. Additionally, where market access is

accumulated, firms can widen their global market coverage and improve efficiency (Nneji & Asikhia, 2021). However, resource sharing also presents several challenges, particularly in terms of partner relationship management and alignment of strategic goals, since resource dependence may trigger power imbalances between partners (Heredia Pérez et al., 2023). According to Lanivich et al. (2024), resource sharing may result in economies of scale, innovation, and improved risk management. However, inequalities in resource contributions may shift power dynamics and create pressure within alliance relationships (Chen, 2022). For instance, in Ondo State, Nigeria, cocoa processors may encounter situations where one partner possesses dominant technological capabilities or stronger market access, thereby increasing dependency risks (Choi et al., 2022). Resource sharing has also been identified as raising concerns regarding the protection of intellectual property rights, particularly when resources such as proprietary technology and knowledge are shared (Kim et al., 2024).

2.4 Information Exchange

Information exchange is a core characteristic of entrepreneurial alliances, especially within industries where technological and market information constitute critical competitive advantages. Chen et al. (2019) argued that the exchange of critical information, including market trends, emerging technologies, and changes in regulatory frameworks, assist firms adapt to emerging trends and improve their products and services to meet international standards. This exchange helps firms make better decisions at the right time, enabling them to respond effectively to market changes. For cocoa processors in Ondo State, information flows play a major role in improving their innovation strategies, expanding international market opportunities, and navigating changing trade rules and regulations (Kongor et al., 2024). In addition, local-to-global knowledge exchange of best practices and operations helps enhance cocoa processors' overall efficiency and competitiveness (Kero & Bogale, 2023). However, information exchange is not always effective. For instance, information asymmetry, where one partner possesses superior information, may lead to distrust and unequal power distribution within the alliance (Mustaruddin et al., 2017). Organisational culture and communication approaches also affect information flow and effectiveness; differences in these areas may lead to poor interaction and cooperation (Nordby, 2020).

2.5 Export Performance

Export performance reflects a firm's performance in international competition and includes factors such as sales, market share, and profitability (Nesredin et al., 2024). According to Heredia Pérez et al. (2023), managerial skills, resource allocation decisions, and market intelligence extensively affect export performance. These, supplemented by other factors within the firm's control and external conditions such as market demand, trade liberalisation, and international access, determine the firm's capability to do business across borders. Consequently, cocoa processing firms in Ondo State face unique hurdles in meeting global market demand for quality cocoa products, technological constraints, and poor market linkage (Kongor et al., 2024). The extent to which these companies can achieve better export performance depends on their ability to optimise operational effectiveness and product quality, and to navigate micro- and macroeconomic challenges, such as tariffs and non-tariff barriers to exports (Heredia Pérez et al., 2023). Although the firm-specific factors are critical, external forces are also crucial in determining export performance. Dubey et al. (2023) argue that firms with higher internal resources, including technological advances and efficient supply chain management, are likely to perform better in international markets. Nevertheless, external factors, such as political instability, exchange rate fluctuations, and unpredictable trade policies have worked against export efforts in firms located in Nigeria, a developing country. This shows that cocoa processors need to form partnerships and engage in resource-sharing management arrangements to address these

external risks. Organisations that strategically respond to both internal (endogenous) and external (exogenous) conditions are better positioned to enhance export standards and achieve sustainable export growth in the global marketplace (Paula & Stephen, 2004).

2.6 Underpinning Theory

Resource-Based View Theory, first postulated by Wernerfelt (1984) and subsequently expanded by Barney (1991), is known as the Resource-Based View (RBV) and establishes the strategic capability of a firm mainly based on the resources it controls. According to the RBV, for resources to contribute to sustainable competitive advantage, they must possess certain characteristics: valuable, rare, costly to imitate, and unique or imperfectly imitable (VRIN) (Barney, 1991). From the perspective of cocoa processing companies in Ondo State, RBV captures the value of utilising local resources, such as a distinctive knowledge base, highly skilled labour, and access to material procurement. The effective and efficient utilisation of these resources can create a competitive advantage for firms and ultimately affect product quality in the global economy. For example, cocoa processors that acquire good-quality cocoa beans or adopt modern processing technology may satisfy international cocoa market demand and outcompete rivals (Utami & Alamanos, 2023). RBV thus presents a strong platform for depicting how firms' resource management efficiency can boost their export performance, as resources that are valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable can create and sustain competitive advantages in the long run.

However, critics of RBV theory assert that it relies too heavily on internal resources, often ignoring market forces, competition, and other external factors (Onno Truijens, 2003). Although RBV has proven useful as a theoretical framework for analysing the significance of the firm's internal skills and assets, the theory lacks practical advice on how firms can obtain or create what they need when resources are scarce or external conditions are uncertain. Cocoa processors in developing regions such as Ondo State may, therefore, struggle to gain or build such resources that are crucial for competing in global markets, given the relatively poor infrastructure and, at times, inadequate institutional underpinnings. Hence, although RBV is a vital framework for explaining how firms build on existing valuable resources, for a more complete analysis, one must use other theoretical frameworks, such as transaction cost theory or institutional theory, which incorporate the market and environment perspective (Oria et al., 2021).

2.7 Empirical Review

Nuryakin (2024) examined entrepreneurial orientation and SME export performance, focusing on factors influencing innovation capability and international networking accessibility in the brass industry: an exploratory study. Using purposive sampling, this research employed a quantitative approach involving 282 owners and managers of SMEs in the brass industry cluster in Boyolali, Indonesia. Based on the results of this study, entrepreneurial orientation had no impact on SMEs' export performance, but it positively impacted innovation capability and accessibility of international networking. Another empirical test revealed that innovation capability had a significant positive impact on export performance and international networking accessibility. Chung and Ho (2024) examined the impact of standardised advertising, managerial connections, and Born Global on export performance. The study used a two-respondent survey of 155 exporting firms operating in an industrial marketing environment in Australia and New Zealand to test the hypotheses using hierarchical regression. The study establishes that standardised advertising positively correlates with export performance and that business interactions have an impact.

Rajab (2024) aimed to evaluate the role of supply chain strategic alliances in the performance of manufacturing firms in Kenya. This research adopted a combination of descriptive and explanatory research designs. The target population of this study consisted of 596 manufacturing firms in Kenya. Probability sampling was adopted, with proportionate stratified random sampling used to target manufacturing firms. Fisher's formula was used to estimate a sample size of 234 manufacturing firms. The primary data were gathered through self-administered questionnaires, and validity and reliability tests were conducted. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics, with the assistance of SPSS version 26. Since this research focused on determining the relationship between the dependent and independent variables, correlation and regression analyses were applied. The findings were presented using tables, charts, frequency percentages, and graphs. The study, therefore, infers that there is a significant and positive relationship between supply chain technical alliances and the performance of manufacturing firms in Kenya ($p=.000$; $\beta=.575$; $R^2=.423$), supply chain marketing alliances ($p=.000$; $\beta=.703$; $R^2=.463$), supply chain innovation alliances ($p=.000$; $\beta=.680$; $R^2=.374$) and supply chain cost and risk sharing alliances ($p=.000$; $\beta=.794$; $R^2=.460$). The study concluded that there is a positive and significant relationship between supply chain strategic alliances and the performance of manufacturing firms in Kenya.

Takyi et al. (2022) examined government support, strategic alliance, and internationalisation in an exploratory study of Ghanaian exporters of Indigenous products. The research employed the survey method; data were collected from 301 Indigenous exporters drawn from the Ghana Export and Promotion Authority database. To ensure the data collected were reliable and valid, confirmatory factor analysis was performed, and the analyses were conducted primarily using structural equation modelling. This study found a positive and significant relationship between financial and non-financial government support and the degree of internationalisation. Tokman et al. (2019) explored the relationship between SME alliance portfolio diversification and the top management's entrepreneurial and alliance disposition, based on self-completed surveys from 230 managers of Australian SMEs. The findings of this study indicate a strong, positive relationship between the composition of SME top management's strategic orientations and the diversity of firms' alliance portfolios. When both entrepreneurial and alliance orientations are high, the preferred portfolio comprises diverse functions.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study used a descriptive survey research design to investigate entrepreneurial alliances and export performance of cocoa processing firms in Ondo State. The target respondents were Export Managers, Operations Managers, Strategic Alliance Managers, Sales/Marketing Managers, and other stakeholders in Ondo State, including NEPC. Nevertheless, it is not easy to calculate the population in Ondo State; therefore, the population was considered infinite. Consequently, convenience sampling was employed to select and administer the study questionnaire to respondents. This technique involves selecting a sample based on availability, as it is suitable when dealing with a large or indeterminate population. The research aims to determine the relationship between entrepreneurial alliances and export performance among cocoa processing companies in Ondo State. The questionnaire was administered using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree – 5 = Strongly Agree) and served as the researcher's instrument. The questionnaires were administered online to ensure equal opportunities for all respondents.

To determine the appropriate and statistically significant sample size for the research, the Krejcie and Morgan (1970) sample size determination table was used. The table offers a scientifically

determined rule of thumb for selecting a sample size that provides a high degree of representativeness and reduces sampling error, particularly when the population of interest is large or even infinite. The use of the table proposed by Krejcie and Morgan (1970) is justified by the presupposition of a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error, which are widely recognised thresholds in social and management science research. These assumptions led to the conclusion that a sample size of 278 respondents was sufficiently large to yield valid, reliable, and generalisable results. The data collected from the respondents were analysed using descriptive and inferential analysis techniques. Multiple linear regression analysis was employed to test the above hypotheses. The data were analysed using SPSS version 26.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of the descriptive analysis are presented in Table 2, which assesses respondents' perceptions of entrepreneurial alliances and export performance variables. On average, strategic partnerships have a mean score of 2.92, indicating a low perception. The scores range from 3 to 5, with a standard deviation of .293. This shows that respondents hold generally negative views of strategic partnerships. Resource sharing is seen more positively, with a mean of 4.13. The scores range from 2 to 5, and a standard deviation of .471 indicates moderate variability in resource-sharing perceptions. This implies that although overall resource sharing is perceived positively, the responses vary. Information exchange has an average response of 2.05, indicating low perceived value. The scores range from 3 to 5. The standard deviation is .572, suggesting considerable variation in the perception of information exchange. This suggests that information exchange needs improvement. Export performance has a mean score of 1.03, which is very low. The scores vary from 3 to 5 on perceived export performance. This low standard deviation of .251 indicates that respondents are aligned in their views on the export performance levels, suggesting that further improvement is needed.

Table 1 Descriptive Statistics of the Respondents' Perceptions Based on Variable Questions

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Average strategic partnerships	278	3	5	2.92	.293
Average resources sharing	278	2	5	4.13	.471
Average information exchange	278	3	5	2.05	.572
Average export performance	278	3	5	1.03	.251

The null hypotheses below were formulated to guide the study:

H0₁: Strategic partnerships have no significant effect on the export performance of cocoa processing companies in Ondo State.

H0₂: Resource sharing has no significant effect on the export performance of cocoa processing companies in Ondo State.

H0₃: There is no significant effect of information exchange on the export performance of cocoa processing companies in Ondo State.

Table 2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.645 ^a	.416	.410	.38479

A. Predictors: (constant), strategic partnerships, resources sharing, information exchange

The results assessing the regression model's fit quality are provided in Table 2 and include key statistics. With a coefficient of determination (R-squared) of around .416, the independent variables (strategic partnerships, resource sharing, and information exchange) within the total model explain 41.6% of the variation in export performance. The model is predicted to be high despite the complexity indicated by the adjusted R-squared of .410, which reflects the number of independent variables. The standard error of the estimate (.38479) represents the average difference between the actual and predicted values.

Table 3 ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	23.075	3	23.075	160.243	.000 ^b
	Residual	32.425	275	.144		
	Total	55.500	278			

a. Dependent Variable: export performance

b. Predictors: (Constant), strategic partnerships, resources sharing, information exchange

The ANOVA table in Table 3 above further supports the regression model's relevance. The overall significance of the regression model is tested using the variance analysis presented in the ANOVA table. The Regression row indicates that a significant proportion of the total variability in the dependent variable, export performance, is explained by the model. The p-value in the model is .000, and the F-statistic is 160.243, indicating statistical significance.

Table 4 Coefficients

Model		Unstandardised Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients	t	Sig.
		β	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	-.173	.115		-4.962	.000
	Strategic partnerships	.714	.187	.748	3.818	.000
	Resources sharing	.595	.21	.662	33.095	.000
	Information exchange	.490	.16	.645	30.625	.000

a. Dependent Variable: export performance

Table 4 presents a regression analysis exploring the impact of strategic partnerships, resource sharing, and information exchange on export performance. All three variables significantly contribute to export performance, as indicated by the coefficients and p-values.

The findings show that strategic partnerships are the most influential variable, with an unstandardised coefficient of .714 ($p < .01$) and a standardised Beta coefficient of .748. This emphasises the increased importance of alliances for export development, given access to synergistic resources and export destinations. This finding aligns with Barbieri et al. (2024), who explain that strategic partnerships enable firms to enter the target market more quickly and gain a deeper understanding of customer preferences. This highlights the significance of exporting with local associates, who claim that cultural and compliance alignment can lead to better export performance. Similarly, Akinlabi et al. (2019) noted that alliances with successful foreign firms provide SMEs with the credibility and contacts they need to operate in increasingly competitive global industries. Furthermore, Chung and Ho (2024) noted that the relational benefits of partnerships are not limited to the cash value of the deal; rather, it is the communication of knowledge and learning between partners that enhances long-term competitiveness. From these findings, it is clear that firms need to dedicate resources to building trust and aligning their goals with those of the counterpart firm to fully reap the benefits of strategic alliances

Regarding resource sharing, the analysis further supports its significance with an unstandardised coefficient of .595 and a standardised Beta of .662 ($p < .01$). This indicates that combining resources with partners leads to higher export performance through resource convergence. This finding further supports Harya et al. (2023), who argue that resource-sharing arrangements lead to rent generation or benefits emerging from joint investments and capabilities that are hard for competitors to imitate. For instance, joint investment in modern supply chain systems or integrated production platforms can reduce costs, enhance service delivery, and improve export performance. Furthermore, Dhaundiyal and Coughlan (2022) have highlighted that the goals of resource sharing focus on developing dynamic capabilities that enable a firm to adapt to market dynamics. Through synergy, firms are better positioned to create new and unique products and services that are market-competitive and gain consumer acceptance. Farida and Setiawan (2022) also found that resource-sharing approaches are most beneficial for industries experiencing high growth, given the importance of rapidly expanding export capabilities. These findings indicate that in export ventures, firms must seek out and successfully deploy complementary resources with partners in areas that create the most strategic value.

Information exchange is also acknowledged as a key driver of export performance, with an unstandardised estimate of .490 and a standardised Beta of .645 ($p < .01$). This emphasises the role of communication and information sharing in the workings of the complex cross-national markets. The finding aligns with Musili and Deya (2023), who concluded that the exchange of market intelligence between export partners improves decision-making and responsiveness to market requirements. They pointed out that organisations with efficient means of sharing information are well-positioned to identify opportunities and manage risks in other countries. Lanivich et al. (2024) also affirmed this view, arguing that knowledge acquisition is central to internationalisation. Their research found that firms that share information with partners learn faster and perform better in foreign markets. Moreover, Oria et al. (2021) noted that real-time interaction technology supports exporters by enabling effective communication with export partners, especially in dynamic and competitive markets.

5. CONCLUSION, IMPLICATIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

The research assesses the impact of strategic partnerships, resource sharing, and information exchange on export performance, with the RBV and dynamic capabilities as guiding theories. The study shows that these factors greatly explain how a firm can build the resource capacity, respond to global market needs, and create a sustainable competitive advantage. Strategic partnerships have the

greatest potential because they help the firm overcome entry barriers to access key resources. Resource sharing and information exchange are equally essential, as they support innovation and improved decision-making skills. The study supports the RBV theory by pointing out that superior organisational performance arises from integrating internal and external resources. These findings underscore the need to strengthen partnerships and leverage available resources to improve export performance and support economic development.

The practical implications indicate that strategic partnerships yielded the strongest substantial influence on export performance. Therefore, business players must form strategic partnerships that offer access to new markets, resources, and capabilities. Such alliances allow firms to distribute risks and costs while achieving greater operational efficiency. Sharing resources also plays a crucial role through co-investment in technology, infrastructure, and innovation, all of which enhance firms' competitiveness in global markets. The exchange of information also improves flexibility and decision-making by making market intelligence easily and readily available. For such partnerships and resource-sharing programs, government policymakers and business development agencies can offer rewards such as tax exemptions or grants. Besides, firms must adopt sound communication technologies to enhance exchange, knowledge transfer, and coordination.

The economic effects suggest that firms that successfully deploy strategic collaborations and resource-acquisition constructs are likely to sustain growth, driving increased economic development. These collaborations advance innovation, create jobs, and improve firms' export performance, thereby increasing national trade performance. The research results are consistent with the RBV, which focuses on valuable and rare resources as the key factor for attaining competitive advantage. As illustrated earlier, strategic partnerships enable firms to diversify complementary resources that enhance their internal strengths. Furthermore, the results align with the dynamic capabilities framework, which highlights the importance of reconfiguring resources in response to environmental conditions. Policymakers can promote such growth by developing partnerships and fostering friendly trading environments, enabling firms to enhance exports as a source of economic diversification.

Based on the results of this research, several directions for future research emerge from this study. First, expanding the investigation across different industries and regions would improve generalisability. Comparative sectoral analysis would clarify whether the patterns observed in this study extend beyond the cocoa industry. Moreover, future research could examine how the digital environment and e-commerce contribute to the development of strategic alliances and knowledge sharing, particularly in the global context of the present and future. Similar significant results could be obtained from establishing the implications of other emerging technologies, such as artificial intelligence and blockchain, on the export of resources. Longitudinal research would help determine whether the observed relationships remain stable over time or fluctuate in response to macroeconomic and microeconomic changes. Moreover, future research could examine how firm size, ownership structure, and governance influence the effectiveness of strategic alliances and resource-sharing strategies.

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made. First, exporting companies should seek and commit resources to partnerships to enhance export performance. Industry cooperation with local and trade partners should enable firms to mitigate and diversify entry risks and to access key resources, such as superior market knowledge and distribution channels. To this end, companies need to create specific departments focusing on discovering and developing collaboration opportunities that align with business objectives.

Second, resource sharing should be a significant objective because it can increase the effective use of resources and develop more effective solutions. Companies should adopt a strategy of co-partnership, co-location, production, and integrated research and development projects to share operational costs. This can be facilitated by policymakers through the development of industrial clusters and co-investing in infrastructure that promotes resource sharing. These steps will help businesses expand operations and increase their efficiency in the global markets.

Finally, it is crucial to enhance the information exchange mechanisms to ensure reliable and timely communication between the partnering entities. Firms should adopt open-source communication tools, digital applications, and knowledge management systems. This process can be strengthened by creating trade information centres and providing guidelines on the effective use of market intelligence. These strategies will help businesses develop the framework necessary to respond to global conditions and capture new opportunities in the market.

However, like any other research study, this work has its limitations. A critical weakness is that the study is based on a specific geographic area, which may restrict the generalisability of the findings to other international contexts. The focus on firms within a particular region may limit the applicability of the recommendations to countries with different regulatory structures, economic conditions, or industrial settings. Another limitation concerns potential respondent bias, as the study relied on survey data collected from business leaders whose responses may have been influenced by personal perceptions or organisational interests. Moreover, this study investigated export performance exclusively, although other important outcomes, such as profitability, innovation capability, and market share, could also be explored in future research.

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