

# **A Comparative Analysis of Export Promotion Strategies In Selected African Countries (South Africa, Nigeria and Egypt)**

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## **Abstract**

This paper employed comparative analysis approach to examine the various export promotion strategies in selected African countries of South Africa, Nigeria and Egypt (SANE). The analysis centred on the concepts, levels and need for exports promotion strategies and initiatives as a stimulant of economic growth and development. Summary of the strategies in the selected countries and subsequent comparative analysis revealed some similarities and differences. Consequently, appropriate initiatives for policy formulation and implementation of export promotion strategies in Nigeria were recommended.

**Keywords:** Export, promotion Strategies, Selected countries, Comparative analysis

## **1. Introduction**

International trade has been found to enhance the engine of economic growth and development, especially through high real productivity exports. With exports, a country has the advantage of division of labour and can also procure the goods and services it desires. A country involved in exports can also gain from economies of scale. Consequently, many countries have embarked on various export promotion strategies to tap these and other advantages associated with international exchange. According to Kruger (1983), shifting to an export promotion policy generally results in improved performance in the country's export earnings. Many developing countries are now shifting to outward-looking policies of export promotion. The strategy has been embraced in order to diversify the economy, generate employment, accelerate economic growth and increase foreign exchange earnings. Various organizations and agencies formulate, approve and implement policies that promote and develop exports.

This paper discusses export promotion strategies in selected African Countries - South Africa, Nigeria and Egypt (SANE). For the purpose, the paper is sub-divided into five sections. Section one is the introduction, Section two considers the basis and levels of, as well as the need for, export promotion strategies. Section three summarises the various export promotion strategies used in the SANE countries. Section four attempts a comparative analysis of the strategies, while section five draws conclusion and proffers policy recommendations.

## **2. Basis, Levels and Need for Export Promotion Strategies**

### **The Basis of Export Promotion Strategies**

Export promotion, as industrialization and trade strategy, encourages production for export. The policies most closely associated with export orientation are part of the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) implemented in Nigeria in 1986. For the export promotion process to be successful; there is need for realistic exchange rates as well as ready access to import of producers' goods. National export strategy is an

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important component of a country's foreign trade policy and it focuses on promoting and developing those products and markets that offer the best opportunities for a country. The dearth of human and financial resources makes it almost impossible for a country to have a strategy covering all products simultaneously. Formulation and implementation of a national export strategy requires a mechanism for policy formulation and co-ordination; active participation and a sense of responsibility by relevant organizations and agencies; persistent application of regulation and development programmes.

The extent and focus of an export promotion strategy depend on proper analysis of the strategy on the basis of short, medium and long-term periods. Thus, a nation's export strategy is based on a comprehensive study of the country's export potential. This involves identifying what to produce based on resources availability and the most suitable markets for such products, detailed study of current demand in foreign markets in order to tap the opportunities in such markets, identification of constraints or problems for exports in terms of production and market conditions.

A comprehensive study necessitates the establishment and involvement of trade promotion organizations and other relevant bodies. In developing and implementing a country's export promotion strategies, the trade promotion organizations (TPOs) are needed. These TPOs normally provide specialized support to the producers of products for export, and serve as a catalyst for related services provided by other entities in the public and private sectors.

A TPO acts as adviser to the government on foreign trade and related matters, and acts as a bridge between the export community and the government, on the one hand, and between the export community and the foreign markets, on the other.

### **Levels of Export Promotion strategies**

Spence (1997) points out that export promotion programmes by governments are aimed at two different levels: enterprise/industry and country levels. The objectives are to guarantee that the financial incentives are targeted at the countries that present the best prospects for the domestic products and services or that have the most potential for infiltration, and to provide financial support to those companies that have the best export potential and require assistance in order to enhance their exports. As export incentives support export activities, the benefits of exporting relate very closely to the benefits of export promotion and are therefore mentioned. The benefits of export promotion can be classified at enterprise/industry and country levels. Consequently, export promotion strategies, as part of trade promotion focus, on enterprise/industry and country levels.

### **Enterprise/Industry Level**

Globalization challenges firms/industries to look beyond the domestic markets to earn much-needed foreign exchange and generate employment. The firms and industries, as part of the business community in developing countries, are expected to significantly increase their share of total export volumes. But international marketing is a much more complicated process than marketing and selling in a domestic economy. Hence, its consideration in the national export promotion programmes. Export promotion strategies at firm/industry level aim at increasing export of existing products, and developing new exportable products. Increasing the exports of existing products means looking at what industries currently produce for export to the world market. For many developing economies, exports are mainly commodity and primary products. Therefore, an initial export strategy focuses on enhancing and consolidating the volume of export into existing markets as well as diversifying to other exports markets.

Developing new export products involves an assessment of possible new products that could be developed for export markets. These new products may originate from spin-offs or downstream activities from existing core industries. For example, the oil industry supports petrochemical industries and oil equipment manufacturing. Therefore, industry-level strategy could favour development of an industry for overall exporting through industrial cluster planning.

### **Firm/Industry Level Benefits of Export Promotion**

Certain benefits accrue to the firm/industry from export promotion. One of the benefits is economies of scale. At a micro level, through the mechanism of exporting, companies can benefit from economies of scale. According to Czinkota (1996) a company can produce more, and by doing so more efficiently, broaden its market reach and serving customers abroad. When interacting and dealing with international customers, it can lead to the improvement of existing products and the development of new ones. Market diversification, which is taking advantage of different growth rates in different markets and gaining strength by not being excessively reliant on one particular market, is one other example of the benefits that accompany exporting. Exporting activities enable a company to be sensitive to various demand structures and cultural diversities, to learn from the competition and demonstrate its ability to endure in a less familiar environment in spite of higher transaction costs. These enhance the firm/industry's international capabilities.

Gençtürk and Kotabe (2001) noted that the use of government export promotion programmes is an imperative determinant of companies' export performance in a direct manner. Such interaction determines companies' export involvement behaviour. The further mentioned that the direct effect unambiguously models the hypothesis that government export promotion programmes are an essential resource for constructing the knowledge and experience needed for successful international market involvement.

Yet another benefit to firm/industry in exports is profit opportunities. Since profit is the main driver of business activity, profit opportunities for exporters should be enough reason to motivate companies to export. Export promotion programmes are used as a tool to motivate companies to engage in export activities, and if profit seems to be the main driver for exports, export incentives play an important part in supporting such motivations and activities.

### **Country Level Export Promotion and Benefits**

The government sets the overall economic direction and trade development strategy. Establishing the export dimension of this strategy in terms of appropriate economic instruments and export promotion measures is critical to national export performance. Therefore, the design of relevant trade policies is the key to a successful national export promotion strategy.

Country level benefits of export promotion can be seen from a macro perspective. Exports enhance the flow of foreign currency and consequently strengthen a country's currency. Therefore exports can influence currency values as well as the fiscal and monetary policies of governments. Czinkota (1996) opines that "exports are also responsible for shaping public perception of competitiveness and determining the level of imports that a country is able to purchase". Exports also enhance economic growth and development. Export promotion and technical assistance programmes, as part of export-led growth strategy, are generally developed to deal with both internal and external barriers to exporting and to encourage economic growth (Cavusgil, 1982, 1983). China can be seen as an example of export-led growth before the end of the 1990s and the country's subsequent economic growth record attests to this (Krugman and Obstfeld, 1991).

### **The Need for Export Promotion Strategies**

Every country tends to have its own set of export incentives. Therefore, export promotion is a development distinctive to the country concerned. Pointon (2001) has observed that no universal agreement exists concerning the nature or extent of central governments' involvement in export promotion. Therefore, each government's advances towards investment in, and provision of, export promotion services are not only based on apparent economic need but also influenced by the nation's history and its economic and social structure.

Basically, export promotion strategies aim at increasing sales of domestic products in foreign markets. In recent years, some countries have focused on strategies of export promotion. Governments are embracing greater liberalization of foreign trade regulations and increased competition from abroad. Most developing countries make export promotion a priority in order to achieve economic development goals. The benefits from export promotion include foreign exchange earnings, favourable balance of payments position, reduced burden of increased foreign indebtedness, increased employment opportunities, attraction of foreign direct

investment to augment local capital, stimulation of efficiency through exposure to foreign competition and technology, internal economies of scale to local industries, technology transfer and trade linkages with international markets.

### **Arguments against Export Promotion Programmes**

Adversaries of export promotion argue that the competitive position and export performance of companies are attributed to the private market forces and not to government promotion programmes. Furthermore, claims of considerable improvement in export performance credited to these programmes are considered self-serving post-hoc rationalisations by many critics, since most states do not have reliable evidence or crucial statistics to either support or contradict the claims (Nothdurft, 1992). Weil (1978) mentioned two general weaknesses of export promotion programmes: (1) a lack of information about what services are needed by specific groups, and (2) insufficient financial resources. He explained further that these weaknesses occur out of a general lack of knowledge of the export development process, which results in inability to effectively target export assistance efforts to potential users.

### **Government Involvement and Awareness of Export Promotion Programmes**

Companies need help and support from the government to identify potential export markets, find customers and promote their goods and services abroad. According to Seringhaus (1986), the stimulation of a company's foreign market participation through government endeavours has increasingly received the attention of policy makers in many trading nations. For public policy makers to overcome this basic challenge, it is vital for them to understand the requirements of exporting companies and to meet those requirements effectively with promotional programmes. There is a view that the role of government in export assistance should not go beyond fostering awareness of foreign market opportunities and involvement, as suggested by Czinkota and Ricks (1981). Seringhaus (1986) continues to say that fostering awareness means providing the right information (assistance) to the right companies at the right time.

Kedia and Chhokar (1986) argued that more companies might make use of export assistance programmes if it could be shown that such support programmes assisted companies to develop or obtain new markets. Kedia and Chhokar (1986: 14) remark: "If it can be clearly demonstrated that various export promotion programmes do help in initiating or developing export markets, perhaps a greater number of business firms would seek assistance and avail themselves of export opportunities". Seringhaus (1986) notes that, to ascertain reliability with management, it is important to show that external resources can positively contribute to the exporting process. Where the exporting process is concerned, the companies undertaking exporting activities are the main role players. Consequently, the contribution of export incentives to the exporting process is dependent on the companies' application of export promotion programmes.

## **3. Export Promotion Strategies in Selected African Countries**

### **South Africa's Initiatives towards Export Promotion**

Export promotion strategies in South Africa are designed and implemented by the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The DTI started redesigning export promotion services in South Africa after 1994. Before then, export subsidies had been argued to be ineffective. Igbal and Liaan (2007) note that export promotion strategies in South Africa include:

**Development of Domestic Mobilization Sectors:** This strategy focuses on developing certain sectors in the economy that lend themselves to domestic mobilisation. The support from these sectors is then extended to export promotion. The focus is now on the upstream identification of competitive strengths through the DTI's cluster studies and the actions required to overcoming identified weaknesses. Therefore, the priority lies with the industries that have been identified as potentially competitive.

**Identification of Export Opportunities:** Through the support provided by Trade and Investment South Africa (TISA), the DTI's trade and investment support body, The DTI is able to provide market intelligence and identify export opportunities in some 48 South African diplomatic missions worldwide. Through a range

of incentive schemes, the TISA provides help and assistance to actual and potential exporters. Through the DTI, South African exporters are availed these product offerings: Market intelligence and advice (e.g. identify new products and new markets), Trade-lead facilitation, matching potential exporters with foreign buyers, In-Market Support and EMIA Financial Assistance.

### **Export-Oriented Schemes in South Africa**

Export incentives are offered through a number of schemes. These include: 1. The Export Marketing and Investment Assistance (EMIA) Schemes designed to assist exporters with primary export market research through trade missions. The scheme is soon to be extended to outward and inward investment missions. The incentives are available to all exporters, with special terms for Small, Medium and Micro Enterprises (SMMEs). 2. Short-Term Export Finance Guarantee Facility (SEFG) which is offered through the Credit Guarantee Insurance Corporation of South Africa (CGIC), and the Life Scheme. The SEFG helps SMMEs to accelerate their export development by reducing financial risk. The Industrial Development Corporation offers assistance through their Export Finance Scheme. 3. Foreign Investment Grant (FIG) which is made available to overseas countries investing in new machinery and equipment to establish projects in South Africa. This enhances South Africa's competitiveness through projects such as the Industrial Development Zones (IDZ), which provide improved infrastructure, expedited customs procedures and duty-free operating environments, as well as the DTI's Workplace Challenge, which aims to create more employment. 4. Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme which aim is to enhance competitiveness through the development of appropriately skilled people and technology. There is also a Support for Industrial Innovation made available to projects that represent a significant technological advance and have commercial advantages over existing products. 5. Critical Infrastructure Programme which supplements infrastructure provided by existing public and private sector companies by funding a top-up grant. 6. Bridging Finance Scheme designed to addresses the short-term needs of emerging entrepreneurs who have secured firm contracts with government and the private sector. 7. Wholesale Finance which is facilitated by the IDC, and made available to intermediaries for onward lending to individual entrepreneurs.

### **Nigeria's Initiatives towards Export Promotion**

The advent of crude petroleum in the Nigerian economic platform was perceived a super gateway to economic and industrial potentials. The country obtained a lot of foreign exchange from the sale of crude oil and embarked on massive importation of finished goods and services, and food. The country could not consolidate on her import substitution strategy owing to weak technological base and some inappropriate policies.

In the early 1980s, Nigeria and other OPEC countries experienced a significant decline in oil price and earnings from exports. Thus, the country could no longer sustain her import substitution industrial strategy. The stabilization and other macroeconomic policy measures of the first half of 1980s failed to remedy the problem of foreign exchange shortage and adverse balance of payments. As economic restructuring and stabilization response, the Structural Adjustment Programme (SAP) was introduced in 1986. The cardinal objective was to reduce Nigeria's excessive dependency on crude production and export; to promote non-oil exports, and earn foreign exchange.

Thus, the government embarked on a number of economic measures and institutional support arrangements to promote non-oil exports. The following are some of the reform measures the government embarked upon: 1. Trade and Exchange Reforms which scrapped the various commodity boards (cocoa, cotton, rubber, palm produce and groundnut) and other quantitative restrictions which, hitherto, hindered private sector participation in Nigeria's export trade. The foreign exchange was also deregulated. 2. Devaluation of the Nigerian currency, the Naira, to make Nigeria's export competitive in the World market. 3. Abolition of Export Duty and establishment of Export Development Fund (EDF) to encourage the promotion of non-oil export. 4. Some monetary and fiscal policy measures were taken to enhance exports. These include 100% retention of proceeds arising from exports, foreign input facility and export credit guarantee and insurance scheme, duty suspension grant, and export price adjustment scheme and subsidy for use of local raw material in producing export products. 5. Import Drawback Scheme, which allows the

importer to claim repayment of the import duty paid on raw materials used in producing export products. 6. Establishment of Export Processing Zones (EPZs), e.g. EPZ Calabar, and the Nigerian Export Promotion Council (NEPC). Establishment of Nigerian Export-Import Bank (NEXIM) in 1991 as an export credit agency charged with the broad objectives of attaining overall export growth as well as structural balance and diversification in composition and destination of Nigeria's exports.

Non-exports responded to the reforms measures. For instance, with sharp depreciation of naira exchange rates, the value of non-oil exports rose substantially from ₦551.4 million in 1986 to ₦20.1 billion in 1995. The percentage contribution of the non-oil export to total export also rose from 6.2% in 1986 to a peak of 13.3% in 1988. The share of non-oil export at 5% during the 1986 -1995 period revealed that the Nigerian economy was far from being diversified away from crude export. During the period, agricultural export still accounted for about 80.5% of the non-oil exports while manufactured exports accounted for only about 8.4%.

### **Egypt's Initiatives towards Export Promotion Strategies**

Drawing from Japan's experiences, Osamu, (2004) suggested ways to further enhance export promotion and industrial development of Egypt. Egypt has been working to give new direction and force to its export promotion activities. The starting point has been the complete reorganization of the Export Promotion Center (EPC), re-established in 2004 as the Egyptian Center for Export Development (ECED). Egypt promotes exports through export promotion activities which include the following (Fatou, 2007): 1. Trade agreements, 2. Fiscal incentives, 3. Export promotion jurisdiction and 4. Establishment of Export Commodity Councils.

A textile technology centre, established in cooperation with the Faculty of Engineering of University of Cairo, became operational by mid-2007. Further, Egypt focuses on these technical assistance projects: 1. EU technical, vocational and educational training reform programme, 2. World Bank skills development project, 3. National standardization project for skills sponsored by the British Council and 4. Mubarak-Kohl project, an Egyptian-German collaboration.

Policies and strategies affecting the textile and clothing industry include three regional trade agreements: 1. Common Market of Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), 2. Pan Arab Free Trade Agreement (PAFTA) and 3. Aghadeer Declaration, bilateral trade agreements with other Arab countries.

Further, Egypt concluded eight bilateral trade agreements, six with Arab countries, one with the EU, and a recent one with Turkey. Moreover, Egypt negotiated a preferential trade agreement with the United States of America. These trade agreements guarantee the preferential treatment of Egyptian products in various markets and have a positive effect on the textile and clothing industry. These numerous trade agreements also protected the Egyptian textile and clothing sector from Asian competitors.

Egypt's triangular export promotion strategy is composed of: 1. Enhancing institutional framework for export and advancing unilateral trade liberalisation measures, 2. Entering into bilateral and multilateral agreement to improve global outreach, and 3. Adopting sector-specific policies and concentrating on marketing efforts.

Egypt possesses a revealed comparative advantage in five sectors: 1. Cotton, Textiles and Apparels, 2. Agricultural Products, 3. Food Processing Industries, 4. Construction and Building Materials, 5. Chemical, Medical and Pharmaceutical Products.

In addition to concentrating export efforts on these sectors, expansion into new export categories including wood and leather products, metal and engineering products, car components, electronics and intellectual property products such as information technology and e-commerce services are sought.

Key lessons to be drawn from the experience of the Egyptian strategies and policies: 1. Preparation of a comprehensive development strategy, 2. Promotion of a conducive business environment in order to attract domestic and foreign investors, 3. Value chain development through skilled labour force, infrastructure improvement and quality control systems, 4. Export promotion and integration into global markets to stay competitive in the global value chain, 5. Higher share of value added products, 6. Tax incentives, 7.

Modernisation and industrial upgrading of the local cotton value chain, and 8. Global and regional integration, the key driver for value chain development.

#### **4. The SANE Export Promotion Initiatives: Comparative Analysis**

Export promotion strategy is an industrialisation strategy which encourages production for exports. As a policy of neutrality, it is bias between production for export and that for domestic consumption. For the selected countries, the export promotion strategies are premised on the concepts of economic efficiency and competitiveness in the world market, and the initiatives are closely related to fiscal, trade, subsidies and wage policies. Nigeria's initiatives related further to monetary and exchange rate policies. Although fiscal policy emphasises increased productivity and efficiency in the countries, it seeks reduction in the size of state through privatization of state-owned enterprises. Unlike Nigeria which faces realistic exchange rate problem, monetary and exchange rate polices constitute no hindrances to the export promotion initiatives in South Africa and Egypt. Trade policies in all three countries emphasise the liberalisation of foreign and domestic trade. Unlike Nigeria and South Africa, Egypt's trade direction is mainly the Arab world.

Egypt focuses on technical assistance projects while Nigeria is entangled in crude oil projects and futile diversification efforts into non-oil exports. Nigeria's export initiatives are saddled with economic measures and institutional support arrangements whereas the others enhance their initiatives realistically on various term basis and dimensions with appropriate fiscal and trade policy measures. For instance, South Africa's domestic mobilization sectors and opportunities identification initiatives and Egypt's value chain development through skilled labour force, infrastructure improvement and quality control systems.

Some peculiar incentives, whose objectives have been outlined earlier, characterise South Africa's export-oriented initiatives. These include: Export Marketing and Investment Assistance (EMIA), Short-Term Export Finance Guarantee Facility (SEFG), Foreign Investment Grant (FIG), Technology and Human Resources for Industry Programme, Critical Infrastructure Programme, Bridging Finance Scheme, and Wholesale Finance.

#### **5. Conclusion**

Some of the export promotion strategies and initiatives in three African countries, (South Africa, Nigeria and Egypt) have been discussed in this paper. Basically, the strategies and initiatives aim at economic efficiency and competitiveness in the world market. The initiatives are closely related to fiscal, trade, subsidies and wage policies in all the countries. However, the Nigeria's initiatives are further related to monetary and exchange rate policies. Nigeria's export initiatives are saddled with economic measures and institutional support arrangements whereas the others enhance their initiatives realistically on various term basis and dimensions with appropriate fiscal and trade policy measures.

Based on the above observations and others, the following policy recommendations are proffered to enhance the diversification of the Nigerian exports base: 1. There is urgent need for implementation of generous export and investment incentives if the exports diversification of the economy must be realized, 2. Re-emergence of overvalued exchange rate must be avoided in order to make the country's exports competitive in the global market, 3. Sustained political stability must be ensured if export drive of the non-oil sector must be stimulated, 4. The government should adapt such export promotion initiatives as Foreign Investment Grant (FIG) and Export-Marketing and Investment Assistance (EMIA) schemes both in South Africa, 5. As in Egypt, Nigeria should enter into numerous trade agreements with genuine trading partners to protect some sectors from unhealthy competitors in the production of specified export products.

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