

**EXPORT INVOLVEMENT PROCESSES EMPLOYED BY SMALL BUSINESSES REQUIRING
GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE**

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I further declare that I have not previously submitted this work, or part of it, for examination at Unisa for another qualification or at any other higher education institution.

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SIGNATURE

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ABSTRACT

Small Businesses (SBs) in the city of Tshwane increasingly engage in export activities due to higher growth rates. The South African government recognises the significance of SBs, resulting in support programmes to increase involvement in export markets. However, SBs still face export challenges from internal and external sources.

This study explored export involvement processes of SBs in the City of Tshwane. 20 participants took part in a qualitative data collection method using observation and semi-structured interviews. Atlas.ti software was used to analyse the data.

Findings suggest that SBs are confronted with varying constraints affecting commitment in export involvement processes. Low levels of awareness and participation in export programmes make it difficult to determine their contribution to the export involvement of SBs.

Recommendations are for an evaluation of government export programmes accompanied by export education and training programmes to ensure that SBs achieve desirable outcome of export involvement in various export markets.

Key words: Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), export involvement, export involvement processes, industry analysis tools, Small Businesses (SBs), Small Enterprise Development Agency (SEDA)

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LIST OF ACRONYMS

ANC	African National Congress
ANCYL	African National Congress Youth League
ARC	Audit and Risk Committee
AIDC	Automotive Industry Development Centre
APDP	Automotive Production Development Programme
BBSD	Black Business Supplier Development Programme
BBSDP	Black Business Supplier Programme
BIP	Black Industrialist Programme
CIS	Co-operative Incentive Scheme
CSFA	Critical Success Factor Analysis
DA	Democratic Alliance
DTI	Department of Trade and Industry
DSBD	Department of Small Business Development
EAP	Export Development Programme
EDP	Export Development Programme
FWW	Final Written Warnings
GEM	Global Entrepreneurship Monitor
GEPP	Global Exporter Passport Programme
IDC	Industrial Development Corporation
IPAP	Industrial Policy and Action Plan
JV	Joint Venture
LTEG	Long-Term Export Goals
MIDP	Motor Industry Development Programme in 1995
MIDP	Motor Industry Development Programme
ACH	National Anti-Corruption Hotline
NDP	National Development Plan
NEDP	National Export Development Programme
NSBA	National Small Business Act
NIDF	National Industrial Development Framework
NPC	National Planning Commission
PEST	Political Economic Social and Technology
PFF	Porter Five Forces
PIPAS	Provincial Investment Promotion Agencies
PSC	Public Service Commission
RTRP	Red Tape Reduction Programme
RBV	Resource-Based View
SBA	Small Business Administration

SBD	Small Business Development
SEDA	Small Business Development Agency
SEFA	Small Enterprise Financial Agency
SBIF	Small Business Innovation Fund
SAAM	South African Automotive Masterplan
SAG	South African Government
SATPSF	South African Trade Policy and Strategy Framework
SBIF	Small Business Innovation Fund
SEZs	Special Economic Zone
STATS SA	Statistics South Africa
STP	Technology Programme
TEDA	Tshwane Economic Development Agency
TISA	Trade and Investment in South Africa
TTIC	Tshwane Trade and Investment Summit
TTIS	Tshwane Trade and Investment Summit
WW	Written Warning

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The number of Small Businesses (SBs) in South Africa grew by 4.4% to 2.55 million in 2019 and their economic contribution is documented worldwide (SEDA, 2019). The recognition of SBs in the South African economy is acknowledged, leading to a sequential entry into emerging export markets, while promoting evolutionary entry into export markets. Sequential entry, as postulated by Figueroa, Osuna and Reynoso (2014), refers to a gradual learning of adaptive strategies aimed to increase export commitment and capabilities over time, while evolutionary entry refers to accelerated growth in export involvement. It is important to note that both sequential and evolutionary export involvement processes are subjected to internal and external constraints that may stimulate dynamics, resulting in an increase, decline, and re-increase of export involvement amongst SBs (Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017). Such inconsistencies provide the explanation of a distinction between exporters at regular and irregular stages (Yan, Wickramasekera & Tan, 2018). At a regular stage, a SB possesses sufficient resources to exploit export opportunities and are able to adapt to market and industry dynamics, while an irregular stage implies insufficient export knowledge and experience that often leads to inconsistent growth in export involvement (Kahiya & Dean, 2016).

SMEs in South Africa create 47% of all employment opportunities, adding a significant growth of 20% towards gross domestic production (GDP) (Liedtke, 2019). The SB development has become a high priority for the South African government, resulting in improved export involvement processes through various export programmes. Government support occupies a primary role in the appropriate selection of the export involvement process. Not only does government intervention guides and aligns SBs with environmental changes throughout the export process, but it also initiates, influences, and channels future export market dynamics. According to Mudalige, Ismail and Malek (2016), determinative outcomes of export programmes depends on adequate alignment of management characteristics to inform organisational distinct capabilities. Government support has been criticised for being structurally uncoordinated in designing adequate programmes to address unique constraints facing each SB (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19).

Underlying concepts used in this study will be defined in conjunction with the current state of the associations between export involvement processes and government support. The increased extent of SBs in export involvement, as advocated by Purwanto, Setiawan, Rohman and Indrawati (2018), is closely associated with government support through the provision of financial and non-financial support. Government support through export programmes encourages a blend of capabilities in strategic areas of marketing and foreign information in order to intensify SBs' export commitment in various foreign

markets. Purwanto *et al.* (2018) argue that government support promotes the development of export activities and management practices that are linked to stronger export involvement. Haddoud's (2017) findings indicate that government support has a direct influence on management commitment and attitude towards developing ongoing exporting activities.

However, government support (export programmes) may not be adequately designed to address unique and varying export constraints facing SBs, and do not really reach the intended audience, resulting in low levels of awareness and use of programmes (Coudounaris, 2018). Findings by Torres, Clegg and Varum (2015) maintain that the goals and objectives of government support export programmes are not consistent with on-going export challenges facing SBs because export involvement is not consistent. Such findings suggest that government support for the export involvement of SBs may influence SBs in undetermined ways.

Today, the export involvement of SBs is recognised worldwide by governments. This has led governments to develop policies aimed at promoting greater involvement in export practices and activities (Njinyah, 2017). Such policies aim to directly and indirectly influence export involvement and the implementation of processes, thereby stabilizing export constraints that threaten to limit involvement (Njinyah, 2017).

1.2 EXPORT INVOLVEMENT PROCESSES OF SBs AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

This current section aims to provide an explanation of export involvement processes and perceptual differences in the corresponding influence of government support thereof. Export involvement and government support are discussed coequally. The current section concludes by discussing the significance of export involvement in the growth and development of SBs.

1.2.1 What is export involvement

Export involvement denotes the extent to which a SB exhibits export activities, promoted by management experience, commitment, and government support, with the intention to foster future development (Damoah, 2017). Export involvement underpins growth through reactive and / or proactive approaches employed by the SB (Bowen, 2019). Damoah (2017) and Stouraitis, Harun and Kyritsis (2016) maintain that there is no one single definition for export involvement, as it is determined by multidimensional elements influencing export activities that arise from internal and external constraints identified at any stage of involvement. Paul, Parthasarathy and Gupta (2017) found that exporting constraints point to management inadequacies (internal matters) that are most likely to have negative consequences in attaining aggregate levels of involvement in diverse export markets.

Export involvement covers a variety of aspects such as marketing function and technological innovation (Paul *et al.*, 2017). Such aspects are regarded as major components contributing to a significant increase in export activities as they encompass business processes and approaches to enhance future growth (Jin & Cho, 2018). Marketing and technological functions prompt the enhancement of skills, capabilities, and the development of foreign market knowledge (Battaglia, Neirotti & Paolucci, 2018).

In today's business environment, a steady growth in commitment of export involvement is subject to marketing and technological innovations due to the complex nature of such functions. This complexity calls for research and development (R&D) activities and systematic strategies driven by appropriate foreign market information and knowledge. Findings indicate that marketing and technological innovation have produced conflicting results with the production of unique products and services that are not consistent with global quality standards (Francioni, Pagano & Castellani, 2016). Yet, Radicic and Djalilov (2018) claimed that the homologue between marketing and technological innovation are critical to enhancing balanced levels of export involvement, and to explain inconsistent export processes.

1.2.2 What is government support (export programmes)

Government support includes activities undertaken to boost export involvement processes through various export incentive programmes (Purwanto *et al.*, 2018). Novikov (2017) views government support as an extraneous agent designed to stimulate the strategic resources for SBs involved in export activities.

Government support varies according to the SB's capabilities for export involvement (Catanzaro, Messeghem & Sammut, 2020). In addition, managerial characteristics define the level of influence imposed by export programmes on an SB's export activities (Catanzaro *et al.*, 2020). This is supported by Wang, Chen, Wang and Li (2017) who postulate that government resources may be limited to advance export involvement if misalignment exists between managerial characteristics such as attitude and commitment towards exporting activities. As revealed by Catanzaro *et al.* (2020), government support may be difficult to describe due to significant criticism received by export programmes. As a result, their influence on the export involvement of SBs is unclear. This finding is supported by Swanepoel (2018) who stated that a lack of clarity increases export challenges, which may contribute towards inconsistent growth in export involvement amongst SBs.

While Han and Park (2019) described government support as a rigid and inflexible structure, failing to reflect on internal and external forces influencing the evolution of export involvement and processes thereof.

The study by Han and Park (2019) revealed that government support has been observed to have a direct and indirect effect on SBs' export involvement, while marketing and technological innovations are of critical to enable SBs to construct a direct link with their target export market.

Despite a complex association between SBs' export involvement processes and government support's influence in advancing export activities, government support is critically important as a source of foreign market knowledge in intensifying managerial characteristics, enabling SBs to commit to export involvement evolution (Catanzaro *et al.*, 2020). With that said, Novikov (2017) deduced that the outcome determiners of export involvement evolution is subject to managerial characteristics.

1.2.3 The perceptual views on export involvement

As indicated earlier, there are perceptual differences between the dimensions of export involvement. These differences result from varying constraints facing each SB, and the manner of the response, based on the SB's characteristics and, managerial commitment (internal and external matters). The table below depicts conventional and new surfacing perspectives on export involvement.

Table 1.1: The surfacing perceptions of export involvement

Position	Conventional perspective	New-surfacing perspective
Perspective	Export involvement as pertinent in the scarcity of resources	Export involvement as a strategy to deal with foreign market constraints
Industry	Export involvement as strategic positioning in the export markets	Export involvement as a strategy to create industry opportunities
Culpability	Owner-managers and export managers	Export involvement as a ceaseless business activity and practice
Practice	Export involvement as a systematic review	Export involvement as a systematic review and a critical thinking approach
Future direction	Export involvement as a direction that evolves over time	Export involvement as a strategy for future growth

Source: Adapted from Sandberg, Sui and Baum (2019); Paul *et al.* (2017).

Table 1.1 above indicates the evolvement of export involvement over time, given perceptual differences and varying constraints (internal and external) confronting each SB. Sinkovics, Kurt and Sinkovics (2018) found that such constraints present varying influences on the capabilities of export involvement, calling for adequate remedies in the form of government support export programmes.

Remedies should be multidisciplinary, as constraints are identified at any stage of export involvement. The table further depicts the extent of differences in managers' views about conventional and new perspectives. Such views are summarised under the position of: perspective, industry, culpability, practice, and future direction. Export activities, practice, and processes aiming to enhance future growth in export involvement are addressed by Table 1.1. The table further outlines approaches (proactive and reactive) through systematic thinking that are closely associated with the intended stability of export involvement.

In light of the above, Paul *et al.* (2017) seem to suggest perceptual differences that surfaced over time, with the intention of examining the extent of influences linked to sound export involvement. As articulated by Bally, Belhoste, Bocquet & Favre-Bonté, 2019. determinative outcomes of export involvement are industry dynamics, management characteristics, and the way in which a business addresses challenges closely associated with accumulated levels of involvement.

It may be worthwhile to observe how export involvement progressed post-apartheid, as SBs' participation in export involvement processes was significantly low (Mahadea & Kaseeram, 2018). Such a low participation prompted the South African Government to design numerous export programmes to activate and strengthen export involvement processes amongst SBs (Mahadea & Kaseeram, 2018). The export programmes were implemented in the early 1990s to meet the needs of SBs at various stages of export involvement, equipping them with foreign information about export markets in order to minimize internal and external constraints (DTI, 2018/19, Schneider, 2017).

Pickernell, Jones, Thompson and Packham (2016) suggest that even though export involvement seems to be an expeditious way to access foreign markets for future growth, export challenges are an irrefutable reality. This reality goes to the heart of managerial export experience, organisational strategic resources, and business processes, and not necessarily exporting challenges (Pickernell *et al.*, 2016).

Export involvement calls for organisational tools, management commitment, and approaches applied in a systematic and rigorous manner (Bianchi & Wickramasekera, 2016). Dynamics in foreign markets are driven by macro-economic changes, thus SBs may require appropriate foreign market knowledge to attain acceptable competencies of export involvement.

Bianchi and Wickramasekera (2016) maintain that export involvement is stimulated by government support activities that place less emphasis on organisational export goals and objectives. Any misalignment between government and business goals may have a significant impact on the extent of export involvement, irrespective of well-defined export goals and objectives (Bianchi & Wickramasekera, 2016).

Export involvement may also rely on innovation and the appropriate use of technology to deal with turbulent dynamics in export markets (Jin & Cho 2018). Management's export experience, together with appropriate foreign information, are regarded as systematic contingencies to build self-efficiency in creating relevant knowledge, since industry and market dynamism create the level of uncertainty in export involvement.

It is universally recognised that SBs accumulate strategic resources over time while executing export involvement tasks. In light of this, Bally *et al.* (2019) discovered that strategic resources influence SB's ability to acquire, develop, and exploit foreign market opportunities to enhance superior export involvement.

SBs applying a proactive approach in the development of unique products and services are likely to attain high export involvement by identifying an adequate target market when entering into foreign markets ahead of rivals (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2018). The link between proactive approaches and export involvement involves the systematization and evaluation of internal and external constraints that threaten to limit an SB's export future growth. According to Boso *et al.* (2019), a proactive approach serves as a gateway to access foreign market opportunities. Paul *et al.* (2017) goes on to say that export involvement remains a subjective topic that is both multidimensional and broad, in that it may be difficult to determine whether export involvement is greater or less.

Given the above perceptual differences, it became evident that export involvement may be interpreted differently depending on the SB's characteristics, and managerial commitment motivated by (internal and external conditions). Given the increasingly fierce nature of the global environment, SBs may be under some pressure to apply systematic approaches based on critical thinking in order to attain higher levels of export involvement (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2018).

1.2.4 Export involvement process

The export involvement process described by Wang *et al.* (2017) may be split into three key facets: management characteristics, government support, and components of export involvement (marketing and technological innovation). These key aspects directly influence future growth in export involvement. Misalignment in the aforementioned facets may lead to export involvement variations, thereby impacting on management commitment and inclination to carry out export activities. Such misalignment can occur at any phase of export involvement, processes, and a large range of activities, influencing overall export capacity (Behmiri, Rebelo, Gouveia & Antonio, 2019). Wang *et al.* (2017) suggest a counterbalance response that rests upon establishing unique and heterogenous resources to deal with disproportions in export involvement (Behmiri *et al.*, 2019).

This study will focus on export involvement processes, government support, and management characteristics, since such key elements are recognised as core criteria to fast track growth in export involvement. The increase in export involvement, as indicated by Rodil, Vence and Sánchez (2016), is accentuated by the association between the SB's characteristics and government support, and how it is applied to export processes to capitalise on foreign opportunities. The answer to export constraints, as identified by Rodil *et al.* (2016), may rest on an SB's choice of export process, management characteristics, and government support, given the varying levels of uncertainties observed in global markets. Karipidis, Chrysochou and Karypidou (2019) suggest the combination of capabilities, critical export processes, and activities discovered by the business are closely related to their capacity for export involvement.

Ambiguous levels of awareness, use, and perceptual differences towards export programmes, is significantly evident (Sharma, Sraha & Crick, 2016). The role of government support in the export involvement of SBs is not sufficiently known due to lower levels of awareness and participation in the government programmes (Sharma *et al.*, 2016). In addition, most SBs do not participate in the export programmes as they focus on enriching managerial characteristics, which are closely associated with escalated capabilities in export involvement (Wang *et al.*, 2017).

A business seeking optimal export involvement ought to gain better understanding of management characteristics to shape the attitude and perception on export activities (Reis & Forte, 2016). Such insight significantly influences the extent of export involvement as it allows a business to invest its efforts on strategic resources and capabilities towards a specific market relative to its offerings (Reis & Forte, 2016). Management characteristics enable a distinction between inconsistent levels of export involvement through a systematic view (Reis & Forte, 2016). Such characteristics are central to a SB's capabilities and export challenges, conferring ways in which managers execute chosen export involvement processes.

1.2.5 Management characteristics

Management characteristics, as identified by Chen (2017) encompass intangible resources (skills) and tangible resources (capabilities). Resources include export involvement components, such as marketing functions and technological innovation (Jin & Cho, 2018). Appropriate characteristics and components promote a dynamic reciprocity between a business and its environment, triggering management commitment and a positive perception toward export involvement (Jin & Cho, 2018).

Management characteristics, as argued by Kotorri and Krasniqi (2018), require a magnitude of export experiences to execute appropriate activities closely related to increased export involvement. Export experience fosters the acquisition of relevant market information required to assist the business attain

superior export involvement by reducing volatility associated with export market uncertainties (Kotorri & Krasniqi, 2018).

There is no single characteristic suitable for all types of businesses since SBs' target markets vary according to specific offerings (Yan *et al.*, 2018). In addition, corresponding constraints vary according to perceptual differences towards export competencies. Management characteristics influence the strategic positioning affecting the optimum export involvement in various foreign markets (Yan *et al.*, 2018).

The misalignment of resources, capabilities, and management commitment give rise to weaknesses and greater susceptibility to threats, as indicated by Kahiya and Dean (2018). Such weaknesses may result in failure to respond to market and industry uncertainties. According to Kahiya and Dean (2018), misalignment derives from internal inconsistencies due to the failure to provide a response relevant to market and industry dynamics. As corroborated by Kotorri and Krasniqi (2018) inappropriate management characteristics tend to limit future growth in terms of adaptation to each export market dynamics and trends.

Management characteristics are dynamic in nature given changes in market and industries in which business operates (Chen, 2017). As suggested by Kotorri and Krasniqi (2018), businesses are obligated to set out rational characteristics to achieve the intended capacity of export involvement. Export involvement is often weakened or strengthened by a diversity of characteristics. For instance, the use of marketing and technological innovation combined with the deployment of appropriate export processes to targeted markets may depend on consumer preferences similar to that of competitors (Kotorri & Krasniqi, 2018). Due to this, it remains an uncontested question, that export involvement is deemed a multi-dimensional concept that comes about because of internal and external constraints (Kotorri & Krasniqi, 2018).

Global quality standards are central to management characteristics (Mohsenzadeh & Ahmadian, 2016). Some SBs struggle to provide quality goods and services closely associated with acceptable global standards (Mohsenzadeh & Ahmadian, 2016) due to inconsistent management characteristics. Such inconsistencies adversely influence the intended concentration in export involvement due to the failure to meet varying requirements of foreign markets, thereby negatively affecting the marketability of offerings (Chen, 2017).

Management characteristics assist in the optimisation of strategic resources and capabilities enhancing overall export involvement and commitment towards export activities and constraints (Kayabasi & Mtetwa, 2016). Management characteristics can predict the future by timing the efficient deployment of planned export goals and objectives using systematic approaches (Kayabasi & Mtetwa, 2016). The

capacity of export involvement is often judged by comparing management characteristics against varying requirements in foreign markets (Chen, 2017; Kayabasi & Mtetwa, 2016).

Management characteristics promote the development of activities and processes closely related to excellency in export involvement (Spyropoulou, Katsikeas, Skarmeas & Morgan, 2017). Where a set of characteristics believed to facilitate the growth of export activities is selected, it should be reviewed periodically in a systematic and rigorous manner to ensuring consistency with market and industry dynamics (Spyropoulou *et al.*, 2017). Such characteristics involve marketing function and technological innovation, combined with managerial aspirations for the future growth of export involvement (Chen, 2017; Kayabasi & Mtetwa, 2016).

1.2.6 Export components (Marketing and Technological Innovation)

A study done by Jin and Cho (2018) revealed that marketing function and technological innovation exerts an influence in the choice of export involvement processes, while providing a clear view of the commitment of involvement. Marketing function is described as the process employed by a business to influence consumer preference with the aim of enhancing value proposition (Jin & Cho 2018). Miocevic and Morgan (2016) describe marketing function as an art of science used by a SB to build sustainable relationships with stakeholders involved in value and supply chains, and in so doing, create superior value to customers. The concept of technological innovation, on the other hand, is concerned with a set of tools that enables managers to implement processes and goals allowing the organisation to respond to internal and external opportunities (Battaglia *et al.*, 2018).

The association of marketing function and technological innovation is viewed as non-linear and compound as it is enabled by internal (management characteristics) and external (industry and market) environment (Battaglia *et al.*, 2018). A match between marketing and technology helps organisations to adapt to local conditions, leading to export growth, goal attainment and overall achievement of intended robustness of export involvement (Schmidt, 2017). Such a match further allows SBs to select export involvement processes to gain a sustainable advantage over its competitors by selecting a target market in line with its offerings (Schmidt, 2017).

1.3 SMALL BUSINESSES AND THE EXPORT INVOLVEMENT PROCESS

Export involvement process is centred on the SB's characteristics, government support, and its components (Imran, Aziz, Hamid, Shabbir, Salman & Jian, 2018). Such characteristics may call for the in-house R&D activities to be present during the execution of export activities. Imran *et al.* (2018) maintain that R&D activities enhance export opportunities and the development of activities while, promoting management commitment due to an adequate foreign information gathering process deriving

from informed export decisions. Government support programmes are designed to complement the management characteristics providing informational and experiential support through financial and non-financial initiatives (DTI, 2018/19; Meschi, Ricard & Moore, 2017).

It is critical to note that export involvement processes are perceived as non-linear, inconsistent, and evolutionary due to the dynamic nature of export markets and industries in which SBs function (Santangelo & Meyer, 2017). Based on these notions, export processes range from sequential (incremental) to dynamic (evolutionary) as indicated by (Santangelo & Meyer, 2017). Johanson and Kalinic (2016) however, view export involvement processes as an acceleration and deacceleration process responding to environmental turbulences. These turbulences are determined by management characteristics, and by how management employs its marketing function and technological innovation capabilities. April and Reddy (2015) and Letsema (2020) consider export processes as a straightforward way to access export markets when the owner-manager has optimal characteristics and adequate support from government export programmes. In all export processes, SBs are more likely to experience risk pressures and benefits associated with achievements and failures in changing export markets (Revindo, Gan & Nguyen, 2018).

Jin and Cho (2018) maintain that the link between export involvement, management characteristics, government support, and export components, triggers the commitment in export activities through marketing and technological functions. A persistent interaction over time between marketing and technological function as an integral part of export involvement processes may result in a persistent growth in export activities. In contrast, Ismail, Alam and Hamid (2017) argue that the export involvement process is not a one size fits all; it is dynamic in nature, given uncertainties in the global market environment in which SBs operate. Additionally, managerial abilities, export experience, market and industry opportunities, and threats that evolve over time directly and indirectly influence export involvement processes. Export involvement processes vary significantly since they demand distinct strategic resources, capabilities, management capacity and steadfast commitment from management, hence the inconsistent export involvement of some SBs (April & Reddy, 2015).

Alrashidi (2016) states that managerial characteristics are essential to influence export future growth, while Ismail *et al.* (2017) argue that past characteristics may significantly influence the choice of export involvement processes. The random dynamics that exist between export involvement and government support creates inconsistencies in SBs' export activities, affecting past and future managerial perception and commitment (Njinyah, 2017). Government support is critical for enhancing a strategy deployment that is associated with greater export involvement (Njinyah, 2017; Coudounaris, 2018). It may be worthwhile to understand the association between SBs' characteristics and government support and its influence on the export involvement of SBs (Ismail *et al.*, 2017).

1.4 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF MANAGEMENT CHARACTERISTICS AND GOVERNMENT SUPPORT

The interchange between an SB's management characteristics and government support plays a pivotal role in the functioning and the enhancement of export involvement (Nakku, Agbola, Miles & Mahmood, 2019). This interchange may provide a complete explanation of inconsistencies in export involvement. Such an explanation allows for a systematic review of constraints limiting the growth of export involvement and for determining why some SBs reach a higher capacity than others (Nakku *et al.*, 2019).

The distinction between managerial characteristics and government support is critically significant from an export involvement perspective. Government support through export programmes are delineated and implemented to provide financial and non-financial support to small exporting establishments. This support allows small exporting concerns to fast track their capacity for export involvement (Yan *et al.*, 2018). Nakku *et al.* (2019), argue that in reality, given the uncertain nature of export markets, most SBs are confronted by various on-going export challenges at disparate stages for export involvement. Furthermore, SBs tend to vary in the areas of interests and needs at any stage of export involvement. Haddoud (2017) advocates for the customisation of programmes to address specific needs and areas of interest in order to promote superior involvement in export activities.

Such revelations seem to suggest the heterogeneous and inconsistent nature of export involvement, despite the intervention of managerial characteristics or government support (Wang *et al.*, 2017). For example, Wang *et al.* (2017) identified internal and external constraints limiting export growth, and further discovered that constraints, such as management abilities (internal), are not necessarily external. However, Haddoud (2017) stated that major constraints arise from the uncontrollable external environment, including the regulatory environment and procedural variances that seem to hinder export growth, rather than internal constraints, such as resources and capabilities. Such variances and inconsistencies in the extent of export involvement may be significant in informing the design and formulation of various government support programmes that aim to increase export involvement (Gkypali, Love & Roper 2021).

The enhancement of managerial characteristics may be facilitated by government support in the reflection of variances in phases of involvement, export experiences, unique needs, and areas of interest (Gkypali, *et al.*, 2021). In addition, Njinyah (2017) postulates that low levels of awareness, and participation in the programmes, may be ameliorated by reviewing current practices and processes used to create the export programmes awareness targeted at a specific audience.

1.5 SMALL BUSINESSES AND GOVERNMENT IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE

A universal definition of SBs remains ambiguous due to unique economic dynamics confronting each country (Adeola, 2016, Anastasia, 2015, Ahmad & Arif, 2016, Koens & Thomas, 2015). The National Small Business Act 29 of 2004 (NSBA) determines the size of a business according to its number of employees, economic activities executed, and annual turnover. The Act classifies SBs according to four main categories namely: very small, micro, small, and medium enterprises. The Act (South Africa, National Small Business Act 29, 2004) describes SBs as a business that is managed by one owner-manager with employees of 11- 50, generating an annual turnover of R150 000 to R25 million per annum. SBs recruit up to 50 permanent employees (Obeng & Blundel, 2015; Anastasia, 2015). This study will primarily focus on SBs. The Small Business Administration (SBA) describes SBs as an independent small establishment that recruits less than 500 people (Dilger, 2018). While du Plessis and Marnewick (2017) maintain that SBs are those that employ less than 50 people. Consequently, it becomes difficult to achieve a generalisation for the definition of SBs due to differing interpretations.

SBs in South Africa have been acknowledged to contribute 50 to 60% towards employment creation within the manufacturing service sectors (The Department of Trade and Industry, 2018/19; Small Business Development Agency, 2016/17; International Finance Corporation; 2019). Given their flexible and adaptive nature, SBs contribute towards the diversification of innovative products and services. However, it is suggested that the failure rate of SBs is almost 80% due to ongoing challenges from the internal and external environment that negatively hinders their developmental growth (Mail & Guardian, 2017). Government has provided various outreach export programmes to align the systemic needs of the business and the industry in which it operates through financial and non-financial interventions (Ferrerias-Méndez, Fernández-Mesa & Alegre, 2019). This support includes access to foreign markets, creating a demand for South African goods and services, building relationships through networking, and establishing an uninterrupted flow of foreign information (Ferrerias-Méndez *et al.*, 2019).

Despite such interventions, in contrast to bigger businesses, SBs still face inappropriate resource and capability challenges that make it difficult to carry out export involvement tasks in the absence of government support (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2018/19). Existing research seems to suggest that government support has not really addressed the aforementioned challenges, as the design of export programmes are embedded in bureaucracy and a misalignment of the objectives aimed at addressing the critical needs of each SB (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2018/19).

The South African government play a key role in diversifying economic activities within the automotive, logistics, tourism and agricultural sectors, as articulated in the South African Automotive Masterplan (SAAM) (DTI 2018/18; SEDA, 2018/19). In the context of the national and provincial setting with regards to economic development, the City of Tshwane is a significant player in terms of economic development,

contributing 10.1% towards the GDP. The City contributes over 40% of all vehicle manufacturing exports in the economy, resulting in employment creation (Lamprecht, 2020). The City accounts for over 85% of the total R&D capacity, however, it has a natural advantage as the official government site. It is the most contemporary municipality as it continues to diversify economic activities, adding significant value in creating employment. Global business opportunities presented by the Tshwane Trade and Investment Summit (TTIC) have been exploited, contributing to the growth and development of SBs in the export markets (DTI, 2018/19).

1.5.1 The history of Small Businesses

During the apartheid regime, in contrast to larger organisations, SBs did not receive adequate support from government (Mahadea & Kaseeram, 2018). The lower capacity for growth was explained by the poor association between government and SBs, resulting from colonial and apartheid laws motivated by racial capitalism (Mahadea & Kaseeram, 2018). These laws favoured white businesses, while black businesses were subjected to oppressive administrative systems (Clark, 2014). The government of the day failed to promote economic transformation, resulting in weak economic growth and a failure to eradicate poverty. Hence, there was little or no influence on the export activities of black businesses. Government policies ensured that white businesses received superior skills and competencies while black businesses were critically constrained in terms of resources, capabilities, and business opportunities (Clark, 2014; Luiz, 2020).

Post 1994, the South African government was pressured to introduce various initiatives to foster growth in respect of export activities in the belief that such involvement would promote economic and social well-being (Bateman, 2019). Examples of such initiatives include the National Export Development Programme (NEDP), the Integrated Export National Strategy, Export Marketing and Investment Assistance (MIA), the Industrial Policy and Action Plan (IPAP), the National Development Plan, Trade and Investment in South Africa (TISA). The aforementioned export initiatives have been significantly endorsed by government, however, they have received significant criticism since their inception in 1994 (Bateman, 2019). Some scholars suggest that the programmes were inadequately designed and organised, given the lack of coordination and collaboration within various government agencies (Haddoud, 2017). Haddoud (2017) suggests that the inadequacy derives from complex procedures and an unfavourable regulatory environment. In addition, export programmes reflected as an oversight since some SBs are unaware of such initiatives while others have little or inadequate knowledge of government support (Coudounaris, 2018; Haddoud 2017).

Researchers such as Coudounaris (2018) and Haddoud (2017) indicate a positive influence in the export involvement of SBs by various government support initiatives that are planned in a systematic manner. For example, government has recognised the infrastructure to facilitate the production quality

of goods and services, thereby promoting communication networks between all parties in the supply chains, using financial and other non-financial support initiatives (Coudounaris, 2018; Haddoud 2017).

It may be safe to say that economic progress in South Africa has been mediocre post-apartheid given the persisting inconsistencies in the export involvement of SBs contributing towards the unemployment rate. Mahadea and Kaseeram (2018) and Luiz (2020) argue that political and racial variances post-1994 still play a significant role in the uneven distribution of export opportunities, leading to reduced capacity in export involvement amongst SBs.

To some extent, government support has assisted some SBs in minimising the harmful effects arising from internal and external constraints by providing appropriate financial and non-financial initiatives associated with consistent export involvement using DTI (Coudounaris, 2018; Haddoud 2017). It is imperative to provide an overview of the DTI's involvement in the export participation of SBs.

1.5.2 The overview of The Department of Trade and Industry

It is important to evaluate the export involvement, of SBs in the City of Tshwane, in context of the DTI. While there has been an increase in export involvement growth in recent years, government support interventions remain insufficient considering the inconsistent capabilities in export involvement of some SBs. Despite various outreaches and interventions there are still some apprehensions about the efficacy of government support and its ability to reach the intended audience given low levels of awareness, use, and conflicting perceptual variances (Coudounaris, 2018; Haddoud 2017; DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2018/19). It is argued that the evaluation of each programme may present a critical variance of views intended to increase the dimensions of export involvement. It was advocated by Coudounaris (2018) and Haddoud (2017) that evaluations should be carried out on managerial characteristics, the extent of export involvement, and the unique needs and constraints confronting a SB.

The DTI has deployed cornerstone export programmes coupled with a periodic evaluation of each programme to safeguard a stable increase in export involvement amongst SBs. Such programmes include the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), The Automotive Industry Development Centre (AIDC), Automotive Production Development Programme (APDP), Motor Industry Development Programme in 1995 (MIDP), and Global Exporter Passport Programme (GEPP) (DTI, 2018/19). In addition, 15.41% of 1.5 billion deployed through various export programmes have increased the strength of export involvement to 45 billion in 2019 (DTI, 2018/19).

The DTI has implemented a periodic evaluation of each programme using critical thinking and a systematic approach. This is attained in three ways: First by comparing programme objectives with the dynamics of the SB, market, and the industry, using both implicit and explicit perspectives.

Secondly, by examining the industry structure in the context of the SB's strategic positioning in parallel to its targeted market and competitors. Lastly, by comparing perceptual differences concerning the programme and the SB's strategy to determine possible solutions closely associated with a higher intensity of export involvement (DTI, 2018/18; SEDA, 2018/19).

1.6 PROBLEM STATEMENT

In reality, government support plays a pivotal role in the export involvement processes of SBs, thereby enhancing management related skills, enriching an unambiguous involvement in foreign markets (Coudounaris, 2018). The export involvement of SBs has been stimulated and inspired by government support through various export programmes to enable them to deepen their presence abroad. As studied by Haddoud (2017), government has been consistent in observing a meaningful contribution to SBs in export involvement by designing strategic policies and incentives that provide informational and experiential knowledge to help strengthen their involvement. Strategic policies encompass enhancing a connection between SBs, foreign buyers, suppliers and main research central points to help them cope with market dynamics. Kalafsky (2016) revealed that government has significantly assisted SBs in establishing and executing export processes that are grounded on proactive related factors, as opposed to reactive factors, minimizing their vulnerability in the foreign markets given their resource constraint nature. Moreover, government support is positioned as an external change agent aimed to mobilise SBs' resources and provide unambiguous guidance in the allocation and usage of resources when export involvement processes are executed (Rosenbaum, 2019).

With this said, government support through various export programmes has been open to growing criticism and scrutiny due to low levels of awareness and participation, resulting in an unclear influence on export involvement of SBs. Critics are also motivated by SBs perceptual differences about the programmes' accessibility, timelines, and credibility, contributing to further inconsistencies in export involvement amongst SBs.

In light of the above, Revindo *et al.* (2017) maintain that export programmes do not appropriately consider the dynamic needs and constraints facing SBs at different stages of involvement based on their varying expertise. Due to this, as revealed by Dominguez (2018) and Safari and Saleh (2019), export programmes do not really mirror real needs to paint a clear picture of an unambiguous influence in the export involvement of SBs in foreign markets. Furthermore, Sharma *et al.* (2016) and Revindo *et al.* (2017) indicate that export programmes exhibit indirect influence on management related factors due to an inability to reach intended audiences.

Even training programmes designed to serve the needs of SBs in foreign markets have proven difficult, if not impossible to determine the influence on export involvement processes (Maluleke, 2014), and as a result some SBs fail to adequately exploit opportunities in foreign markets.

Coping with dynamics in foreign markets when export involvement processes are implemented becomes a critical concern when the influence of export programmes is unclear. In this context, proactive SBs rigorously seek for export opportunities in various export markets in a systematic and consistent manner despite unclear influences associated with export programmes.

To this end, there is a lack of research carried out to explore the influence of government support through various export programmes on the export involvement processes of SBs in the City of Tshwane and in South Africa.

Against this theory, this study will explore export involvement process employed by SBs operating within the City of Tshwane.

1.7 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

According to Jin and Cho (2018), export involvement denotes the dimension by which the export goals and objectives are attained. Such goals and objectives are collateral to market patterns and trends, which may be motivated by collaborations with customers, suppliers, competitors, and business associates. Given the resource constraint nature of most SBs, collaboration as noted by Stouraitis *et al.* (2016) is based on mutual trust and commitment.

The research objectives and research questions will be discussed next, followed by a discussion of the research questions.

1.7.1 Primary research objective

(i) The **primary** objective of the study is to explore the export involvement processes employed by SBs operating in the City of Tshwane.

1.7.2 Secondary research objectives

(ii) To explore the influence of government support in the export involvement of SBs in the City of Tshwane.

(iii) To explore the perception of SB owner managers on government support export programmes.

(iv) To learn about export involvement components employed by SBs in City of Tshwane.

(v) To explore the industry analysis tools employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane.

It was envisaged that export involvement processes are deemed an outcome of management characteristics and capability to use foreign market knowledge to exploit opportunities to achieve greater capabilities in export involvement.

1.7.3 Primary research questions

(i) What are the export involvement processes employed by SBs operating in the City of Tshwane?

1.7.4 Secondary research questions

(ii) What is the influence of government support in the export involvement of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane?

(iii) What is the perception of SB owner-managers on government support export programmes?

(iv) Which export involvement components are employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane?

(v) Which industry analysis tools are employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane?

1.8 RATIONALE FOR THE STUDY

In view of export involvement and government support, evidence suggests a complex association between aforesaid elements. Such complexity may be due to a mismatch between programme determinative outcomes and SBs' unique needs, coupled with varying constraints facing each SB (Raza *et al.*, 2018, Revindo *et al.*, 2018).

Management characteristics and government support as postulated by Kayabasi and Mtetwa (2016) jointly influence competencies in export involvement and the choice of export processes to be employed. Furthermore, export programmes are not constructed to spontaneously increase export involvement if managerial characteristics are misaligned. For example, export programmes may be viewed as unproductive if the SB is not capacitated to maximize opportunities embedded in the government support (export programmes). In addition, inadequate management characteristics may result in an inability to convert initiatives presented by export programmes into action plans (Kayabasi & Mtetwa 2016; Revindo *et al.*, 2018).

That being so, export programmes may be critical to the advancement of export involvement but may be deficient for SBs to engage in foreign markets in the longer term (Rosenbaum, 2019; GeldresWeiss and Monreal-Pérez, 2018). SBs, as discovered by Rosenbaum (2019) and Geldres-Weiss and Monreal-Pérez (2018), have limited knowledge of export programmes while Rosenbaum (2019) revealed that the awareness is determined by the capacity in export involvement. There seems to be a need for cutting edge promotions of such programmes with the intentions of increasing awareness to enhance the capacity of export involvement (Rosenbaum, 2019, Sharma *et al.*, 2016).

The awareness and participation in government interventions may be viewed as an enabler towards a better understanding of complementing managerial characteristics, export involvement decisions, effectiveness, and efficiency (Geldres-Weiss & Monreal-Pérez, 2019). For example, export programmes bestow export opportunities such as workshops, business seminars, export training, and networking, enabling the establishment of global relationships to foster the formation of export practices, methods, and activities (Sharma, *et al.*, 2016).

The complementary association between export involvement and government support promotes the adaption to dynamic export industries and markets, resulting in the superior export involvement of SBs (Rosenbaum, 2019). The effective alignment of managerial characteristics and export programmes may necessitate a systematic blending of internal and external environmental forces to address the uncertainties resulting from dynamic export industries and markets (Sharma *et al.*, 2016). The use of export involvement components, marketing function, and technological innovation, are critical in determining the extent of export involvement, and in reaching a target market relative to an SB's offering.

This study is important in that it offers a unique scrutiny of the export fraternity, and it is anticipated that the findings will be used in other exporting circumstances. A careful examination of the literature indicated that a similar study had not been carried out in South Africa in this context before. This study will make pivotal information available to policy makers and SBs on lucrative export involvement processes. These processes have the potential to enhance the development of export activities to deepen the involvement of SBs in various export markets. This study provides an authentic contribution in its exploration of the effects of government support (export programmes) in the export involvement of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane. The study will focus on the importance of the interplay between export involvement processes and government support to policy makers, owner managers, business educators, and academic researchers.

1.9 THE ASSUMPTION OF THE STUDY

In this study, it is assumed that SBs operating in the City of Tshwane employ some export involvement processes. It is visualised that the findings of this study might potentially assist in determining appropriate export involvement processes needed by SBs to strengthen the export involvement in various export markets.

SBs operating in the City of Tshwane were selected due to the economic diversity offered by the City (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2018/19). The City hosts global networking opportunities for SBs. These are normally attended by global investors to identify export growth opportunities for SBs through the Tshwane Trade and Investment Summit (TTIS) with the aim of promoting export involvement.

The City's population was 2.1 million in 2016. This number is anticipated to increase to 2.3 million by the end of 2020 (Statistics South Africa [STATS SA], 2020). This is supported by the World Population Review (2020) which reveals that 2,565,660 people live in the City. At least 20 SBs partaking in export involvement processes are operating within the City. It can therefore be assumed that the findings of this study will assist to construct a rich and in-depth understanding of export processes employed by SBs. Such findings potentially provide a complete explanation of government support export programmes and its influence in achieving accumulated growth in export involvement.

1.10 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

Due to time, resources, and other restricting factors, this study was limited to South African SBs operating in the City of Tshwane. Additionally, this study focused chiefly on SBs who had been involved in export activities for longer than twelve months.

There are 278 municipalities in South Africa, consisting of 8 metropolitan, 44 district and 226 local municipalities; however, this study is limited to the City of Tshwane in Gauteng province. It became difficult to attain a true consideration of what may be happening in other SBs in other provinces in South Africa. In addition, business records such as financial statements and annual reports were not at the researcher's disposal at the time when the study was carried. These records would have provided meaningful insights into the associations of SB, managerial characteristics, export involvement extents, processes, and government support. In light of the above, the researcher relied on actual interviews and participant observations as the primary source for the data collection process.

1.11 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

In a qualitative enquiry, the researcher's merits and faith are meant to elucidate the world being studied (Van Zyl, 2014). People do not really have a complete view of the world and its associated various parts, but debate about the world in an effort to reveal their distinctive perceptual differences, values, and beliefs. The world can never be known in its aggregate form, as it exists beyond merits, norms and beliefs systems (Pruzan, 2016). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2016) and Bairagi and Munot (2019) merits, norms, and belief systems influence a way in which the world is perceived. In addition, the world is at the disposal of all living humans to be observed and scrutinized. The world is a subjective phenomenon in that it encroaches on objectivity prodigy (Bairagi & Munot, 2019). In qualitative studies, subjectivity controverts objectivity in that it provides an unassertive receiver with outermost insights and understanding (D'Itri & Helms, 2018).

In qualitative studies, differences in perceptions, as described by Bairagi and Munot (2019) can be either a relativist or a constructivist paradigm. Relativism and constructivism suggest that every culture is subjectively linked to its values, norms and belief systems (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Furthermore, Leedy and Ormrod (2016) and D'Itri and Helms (2018) suggest that cultural variances obstruct universal acceptable ethical beliefs, due to inconsistencies in peoples' lived experiences and perceptual differences.

This study is exploratory in nature and has employed the constructivist paradigm. This paradigm has enabled the researcher to engage vigorously with participants, since it provides clear recommendations on how to deal with people across all cultures (Dodgson, 2017). In this instance, participants were from SBs involved in export activities operating from the City of Tshwane, Gauteng province. Exploratory research is further discussed below.

Exploratory research is used to elucidate a predicament, thereby suggesting a theory to enhance additional understanding about the predicament being studied (Tracy, 2020). According to Creswell (2018) the ultimate goal of exploratory research is to gain new awareness from which a contemporary premise may be developed. This kind of study is essential when the predicament being studied is not clearly elucidated (Bairagi & Munot, 2019).

Exploratory research continuously examines theory, thereby reducing the possibility of committing to misconceptions related to the dilemma being investigated (Tracy, 2020). Such misconceptions may lead to misinterpretations between the reader and the author about the topic or dilemma being studied, resulting in perceptual differences and speculations (Creswell, 2018).

As stated by Creswell (2018) exploratory research is open-minded in nature as it aims to expand the knowledge relating to a problem that is not clearly defined. Exploratory research is carried out when sufficient knowledge about the problem being studied is available to allow for conceptual variation (Cooper & Schindler, 2014). It is essential to identify the best research design, data collection methods, and selection of participants to address research objectives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

In view of the above, the appropriate research methods to be employed, with the aim of finding the answer to the research problem and research questions was carefully reflected upon. According to Bairagi and Munot (2019) the determination of the pertinent research design for a specific study is a complex process. In addition, conducting a study that is aligned to laudable research practice is deemed problematic since different researchers are frequently inconsistent (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Considering such a finding, Creswell (2018) suggest that decisions should be based on well-grounded relevant information that can be rigorously corroborated.

Research represents rigorous cycles to generate new knowledge grounded in experience that can be used to discover new insights about the problem in a systematic manner (Bairagi & Munot, 2019). This can be achieved by following adequate research methodologies that will generate credible findings. There are two main research strategies namely: qualitative and quantitative research strategies. On occasion, both research strategies can be employed and is then known as mixed method strategies (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

A quantitative research strategy involves scrutinising relationships between variables, using a systematic and scientific perspective based on numerical manipulation of a dataset for elucidating the phenomenon being observed (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). A qualitative strategy, however, signals a convocation of narrative and personal intuitions based on subjective perceptions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

This study employed a qualitative research method using a semi-structured interview guide and participant observations to promote flexibility and trustworthiness, as being part of the phenomenon and the scene being investigated making findings more credible (Dodgson, 2017). This study also employed a phenomenological exploration to view the current phenomenon in the historical context from which it emerged (Creswell, 2018).

The open- and closed-ended questions were developed using the interview guide, which covered the primary topics related to the phenomenon in the study (Dodgson, 2017).

1.11.1 Selection of participants

The selection of an adequate sample for the study is one of the critical processes in qualitative research as it is essentially determined by the research topic (Leedy and Ormrod, 2016). It is not realistic, viable, or ethical to study the entire population (Creswell, 2018). Sampling facilitates the identification of critical attributes that represent the population in its entirety (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

After careful deliberation, 17 respondents in the interview symposium of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane, Gauteng area were selected for the sample. However, some participants insisted that three colleagues participate. This made the total number of participants 20, which were from 17 participating organisations. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with selected participants to obtain participants' observations.

The research sought participant perceptions based on their knowledge, experiences, and competencies in their respective industries. The internet was used to compile a database of prospective participants. A rapport-building strategy was employed to increase accuracy of information by building relationships with participants based on mutual trust (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

According to Tracy (2020) sampling is crucial in qualitative research to draw conclusions about the population in order to achieve the generalisation of findings. Sampling is designed to accomplish three key objectives as listed below:

- To enhance the quality of research findings by generating multi-perspectival views that represent the entire population by reducing large volumes of data and thereby saving resources.
- To foster the accuracy of the dataset in a short space of time for the entire population.
- To develop new insights by collecting an extensive and substantial dataset for the entire population.

Consequently, this study only included participants involved in export activities operating within the City of Tshwane, Gauteng province. The study aimed to understand the influence of government support in the export involvement of SBs in the City of Tshwane. To achieve this aim, a purposive sampling of SBs involved in the execution of export activities, as the inclusion criteria, was employed in this study. Purposive sampling is used when the researcher aims to explore concealed information specific to a particular population (Pruzan, 2016). Given the bias and subjective nature of purposive sampling, Pruzan (2016) argue that such biases hamper accurate deductions relative to the broader population. In contrast, such deduction continues to happen. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) reveal that purposive sampling is determined by the researcher's discernment concerning the choice of participants being investigated. Purposive sampling encompasses the selection of participants that will appropriately represent key attributes of a wider population. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) argue that this will enable the researcher to address the research objectives. This sampling method is designed to consummate a specific distinctive need or purpose, using a specific group of participants to capture perceptual differences relative to the phenomenon being studied (Bairagi & Munot, 2019).

Purposive sampling aided the researcher to gather a pertinent dataset from pertinent participants with respect to the compound associations between the export involvement of SBs and government supported export programs resulting from political and economic dynamics influencing the industry and market paradigm.

As indicated above, out of nine provinces, 278 municipalities in South Africa, consisting of 8 metropolitan, 44 district, and 226 local municipalities, this study chiefly focuses on the City of Tshwane in Gauteng province.

A database of SBs involved in export activities operating in the City of Tshwane was compiled from the internet. It was predicted that 17 participants would be available to provide a broader perspective of the associations between export involvement processes and the government. However, the number of participants ended up being 20 (including 2 colleagues and 1 business partner).

The researcher managed to access 30 participants willing to play a significant part in the study, however only 20 met the inclusion criteria.

A purposive sampling method is often used to select existing participants who meet the inclusion criteria. In this case, a database of existing potential participants was compiled through an internet search. The inclusion criteria in this study were listed as follows:

- The participant must be involved in export activities.
- The participant must operate from the City of Tshwane.
- The participant must be involved in export involvement processes.

According to Creswell (2018) and Leedy and Ormrod (2016), in qualitative research the sampling size is determined by a consideration of the phenomenon being studied and variances in the population. That being the case, it is unfeasible to work out the number of participants to partake in any research project. As outlined earlier, this study selected 20 participants who met the inclusion criteria, to provide new knowledge and a reliable dataset to be used to create codes and themes. The sample size informs the data saturation level and it becomes an ethical issue when an inadequate size is used, as it involves the improper allotment of research project funds and participants' resources (Tracy, 2020).

Given the bias and the subjective nature of purposive sampling, researcher and participant judgements are constructed from an ambiguous criterion. Tracy (2020) suggests that such judgements are often less considered, making it difficult to assure the reader that judgements were adequately based on the generalisation of the broader population. The sampling method indicated above assisted in selecting the appropriate participants. The participants all used export involvement processes, and provided relevant insights into these, and into the influence of government support in their involvement in export activities (Bairagi & Munot, 2019). Another limitation is that the information about the appropriate population for the study may not always be accessible. Tracy (2020) argues that in such cases the efficacy of purpose sampling may be interrogated. With that said, it may be possible that a hidden population that may provide credible insights on the phenomenon being investigate may be eliminated from the study (Tracy, 2020).

1.12 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations are consistent with standard principles for executing a research project. In keeping with Leedy and Ormrod's (2016) views, data collected from research participation, in this instance SBs operating in the City of Tshwane, should only be utilized for research intentions. It has been postulated by Leedy and Ormrod (2016) that a research project with SBs involved in export activities calls for a higher intensity of ethical attention.

Ethical considerations in export involvement research are critically important to inform and enhance decision-making processes by policy makers, government bodies, SBs, and academics in relation to possible threats and opportunities identified in export markets and industries. That being the case, this study adhered to the following ethical guidelines:

- **Voluntary participation and study withdrawal**

This study observed research protocols by providing detailed information related to the risks and benefits. The researcher further informed participants of their right to decline and withdraw from study protocols at any time and that such withdrawal would not negatively influence participants in any form.

- **Informed consent**

All informed consent practices were observed as a critical principle for executing a research involving human subjects (Scott and Garner, 2013) by informing all participants about the outcome determinative of the study. All participants were provided with copies of consent forms in the case of clarity seeking questions and concerns arising during or after the interview (Scott & Garner, 2013).

- **Confidentiality**

Data collected from all participants were protected and only used for research purposes. Scott and Garner (2013) suggest that such data should not be revealed without the consent of participants, the researcher, and the study supervisor.

- **Anonymity**

The rigorous protection of material collected from participants was observed, as all participants of the study were assured that such material would be strictly protected by adhering to ethical guidelines. All participants were informed about the data protection principles that were in place and were assured of anonymity and confidentiality.

As argued by Van Zyl (2014) and Scott and Garner (2013) ethical principles must be employed in respect of participants, prior to providing consent for the research project. This must also be done through the outline of research values, intentions, confidentiality, and anonymity, and by refraining from plagiarism and the manipulation of a dataset, which can happen by accident or through negligence. These principles were adhered to by formulating short and unambiguous questions to create a focus structure for a dialogue to attain rich insights from participants (Van Zyl, 2014).

The researcher adhered to the ethical practices as postulated by Pruzan (2016) for governing the research project investigating SBs export involvement, strengths or weaknesses, and the influence of government support when export processes are carried out to enhance validity and reliability of the dataset. The researcher obtained ethical clearance from Tshwane Economic Development Agency (TEDA), which is attached as an appendix to the end of this study. Furthermore, the researcher obtained an ethical clearance certificate from the ethics committee within the institution of higher learning. This is also attached as an appendix to this study. Permission from the DTI to obtain a database was granted; however, the database of 20 participants was obtained from the internet.

1.13.1 Pilot study

A pilot study was carried out in order to uncover potential constraints that may negatively influence the research process (Malmqvist, Hellberg, Mollas, Rose & Shevlin, 2019). The researcher achieved this by selecting 5 participants apart from the nominated sample, who were interviewed to gain critical information. A pilot study assisted in providing guidance to evaluate the effectiveness of the research methods used in the study (Malmqvist, *et al.*, 2019).

1.14 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

In qualitative research, issues surrounding the quality of research are critical if findings are to be utilized by policy makers, SBs, and academics for future research, using validity and reliability as a criterion (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The construct of validity encompasses integrity, elucidation, and descriptions that are a true reflection of findings, while reliability involves consistency in the findings within research methods employed in the study (Pruzan, 2016).

The researcher further used the trustworthiness criteria to increase the quality of the study. Credibility is concerned with the observations and persistence engagement with participants while transferability allows the reader to determine whether the findings may be applicable in a different state of affairs.

Dependability involves the incorporation of triangulation to ensure that research findings are traceable. Triangulation was used in this study to construct a broad understanding of a phenomenon. The researcher achieved this by making use of various credible sources to enhance confidence in this study. Confirmability refers to determining whether the interpretation of the findings stem from data.

Given the above, the researcher reflected on the fundamental principles of validity and reliability in the study. Consistency and accuracy in the interpretation of the dataset was critically considered by the researcher to enhance the credibility of the study.

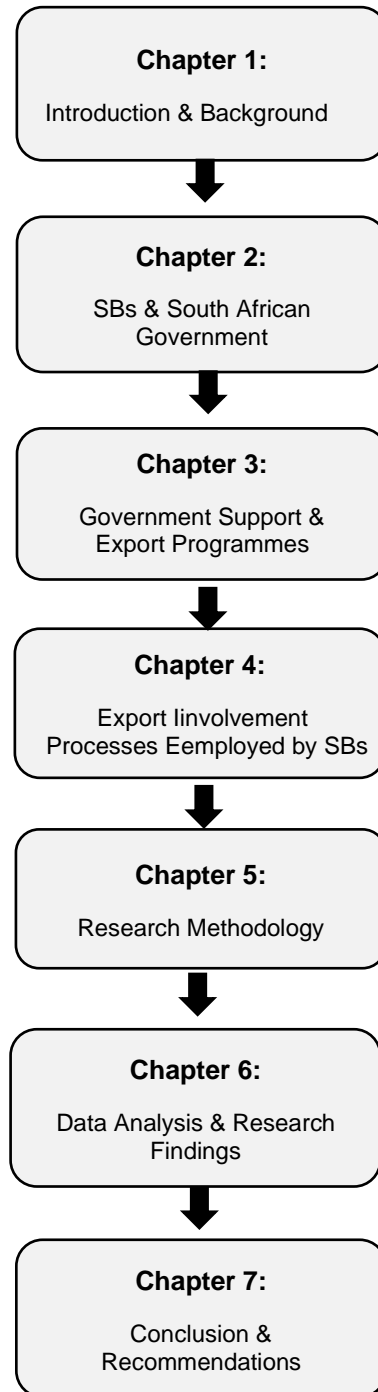
This was achieved through extended interactions with participants, as semi-structured interviews to obtain participants' observations were the prime methods employed. The researcher continued with aforesaid extended engagements until saturation point was reached, resulting in the generation of themes (Bairagi & Munot, 2019).

1.15 CONCLUSION AND CHAPTER LAYOUT

In this study, the ambiguous export involvement processes employed by SBs, the capacity (weak or strong) of involvement, and the influence of government support in export activities were discussed. The study further outlined the complex associations between export involvement and government support in influencing the attainment of greater capabilities in export involvement. Perceptual differences provided diverse views about the influence of export programmes on the implementation of export involvement processes due to a lack of awareness and participation, resulting in limited information about foreign market opportunities. This chapter further discussed the significance of managerial characteristics in the execution of export involvement in foreign markets. The history of SBs in South Africa was discussed to understand their current status quo within the context of export involvement processes. The chapter concluded by shedding light on the research methods used to address the research objectives and enhance the credibility of the study.

The ambiguous export involvement of SBs and the South African government were explored in detail in chapter 2, while chapter 3 and 4 respectively discussed export involvement processes and government supported export programmes. Chapter 5 discussed the research methodology. Chapter 6 discussed the presentation and the interpretation of the dataset, while chapter 7 concluded with recommendations to be used for future research projects.

Figure 1.1 Chapter layout



Source: Author's own compilation

CHAPTER 2 RESEARCH CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The evolution of SBs involvement in export actions has been widely recognised by the South African government for their contribution to economic progress (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2018/19). The participation of SBs in export markets has escalated over the recent years due to various government interventions as a critical driver to enhance SBs export growth and involvement in diverse global markets (DTI, 2018/19).

In this chapter, the researcher attempts to outline the pivotal role played by various government agencies in contributing to the growth and development of SBs in export markets. Strategies formulated by agencies with the intention of cultivating export involvement of SBs to take advantage of foreign market opportunities will be reflected on.

2.2 THE MINISTRY OF SMALL BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The ministry of SB development was formed in 2014. In the same year, the Honourable Lindiwe Zulu was appointed as Minister of Small Business Development by the then President of the Republic of South Africa, His Excellency Jacob Zuma and his cabinet. The Honourable Lindiwe Zulu served from 2014 until 2018 (People's Assembly, 2019). The Honourable Khumbudzo Ntshavheni was then appointed as Minister of Small Business Development in 2019 (City Press, 2019). The Honourable Khumbudzo Ntshavheni presently serves as a member of the National Assembly, a member of the African National Congress (ANC), and a member of the ANC Youth League (ANCYL). She also performed the duties of municipal manager, tourism manager, and chief information officer for local government and housing in South Africa. One of Minister Ntshavheni's directives includes executive leadership decisions in the allotment of funds by linking SBs to the respective target export markets.

Honourable Khumbudzo Ntshavheni translated her directives into task-related activities, injecting funds to various government programmes that are consistent with the development of SBs through partnerships with private sectors. Moreover, in 2014-2019 one of the government initiatives included the formation of a unified multi-service centre to increase the financial and non-financial support of SBs aiming to boost their competency via informational and experiential export assistance. Various innovation summits were organised to mobilize innovation through network opportunities offering SBs a better understanding of export involvement processes. The aforementioned summits are in alignment with DTI, SEDA, TEDA, Small Enterprise Financial Agency (SEFA) and Small Business Development (SBD) as these institutions guide export trade and assist SBs to identify business opportunities in various global markets (DTI, 2018/19).

Therefore, this study will look at the state of export involvement processes from DTI, SEDA, Department of Small Business Development (DSBD), and TEDA standpoint in promoting SBs involvement in exporting activities.

2.3 DYNAMICS IN THE DEPARTMENT OF TRADE AND INDUSTRY

The DTI governs export activities in South Africa and has always aspired to provide the appropriate support to SBs, while searching for new and emerging best export practices to enhance export involvement processes employed by owner-managers. The minister of the DTI is the Honourable Ebrahim Patel. Mr Patel was appointed by the president of the Republic of South Africa, Mr Cyril Ramaphosa in 2019. Prior to this appointment, Mr Ebrahim Patel served as the minister of Economic Development in South Africa from 2009-2019.

DTI is a government body that is mandated to support foreign knowledge codification and innovation dissemination to assist the evolution of involvement in export activities amongst SBs operating in the City of Tshwane. This mandate is executed by providing financial and non-financial support, accompanied by the private sector, through streams of export incentive programmes equipping SBs with tools to convey foreign information into knowledge for the effective execution of export components (marketing function and technological innovation).

Over the years, DTI focused on the implementation of its missions. This included the provision of a conducive environment for foreign investment, trade, SB evolution, and the facilitation of structural adjustments to meet the demands of dynamic industries and export markets. Programmes implemented under the DTI run parallel to promote the management of marketing function and technological innovation of SBs, while increasing the awareness of export programme policies to be adhered to with the aim of advancing export involvement. Despite the complex nature in the South African economic and political environment, the DTI strives to invest in innovative incentives for SBs, including business analysis. This is aimed at constructing best practices and rigorous export processes in order to upgrade business, managerial characteristics, and capabilities. The aforesaid business support activities are often carried out by external consultants from private sectors, considering the ambiguity in SBs' export involvement processes and the mismatch of managerial characteristics (Alrashidi, 2016; DTI, 2018/19; Gkypali *et al.*, 2021).

There seems to be a disconnection between various sections within the DTI in that activities are carried out with an absence of centrally collected information relative to the determinative outcomes and criteria of various export programmes (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2018/19). Such a disconnection not only compromises the competencies of export programmes, but also increases arguments relative to the awareness, and participation of SBs in export programmes.

Despite such disconnections, DTI continues to elicit correlative policy makers to systematically and rigorously examine the essential needs of SBs to help them in the enactment of export involvement activities. DTI achieves this by positioning various export programme objectives with that of SBs, ensuring the appropriate formulation of customised services, marketing and technological needs correlative to internal and external constraints confronting the SB. In addition, DTI further ensures that such services enhance the export involvement process, and managerial characteristics in alignment with the DTI mission. To bring more rigor into DTI export interventions, it is important to reflect on DTI mission statements as indicated earlier in this discussion.

The DTI mission statement does not only encompass exporting SBs, but also including stakeholders mandated to promote export involvement through the allotment of financial and non-financial support. Such stakeholders include global structures, pertinent associations, government, and regulatory structures (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2018/19). The DTI mission statement appears to be associated with export involvement in that it places emphasis on industry and market dynamics in which SB operates. It is important to note that the following DTI mission statements are defined based on the inclusion of all stakeholders and the achievement of export involvement goals and objectives:

- To facilitate structural evolution relative to dynamics in the industry, markets, and globally competitive economic environment.
- To facilitate the provision of foreseeable, competitive and conducive environment by promoting investment, trade and the growth of SBs.
- To elevate the export involvement processes employed by SBs.
- To enhance managerial characteristics associated with competent export involvement.
- To improve the collaboration within DTI segments in-order to facilitate information flow.
- To create consistency between export programme objectives with an SB's objectives, export processes and managerial characteristics.

Additional evidence claims that the DTI's mission is formulated in the evaluation of employed export processes associated with managerial characteristics by focusing on a broader scope of internal and external constraints threatening to limit the export involvement of SBs. DTI further expands on the importance of substantial, extensive, and overarching values correlative to the development of export involvement. Such values as listed below are aimed to inspire the export involvement of SBs.

- To enhance operational excellence by aligning the SB's business practices and quality management with that of global standards.
- To strengthen organisational continuous learning consistent with export involvement processes, management characteristics, marketing function and technological innovation.

- To promote quality relationships with all stakeholders.

DTI values, as indicated in (DTI, 2018/19), are a cornerstone of export involvement as they underpin the interrelations between the SB, industry and target market. In addition, DTI values link export programmes' objectives and SBs' objectives to facilitate the penetration into export involvement.

The mission and values outlined above are viewed as critical tools in assessing the extent of export involvement constructed from export involvement processes and managerial characteristics. DTI mission and values position aforesaid elements into perspectives based on clear export involvement priorities, helping SBs minimise poor export decisions by promoting efficient coordination between a SB and its environment (internal and external) (DTI, 2018/19).

Moreover, DTI structures rest upon three critical pillars formulated in 1995, and aimed at helping SBs exploit foreign opportunities, promoting the assessment of industry and market dynamics while reducing ambiguity identified at various stages of export involvement. Such pillars are constructed by matching employed export processes and managerial characteristics with government support, enabling associations with competencies in export involvement amongst various practices. The pillars listed below are built on fundamental strategies associated with SBs' export involvement:

- To increase the provision of financial and non-financial support.
- To create a demand for SBs goods and services.
- To minimise regulatory constraints limiting growth and development of SBs.

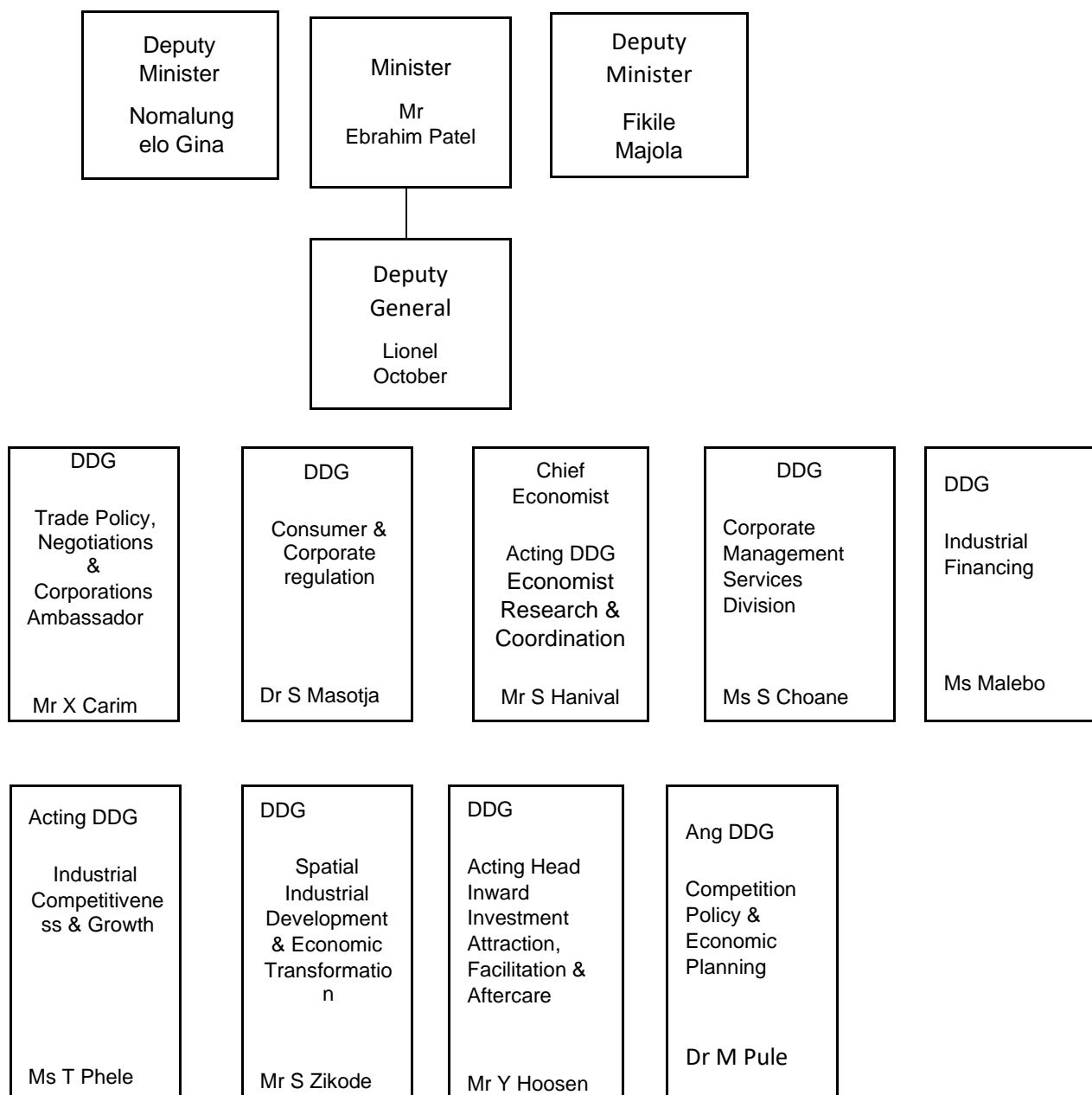
In line with this study, attention is drawn to all three pillars, as they constitute substantial value in greater involvement in exports activities. Such pillars were formulated in the consideration of dynamics in the targeted markets and industries, resulting in ambiguity in levels of export involvement. DTI pillars facilitate the systematization of export processes with marketing function and technological innovation to promote the quality deliverables in consistent with global standards. DTI achieves this by implementing evaluating procedures that enables the penetration of underlying constraints threatening the growth of export involvement, allowing SBs to share best practice within industries through organised formal and informal business networks.

By contrast, a conflict of interest in export policies within government agencies influence the regulatory environment, reducing the trust in government export programmes amongst SBs and resulting in a decline in awareness, and participation in export programmes. Dynamics in the conflict of interests exist not only within DTI structures, but also in SEDA, TEDA, SEFA, and SBD. For example, evidence suggests that SEDA operates under inadequate capacity (SEDA, 2016/17). SEDA has acknowledged this and has implemented strategies to minimise harmful effects (SEDA, 2017/2018). Such conflict of interest may give rise to unethical and corrupt activities such as bribes, resulting in a waste of government and SBs' resources.

Evidence further suggests that arrests have been made related to tender irregularities carried out by government officials and business directors in South Africa (Omarjee, 2019). Irregularities occur at any stage of the project life cycle, which negatively influence the development of the country and that of SBs (Omarjee, 2019).

Below is the DTI structure of key officials mandated with the responsibility of the effective implementation of the aforementioned pillars:

Figure 2.1: The DTI organogram



Source: DTI (2020)

The DTI organogram for 2020, as indicated in Figure 2.1 above, depicts a comprehensive undertaking to promote the evocation of organisational goals and objectives. It further depicts the office holders and their principal roles within the DTI. Honourable Ebrahim Patel is the minister accountable for export policy formulation and decision-making processes correlative to the design of export programmes within the DTI structures. Ms Nomalungelo Gina and Mr Fikile Majola are Deputy Ministers chiefly accountable for policy implementation and guidance, expenditure planning, review and control. Ms Nomalungelo Gina and Mr Fikile Majola are chiefly assisted by the Director-General, Chief financial Officer and Group Chief Operating Officer. The latter is accountable (amongst others) for marketing, finance, general administrations, communication and trade negotiations.

2.3.1 The history of DTI

The Department of Trade and Industry was established in South Africa in 1910 under the administration of the former president of the Republic of South Africa Louis Botha, who appointed the Honourable Frederick Robert Moore from 1910-1911. At the time, it was named as the Department of Commerce and Industry. DTI was formed with the intentions of promoting economic activities through trade, investment, and exports. Since its formation, it has been served by 10 ministers. A condensed study of ministers with their competence within organisational structures provides a holistic view of DTI, its structures, and its impact on the export involvement of SBs (which is the focus of the study). Table 2.1 below depicts the overview of the times, contributions, and competency of each minister (including export programme policy and implementation and strategic matters).

2.3.2 DTI ministers

As indicated by Table 2.1, it is apparent that 8 of the 10 ministers were white, 1 Indian and 1 black. Dr Rob Haydn Davis was viewed as a competent minister based on his skills, consistency and academic achievements, as he served the department for 2 terms (from 2009-2019). Dr Davis played a critical role in economic transformation by promoting export involvement growth, innovation, and flexibility through trade and investment. One of the programmes he was involved in was SAAM and the APDP. Under his leadership and counsel, these programmes contributed 6.9% towards the GDP, resulting in 30.1% output and 13.9 of export sales in 2018 (South African Government [SAG] 2018).

Table 2.1: DTI Ministers

Minister	Date of birth	Place of birth/Nationality	Period of tenure	Key contributions
Frederic Robert Moore	Born 12 May 1853 Died 18 March 1927	South Africa	1910-1911	Handled secretarial duties related to native issues. Contributed to the formulation of tribal system and customary law
George Leuchars	Born 06 April 1858 Died 10 February 1924	South Africa	1911-1912	Explored investment potentials in the manufacturing and service sectors
Adriaan Fourie	Born November 1882 Died 06 July 1941	South Africa	1933-1938	Facilitated economic growth by formulating practices to level the playing ground
Oswald Pirow	Born 14 August 1890 Died 11 October 1959	South Africa	1938-1939	Formulated trade policies to protect domestic producers against foreign competition
Richard Stuttaford	Born 13 June 1870 Died 19 October 1945	South Africa	1939-1941	Formulated strategies to protect local SBs against unfair markets and industry practices
Sydney Waterson	Born Died	South Africa	1941-1943	Promoted the restructuring of local markets and industries to increase exports
Alec Erwin	Born 17 January 1948	South Africa	1996-2004	Actively participated in trade unions to promote industrial development
Mandisi Mphahlwa	Born 21 August 1960	South Africa	2004-2009	Formulated policies to promote export development and investment
Rob Haydn Davies	12 May 1948	South Africa	2009-2019	Mastermind behind financial and non-financial support

Ebrahim Patel	01 January 1962	South Africa	2019-present	Oversees the overall strategic direction of IDC to ensure equal distribution of financial and nonfinancial support
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Source: DTI

100 days into office, Honourable Ebrahim Patel managed to conclude a free trade agreement. This created export opportunities by developing new global networks worldwide and broadening the scope of exports for South African goods and services in various global markets. He also contributed to the formulation of export policies to minimise constraints at South African borders, which previously resulted in the delay of the delivery of South African goods and services in various global markets.

At the same time, Honourable Ebrahim Patel received significant criticism related to inconsistencies in export policies, without making adequate references to the objectives of export programmes and how such inconsistencies may have influenced the levels of export involvement amongst SBs (Macpherson, 2020). These inconsistencies create an internal mismatch between SBs export components (marketing function and technological innovation) affecting export processes (managerial characteristics), resulting in a growing complexity between government support and SBs export involvement) (DTI, 2018/19). As a result, the Democratic Alliance (DA) called for his resignation with immediate effect, as inconsistencies are anticipated to result in an economic decline.

2.4 SEDA

The formation of SEDA in 2004 was proposed by DTI with the intentions of developing support initiatives to promote export activities through the National Small Business Amendment Act - Act 29 Of 2004 (SEDA, 2018/19; DTI, 2018/19). SEDA exhibits its mandates and activities under the supervision of DTI. However, in 2014 the conduct of such activities was allotted to DSBD in order to aid SBs to make a meaningful contribution to their export involvement through financial and nonfinancial initiatives. Government support initiatives were constructed to address conflicting export challenges confronting SBs in their respective industries. It is crucial to note that financial support activities are carried out by institutions such as SEFA, Industrial Development Corporation (IDC), and the DTI (Bosiu, Nsomba & Vilakazi, 2019).

The importance of SBs' meaningful contribution to the economy has been acknowledged by the South African government. The contribution of SBs has given rise to the formation of various export programmes, with the aim of meeting unique and varying challenges in their pursuit for higher export involvement.

Bearing this in mind, that there is no one size fits all correlative to initiatives offered by the government's support. This necessitates the need for programmes to be tailored in alignment to the varying needs and challenges facing each SB.

By contrast, there seems to be constraints facing SEDA in the allotment of financial and non-financial support designed to promote export growth amongst SBs (DTI, 2018/19; DTI, 2018/19). These constraints include a lack of skills, and a lack of coordination in administrative protocols, resulting in a lack of access to government support services, which then influences the awareness, and participation in these services (SEDA, 2017/18; Maluleke, 2014). Other constraints encompass inadequate training, unskilled business analysts, leading to poor design and evaluation of export programmes. Aforesaid inadequacies as indicated by Malca *et al.* (2019), give rise to a mismatch between programmes designed to address varying needs, and export constraints facing each SB. These inadequacies, in turn, slow down export involvement progress. The above provides a complete explanation of perceptual differentials in export programmes, to justify the complex associations between ambiguous intensity in export involvement, fluctuating export processes, and government support.

2.4.1 SEDA and ethics

The ethical conduct and concession of good governance rests upon various stakeholders, including SEDA officials and SBs. 23 fraud and corruption cases were identified within SEDA structures in the financial years of 2018 and 2019, undermining a conduct of good governance (SEDA, 2018/19). Such an act compromises the efficient control of financial and non-financial initiatives, resulting in an influence in managerial characteristics and their intensity in export involvement. In spite of the knowledge of such acts of fraud and corruptive conduct, SEDA (2018/19) revealed that often such cases are not systematically investigated. To a certain extent, some SBs partly accept such behaviour, as they participate in bribery activities to secure financial and non-financial support to access export markets (SA News, 2015; Xego, 2020).

In view of the above, it is critically paramount to visit the objectives articulated by SEDA, as listed below, to determine a misalignment in SB objectives and the intentions of SEDA in advancing the level of export involvement through financial and non-financial interventions. It is important to note that the SEDA constructed objectives to ensure a continued growth of export involvement amongst SBs:

- To enhance and inform the acceleration of service delivery.
- To promote adaptive strategies for the enhancement of operational excellency.
- To facilitate marketing function and technological function by increasing stakeholder networking.

The aforementioned objectives call for systematic strategies to facilitate the execution of good governance, transparency, accountability and good ethical conduct (SEDA, 2018/19). Despite

continuous measures implemented by SEDA to mitigate fraud and corruptive activities, irregularities are persistent within SEDA structures (SEDA, 2018/19). Such irregularities are closely associated with fraud and corrupt activities undermining government support initiatives and transparency. SEDA (2018/19) revealed that this does not only influence government efficiency and effectiveness, but significantly increases the ambiguity in export involvement of some SBs, increasing inconsistencies in the capacity of export involvement. It is further revealed by SEDA (2018/19) that corrupt activities executed by government officials interrupts the collaboration within SEDA structures, making it difficult to determine economic order in terms of the associations between government support and SBs' stages of export involvement.

In 2019, Nine SEDA officials were suspended and subsequently dismissed due to fraud and corruption linked to the Black Business Supplier Development Programme (BBSD) and Co-operative Incentive Scheme (CIS) (Africa, 2019). SEDA acknowledges that such acts may be linked to a lack of access to financial and non-financial support since these are viewed as continuous issues threatening to limit the awareness, and participation in government export programmes. Such perennial issues further increase the complex association between government support and export involvement, resulting in ambiguity of export involvement processes.

The above findings may shine a light on practical solutions constructed by SEDA to mitigate the spread of corrupt activities. This involves formulating strategic policies that are informed by the internal and external environment to detect varying forms of corruption (SEDA, 2018/19). Among other practical solutions, SEDA established the Audit and Risk Committee (ARC) to underpin the auditing function. The committee is constructed by independent external auditors with a sound expertise of financial aspects to evaluate the weaknesses and irregularities enabling SEDA to attain financial and compliance objectives.

With this in mind, SEDA acknowledges that fraud and corruptive activities cannot be carried out by its officials without some involvement of SBs. As the supply party of (financial and non-financial support) another party, SBs must be eager to supply officials with bribes to access export market opportunities.

Efforts have been invested by SEDA to incorporate investigative processes on fraud and corrupt activities, yet not all cases have been concluded (SEDA, 2018/19). This may interrogate the quality of investigative procedures employed, policy weaknesses, and an inappropriate departmental mandate, due to unnecessary processes resulting from poor collaboration within SEDA structures. For example, Table 2.2 below reveals disciplinary cases, dismissals, final written warnings (FWW), written warning (WW), counselling/verbal warning and withdrawn/not guilty as indicated in SEDA's 2018/19 financial year report.

The table further suggests that disciplinary procedures due to fraud, corruption, irregularities, and unethical practice form part of day-to-day activities as the total number of disciplinary cases amounts to 46 since March 2019.

Table 2.2: SEDA Disciplinary cases

Disciplinary cases	Number of cases				
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Dismissals	0	2	1	1	4
final written warning	4	2	5	3	14
written warning	5	7	2	4	18
counselling/ verbal warning	0	1	3	3	7
withdrawn/ not guilty	0	1	1	1	3
Total disciplinary cases	9	13	12	12	46

Source: SEDA

Table 2.3: SEDA Grievance cases

Grievance cases	Number of cases				
	Quarter 1	Quarter 2	Quarter 3	Quarter 4	Total
Grievances	1	0	1	3	5
Total number of grievances	1	0	1	3	5

Source: SEDA (2018/19)

The above table depicts the total number of grievance cases since March 2019 that were carried out using labour laws as a mechanism to establish negotiations between SEDA and its officials.

In light of the above, it became apparent that due to persisting misconduct between SBs and officials, internal strategies may have limited influence on the quality of ethical standards and governance. In the context of the study, this provides a complete explanation of ambiguity in the intensity of export involvement driven by the complex association between government support (export programmes) and SBs, affecting the awareness, and participation in export programmes. It is therefore critically important to analyse the dynamics in the DSBD as an affiliate to SEDA, with both established under supervision of the DTI.

2.5 DSBD

The formation of DSBD was announced by President Jacob Zuma in 2014 in affiliation with the Small Enterprise Finance Agency and the Coca-Cola company (Small Enterprise Finance Agency [SEFA], 2018/19). Since its inception, the DSBD has made meaningful contributions, such as providing financial and non-financial initiatives to 505 SBs in alignment with the objectives indicated in the Black Business Supplier Programme (BBSDP). DSBD has been involved in the transformation of industry structure and market dynamics, matching the perceived export processes with managerial characteristics (Department of Small Business Development [DSBD] 2018/19). As a result, their export policies are anticipated to enable SBs to capitalise on opportunities.

DSBD further acknowledges bureaucratic rules influencing the awareness, and participation in government support programmes. They responded by implementing the Red Tape Reduction Programme (RTRP) (DSBD, 2018/19). Bureaucratic implications are closely associated with compliant costs and export entry barriers in various global markets, influencing opportunities related to prospective investors domestically or globally (Rialp-Criado & Komochkova, 2017). As response to this, DSBD invested R 840 million to enhance its internal controls thereby minimising the bureaucracy burden; however; only R340 million was injected into supporting SBs' development facilitated by SEFA (DSBD, 2018/19). During the same financial year (2018/19), DSBD, in collaboration with SEDA, advanced its contribution in a similar volume and scope. DSBD matched its objectives with that of SBs by providing financial and non-financial interventions to over 4 700 SBs. Of these, 2 860 are active participants, and 199 are graduates of the programme, resulting in a total turnover of R1.7 billion injected to promote growth.

Despite efforts invested to promote growth, persisting bureaucratic burdens, present dynamic influences on ambiguous export involvement contributes to the existing complex associations between government support and managerial characteristics, affecting export processes and activities. DSBD acknowledges that such bureaucratic burdens constitute challenges for SBs; thereby influencing their

ability to deliver quality associated managerial characteristics. This in turn contributes to inconsistent growth in export involvement due to the cost of compliance.

DSBD further noticed poor collaboration within its structures, which significantly influences export involvement, making it difficult for DSBD to identify critical constraints relevant to the aforesaid interface (export involvement). One of the internal constraints identified is the duplication in the allotment of financial and non-financial support between DSBD, SEDA, and SEFA (DSBD, 2018/19). For example, SBs financial intervention activities are carried out by SEFA in order to achieve consistency between programme design, implementation, and assessment to detect dynamics and a need for improvement.

SEFA is an assigned agent affiliated to DSBD that is mandated to implement the Small Business Innovation Fund (SBIF). SBIF is projected to spend R3.2 billion as government recognises the critical importance of SBs. In addition, DSBD supports 799 SBs through export workshops and exhibitions, export education, and training of 861 SBs on global standards contributing to export involvement.

In the same tone, DSBD, in collaboration with SEDA, further recognised the importance of consistent support to enhance the extent of export involvement through the SEDA Technology Programme (STP) to promote and to increase the efficient execution of export components. As a result, 2 860 and 465 SBs were supported via incubation outreach, while quality initiatives were directed at 266 and 50 firms received technological innovation assistance. Such figures tend to differ due to the diversity of needs and challenges facing each SB.

With this in mind, it is critical to consider that persisting irregularities deriving from fraud and corruption continue to interfere with efficiency in adhering to ethical standards and governance. During the 2016/17 financial year, DSBD suspended various officials due to fraud and corruption activities executed within the department. Investigation proceedings occurred during the 2016/17 financial year, resulting in officials being charged with mismanagement, misinterpretation of truths and violating the accessibility of SBs in government support programmes (South African Government, 2019).

In reference to the above, we will now visit the mission statement articulated by DSBD to guide the focus on the export advancement of SBs. Admittedly, DSBD mission statement and values were significantly prepared with the export involvement of SBs in mind. The mission statement and values place the emphasis on components of export involvement (marketing function and technological innovation), ranking the significance of SBs development by the extent of creating an enabling environment. It is further important to note that the DSBD mission statement is articulated with the importance of key stakeholders (government and SBs) to construct courses of action that may possibly lead to intended growth in export involvement.

- To facilitate the harmonization and mobility of strategic resources to create an environment conducive to increasing the export involvement of SBs while lessening the complex associations between government support and SBs involvement in exports.

As indicated, DSBD values highlight key components of export involvement according to their significance to ensure congruence between export programmes and ongoing constraints confronting SBs during export involvement. Such congruence enables DSBD to develop practical goals and objectives that are attainable within their capacity. It is important to note that the following goals and objectives were formulated with the aim of evaluating the export involvement of SBs with respect to export programmes.

- Setting precedent commitment towards export involvement.
- Promote technological innovative notions to explain internal and external constraints.
- Consistently search for innovative strategies aiming at enhancing export involvement processes.

The above values call for the application of ethical standards to enhance internal decision-making processes to minimise fraud and corruption activities. This influences the capacity of DSBD to deliver the support relevant to export challenges that confront SBs in their quest to achieve the intended growth of export involvement.

In the context of the study, it will seem that a lack of internal adherence to ethical principles contributes to ambiguous export involvement among SBs, resulting in a lack of awareness, and participation in government support export programmes. This is supported by Dhliwayo, (2017), who revealed that a low level of awareness, and use of export programmes among some SBs is due to the ambiguous influence on export involvement. This is because some programmes are not effectively designed to address conflicting issues confronting SBs in uncertain export markets, hence inconsistent outcomes (Maluleke, 2014). Such drawbacks also contribute to a complex association between export involvement and government support due to a lack of insights associated with export challenges confronting SBs at different stages of involvement using their respective export processes.

The study will now discuss TEDA and its contribution towards export development and SBs involvement in various export activities.

2.6 TEDA

TEDA is an economic development agency established by the City of Tshwane in 2006. The execution of its activities is carried out in alignment with the Integrated Development Plan (IDP) (2016/21) under the management of the City of Tshwane's 2030 vision. This plan is aimed at addressing economic development dynamics arising from complex associations between government support and SBs. Both

TEDA and the City recognised the need for systematic integration in decision-making processes which primarily focus on designing export programmes to deepen the export involvement of SBs. To achieve this, TEDA and City has significantly focused on trade and investment interventions, paying attention to export involvement considerations (Tshwane Economic Development Agency [TEDA] 2016/17).

In the context of this study, it is essential to outline TEDA's mission statement to determine its efforts in creating awareness of the export programmes associated with export involvement. In the mission statements listed below TEDA aims to express their ambitions, aspirations, and possible adjustments to their internal structures to attain intended export involvement growth.

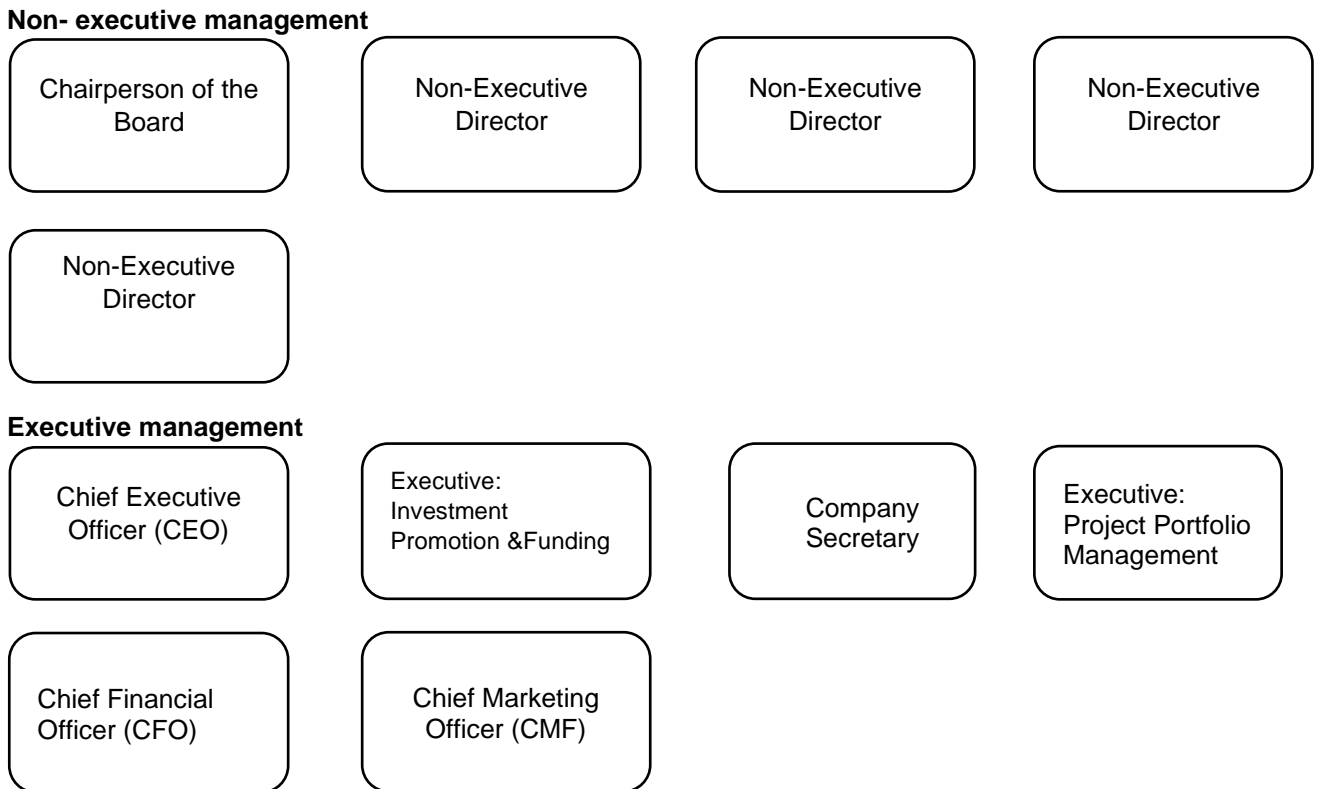
- To establish and promote trade and foreign investment to enhance export involvement process of SBs.
- To identify and design export projects that will enhance marketing function and technological innovations of SB through export programmes.
- To promote the diversification of economic opportunities in the City of Tshwane.
- To adhere to good ethical principles and governance within the context of export involvement processes.

To achieve the above, TEDA and the City need to align the heterogeneous nature of SBs with the dynamic markets and industries within which they operate. All these influence the extent of export involvement and managerial characteristics that may impact on the awareness, and perceptual differences about export programmes.

Figure 2.2 depicts the TEDA board of directors, encompassing non-executive management and executive management. The key responsibility of the board is to oversee the adherence of ethical principles by understanding what represent implicit governance.

Since its inception, TEDA managed to formulate strategies as a key element of trade and investment aimed at increasing export involvement outcomes in the consideration of internal and external constraints confronting SBs.

Figure 2.2: TEDA organisational structure



Source: TEDA (2016/17)

The board's rating consists of a dataset gathered by the City, and external auditors identifying critical elements to determine projected outcomes related to the export involvement patterns of SBs within the context of balanced scored (TEDA, 2016/17).

In light of the above, TEDA recognises the internal challenges associated with financial sustainability and shortcomings that call for greater accountability from their part, which is closely associated to policy review processes aimed at addressing such challenges. In the context of this study, unsustainability of financial resources within TEDA structures contribute to export involvement ambiguity of some SBs, thereby threatening to limit the growth of managerial characteristics while contributing to inconsistencies in the export involvement processes employed by owner-managers. This may significantly impact upon awareness, use, and possible benefits of government support export programmes.

TEDA further acknowledges that the execution of some internal projects was compromised due to inadequacies in budgeting, influencing their ability to implement export involvement activities. Such a deficiency increases ambiguity in export involvement processes, and complexities between government support and SBs, while further distorting economic relations between TEDA and the City as the sole shareholder (TEDA, 2016/17). This may influence the innovative capabilities of both parties.

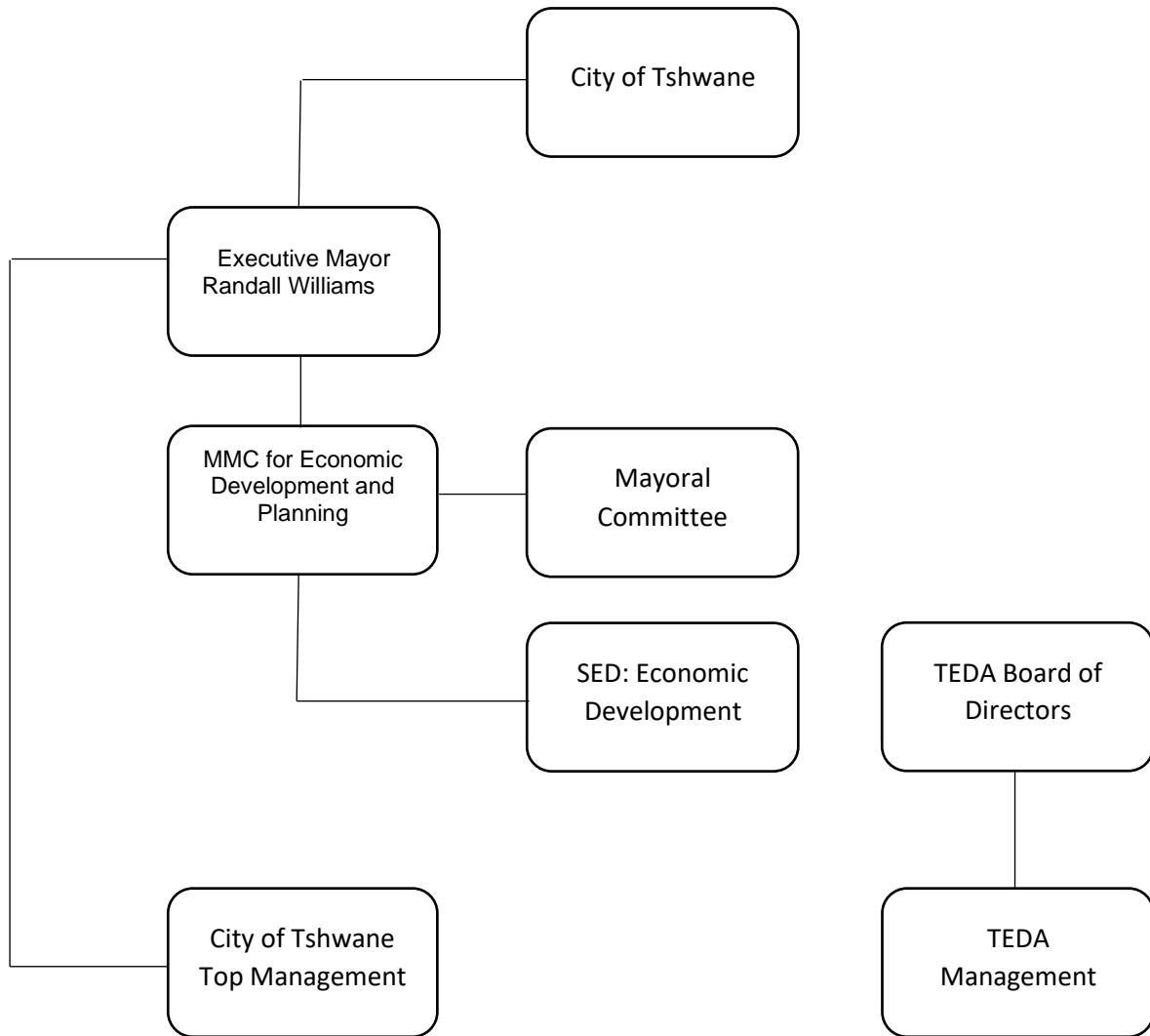
It is critically important to discuss economic relations between TEDA and the City to promote trade and investment in export involvement activities. The magnitude of collaboration between TEDA and the City is aimed at addressing varying export challenges by minimising a gap between export involvement ambiguity and government support in a more rigorous and comprehensive manner.

The City of Tshwane is known as the beating heart of the Gauteng region, representing a government site that is recognised as an economic powerhouse. Tshwane is regarded as a rapidly growing economy in South Africa, accounting for R&D activities at 8% while contributing 10% towards national GDP (TEDA, 2016/17). The City has prospects for growth opportunities through global trade and investment in automotive, logistics, tourism, and agricultural sectors (TEDA, 2016/17).

By contrast, the City admits to a slack of internal and external controls within its structures, resulting in changes in pre-existing export strategies and the execution of activities leading to decision-making processes having limited or no impact. As confirmed by TEDA (2016/17), the City's internal control mechanisms and processes indicate inactiveness and lacks refinement for the purpose of assessment to detect inefficiencies. This shortcoming creates further ambiguity in export involvement, leading to lower levels of awareness, participation, and the possible benefits of export programmes.

Figure 2.3 depicts TEDA and the City's institutional arrangements, contributing efficient management with the intention of promoting stakeholder collaboration and partnership, leading to anticipated export involvement outcomes.

2.3 TEDA and City of Tshwane Institutional grouping



Source: TEDA (2013)

Mr Mokgalapa was elected from the Democratic Alliance (DA) in 2019 to provide efficient management representing the City domestically and globally. In February 2020, he was pressured to resign with immediate effect following a series of allegations related to irregularities. Prior to his appointment, the Honourable Solly Msimanga performed the duties of the executive mayor in the City from 2016-2019. He resigned following the tabling of a motion of no confidence by the African National Congress (ANC) in January 2019. Mr Mokgalapa was also replaced and after long court battles with other opposition parties, he was subsequently succeeded by Counsellor Mr Randall Williams (also from the DA).

Despite the aforementioned victories, a large body of evidence suggest significant leadership challenges confronting the City of Tshwane, which result in a drastic influence in SBs export involvement, and implicates the associations between government support interventions, resulting in ambiguity in export involvement processes employed by SBs (De Klerk, 2019; Ntshidi ,2020;

Manyathela, 2019; Evans, 2019; Smit, 2019; SABC News, 2018). For example, Solly Msimanga's administration has been crippled with allegations that undermined anti-fraud and corruption mechanisms and obstructed current and future strategies aimed at minimising ambiguity in export involvement of SBs. In 2019, Msimanga's reputation has been tarnished by the manipulation of the City's Structures Act correlative to the Glad Africa Debacle (Mitchley, 2019, Evans, 2019). Following rigorous investigations, it was found that improper conduct within the supply chain amounted to R317million, while R12 billion was deemed irregular due to internal inconsistencies. The implications were that if the allotment of these financial resources were irregular, all other expenditures linked to Glad Africa Debacle were irregular. All allegations connected to Glad Africa Debacle were denied in 2018 as the City manager (Moeketsi Mosola) claimed that all protocols and policies were followed in the allotment of financial resources (Mudzuli, 2018). In the same breath, Msimanga later laid a series of allegations of criminality against the Mosola linked to the Glad Africa Debacle after a private investigation conducted by an independent committee.

It is important to note that Dr Kgosientsho Ramakgopa, the former mayor of the City, played a key role in reversing the exclusion of SBs by partaking in the formulation and implementation of export programmes (South African government, 2015). This created export opportunities for SBs to diversify their goods and services by placing them into centres of economic production.

On the other hand, Msimanga's administration created export opportunities for SBs operating in automotive, logistics, tourism, and agriculture by investing R2 billion (Moatshe, 2018) to be allocated to new export involvement projects. A further R3.8 billion was invested to create 1 850 new jobs in the City, reducing the overall expenditure from R1.6 billion incurred in the 2015/16 financial year, to R634 million incurred in the 2016/17 financial year (Moatshe, 2018; DTI, 2016/17).

However, Mokgalapa found himself in an inappropriate audio-recorded misconduct debacle involving Sheila Senkubuge. In a 30 minutes audio clip they confer about the upcoming dismissal of some government officials within the City (Mitchley, 2019).

The above are some of the allegations and irregularities driven by fraud and corruption that caused severe harm to the export involvement of SBs, which were viewed as incompetent and unethical. This may provide a complete explanation of inadequacies in designing export programmes targeted at meeting varying needs of SBs at export stages.

Some research advocates a compound association between government support through various export programmes, and its influence on export involvement processes employed by SBs (Wang *et al.*, 2017, Geldres-Weiss and Carrasco-Roa, 2016; Han & Park, 2019). Similar findings were revealed by Nakku *et al.* (2019) and Comi and Resmini (2019) who describe a blurred distinction, resulting in ambiguous growth in export involvement and inconsistent export processes employed.

The above findings are essential for the integration of export involvement processes employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane. In this study, export involvement processes employed by SBs to increase their export commitment outside their own market are being explored. This matter was addressed at DTI in Tshwane, Gauteng region. DTI is the main government body mandated to promote the export involvement of SBs. In collaboration with Provincial Investment Promotion Agencies (PIPAs) DTI fosters international trade and investment in various export markets (Brand South Africa, 2017). For this reason, DTI plays a significant role in soothing export involvement processes for SBs.

Yet, over the years government support (financial and non-financial) has been observed to be blurry and ambiguous, hence inconsistencies in export involvement (Wang *et al.*, 2017, Geldres-Weiss and Carrasco-Roa, 2016; Han & Park, 2019). This finding is yet to be reviewed as a barrier towards achieving intended growth of export involvement.

It was through the creation and implementation of various export programmes since 1994 that the DTI, in collaboration with the City of Tshwane, began to attract significant attention. Export programmes resulted in the hosting of investment projects in the City were designed to attract international investor communities (DTI, 2013). These investment projects were about, among other things, to increase export involvement growth through the provision of information and experiential knowledge to complement owner-managers capabilities. Such projects are also aimed at enhancing industrial capacity through the appropriate analysis of skills to promote marketing and technological innovation functions.

2.8 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we reported on the state of SBs, government agencies and other support institutions aimed to promote the desired outcomes of export involvement at a global level. Export programmes administered by respective government institutions are designed to address pressing challenges confronting SBs when conducting export processes.

Issues such as ambiguity in export involvement and export processes employed by SBs, the complex associations of government support and SBs resulting in a lack of awareness, and participation in the export programmes were discussed.

Based on the above discussion, pressing challenges threaten to limit the extent of export involvement that has contributed to irregularities, fraud, and corrupt activities within respective government institutions.

Due to the high level of export involvement, ambiguity, and inconsistent export processes, it became clear that a review of government support initiatives to assess their influence to increase export involvement may be essential.

Aforesaid concerns call for refined export involvement processes and industry analysis tools supported by export programmes that systematically reflect on real challenges facing SBs with varying competencies and experiences at various stages of export involvement.

The next chapter will focus on various export programmes by investigating their impact on the export involvement of SBs operating in various export markets.

CHAPTER 3: GOVERNMENT SUPPORT AND EXPORT PROGRAMMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The end of apartheid in 1994 was significant in addressing the economic imbalances associated with the poverty and unemployment that resulted from economic discrimination (Mahadea & Kaseeram, 2018, Thurik, Stam & Audretsch, 2013). The creation of politically motivated support programmes followed and were aimed at deepening export involvement and fostering a conducive environment for

black SBs (Preisendoerfer, Bitz & Bezuidenhout, 2014). One of the primary aims of the government of the Republic of South Africa post 1994 was to reverse the economic privation and seclusion of black SBs by promoting the export involvement of SBs to the world (South African of International Affairs [SAIIA] 2017). Since 1994, government support has played a pivotal role in promoting the export involvement of SBs in South Africa. The support has taken the form of financial and non-financial incentives to positively contribute towards management commitment and attitude on exporting benefits and challenges (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19, Haddoud, 2017, Coudounaris, 2018, Han & Park, 2019, Njegic, Komnencic, Damnjanovic, 2020).

This chapter reports on the influence of various export programmes and their quest to contribute to the growth of export involvement by SBs and to minimise their ambiguity by enabling resource orientation support through financial and non-financial support (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19, Haddoud, 2017, Malca *et al.*, 2019).

The chapter concludes by reflecting on the current status quo of SBs operating in South Africa, particularly in the City of Tshwane.

3.2 AN OVERVIEW OF GOVERNMENT EXPORT SUPPORT IN SOUTH AFRICA

The associations between government support and the export involvement of SBs remains ambiguous (Sharma *et al.*, 2016, Haddoud, 2017). In addition, the real influence of government support on growth export involvement among SBs remains ill-defined (Sharma *et al.*, 2016, Haddoud, 2017). This missing link explains the lack of awareness, use, and participation in the export programmes and inconsistencies in export involvement processes (Sharma *et al.*, 2016, Haddoud, 2017, Torres *et al.*, 2015).

Government support in South Africa is perceived as an external agent and a resource boost; therefore, assessing its influence may be essential as previous literature revealed mixed and obscure findings (Coudounaris, 2018, Geldres-Weiss & Carrasco-Roa, 2016). The focus of this study does not aim to assess government support effectiveness, but to gain a better understanding of the pivotal role played by government export programmes in promoting systematic support to SBs.

However, Wang *et al.* (2017) revealed significant inconsistencies in export programmes leading to unknown influence on export involvement.

In South Africa, there are a wide range of export programmes, including financial and non-financial support through trade shows, workshops, seminars, and general meetings to educate ownermanagers about foreign markets dynamics (Torres *et al.*, 2015). This will allow SBs to mitigate risks and minimise costs while achieving consistent growth in export involvement and its processes.

The next sections explore various export programmes initiated by government to enable the accessibility of foreign markets as they are confronted with inconsistent challenges when entering new markets.

3.3 EXPORT PROGRAMMES AND INCENTIVE SCHEMES IN SOUTH AFRICA

Export programmes have increased since 1994, claiming a space in the government's budget (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA). The Government of the Republic of South Africa offers incentives and tax rebates to stimulate export diversity by deepening the export involvement of SBs (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19). Such incentives are embedded in the export programmes and are aimed at restoring export involvement processes and activities by providing adequate programmes associated with such activities (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19).

Government export programmes have received positive commentary, as some perceive them as strategic resources (Catanzaro *et al.*, 2020). However, some argue that export programmes have little or no influence in promoting export involvement, resulting in low levels of use, participation and awareness (DTI, 2018/19, Haddoud, 2017, Coudounaris, 2018). Determinative outcomes of export programmes are inadequately defined due to inconsistent design and timelines. This reduces reliability in addressing varying needs confronting SBs in the uncertain global environment (Njinyah, 2017). Owner-managers have varying viewpoints about the export programmes they need to address real issues (internal and external) based on their experiences and characteristics (Meschi, Ricard & Moore, 2017). For instance, export programmes lack differentiation specificity in terms of what they offer. This appears to be because a blanket approach is used to serve the unique needs of SBs operating in different export markets and industries, making it difficult to monitor the progress of such programmes (Meschi *et al.*, 2017)

Wang *et al.* (2017) revealed a diminishing inclination to use and participate in export programmes due to little or no influence on management characteristics and their export involvement in the export market domain.

DTI (2018/19) suggests the need to customise programme design as the SB moves through various stages of export processes and export involvement.

For instance, export planning processes, market segmentation, market entry, and exporting may be a possible attestation of export involvement influencing the distinction between regular and irregular exporters. The customisation of export programmes will help programme designers and decision makers to narrow down offerings according to the unique needs of the SB (DTI, 2018/19). For instance, customisation can be broken down into two major categories namely: informational and experiential offerings of financial and non-financial support aimed at promoting management competencies and

increased growth in export involvement. Informational knowledge acts as a critical enabler towards achieving superior export involvement as it encompasses export education and training related activities on various export processes (Spyropoulou, Katsikeas, Skarmeas & Morgan, 2017). SBs are confronted with diverse constraints to attaining consistent growth in export involvement, such as a lack of adequate export market knowledge and insufficient resources. They may need to depend on exclusive information to enhance their decision-making processes and to take advantage of export opportunities (Han & Park, 2019, Chang & Webster, 2019). Experiential support is concerned with establishing direct associations with complementary partners such as clients, competitors, and partners (Coudounaris, 2018, Bianchi and Wickramasekera, 2016). The experiential support suggests that further export market information is critical to achieve consistent competency in export involvement (Haddoud *et al.*, 2017).

To explore the influence of various export programmes on the export involvement of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane, the researcher will discuss the following programmes implemented under the supervision of DTI: National Development Plan (NDP), Global Exporter Passport Programme (GEPP), National Exporter Development Programme (NEDP), Black Industrialist Programme (BIP), Export Development Programme (EDP), Export Development Programme (EAP), Automotive Production Development Programme (APDP), Motor Industry Development Programme in 1995 (MIDP), and SAAM.

After the end of apartheid in South Africa in 1994, DTI developed extensive export intentions aimed at promoting export involvement amongst SBs by proposing the creation and implementation of various export programmes (DTI, 2004). DTI played a primary role in advancing the economy through various programmes. As a result, between 1995 and 2013 the South African GDP increased from 17.4 to 24.2%, leading to higher export involvement amongst SBs (Edwards, Flowerday, Rankin, Roberts & Schöer, 2014).

It is crucial to note that other programmes may be developed within the context of export involvement of SBs. However, for the purpose of this study the researcher will focus on the aforementioned programmes. These programmes are closely linked with high export market information, knowledge and export orientation resulting in consistent export involvement in emerging markets (DTI, 2018:19; SEDA, 2018:19; Barnes & Black, 2017; Strydom, 2014; Ndhlovu, 2014).

3.4 NDP

Since its launch in 2012, the NDP has been tasked with abolishing poverty and inequality by 2030. Promoting export involvement of SBs will contribute towards these objectives (DTI, 2018/19, Chilenga, 2017). The NDP was formulated and implemented under the policies of the National Planning

Commission (NPC). Its ultimate goal is to promote the capabilities of SBs, individuals, and communities by significantly limiting economic threats and by encouraging export involvement (DTI, 2018/19). The NDP is perceived as a roadmap for economic transformation within a complex and unpredictable society. It is known as an independent advisory entity for government (DTI, 2018/19). The NDP is detailed in a document articulating its objectives into medium-term plans to be executed by government agencies with the aim of contributing towards economic progress (DTI, 2018/19).

Enhancing export involvement of SBs is embedded in the NDP executive summary document.

3.4.1 NDP and long-term objectives

The three main objectives of the NDP are to eliminate the follow key issues:

- poverty
- inequality
- unemployment

Increasing South African export involvement by diversifying its offerings in various export markets to increase export activities by 6% in 2030 will contribute to these objectives (National Planning Commission [NPC] 2030).

By contrast, Statistics South Africa (STATS South Africa) (2020) has reported inconsistent findings in the NDP implementation process. For instance, the unemployment rate increased by 30.1%, while Burns, Tomita and Lund (2017) revealed a significant gap between poor and middle class, and a shrinking gap between middle and rich has been observed. In 2019, the South African economy decreased by 1.4% (STATS, SA, 2020).

Government structures are held accountable for the implementation of the NDP; however; reports reveal an ambiguous influence on economic development and export involvement, which is contrary to its main objective (DTI, 2018/19). Moreover, government agencies are lacklustre in their commitment to NDP objectives; hence, low levels of government export programmes lead to fluctuating export involvement amongst SBs in the City of Tshwane (DTI, 2018/19, NPC, 2030). It is revealed that some government structures do make mention of the NDP; however, it is not really implemented as intended; as a result, some owner managers cannot relate to the NDP as they are not aware of it and its intentions towards export development (DTI, 2018/19).

There seem to be a disconnect between the objectives set out in the NDP and the government's capacity to deliver such objectives given the lack of skills needed for the successful implementation (Coleman, 2014). Catanzaro *et al.* (2020) suggest that policy makers seem to confuse economic, social, and government issues as all tied to economic development. Such issues are distinctive as they present

varying influences and all need differential mechanisms and strategies to be implemented in order to address them as separate issues (Catanzaro *et al.*, 2020).

With this in mind, the influence of the NDP towards export development of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane remains an obscure phenomenon (Coleman, 2014).

3.5 GEPP

Since its launch in 2013, participation in the GEPP has increased to 2126 (Oliveira, 2017). GEPP was developed jointly with the NEDP under DTI to prepare SBs to become actively involved in the export markets (DTI, 2018/19; Engineering news, 2017). This programme was developed due to the increasing deficit on the balance of payment account in-order to reposition trade. The GEPP was perceived as a real solution to address this shortcoming (Setena, 2019). DTI has created export opportunities to promote networking amongst complementary businesses, including trade shows, business councils, and seminars in global countries such as Iran, India, France, Brazil and China (DTI, 2018/19, Oliveira, 2017). Such events were aimed at equipping SBs with foreign market knowledge to help them interconnect their offerings to varying preferences (South African News [SAN] 2017). Similarly, such events help stimulate the generation of new foreign market knowledge through continuous communication and collaboration with foreign partners (SAN, 2017).

It is also crucial to note that the implementation of GEPP is embedded in the NDP with the aim of increasing export involvement by 6% in 2013 (NPC, 2030).

GEPP is divided into four main categories listed below:

- Introduction to export involvement
- Planning export involvement
- Market entry into export involvement
- Global exporting involvement

The first category entails comprehensive export training, which is concerned with equipping owner managers with industry and market related information in line with the internal and external environment to enhance export readiness in emerging markets (DTI, 2018/19, SAN, 2017). In addition, activities involved in this phase are market entry, growth, and maturity. The aforesaid activities are executed to create an awareness of international currencies, export duties, and other export processes and documentations (DTI, 2018/19, Oliveira, 2017).

The second category is concerned with providing a better understanding of the distinction between the industry and market analysis as they both present a broader impact on the competency of export involvement (DTI, 2018/19). For instance, in both perspectives, DTI provides owner-managers of SBs with industry analysis tools (PFF and PEST model) to detect the latest trends and patterns using the

latest technologies to innovate and to market their offerings globally (DTI, 2018/19, Oliveira, 2017). This is attained by identifying the targeted group of market(s) in order to broaden the horizon, thereby strengthening the export involvement in other markets (DTI, 2018/19). It must be noted that market analysis cannot be viewed as a blanket approach due to the complex and dynamic nature of export markets (Danemo, 2018).

The third category involves market entry with the aim of deepening the involvement using export components such as management characteristics, marketing function, and technological innovation (DTI, 2018/19, Engineering news, 2017). These components cannot work in isolation since they are closely associated with export market patterns and trends that positively influence export involvement.

The last category is global exporting, which is concerned with the analysis of various factors responsible for the success or failure in export involvement processes (DTI, 2018/19, Oliveira, 2017). This category further seeks to identify opportunities and threats that are likely to be significant to enhancing export related decisions in the new consumer market (DTI, 2018/19, Oliveira, 2017). DTI provides owner-managers of SBs with networking opportunities with other stakeholders to discuss challenges and possible solutions to address export constraints identified during the industry and market analysis (DTI, 2018/19, Oliveira, 2017). DTI creates network opportunities to help SBs strengthen their export involvement by developing relational export opportunities with complementary businesses in various markets (DTI, 2018/19, Oliveira, 2017).

3.5.1 The GEPP integrative and driven strategic outcomes

The GEPP activities are implemented in collaboration with the principles articulated in the NDP document in alignment to the NEDP (Swanepoel, 2018, DTI, 2018/19). Strategic outcomes are driven by current GEPP service offerings and growth opportunities in export markets (DTI, 2018/19). The compound competitive space is moderated by GEPP initiatives, leading to various innovation processes aimed at triggering export involvement in existing and emerging export markets (DTI, 2018/19). The GEPP has managed to increase programme awareness, leading to over 2000 participants located in Special Economic Zones (SEZs), such as service and manufacturing industries within the Gauteng region (DTI, 2018/19; Oliveira, 2017). Such an economic cluster is deemed a lucrative strategic plan to increase competition through export involvement by developing management characteristics, marketing function, and technological innovation to stimulate newcomers in emerging markets (DTI, 2018/19).

Despite the growing number of participants under this programme, the level of awareness and use remains low, furthermore, its influence on the export involvement of SBs is deemed a difficult phenomenon to investigate in a short period. SBs are still confronted with export issues deriving from the internal and external environment.

Catanzaro *et al.* (2020) suggest that export programmes ought to be customised to address conflicting problems facing SBs in compound, chaotic, and turbulent consumer markets. This may lead to the questioning of the effectiveness of export programmes in export growth. This may be in contrast with the focus of the study, as this study primarily focuses on export involvement planning processes and government support (export programmes).

3.6 NEDP

The NEDP was developed in 2013 with the aim of addressing issues relative to the inconsistent export involvement of some SBs (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19). This aim is attained by enhancing the export readiness of SBs when entering a new market, by equipping them with advanced knowledge about export processes and implementing procedures (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19). The NEDP forms an integral part of National Export Strategy (NES), which focuses on export progress by creating an enabling environment for business growth (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19). This programme acknowledges a mismatch between the varying needs of SBs, and what the programme has to offer to address such needs (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19). The NEDP achieves this by not employing a blanket approach in the design and implementation of the programme in order to reach a target audience. Various factors preventing owner-managers from reaching their full potential are avoided to promote higher capacity of export involvement. For instance, the gap that exists between the programme start time and manifestation of projected outcomes is significantly minimised because factors threatening the anticipated implementation are identified and clearly defined (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19). The NEDP further admits differences between programme objectives and objectives developed by different SBs, due to variances in export experiences within a compound environment. This is accounted for by a systematic evaluation of global factors that significantly influence export involvement competency (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19).

It is important to note that in its implementation the NEDP acknowledges export policies and strategies outlined in the NDP document, National Industrial Development Framework (NIDF) and South African Trade Policy and Strategy Framework (SATPSF).

3.6.1 The purpose of NEDP

The purpose of the NEDP is to enhance the export diversity of South African value-added goods and services in various global markets. The NEDP target audience are SBs, particularly from unprivileged backgrounds. Further, established SBs operating in export markets have not been overlooked since the inception of the programme.

3.6.2 The vision and mission statement

The NEDP's vision and mission statement have been observed as an essential component of export involvement processes. The NEDP has speculated that their vision and mission statements are deemed as significant instruments to help SBs reduce vulnerability in an uncertain export environment.

The vision and mission statement serve to address the following items:

The vision

- To tailor export programme(s), not only to address the needs of export involvement businesses, but also to consider the needs of markets and industries through a systematic consideration of the heterogenous nature of SBs.

Mission statement

- Increase the number of SBs involved in export activities.
- Foster penetration into current markets and promote accessibility into new emerging export markets.
- Encourage export development by offering efficient strategic resources.
- Promote leadership skills and quality amongst various stakeholders in the supply chains.
- Foster business networks through collaboration and coordination with public and private sectors.
- Ensure the review and assessment of process improvement.

3.6.3 Stages of export development

The NEDP underscores a pivotal role in encouraging a gradual export process instead of sudden progression to minimise uncertainty levels associated with a compound and turbulent export environment.

This is done to encourage management commitment to capitalise on export opportunities that are located outside of business internal environment (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19).

The NEDP developed five stages as part of export involvement process. These stages are discussed below:

- **Stage 1: Domestic enterprise**

The NEDP seeks to boost management commitment, attitudes, and perceptions to positively influence their export involvement. For instance, the financial and non-financial support assists managers to match their internal capabilities with global standards by offering informational and experiential assistance helping them minimise export constraints. Blending informational and experiential knowledge cultivates corporate innovativeness and increases foreign investor participation in export activities developed by the SB (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19).

- **Stage 2: Export awareness**

Global standards in various export markets in which SBs function, demands intensive skills to promote incremental quality modernization to account for differentials in preferences, due to variance in consumer markets (DTI, 2018/19). SBs identified in the programme in this phase are significantly committed to export activities but somehow lack appropriate skills to attain a lucrative strategic positioning.

- **Stage 3: Export readiness**

In this stage, owner managers prepare critical components of export involvement; namely, management characteristics, marketing function and technological innovation. These components are intertwined in the complexity of export markets as they significantly trigger tensions on how to balance internal and external environment (DTI, 2018/19, SEDA, 2018/19). NEDP informational and experiential assistance and services are used to bridge that gap.

- **Stage 4: Export development and growth**

Export-led growth is rooted in extensive experience of export processes and practices stemming from managerial commitment and knowledge in reconciling internal and external environments. Export development depends on the interconnectedness between an SB's export marketing plans and proposed ways of attaining such plans to determine the growth of export involvement. From a marketing perspective, NEDP empowers owner managers with skills and knowledge relative to quality policy, distribution policy, and communication policy.

- **Stage 5: Global exporting**

In this stage, both new entrants and existing SBs formulate new strategies to increase their presence in a chosen market that determines the capacity of export involvement. This stage decides whether the business is growing or shrinking.

3.6.4 Attained determinative outcomes

Amongst many achievements, NEDP designed a business model to define the value proposition linking various stakeholders involved in driving the execution of the programme. The execution of NEDP is carried out on existing programmes and incentive plans articulated in the NDP document.

The NEDP, through GEPP, created 729 international trade leads to increase export sales and the involvement of SBs in various export markets (DTI, 2018/19).

3.7 BIP

The BIP was launched in 2016 under IDC with the supervision of the DTI to promote the manufacturing capacity of black business owners to tap into export supply chains providing global distributors with South African produced goods. The BIP chiefly targets owner managers with abundant knowledge, skills, and experience in their respective areas of proficiency (Industrial Development Corporation [IDC] 2014). The BIP, in collaboration with the DTI, has sought to inculcate self-reliance amongst small Black SBs through a range of well-defined and systematized financial and non-financial initiatives. BIP prioritizes SBs operating within manufacturing sectors and value creation sectors, with reference to the Industrial Policy Action Plan (IPAP).

The aim of the BIP initiative is to promote the growth of SBs by adding financial and non-financial dimensions so they can manufacture goods to service export markets.

BIP admits that growth on a large scale as a determinative outcome may bring some adverse dynamics in both internal and external environments. The continued support via informational and experiential interventions suggests that industrial growth is subject to management's capacity to carry out marketing functions and technological innovations. The BIP acknowledges Black excellence within various manufacturing sectors; however, such excellence is closely related to management capability and practices that are deemed unclear. Black business excellence in the context of BIP covers export processes and practices aimed at increasing the export involvement of SBs in diverse export markets. SBs are empowered with information and experiential capacity to promote consistent growth of export involvement by enabling SBs to channel their resources to exploit market opportunities.

BIP is not concerned with the exclusion of SBs; however, its principal mandate is to enhance owner manager's competencies and capabilities through a wide range of financial and non-financial incentive schemes offered in the programme.

It achieves this by consolidating the dynamism and uniqueness of participating SBs, ensuring that a manufacturing foundation consistent with global standards is created and sustained.

In contrast to the above, it would appear that accessing BIP services poses significant challenges for

SBs. For instance, it is regarded as an external resource in a far as financial and non-financial support is concerned. However, their lending rates are observed to be higher than that of commercial banks, influencing the decline of export involvement in consumer markets (Bosiu *et al.*, 2019). While Bosiu *et al.* (2019) reveal that higher lending rates are due to three reasons: Firstly, IDC is not subsidised by any government body. Secondly, IDC does not require deposits from its clients, in this case SBs. Lastly, IDC works closely with commercial banks. While Goga, Bosiu, and Bell (2019) postulated that IDC precedence correlative to funding procedures are deemed ambiguous. Finance application procedures were observed to be significantly lengthy, leading to loss of business opportunities for some SBs. Such shortcoming constitutes a funding gap due to process issues encountered during the application (Bosiu *et al.*, 2019; Goga *et al.*, 2019). The financial support provided by IDC has created a gap between upstream and downstream as they often supply financial aid to SBs operating within manufacturing industries. For instance, financial aid provided to upstream manufacturing SBs has little or no influence on the growth and development of downstream operating SBs (Goga *et al.*, 2019). Downstream operating SBs are concerned with shaping the needs of consumer preferences in order to deliver the value that is needed (Gambardella, Hippel, 2020). Upstream SBs, on the other hand, refer to sourcing of material to produce a product or service (Alkhatib, 2017). Upstream involves activities such as innovation and distribution of products and services to clients (Alkhatib, 2017).

The findings of Goga *et al.* (2019) reveal that IDC often provides financial assistance to large organisations, which is not in line with the IDC vision, mission, and values. As a result, the total number of approvals declined between 2002 and 2017 (Goga *et al.*, 2019). The findings further reveal that in 2002 approved projects amounted to 516 while in 2017 only 177 projects were approved. This finding indicates shortcomings that exist within IDC structures that are not effectively addressed to increase the volume of SBs receiving financial assistance.

Higher interest rates embedded in loans seem to limit innovative activities among SBs, resulting in failure to formulate and implement innovative strategies that support a higher capacity of export involvement and export processes (Mwela, 2019, Goga *et al.*, 2019). In addition, prices on loans are deemed significantly competitive when compared with commercial banks (Goga *et al.*, 2019, Mwela, 2019).

The complexity of the application processes makes it harder for SBs to access financial facilities on time (Goga *et al.*, 2019). This shortcoming has a negative and lasting effect on SBs when undertaking productive activities with the aim of contributing to the economic progress (Goga *et al.*, 2019).

The BIP initiative recognises various factors that restrict SBs from reaching their full potential, including resource-oriented constraints. Some SB challenges originate from the external environment presenting opportunities and threats in its internal environment. For instance, BIP has developed responses to

enhance the strategic positioning of business aligning its strategies with environmental dynamics. This is attained by addressing the following areas:

- Extensively support export involvement activities providing access to export markets.
- Providing various funding interventions for the intention of setting up manufacturing facilities.
- Professional development through various mentorship interventions with the significance of export involvement.
- Establishing networking portal for synergistic purposes with other complementary businesses.
- Providing support in evaluating the performance of joint ventures.
- Supporting pilot studies to prevent waste through the execution of research activities.

The above support mechanisms seek to achieve the following:

- To increase the participation of SBs in export markets.
- To increase the awareness and industrial connection among SBs to trigger knowledge intensive exchange.
- To enhance competitiveness of SBs by promoting marketing function and technological innovation.
- To use black industrialists as a process of economic progress and transformation through employment creation.

3.7.1 Vision, mission and values

Vision

- To foster industrial development through innovation within South Africa and the entire African continent.

Mission

- To provide balanced financial services that add value to economic development and transformation in Africa. IDC attains this by establishing competitive manufacturing sectors and by promoting the growth of existing sectors. It provides financial support to businesses with sound organisational practices and principles.

Values

The execution of financial services is based on the following fundamental values:

- Enthusiasm

- Collaborations
- Professionalism
-

3.7.2 IDC and Ethics

Fraud and corruption issues in IDC have affected good corporate governance, resulting in criminal charges being laid against IDC employees (Maake, 2016). As indicated by the IDC spokesperson (Mandla Mpangase), 21 employees were investigated for theft, corruption, or fraudulent activities since 2009 (Maake, 2016). This incident led to the dismissal of 12 employees, while four faced criminal charges and five were found not guilty (Maake, 2016).

Such occurrences have led to the formation of various mechanisms aiming to minimise fraud and corruption. For example, IDC has conducted various corporate and social programmes to discourage fraud and corrupt activities, including the formation of the fraud awareness and training programme in 2015 and various road shows within the corporation to increase awareness.

The principal objective of the IDC is to create balanced and sustainable economic progress in South Africa through the effective provision of financial and non-financial support. This objective calls for high ethical standards that will enable employee conduct to interconnect with the overarching values, mission, and values of IDC.

There has often been a disconnectedness between ethical principles and their application during ongoing activities. This is due to various factors influencing acceptable ethical behaviour. To address irregularities and inconsistencies, the IDC has constructed ethical guidelines for business conduct to ensure that regulatory responsibilities are accounted for. In addition, various mechanism such as fraud, corruption training and workshops, which seek to promote high ethical values throughout the organisation, have been introduced.

Any misalignments in ethical practice raises critical ethical concerns that may have a long-lasting effect on the choices associated with export involvement processes. This is why the study considers export involvement processes employed by SBs and the influence of government support export programmes in the selection process.

The next section, which forms part of the analysis of the associations between export involvement processes and the influence of government support in such choices thereof, will discuss the EDP.

3.8 EDP

The EDP was established by SEDA in collaboration with DTI, with the aim of addressing distinct needs and constraints confronting owner-managers in their respective industries and export markets. This is attained by promoting export readiness that aligns management commitment and attitude towards

marketing and technological innovation. EDP offers informational and experiential services in the form of financial and non-financial support aimed at enhancing export competency. The aforesaid services encompass export training, workshops and networking opportunities constructed as additional support services to existing initiatives offered by the DTI and SEDA to assist SBs achieve long-term growth in export involvement. This programme places much emphasis on informal experiential training rather than on formal rigid content, which may consequently influence ownermanager perceptual differences on training usefulness. Furthermore, hands-on activities are executed during training and workshops to help owner-manager put the information they received into practice instead of merely memorizing it.

Export development programmes assist SBs to collect appropriate export information relative to market and industry dynamics, export involvement process, and possible overseas partners in order to penetrate into diverse export markets. The EDP achieves this by focusing on the following key areas:

- Product development processes and efforts.
- Productivity improvement by developing needs and analysis.
- Quality development to potentially develop ways in which cost of product development can be minimised.
- Improving marketing function and technological innovations.
- Access to financial and non-financial support.

Qualification criteria for programme entry:

- The owner-manager should have extensive export experience to enhance export decision-making.
- The owner-manager should establish a market position to ensure competitive positioning.
- The owner-manager should develop risk management capabilities to assess threats and opportunities.

3.8.1 Awareness and challenges in accessing the EDP

A study carried out by Maluleke (2014) revealed poor accessibility and implementation of programme(s) established and organised by SEDA, coupled by a lack of programme evaluation for process improvement. Maluleke (2014) further revealed the following shortcomings:

- Accessibility to programmes remains obscure.
- Low levels of awareness, use, and participation influences perceptions about the programme.
- Inadequate communication within internal structures.
- Lack of synergies and coordination within SEDA structures.

- Poor quality of trainers not suited to addressing varying needs of SBs.

The above challenges seem to suggest that SBs export constraints derive from external environment as noted by (SEDA, 2018/19). For example, government support agencies are unable to reach the intended audience due to inadequacies in separating organisational and managerial needs to ascertain replication of observed key factors that influence an increase or decline in export involvement. Such shortcoming seems to suggest that the meaningfulness of the programme(s) designed by SEDA present differences in the roles they play, considering differences in the export determinative outcome of each SB's export involvement. For instance, some SB's exports are more ambiguous than others as they all range from regular to irregular.

The aforementioned challenges facing SEDA may help to explain the increase or decline in export involvement as an external and strategic resource of SBs operating in export markets to provide information and experiential foreign knowledge to help SBs raise their involvement in foreign markets.

With this mind, it can be noted that the EDP is critically important for carrying out the appropriate analysis of the compound external environment and providing substantial insights of both informational and experiential support. Informational support in this context is concerned with providing SBs with relevant foreign information to increase export involvement. Experiential refers to the opportunity to attend workshops, seminars, and other export events, while networking and building business contacts in various markets to raise the levels of export involvement and experience.

Different SBs experience different resource constraints. For those SBs with little resources, export programmes are critically important to overcome other constraints associated with complexity and uncertainties in the external environment. This is attained by providing relational resources to boost value creation and innovation that will help owner-managers accelerate their export involvement.

We shall now discuss the integration of MIDP and APDP into SAAM. This forms part of the analysis to determine its influence on the export involvement of SBs.

3.9 THE INTEGRATION OF MIDP AND APDP INTO THE SAAM

The MIDP took effect in 1995, while APDP was established in 2013 by the DTI to increase the export involvement in South African units (vehicles) through uninterrupted production. The MIDP ended in 2013, and was replaced. APDP will be replaced by the SAAM at the end of 2020. The SAAM was established by the DTI, and is projected to run from 2020 to 2035. The SAAM aims to provide a roadmap for the industry and SBs, given the challenges and increased global competitiveness that drives uncertainties in the export market.

As industry evolves at different levels of speed, scales, and cycles, MIDP was designed to explore techniques that benefit of the industry, and to highlight the export involvement of SBs into various foreign markets (Strydom, 2014, Bronkhorst, Steyn & Stiglingh, 2013, Lamprecht & Tolmay, 2017). Its overarching aim is to enhance industry processes, thereby enabling ease of access to export markets by overcoming various challenges that SBs face. For instance, major industry partners and key stakeholders bring about normality in the industry by adhering to government and DTI policies; however, there some unclear policies and industry processes leading to a reduction of industry attractiveness (Khati, 2018). This leads to the realisation of a close connection between industry attractiveness and owner-manager's competencies and capabilities in determining the capability of export involvement (Barnes & Black, 2017). It is also evident that internal inconsistencies affect an SB's level of export involvement and how it addresses environmental dynamics and uncertainties (Barnes & Black, 2017). The MIDP aims to close such gaps by grouping all factors considered significant in assessing and reviewing MIDP objectives and observing tools to be used in assessing such factors (Barnes & Black, 2017).

3.9.1 MIDP objectives

MIDP objectives were formulated as follows:

- To attain an incremental decrease in import duties of both units (vehicles) and component parts.
- To reconcile duty rebates on units and component parts in order to boost the export involvement.
- To enable local production with the purpose of increasing the industry attractiveness.
- To minimise local content regulations and prerequisite.

When the MIDP came to an end in 2012, it did not really achieve its objectives and had little or no influence on the export involvement of SBs.

As a result, it was replaced by APDP in 2013, to be also replaced by the SAAM in 2020 (Barnes & Black, 2017; Strydom, 2014; Badenhorst-Weiss & Tolmay, 2016). The evaluation done by (Global Alliance of SMEs [GASME] 2004-2016) discovered notable contributions by MIDP, and persisting constraints since its inception in 1995. This negatively influenced the growth of export involvement amongst SBs. This evaluation further explored that the export involvement of SBs in foreign markets contracted due to a number of external constraints, including poor infrastructure and logistical inadequacies (GASME, 2004-2016). In addition, the MIDP was compelled to function alongside major industry players, while expected to be in alignment with World Trade Organisation's (WTO) policies (GASME, 2004-2016).

Due to the above, the impact of MIDP on the export involvement progress of SBs is not extensively known or clearly defined. This finding may possibly explain variations and inconsistencies in export involvement contributing to low levels of awareness of government support programmes.

3.10 APDP

The formation of APDP in 2013 aimed to explain the interconnectedness between perceptual differences amongst all supply chain partners and the outcome determinative articulated in the MIDP (Strydom, 2014). APDP is designed on the basis of promoting export involvement perspectives so that they are synthesised in ways that addresses complexity and dynamics in export markets and industries (Barnes & Black, 2017). It was noted that the formulation of its policy instruments was deemed to have a negative influence on the current status quo of industry exports and the future of SBs manufacturing and supplying component parts in various export markets (Barnes & Black, 2017). As a result, key industry players were not completely clear about the APDP policies and how it would influence growth opportunities in the industry (Strydom, 2014). For instance, Strydom (2014) revealed shortcomings anticipated to be addressed by APDP. These shortcomings are listed below:

- Complexity and uncertainties when synchronising the supply chain management of the industry.
- Reduced levels of local contents resulting in low export involvement.
- Interrupted levels of production resulting in failure to attain scale efficiencies.
- The development of investments in the industry are ambiguous.
- Increasing problems relative to adhering to World Trade Organisational (WTO) policies.

The APDP aims to intensify its efforts to resolve the aforesaid shortcomings, which it inherited from the MIDP (Kaggwa & Steyn, 2015). This is achieved by employing a systematic approach chiefly focused on the root cause of challenges (negative or positive) and the interconnectedness of various factors contributing to the increase or decline of export involvement (Kaggwa and Steyn, 2015).

For instance, findings by Kaggwa and Steyn (2015) revealed that MIDP failed to effectively detect external causes of failure in their industry analysis to determine the influential significance of each failure (Barnes & Black, 2017). Similarly, MIDP has taken into considerations industry problems, ranking from internal and external forces and how these influence performance.

The industry is currently confronted with unprecedented inconsistencies influencing the operation of APDP and the implementation of the masterplan due to COVID 19 (Business day, 2020). Production volume has been grievously affected, resulting in an ambiguous relationship between government, key industry players, and other partners in the value and supply chains (Business day, 2020).

The National Association of Automotive Manufactures of South Africa (NAAMSA) revealed a 65% contraction in sales, accompanied by a drop of almost 100% in April 2020, severely affecting the export involvement of SBs (Business Tech, 2020).

NAAMSA has requested President Ramaphosa to postpone the implementation of the Masterplan by no later than six months in order to develop future plans that may protect the industry and SBs against threats. This was done so that they may exploit opportunities resulting from uncertainties deriving from the pandemic (Business day, 2020).

3.10.1 APDP strategic objectives

Strategic objectives formulated by APDP helped to explain industry performance and their influence on export involvement of SBs. The objectives are formulated as follows:

- Achieve 1.2 million production output by 2020.
- Enhancing industry attractiveness and competitiveness in the export markets.
- Maintaining incremental growth of export involvement amongst SBs.
- Promoting scale efficiencies at lower production costs.
- Encouraging the inflow of capital investment in South African economy.

Given the current economic status in the South African economy, it is unclear whether APDP managed to deliver its expectation.

There are notable perceptual differentials from various stakeholders concerning MIDP and APDP. For instance, a study done by Markowitz (2016) revealed that MIDP did not fully manage an analysis of environmental issues, which indicates opportunities and threats affecting the organisation to thrive. On the other hand, both MIDP and APDP failed to protect local component parts suppliers by promoting subsidies on imported parts (Markowitz, 2016). These shortcomings have led to a closure of some SBs; however, government has invested efforts to redress systematic and innovative measures to accelerate the export involvement growth of SBs (Markowitz, 2016).

The South African government recognises the competitiveness of SBs in an interconnected export marketplace. It has responded by encouraging transparency in the development of MIDP and APDP, resulting in an increased interconnectedness between SBs, government, and critical stakeholders involved in the value and supply chains (Markowitz, 2016). Barnes and Black (2017) discovered that policies incorporated in the design of MIDP reflect commonalities matching distinct interdependencies. These describe export involvement echoed in the APDP, as articulated by the DTI (Bronkhorst, Steyn & Stiglingh, 2013). The MIDP and APDP were used to effect a positive influence on investor confidence, due to expectations that were incrementally met over time despite the adverse industry and market uncertainties (Bronkhorst *et al.*, 2013).

APDP is an extension of MIDP used to identify critical factors that will help government design a central programme to adapt easily to changing environmental needs (Bronkhorst *et al.*, 2013). This central programme is developed to marshal and instil order in individual objectives articulated in the MIDP and APDP (Bronkhorst *et al.*, 2013). This is expressed in SAAM, which will be discussed in the succeeding section.

3.11 THE SAAM

Based on the inconsistent outcomes deriving from MIDP and APDP, a comprehensive plan comprising of various stakeholder perceptions was suggested to provide a roadmap for the growth of automotive value and supply chains from 2020 to 2035 (Deonarain, 2019, Barnes, Black, Comrie & Hartogh, 2018). SAAM was issued in 2020 as an attempt to encourage localisation through automotive value chains, despite conflicting industry and market forces confronting SBs (Kaplan, 2019). Strategic objectives are established in the plan to strengthen capabilities and core competencies of small local SBs, placing the significance of quality improvement in production, using latest technologies (Bronkhorst *et al.*, 2013). The plan seeks to promote industry growth by developing new opportunities deriving from possible accurate forecasts to increase the probabilities of meeting the conflicting needs of various stakeholders involved in the value and supply chains (Barnes *et al.*, 2018). Additionally, SAAM included several interventions, such as training and skills development to enhance the performance of the automotive industry (Bronkhorst *et al.*, 2013).

SAAM provides recommendations and guidelines to create a sustainable competitive advantage for the industry in order to meet the conflicting needs of stakeholders (Barnes *et al.*, 2018). SAAM achieved this by developing effective training needs for owner-managers to promote higher export involvement in export markets.

The SAAM acknowledges conflicting competitive challenges confronting the industry that negatively influences export involvement of SBs, causing variations when executing exporting activities (Barnes *et al.*, 2018).

Scale efficiencies are somewhat accomplished due to latest technologies, but there are still value creation challenges from the perspective of meeting global quality standards (Bronkhorst *et al.*, 2013). Value chain problems have been noted by SAAM to add significant costs to exhibit export activities with suppliers and customers, which consequently influence the growth of SBs (Bronkhorst *et al.*, 2013). In addition, quality issues negatively affect stakeholder relationships and the ability to respond to consumer preferences (Kaplan, 2019, Automotive Business Review, 2020). SAAM further acknowledges a close interconnection between supply chains and quality, as poor quality poses a critical threat to supply chain effectiveness (Kaplan, 2019)

SAAM maintains that though there may be industry shortcomings in the value and supply chains, there are also potential industry opportunities that stimulate innovation through collaborative efforts and evolving industry trends that encourage the effectiveness of supply chains (Reboredo, 2020, Jooste, 2019). For instance, government initiatives (financial and non-financial), including export programmes, are chiefly designed to increase industry attractiveness in the face of varying challenges confronting SBs (Reboredo, 2020). Such challenges include cost inconsistencies, which ultimately influence owner-managers' abilities to take advantage of export opportunities, thus causing further influences on the choice of export processes (Barnes & Black, 2017; Ritchie, 2019). SAAM helps SBs understand the impact of such inconsistencies on export involvement growth, as well as appropriate actions needed to lessen such inconsistencies (Barnes *et al.*, 2018). SAAM also admits that the skills gap continues to persist, making it difficult to update some SBs with technological innovations, commercial inconsistencies, and regulatory dynamics (Barnes *et al.*, 2018, Jooste, 2019). To close this gap, SAAM has established various programmes to match changes in the latest technologies, while providing directions for training initiatives in alignment with industry and market dynamics (Festival of Motoring, 2020). These training interventions may address some industry shortcomings as they are constructed to effectively deal with market uncertainties, which may enhance SBs outlook in export involvement.

SAAM has identified six critical pillars to support industry development and promote export involvement of SBs in the City of Tshwane. These are listed in the Table 3.1.

Table 3.1: SAAM Six Pillars

Pillar	Government agency	Key activities employed
Market expansion	DTI, National Treasury, DED	Targeting specific markets using effective allocation of available resources
Market evolution	DTI, SACU, SADC, Trade and Industry of other countries, ASCCI	Focus on mass production and efficiency
Stimulating localisation	DTI, DED, IDC and ASCCI	Adapting offering to local consumers
Automotive infrastructure	DTI, Transnet, SANRAL and local municipalities	Focusing on building new systems
Industry transformation	DTI, DED, IDC and ASCCI	Introducing new industry processes

Matching technology and skills development	DTI, DSI, Department of labor, Department of Education and ASCCI	Developing new training needs
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Source: Barnes *et al.*(2017)

As indicated in Table 3.1, given market uncertainties, each pillar is endorsed by a government agency to assist SBs to adapt and respond to increased environmental variability until 2035 (Barnes & Black, 2017). The execution of each pillar is determined by an assigned government development agency mandated to provide core services (financial and non-financial) to SBs. Industry growth and competitiveness are significantly determined by the way in which these pillars are implemented, and is consistent with SAAM's vision. SAAM will be closely assessed and monitored over time by a government agency allocated to its pillar to identify changes and trends.

3.11.1 The SAAM vision and relational components

- Increasing optimal global quality standards to promote industry competitiveness that contributes to economic development.

Components

- Evolving global competitiveness.

Growth in the automotive industry in the South African economy is expected to raise the levels of export involvement by 2035. This is largely due to differentiated component parts produced by the latest technologies to attain scale efficiencies. SAAM observed the multi-layered nature of global competitiveness by zooming in on the fit between the industry and the compound global environment in which it functions. In addition, it further acknowledges that global competitiveness is located at various levels of the industry, for instance at the micro and macro levels.

- Economic transformation

This aspect involves government policies that influence industrial development negatively or positively to promote structural change that will facilitate innovation capacity and the capabilities of owner managers. This calls for the industry to embrace a vision of global competitiveness in order to serve dynamic preferences in the export markets.

- Stakeholder success

Sustainable prosperity of stakeholders is determined by industry performance. SAAM encourages standardised industry practices that are stakeholder-oriented in order to achieve projected stakeholder wealth by embarking on proactive activities, as opposed to reactive activities, which recognises a reaction to issues. Meeting stakeholder conflicting expectations is central to SAAM as it facilitates the long-term survivability and sustainability of SBs and the automotive industry.

- Sustainability

Industry sustainability is significantly dependent on policies and strategies employed in the industry, which adds value to its global competitiveness. Sustainability suggests the effective and efficient balance between the internal and external environment within the process of manufacturing goods and services.

SAAM's objectives aim to address the following amongst others:

- To increase the local production of vehicles to 1% global output expected to reach 140000 units annually by 2035.
- To promote South African local content to 60%.
- To increase employment opportunities with the automotive value chain.
- To increase growth of competitiveness of the automotive industry to global standards.
- Evolution and transformation throughout the value chain to attain level 4 BEE Status from 2021.
- Increase value creation and addition throughout the value and supply chain.

For the purpose of this study, the focus is on the vision and mission statement, as they provide perceptions and conclusions about the status quo and the future of the industry in as far as the export involvement of SBs. This vision and mission statement are consistent with NEDP and GEPP which focuses on export involvement progress by creating an enabling environment for export industries to foster business growth.

3.12 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, we reported on the current status quo of government export support in South Africa, various export programmes, and their missions, goals, and objectives in providing efficient support to SBs in their pursuit of export involvement.

Critiques of programmes that increase export involvement ambiguity, leading to poor credibility due to lower levels of awareness, use, and participation was noted. Some studies (Purwanto *et al.*, 2018; Coudounaris, 2017; Torres *et al.*, 2015) reveal that government support programmes have little or no influence in promoting export involvement, while others (Njinyah, 2017; Rosenbaum, 2019) reveal that programmes enhance management characteristics and capabilities to increase export involvement.

Such inconsistent findings compel a need for export involvement processes that will promote unambiguous export involvement. It is therefore essential to examine and gain a better understanding of export involvement processes employed by SBs.

The following section will discuss export involvement processes in the context of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane.

CHAPTER 4: THE EXPORT INVOLVEMENT PROCESSES OF SBs IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter aims to provide a theoretical background to export involvement processes employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane using existing literature related to this study. The chapter begins with a brief discussion on contemporary export involvement processes, namely: sequential (gradual or incremental) and dynamic (vigorous or compelling) processes (Stouraitis *et al.*, 2016; Coudounaris, 2018; Akbar, Balboni, Bortoluzzi, Dikova & Tracogna, 2018; Tan, Brewer & Liesch, 2018). The aforementioned export involvement processes form part of Diagram 3.1 and will be further discussed further in the current chapter. An in-depth discourse and contradicting views will be presented, and the current research will be evaluated. Considering the principal focus of the study, the current chapter will also focus on export involvement processes in the reflection of managerial characteristics, marketing function, technological innovation, and the influence of government support thereof.

4.2 EXPORT INVOLVEMENT PROCESSES

Export involvement, as studied by Yan *et al.* (2018), is determined by internal and external constraints as these constantly influence the progress of a business throughout the stages of involvement (regular and irregular stages). To some extent, this description suggests that export involvement components, management characteristics, and government, act as enablers towards export involvement progress (Figuroa, Osuna & Reynoso, 2014, Lecerf & Omrani, 2017, Fernando, Fitrianingrum & Richardson, 2017, Kahiya & Dean, 2015). While Haddoud *et al.* (2020) describe export involvement as a means of matching an SB's internal capabilities with the external environmental dynamics in order to achieve export involvement progress.

Imran *et al.* (2017) and Gil-Barragan and Palacios-Chacon (2018) identify two major determinants of export involvement as follows:

- **Internal forces**

Internal forces potentially influence the ability of the SB to carry out export involvement activities in foreign markets, as it encompasses everything that is within the control of a business (Pagano & Castellani, 2016). Rua, Franca and Ortiz (2017) suggest that internal forces refer to factors within the SB that determine its ability to achieve export involvement growth in diverse export markets. This aspect was also emphasized by Ipinnaiye, Dineen and Lenihan (2017) and Yli-Viitala, Arrasvuori and Wathen (2019), who discovered that management characteristics, marketing function, and technological innovation are critical aspects closely associated with the advancement in export involvement.

This study will mainly focus on management characteristics, marketing function, and technological innovation as a prerequisite towards achieving unambiguous export involvement in foreign markets.

- **External forces**

External forces are defined as factors that the business cannot control; however, such factors have an influence on export development (Ipinnaiye *et al.*, 2017). External forces, as studied by Holtgrave and Onay (2017), include uncertainties in export markets and industries, regulatory environments, and in government support (Ipinnaiye *et al.*, 2017). Changes in one of these factors may positively or negatively influence the export involvement of SBs at any stage (regular or irregular) (Kraus, Mitter, Eggers & Stieg, 2016). Machado and Bischoff (2018) suggest that external forces may threaten export involvement growth in the absence of government support, since government support is an enabler of foreign information and experiential services. While Rosenbaum (2019) and Quaye, Sekyere and Acheampong (2017) argue that the manner of responses may vary between SBs due to diverse export involvement challenges stemming from foreign markets. Gil-Barragan and Palacios-Chacon (2018) maintain that if SBs understand their weaknesses and potential threats they may be able to exploit opportunities associated with a progressive export involvement even in the absence of government support.

Gil-Barragan and Palacios-Chacon (2018) seek to merge proactive export involvement processes with matters pertaining to export market and industry volatility and other unpredicted developments in the regulatory environment that may present threats and opportunities for SBs linked with export involvement activities. In this instance, the following are known as export involvement drivers and are critical to note in this regard.

- **Motives for export involvement**

Export involvement motives are central to internal and external forces and their effect may vary between SBs serving different export markets (Alrashidi, 2013). For instance, Bowen (2019) discovered that a SB planning to increase its export involvement might need to acquire appropriate foreign information and experience for insights and critical knowledge to enhance their export involvement processes. Inappropriate motives may result in export involvement ambiguity and the business may fail to achieve its intended involvement in foreign markets, thus motives ought to be continuously monitored and reviewed to attain export involvement consistency (Alrashidi, 2013). This may assist a SB to evaluate its potential weaknesses and threats to improve its opportunities and strengths (Anil, Shoham & Pfajfar, 2016).

Management characteristics, export involvement components, and the presence of government support are closely related to export growth (Anil *et al.*, 2016).

- **The role of management characteristics**

Managerial characteristics explain export related decisions based on experiences, background, commitment and perceptions towards export activities (Alrashidi, 2016). Alrashidi (2016) argues that managerial characteristics incorporate personality, behaviour, commitment, and attitude that reflect the magnitude of manager's tolerance towards export risks to explain imbalances in export involvement. Managerial characteristics are often used to predict export involvement growth to explain the constructs of variances deriving from complex internal and external environments (Giovannini, 2017). An increase, decline, and re-increase of export involvement are closely associated with distinctive changes implemented by managers deriving from managerial characteristics Giovannini (2017).

- **Innovativeness of export involvement**

Export innovativeness refers to the accumulation of foreign market knowledge gained over time that is transferrable into export ongoing activities through a systematic interplay of internal and external environment to deepen the involvement of export (Lejpras, 2018, Makri, Theodosiou & Katsikea, 2016). Innovativeness in export involvement is an incremental learning pattern promoting the incorporation of foreign market knowledge appropriate to respond to industry and market dynamics (Jin & Cho, 2018). Innovativeness of export involvement goes to the heart of managerial characteristics (internal environment) and much less to the external environment (Jin & Cho, 2018; Lejpras *et al.*, 2016). An innovative perspective supports the circulation of new information that is not necessarily correlative to distinctive innovation, but rather reflects managerial characteristics and its ability to deliver projected development in export involvement in a repetitive basis (Jin & Cho, 2018). This can be attained by assessing the interconnectedness between various elements (internal and external) that threatens export involvement growth in the complex global market (Faroque, Morrish & Ferdous, 2016).

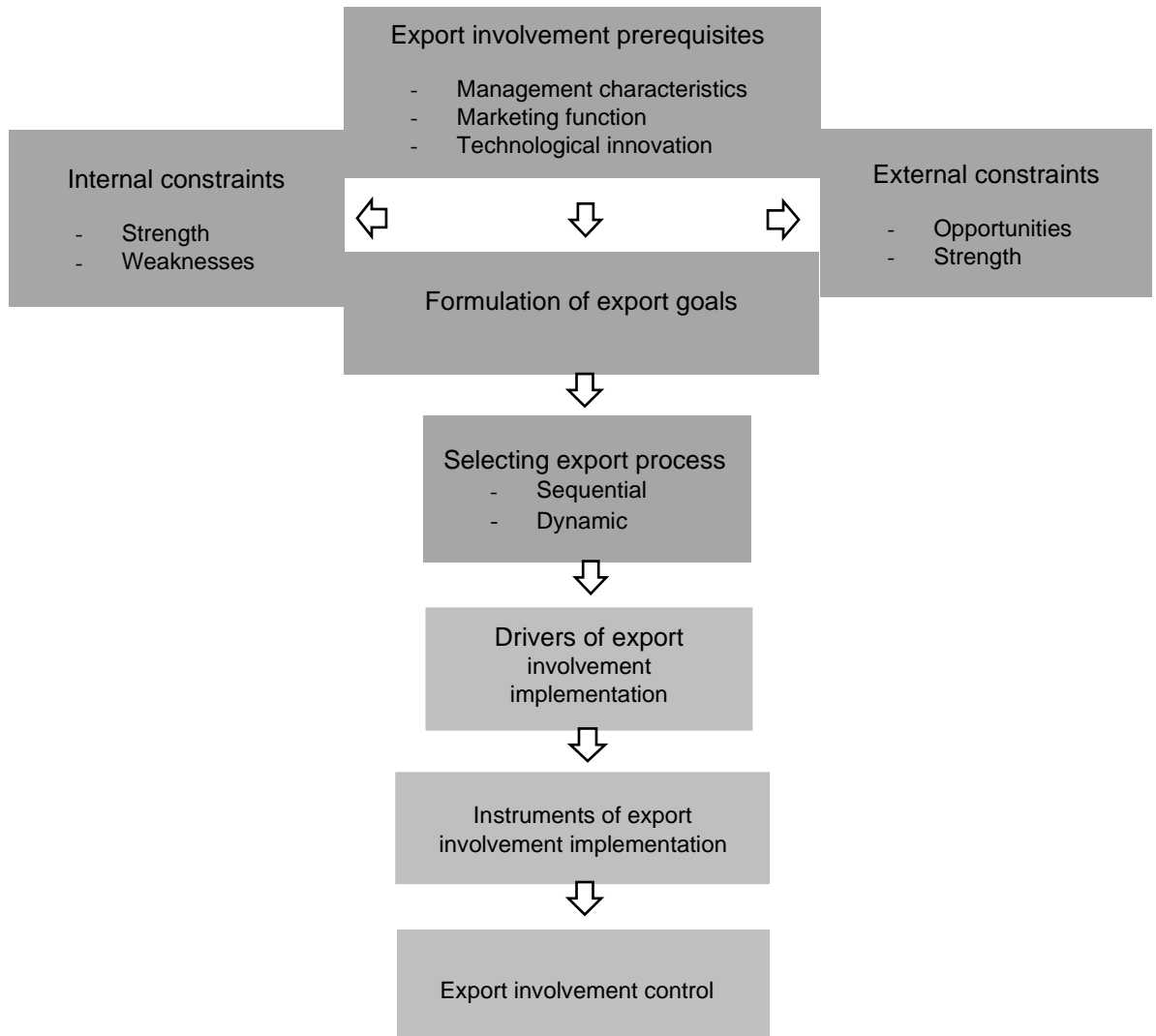
4.2.1 Dynamic export involvement process

Complexity and uncertainty are central to the dynamic export process, making the analysis of forces and events influencing export decisions more complex (Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017; Pellegrino & McNaughton, 2017). A dynamic perspective is deemed non-linear as it determines the technological future of the SB, closely linked to a targeted increase in export involvement (Stouraitis *et al.*, 2016; Coudounaris, 2018).

A dynamic process provides strategic direction to attain technological competence through a consistent alignment of managerial characteristics with the external environment (Stouraitis *et al.*, 2016; Coudounaris, 2018). It further elaborates on the importance of export involvement components to attain acceptable magnitudes of export involvement (Stoian, Dimitratos & Plakoyiannaki, 2018). In some of the literature different views were presented. Pellegrino and McNaughton (2017) and Hsieh *et al.* (2019) suggest that dynamic exporting SBs often do so at a high speed and often fail to afford sufficient time to acquire foreign market knowledge and experiences.

The current section serves to address differing components relative to export involvement processes to be used as a choice of entry into existing or emerging market(s). As already indicated, export involvement components are managerial characteristics, marketing function and technological innovation, environmental analysis (internal and external), formulation of export objectives as well as export process choice selection. The aforesaid elements are part of Diagram 4.1 and will be discussed in the following section.

Figure 4.1: The export involvement process



Source: Adapted from: Stouraitis *et al.* (2016), Coudounaris (2018), Akbar, Balboni, Bortoluzzi, Dikova and Tracogna (2018) & Tan, Brewer and Liesch (2018)

Figure 4.1 shows the export involvement process, which suggests that export involvement in its totality is divided into export planning, export implementation and export control (Swoboda & Olejnik, 2019). Export involvement components are central to three process perspectives (planning, implementation and control). Export involvement planning covers managerial characteristics, marketing function, and technological innovation. Environmental analysis (internal and external) follows. Formulation of export objectives concludes this phase. The second phase of export involvement implementation focuses on export involvement action plans congruent with various industry analysis tools. The control phase of export involvement ensures that extensive efforts invested in the composition of comprehensive export planning are translated into actions in the systematic evaluation of plans and actions to apply corrective measures in case of variations from standards. Export involvement is summarised in the following section.

- **Managerial characteristics**

It is suggested by Mudalige *et al.* (2016) that management characteristics encompass export experience, educational inclination, and foreign market knowledge. Chen (2017) adds that export experience that is appropriate, and relative to the target market, significantly influences the execution of export involvement processes, providing adequate foreign knowledge to promote incremental progress for future export activities. Foreign market knowledge (existing and emerging) is closely linked to managerial absorptive capacity, which is accumulated in small bites over time. Mudalige *et al.* (2016) warn that when entering new markets, extensive knowledge may threaten the absorption of new knowledge, accounting for inconsistencies in the growth of involvement, especially when faced with uncertain speed and dimensions of exporting (Chen, 2017). Appropriate export experience is a critical management characteristic as it serves as a peacemaker between internal and external forces confronted by SBs when carrying out on-going export involvement activities (Mudalige *et al.*, 2016).

Export experience does not necessarily mean better foreign knowledge related to the target export market; in addition, it does not guarantee extended development of involvement in the absence of an adequate educational background. Mudalige *et al.* (2016) maintain that educational background includes export skills and problem-solving abilities that are perceived to have the influence on the SB's export involvement.

In essence, owner-managers with adequate export experience, educational background, and foreign market knowledge facilitate the development of foreign opportunities, and increase the awareness of threats associated with exhibiting export involvement activities in a foreign country (Chen, 2017). The undersupply of the aforesaid characteristics may significantly affect the execution of marketing function in supporting the constructs of export activities in emerging markets, resulting in inconsistencies and ultimate decrease in export involvement (Mudalige *et al.*, 2016; Chen, 2017).

The next section will discuss the gravity of marketing function within the context of export involvement as a process.

- **Marketing function**

Marketing function refers to planning, assessment, and control of marketing related activities aimed at increasing the awareness of an SB's offerings in new and / or emerging markets (Alrashidi, 2016). Marketing related activities provide guidance on market opportunities and suggest strategies of entry (Nyuur, Ružica & Simintiras, 2016). This component further suggests the significance of conducting a screening procedure and interrelated complexities in a systematic and vigorous manner.

Marketing function requires accurate, complex, relevant, timely, and distinctive information relative to the target market (Riswanto, Hurriyati, Wibowo & Hendrayati, 2020). Any misalignment may influence the dynamics of export involvement projected by the SB (Riswanto *et al.*, 2020).

Given that some SBs are constrained by lack of resources, even with relevant market information, they fail to carry out marketing related activities leaving the survival of SBs in a compromising position (Boso, *et al.*, 2019; Francioni *et al.*, 2016). Due to the small size of businesses, they are often not perceived as competitive in a complex market, compared to their larger counterparts, placing them in a vulnerable position (Francioni *et al.*, 2016). This is also in line with Miocevic and Morgan (2016) who argue that larger SBs possess sufficient resources enabling them to achieve greater magnitude of export involvement. Francioni *et al.* (2016) echo that SBs are resource constrained when chasing export involvement in foreign markets, and acknowledge the role of translating scarce resources into daily activities. Findings by Osano (2019) confirm that due to a lack of access to funding from government and banking institutions, SBs search for means to produce resources independently.

Marketing function is closely tied to an SB's prior export experience as it stimulates managerial perceptual differences that cause a shift in the progress of export involvement and its growth in the target market (Oura, Zilber & Lopes, 2016). Moreover, Oura (2016) recommends a systematic analysis of past and present marketing experiences (direct and indirect) to determine the influence levels extending to the intended competency of export involvement. In addition, Evangelista and Mac (2016) postulate the significance of an SB's current strategic plan(s), management perceptions, and its alignment with target market dynamics and uncertainties.

In a nutshell, the call for an extensive understanding of forces that may adversely influence the functioning of marketing aspect may result in the use of technological innovations pertinent to the greater development of export involvement (Evangelista & Mac, 2016).

Oura *et al.* (2016) suggest that innovation development facilitated by latest technologies give rise to management commitment to develop export activities in line with the cultural context of the target market.

These arguments lead to the discussion of technological innovation as a critical component of export involvement process.

- **Technological Innovation**

Technological innovation, as described by Bagheri *et al.* (2019), is a strategic link between managerial characteristics and government support to explore relative elements affecting deliberate export involvement growth. While Saunila (2019) refers to this component as an adaptable construct that varies in terms of export involvement choices, target market, and the level of managerial commitment towards exporting risks and benefits. Technological innovation separates SBs according to their levels of exporting commitment; for example, some perceive this component to be a radical process, while to others it is an incremental process that can be accumulated over time (Saunila, 2019). Love, Roper and Zhou (2015) define innovation in the use of technology as a strategic choice decided by management and driven by its commitment to export involvement. Bagheri *et al.* (2019) encourages the involvement of internal and external forces when technological innovation decisions and activities are developed.

By contrast, the rate at which technological innovation activities are carried out may be contradictory and inconsistent between SBs due to variance in the target market and challenges faced, leading to inconsistent export involvement (Love *et al.*, 2015). However, Bagheri *et al.* (2019) perceives technological innovation as a mediator between industry and market dynamics confronting each SB. Rialp-Criado and Komochkova (2017) suggest that technological innovation bestows noteworthy outcomes yet demands a swift adaptive capability towards a targeted market within the changing cultural context.

In today's complex environment, it may be difficult to accomplish the intended development in export involvement without a systematic link to management characteristics and government support (Bodlaj, Kadic-Maglajlic & Vida, 2020). However, some SBs are unaware of government support programmes and their influence over export involvement (Coudounaris, 2018). Moreover, technologically innovative activities ought to be planned and implemented as a true reflection of (internal and external) forces in which the business operates. Such forces can potentially give rise to appropriate export involvement processes, enabling managers to increase their scope in other emerging export markets (Coudounaris, 2018).

The next section will provide a discussion on environmental analysis (internal and external), and how it directly and indirectly influences export involvement and processes.

4.2.2 Environmental analysis

Environmental analysis denotes a process of detecting errors that could result in failures caused by complex, uncertain and inconsistent global markets and industries (Pourmohammadi, Bastani, Shojaei, Hatam & Salehi, 2018).

Chebo and Kute (2019) define the analysis of the environment as a process applied to reconstruct an SB's internal routine in order to minimise a mismatch between resources, strategies, and export involvement processes with its external environment. The alignment of the aforesaid elements may result in the increase in the awareness, frequency and participation in government export programmes to trigger planned advancement of export involvement in a form of financial and non-financial interventions (Pourmohammadi *et al.*, 2018).

Environmental analysis is perceived as a critical systematised analysis; however, it is not sufficient to facilitate substantial export involvement (du Toit, 2016). Given the constrained nature of SBs, sometimes they lack appropriate foreign market information in order to perform a comprehensive environmental analysis (du Toit, 2016). As industries and market inclinations continually evolve, information gaps increase uncertainties while enabling the identification of critical areas that seek enhancement within the context of export involvement.

This suggests the interdependence of the internal and external environment to achieve a comprehensive and systematic analysis that will determine trends and patterns to enable managers to enhance export involvement processes (Garnett, Lickorish, Rocks, Prpich, Rathe & Pollard, 2016). Moreover, an environmental analysis promotes current, accurate, and distinctive information processing that will help minimise costly errors (Butarbutar & Lisdayanti, 2020). While Pineda, Florencio and Roldán (2017) state that misalignment and inconsistencies resulting from macroenvironmental elements, such as economic, political, legal elements, may give rise to contradicting interpretations of the analysis, leading to inappropriate exporting decisions and ambiguous export involvement. Unpredictable macro-environmental elements, attributed to the incidence of market and industry uncertainties, stimulate dynamics in preferences and may result in the sluggish development of export involvement (Pineda *et al.*, 2017).

Considering the resource constrained nature of many SBs, environmental analysis calls for heterogenous and customised solutions, including managerial characteristics, marketing function and technological innovation to help detect underlying issues influencing purposeful growth of export involvement (Garnett *et al.*, 2016; Descotes & Walliser, 2018). Tailored solutions will help SBs identify opportunities and threats, leading to enhanced development of export activities (Pineda *et al.*, 2017). This can be facilitated by excellence in the export involvement process by avoiding poor planning and unreliable or biased environmental analysis outcomes (Pineda *et al.*, 2017). This is echoed by du Toit (2016) who maintains that poor planning results in fragmented and unclear development in export involvement.

Both internal and external environmental analyses will be discussed in this section. Environmental analysis is critically important for the following reasons:

- To formulate export involvement processes that will ensure adequate response allowing the SB to adapt to changes (Pineda *et al.*, 2017).
- To facilitate the alignment and interrelations between the SB and its environment to generate mechanisms that will support higher levels of export involvement.
- To provide a SB with a sequential approach that will underpin the efficacious in the formulation and implementation export involvement intentions (Pineda *et al.*, 2017).
- To consider that different markets require different strategic analysis since varying decisions are linked to conflicting export activities. Managers often use their perceptions to formulate strategies constructed from their experiences, attitude, and commitment towards export risks and benefits.
- To acknowledge that the (internal and external) environment gives rise to problems and solutions (Susanty, Sari, Rinawati & Setiawan, 2018). The continual export involvement is determined by processes taken to monitor, review, and modify their strategies utilising the information gained from the analysis.
- To recognise that an environmental analysis may be inadequate if managers fail to apply acquired information to exploit opportunities by aligning such information to execute export activities. This is achieved when interdependencies of emerging challenges are acknowledged to help limit the magnitude of uncertainties.
- The internal environment encompasses resources, strategies, processes, and practices that can be internally controlled and are deemed as an SB's driving forces positioned to protect its weaknesses (Maulina & Raharja, 2018; Mak & Chang, 2019; Aithal, 2017).
- The external environment refers to economics, political, technological, and social aspects, recognising that threats may be used to exploit opportunities with the intentions of limiting internal weaknesses (Mak & Chang, 2019; Leonidou, Christodoulides, Kyrgidou & Paliawadana, 2017).

Given the complex nature of the external environment, it is critical to note that SBs function within a significantly dynamic context of unique market and industry characteristics (Leonidou *et al.*, 2017). A better understanding of such dynamics will help managers identify markets to be pursued and those to be avoided (Ahmad, Rezaei, Sadaghiani & Tavasszy, 2017).

The external environment will be discussed in the following section.

4.2.2.1 External environmental analysis

An external environmental analysis seeks to identify emerging patterns and trends threatening export involvement growth and to reduce unexpected shocks by promoting analytical thinking (Ivančić, Mencer, Jelenc & Dulčić, 2017). Such patterns and trends generally go beyond the management characteristics, export processes, practices and strategies (Ivančić *et al.*, 2017, Ahmad *et al.*, 2017, Kotorri & Krasniqi, 2018, Leonidou *et al.*, 2017)

Environmental scanning is deemed as a first point of departure in linking the organisation with its environment. This enables the process of identifying market opportunities, while acknowledging threats, encourages the formulation of strategic plans congruent with environmental events (Ahmad *et al.*, 2017, Cao & Chen, 2018).

Analysis linking export involvement processes in different industries and markets varies (Anwar, Shah & Khan, 2018; Adebayo, Alheety & Yusoff, 2019). Such variances provide a complete explanation of environmental preconditions essential in each industry or market. This may result in SBs operating in similar industries responding differently, due to varying analyses resulting in different export involvement processes (Udomkit and Schreier, 2017).

Due to unmatched information during the analysis and scanning process, the formulation export involvement processes tend to differ (Susanty *et al.*, 2018). In addition, when the analysis leads to a decrease in export involvement; that may be due to a limited search for information by management (Susanty *et al.*, 2018). Leonidou, *et al.* (2017) suggest the categorisation of information to minimise the gaps to produce a comprehensive analysis that will help SBs cope with change.

Soto-Acosta, Popa and Martinez-Conesa (2018), Efrat, Gilboa and Yonatany (2017), and Kahiya and Dean (2015) define macro-environmental factors as listed in the section below:

- **Technological environment**

This aspect continues to bring about new challenges, leading towards new directions in the constructs of export involvement processes. Soto-Acosta *et al.* (2018) suggest that technological innovations do not necessarily refer to the manufacturing processes, but also focus on the execution of export involvement processes. Furthermore, technological advancements in an increasingly complex and uncertain global environment may not allow for mistakes by managers during export involvement dynamics (Soto-Acosta *et al.*, 2018). Given that SBs are constrained by limited resources, technological advances demand a highly skilled workforce to carry out export involvement activities to attain the desired outcome (Safar, Sopko, Bednar & Poklemba, 2018).

Technology continues to play a pivotal role in the execution of business functions, including information exchange, assessment of business relationships (customers and suppliers) and a shift from face-to-face daily meetings to audio meetings through social media platforms (Safar *et al.*, 2018).

- **Economic environment**

Economic factors such as inflation, unemployment, and interest rates determine the levels of openness to change for most SBs (Efrat *et al.*, 2017). The economic environment is significantly complex, as it is directly associated with the functioning of internal and external matters, which influences the growth of export involvement (Efrat *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, economic dynamics interfere with the link between the business and its environment by influencing the ability to gain information and knowledge from the external environment, affecting the capacity for learning. This further affects dynamics in industry, the state of market affairs, and export involvement processes (Leonidou *et al.*, 2017). Aforesaid factors determine the capability of export involvement and directs the strength and weaknesses of a SB in a complex export market (Maulina & Raharja, 2018).

- **Socio-cultural environment**

Social issues can lead the business to favourable or unfavourable outcomes, resulting in distinct societal difficulties (Kahiya & Dean 2015; Rahman, Yaacod & Radzi, 2016). Societal issues derive from erratic circumstantial conditions, including demographics, culture, and languages. Culture and religion have an influence on social ills, as it entails interactions and collaborations between people, institutions, and businesses (Kahiya & Dean 2015).

Such factors are interrelated, as they assist in the analysis of social ills, based on social significance to promote a process of contrast among industries and markets across cultural differences to enhance export involvement processes (Kahiya & Dean 2015).

- **Cross-cultural and international environment**

SBs involved in export activities are confronted with cross-cultural issues when operating in a compound global environment (Kahiya & Dean 2015). Such factors may construct, and or deconstruct export involvement capacity when one stakeholder (customer, supplier, associates or government) fails to understand differences in business practices, strategies, process and global standards demanded in a foreign market (Kahiya & Dean 2015). Such a shortcoming may also lead to the ambiguous development of export involvement processes, resulting in the SB's failure to carry out export activities (Prasanna, Jayasundara, Gamage, Ekanayake, Rajapakshe & Abeyrathne 2019).

- **Political environment**

The political environment seeks to mediate export processes, thereby facilitating access to market entry processes (Kahiya & Dean, 2015). Prasanna *et al.* (2019) learned that SBs engage in political activities with the aim of influencing political resources and legislative processes leading to a reduction of compliance costs and taxation (Prasanna *et al.*, 2019). Such engagement promotes the formulation of politically related strategies, helping SBs to chase political related goals to influence export involvement processes.

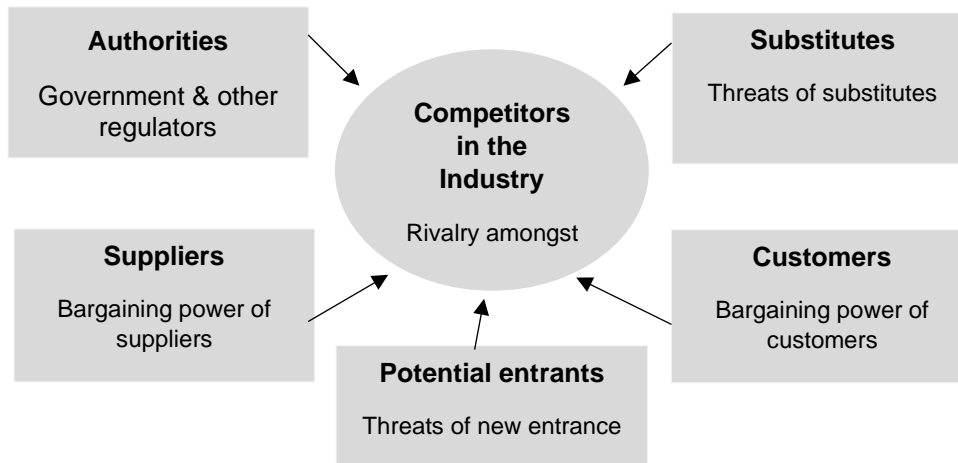
- **Physical environment**

The contemporary business environment does not allow for errors in organisational functions and in the implementation of export involvement processes (Rialp-Criado & Komochkova 2017). Determinative outcomes of intended competency, relative to export involvement, is the effective sparring in the allotment of scarce resources under the circumstances to achieve exporting involvement goals (Rialp-Criado & Komochkova 2017). A mismatch between functions and export activities may not only compromise an SB's export involvement, but also relationships with stakeholders (Soto-Acosta *et al.*, 2018). The aforementioned macro-environmental forces serves as a mediator between the SB and its external environment, resulting in considerable influence on the industry and market dynamics (Soto-Acosta *et al.*, 2018).

Porter Five Forces (PFF) model provides a complete elucidation of the competitive environment and competitive state of affairs of any industry. As indicated by Zhao, Zuo, Wu, Yan and Zillante (2016) principal stakeholders identified in each industry are competitors, suppliers, customers, buyers, prospective competitors and substitutes (Zhao *et al.*, 2016).

For the purpose of the study, the Government is also added as an essential stakeholder in promoting export involvement processes in a competitive environment as depicted in the Figure 4.2.

Figure 4.2: The competitive environment



Source: Anastasiu, Gavris, & Maier (2020)

Stimulation of export involvement processes amongst SBs are considered a significant priority for government and stakeholders in order to foster a more dynamic expansion of SBs in foreign markets (Gkypali, *et al.*, 2021). Juliana and Nyoman (2019) and Huang, Pan and Zhou (2019) revealed the export involvement processes of SBs and the constraints (internal and external) using the PFF model. The pivotal consideration is to identify the strengths and weaknesses that exist amongst SBs with respect to the implementation of export involvement processes in a highly turbulent and inconsistent foreign market (Gavris & Maier, 2020). The turbulent and inconsistent nature of foreign markets may mean that a systematic analysis of the core elements in the PFF is required to determine solutions for the internal and external constraints confronting SBs (Chesula & Kiriinya, 2020). As deduced by Fabbri and Klapper (2016); Chesula and Kiriinya (2018); and Juliana and Nyoman (2019) a desired implementation of export involvement processes requires a critical analysis of government support through export programmes and management characteristics to evaluate the strength and weaknesses of the business.

The main components making up the PFF model are discussed below:

- **Threat of the new entrants**

The threat of new entrants insinuates new dynamics that obstruct the current state of affairs (Chesula and Kiriinya, 2018). Anastasiu, Gavris and Maier (2020) argue that new entrants imply new barriers that may provide practical opportunities and strategic resources while also threatening the growth of export involvement of existing and new SBs (Chesula & Kiriinya, 2020). New entrants are closely associated with industry progress as new SBs are attracted to industries with higher market share (Wellner & Lakotta, 2020; Anastasiu *et al.*, 2020).

- **Bargaining power of suppliers**

Evidence suggested by Fabbri and Klapper (2016) is that a close alliance between suppliers and customers is maintained as a crucial enabler for higher growth in export involvement. The poor bargaining power of suppliers may weaken the export involvement of SBs due to an increasingly competitive environment (Fabbri & Klapper, 2016). Such weak bargaining power is derived from homogeneous products in the market, resulting in a reduction of profit growth.

- **Bargaining power of customers**

Customers often demand lower prices and higher quality standards, resulting in higher operational costs (Anastasiu *et al.*, 2020). Customers are deemed powerful when they exhibit price sensitivity, thereby negotiating lower prices with other competing SBs, directly and indirectly affecting the competency in export involvement (Anastasiu *et al.*, 2020).

- **Rivalry amongst competitors**

Rivalry determines the attractiveness of the industry, considering the number of competitors offering homogenous products and services (Fabbri & Klapper, 2016). Often competitors apply price strategies to gain customers, as owner-managers are committed towards export involvement growth (Fabbri and Klapper, 2016). Some SBs fail to detect competitors' strategies due to higher levels of unfamiliarity towards one another (Anastasiu *et al.*, 2020).

- **Threats of substitute of goods and services**

The profitability of the industry and higher development in export involvement are determined by the vigour of substitutes (Anastasiu *et al.*, 2020). An increase in substitutes may threaten export involvement processes of a SB as customers may decide to procure a substitute for goods and services from a competitor (Fabbri & Klapper, 2016). In the same breath, competitive prices are closely associated to substitutes mainly when latest technologies are embedded in delivery processes to enhance value quality characteristics (Anastasiu *et al.*, 2020). Due to this, customers often switch to lower prices.

- **Government support (export programmes)**

It is critical to note that government support is not part of the PFF model, but plays a pivotal role in this study and the industry in general. Government regulatory framework and initiatives through differing incentive programmes has a significant influence on the advancement of export involvement (Chang & Webster 2019). Government regulatory framework has facilitated network opportunities with other complementary SBs, including through exhibitions, workshops, and trade conventions (Njinyah, 2017). The awareness, use, and participation in these programmes is low, due to a lack of knowledge of government initiatives designed to help SBs involved in export activities (Wang *et al.*, 2017; Njinyah, 2017). In addition, compliance costs are deemed a concerning factor.

The market segmentation tool is universally recognised as it is concerned with reconciling products and services with marketing attempts to meet the cultural differences and preferences of targeted markets to influence procurement decisions and conduct (Jafarinezhad, Zangeneh & Naami, 2016). Segmentation of markets is concerned with grouping customers, choosing the most alluring market to strategically position the offering in the targeted markets relevant to meeting preferences (Jafarinezhad *et al.*, 2016). It is important to note that market segmentation is not a one size fits all, as it constitutes various approaches that are determined by an SB's export involvement goals directed at a distinct market (Bocconcelli, Cioppi, Fortezza, Francioni, Pagano, Savelli & Splendiani, 2016). In addition, Jafarinezhad *et al.* (2016) argue that marketing efforts ought to be adjusted in alignment with markets and industries, as they evolve over time.

Market segmentation provides precepts on the allotment of strategic resources constructed from varying responses of different segments based on the effective evaluation of consumer feedback over time (Bocconcelli *et al.*, 2016). The concept of segmentation allows SBs to gather various forms of data in order to identify patterns and trends between various types of markets in a systematic manner by tailoring solutions to serve the specific needs of that market.

It is critically important for SBs to note that there is no specific product or service that is targeted at all export markets, as SBs seek differential customised products to meeting varying needs (Qin, Yuan & Wang, 2017). This is echoed by Gandellini and Tatananni (2018), who suggest various criteria to use, which focuses on demographics, behaviour and psychographic segmentation driven by data collected to promote an imperishable export involvement

Other external environmental analyses tools are deemed critically significant to understand threats and opportunities important to the organisation. However, the tools discussed above, fall within the scope of this study. The next section is chiefly focused on the internal environment.

4.2.2.2 Internal environmental analysis

Generally, after the conduct of external environmental analysis, a SB needs to inwardly analyse its internal situation to determine opportunities and threats (Rialp-Criado & Komochkova, 2017). This process is also referred to as internal evaluation, internal audit, or the appraisal of organisational resources (Rialp-Criado & Komochkova, 2017). Environmental analysis is also concerned with the assessment of the organisation's state of affairs in as far as resources, strategies, competencies, value proposition, competitive strength, and capabilities are concerned (Butarbutar & Lisdayanti, 2020). Information gained from the analysis will enhance export involvement decisions as a critical element in the environment, geared to deliver the wishes of the SB (Alshura & Assuli, 2017).

Naturally, not all SBs develop environmental analysis strategies best fitted to the situation on hand (Alshura & Assuli, 2017).

There are two key criteria in determining organisational strength when internal analysis is conducted. First, the organisation should assess its export involvement gains and strength in targeted export markets. Secondly, it should monitor whether its target market is growing incrementally in order to develop improvement tools if a need arises (Tresna, 2017). Persisting failures in achieving intended growth of export involvement due to internal inconsistencies may mean poor analysis resulting from inappropriate information about target market (Alshura & Assuli, 2017; Tresna, 2017).

Internal analysis may also involve reviewing trends in export involvement in the reflection of the degree of consumer retention capabilities (Rialp-Criado & Komochkova, 2017, Francioni *et al.*, 2016, Stouraitis *et al.*, 2016).

Long-term export involvement in various export markets call for continuous internal environmental analysis to keep up-to-date with latest patterns and market dynamics to defend the SB against existing and future threats and to protect its market position (Imran *et al.*, 2017)

With this in mind, the organisation can potentially influence the allotment of its resources correlative to its target market to enhance its competitive standing, leading to continuous export activities (Imran *et al.*, 2017).

The internal environment ought to be controlled by a systematic and consistent outlook to fit the needs of the organisational external environment in order to achieve a competitive advantage leading to consistent growth of export involvement (Rialp-Criado & Komochkova, 2017).

There are various evaluating tools that organisations employ to strengthen their market standing in order to defend their weaknesses (Rialp-Criado & Komochkova, 2017).

The comprehensive synopsis of internal analysis tool does not directly form part of this study, since there are three commonly employed tools that help the organisation identify what it does well and where it fails in creating sustainable export involvement (Rialp-Criado & Komochkova, 2017).

First, there is the Resource-Based View (RBV), which refers to strategic positioning using competencies and capabilities that are difficult to copy (Nagano, 2017). The RBV perspective suggests that a SB possesses a bundle of strategic and competitive resources, which constitutes Value, Rarity, Inimitable, and Non-substitutable (VRIN) (Alexy, West, Klapper & Reitzig, 2017; Yu, Chavez, Jacobs & Feng, 2018). Nagano (2017) suggests that if a SB produces goods and services that are valuable, with limited accessibility and that are burdensome for opponents to copy, these attributes will make it difficult for consumers to search for alternative products.

Ramon-Jeronimo, Florex-Lopez, and Araujo-Pinzon (2019) suggest that RBV encompasses physical and non-physical resources and internal and external relationships with stakeholders, with the aim of building a long-term competitive advantage.

RBV suggests that resources deemed strategic, constitutes an SB's strength, yet such resources are not homogeneous nor relative between organisations to maintain a position of strength in the market (Alonso & Bressan, 2016). An SB's capabilities, according to Kull, Mena & Korschun (2016), should be designed to be distinctive, and not merely comparable, if the SB is to stay ahead of competitors.

The second analysis is a Systems Thinking Approach (STA), which focuses on understanding the functioning of the organisation by breaking it down into various parts (Martineau & Pastoriza, 2016; Banson, Nguyen, Bosch, & Ockie, 2018). Ershadi and Dehdazzi (2019) maintain that systems thinking, involves gaining an understanding of the organisation within the context of the environment in which it operates by assessing the individual parts that constitutes a whole. The intentions of systems thinking is to help management improve their judgements by making them explicit in order to minimise errors and to become more effective over time (Banson *et al.*, 2015; Vargo, Koskela-Huotari, Baron, Edvardsson, Reynoso & Colurcio, 2017).

STA aims to examine the interactions of parts at various levels to determine strength and weaknesses within the organisation (Caldera, Desha & Dawes, 2017; Kunze, Wulfhorst & Minner, 2016). STA is concerned with the consistent analysis of inputs, transformation, outputs, goals, objectives, and feedback from stakeholders to understand the business in a holistic manner (Caldera *et al.*, 2017). An STA perspective advocates the continuous support of complex functions to promote organisational learning and so help managers achieve their intended growth in export involvement (Martineau & Pastoriza, 2016).

STA further promotes a way to maximize organisational effectiveness through the understanding of interconnections of various parts and the integration of export activities (Martineau & Pastoriza, 2016). A systems thinking perspective is essential because it helps managers gain a better understanding of critical constraints influencing the growth of their export involvement and maintaining their market standing (Piza, Cravo, Taylor, Gonzalez, Musse, Furtado, Sierra & Abdelnour, 2016).

Lastly, Critical Success Factor Analysis (CSFA) is concerned with those key elements that must effectively work together in a systematic way to ensure an eminent entry into a target market (Bose, 2016). CSFA ought to be given consistent attention, as it constitutes critical issues driving the existing and future export involvement of the organisation (Bose, 2016). CSFA refers to attributes related to managerial characteristics, products, and service features that promote successful positioning in emerging export markets (Bose, 2016).

CSFA encompasses the process of understanding varying needs of targeted markets from a standpoint of effective marketing function and technological innovation (Kim, Kim & Jeon, 2018). While Mendes (2018) argues that a SB needs to observe its competitors by paying attention to its capabilities to maintain its market standing.

It is important to observe that CSFA is a subjective process, which calls for a significant gravity of judgement considering varying CSFAs employed in different SBs pursuing different export markets (Mendes, 2018).

4.2.3 Formulating long-term export goals

In general, Long-Term Export Goals (LTEG) are formulated using information gathered from the internal and environmental analysis, and are essential to manage an organisation (Méndez *et al.*, 2018). This process involves a selection of distinctive sets of actions to achieve a purposeful capacity of export involvement (Méndez *et al.*, 2018). Long-term export goals are often employed to link an organisation to its target market for a period of 10 years and above to achieve considerable market share (Méndez *et al.*, 2018).

By its nature, the LTEG process is consistent and ongoing as it entails a mission statement that carries a crucial message about the goals, objectives, and strategic direction of an SB's export involvement processes (Fitzgerald & Cunningham, 2015). The mission statement answers questions associated with the existence of the organisation (Fitzgerald & Cunningham, 2015). Fitzgerald and Cunningham (2018) maintain that the mission statement should be clear, assessable, stimulating, and easy to relate to in describing the desired future of the organisation (Alegre, Berbegal-Mirabent, Guerrero & Mas-Machuca, 2018).

The mission statement is broad, as it separates the organisation from its competitors to promote export involvement growth, efficiency, retention, and service delivery (Alegre *et al.*, 2018).

A carefully planned mission statement captures the essence of the business' existence by reconciling internal and external factors to identify threats and opportunities and to address the special needs of the business (Taiwo, Lawal & Agwu, 2016). In a nutshell, according to Taiwo *et al.* (2016) the mission statement aims to answer the following questions:

- Why do we exist?
- Who are our customers?
- What can we offer to our customers?
- What reputation would we like to convey?

The above questions aim to minimise misunderstandings and perceptual differences between a SB and its stakeholders, and further aims to create shared expectations about organisational goals.

The following section will discuss the process of selecting export involvement processes.

4.2.4 Selecting export involvement processes

The selection of an export involvement process is motivated by management perception and attitude towards export activities, as it is not attested to factual events facing the business. Mendes (2018) stated that inconsistent factors that influence the choice, including market and industry uncertainties ranging from political, economic, and legal differences. However, Clark, Li and Sheperd (2017) and Tran (2019) suggested the following criteria as a guideline in selecting export involvement process when entering emerging markets:

- **Foreign information gathering**

Information gathering activities refer to appropriate data connected to the target market in the reflection of direct application of that information (Saeed & Ziaulhaq, 2019). Saeed and Ziaulhaq (2019) further reveal that some SBs use inappropriate information to address irrelevant export issues. This indicates a misalignment between the foreign information gathered and actual real problems confronting the SB (Leonidou *et al.*, 2017). Pascucci, Bartoloni and Gregor (2016) also suggest that information gathering is controlled by process complexity and the capabilities of managers based on their characteristics, commitment, and perceptual differences towards export activities. Mudalige *et al.* (2016) describe the cluster of information in alignment to the targeted market to determine its feasibility and effectiveness in advancing the intended growth of involvement in that market.

- **Market segmentation**

Market selection is determined by managerial foreign knowledge in line with their capabilities and strategic resources (Ayob & Senik, 2015, Alrashidi, 2016). This in turn influences export involvement processes, considering that managerial characteristics must match the traits of a chosen market (Alrashidi, 2016). Given the resource inadequacies of small SBs' characteristics (management and market) have a major influence on the market entry and export involvement of a SB in that market (Chen, 2017).

- **Formulating marketing and technological innovation goals**

As indicated earlier, management characteristics, marketing function, and technological innovation are deemed components of export involvement (Efrat *et al.*, 2017). In that context, it is important to align the aforesaid elements to create a concord-oriented export decision that promotes higher development in export involvement (Efrat *et al.*, 2017). Such elements reflect changes in management innovation capabilities and competencies to promote the unambiguous growth of export involvement (Efrat *et al.*, 2017).

Export goals relative to management characteristics, marketing, and technological innovation assist SBs to arrive at optimal decisions regarding the target market(s) by driving growth and promoting resource allotment.

- **Detailed analysis of information**

In uncertain and information-based export markets and industries, information has become a fundamental resource for many organisations (Saeed & Ziaulhaq, 2019). Carefully assessed information aids SBs to explore opportunities and strengths in foreign markets by searching for mechanisms to defend the business against weaknesses and threats. Information analysis explains the ambiguous export involvement based on the SB's ability to obtain and manage its flow about the target market being pursued (Mudalige *et al.*, 2016).

- **Evaluation and process selection**

The lifeblood of a business is to select the export involvement process relative to organisational competitive strength in the target market using limited resources to increase the execution of export activities (Coudounaris, 2018). This is achieved by avoiding markets with high export barriers threatening organisational growth in that market (Akbar *et al.*, 2018).

Evaluating the export process is deemed subjective as it is chiefly determined by management, based on their skills and their ability to predict future growth. Tan *et al.* (2018) suggest that subjective assessment has little or no influence on export growth, as bias cannot be mitigated.

Benchmarking allows SBs to employ varying criteria to determine areas seeking improvement when operating in complex and uncertain export markets (Stouraitis *et al.*, 2016).

In the same breath, due to increased uncertainties in export markets over time, Robinson and Simmons (2018) and du Toit (2015) emphasise the gravity of information gathering within the context of the internal and external environment to drive technological innovation and marketing functions that bring strategic change to boost export involvement. Such information aids managers to refine and develop strategies to enhance process selection through a systematic analysis of perceptions pertaining to export market uncertainties (du Toit, 2015; Pourmohammadi, Bastani, Shojaei, Hatam & Salehi, 2020).

Environmental analysis is deemed a subjective matter as managers use biased judgement during the analysis, leading to inconsistent determinative outcomes (Borges and Janissek-Muniz, 2018). Gregory, Ngo and Karavdic (2019) and Jin and Cho (2018) describe a critical link between management characteristics, marketing function, and technological innovation.

Marketing and technological innovation play a significant role when selecting export involvement processes as it is fragmented into management technology, focusing on practice and internal process while marketing function focuses on steps taken to carry out marketing activities in a foreign market.

4.2.5 Export involvement processes

It is important to note that an in-depth analysis of all export involvement processes does not form part of this study; however, varying processes have been discussed in studies. This study will discuss government export programmes, networking, joint-venture (JV), global agents, and strategic alliances as export involvement processes used by SBs operating the City of Tshwane when entering existing and emerging export markets (Salisu & Bakar, 2018; Stoian *et al.*, 2018; Freixanet, Renart & RialpCriado, 2018). Each process is determined by the extent of export involvement deriving from managerial commitment, attitude, and perceptions towards exporting risks and benefits in each SB (Freixanet *et al.*, 2018).

- **Government export programmes**

Government support plays a pivotal role in the promotion of export involvement of SBs, as export programmes cover financial and non-financial support promoting trade movement in aspects such as training and education to boost export growth (Malca *et al.*, 2019). Such interventions boost management confidence and commitment towards export risks and benefits, adding merits to export involvement (Haddoud, 2017).

The impact of government programmes on the export involvement of SBs has been largely criticised due to low levels of awareness, use and participation in the programmes, resulting in ambiguous growth of export involvement (Haddoud, 2017).

Malca *et al.* (2019) suggest that programmes are reviewed in the design stage to increase diversity and programme activities to address unique ongoing constraints (internal and external) confronting SBs.

- **Global networking**

The use of global networking is expanding significantly, given the importance of export involvement in developing and developed economies (Cragg, McNamara, Descubes & Guerin, 2019). For example, some exporting SBs establish global relations by networking with complementary SBs. Cragg *et al.* (2019) elaborated on a construct of external relations developed at various levels of associations to access export markets. Networks aim to link the SB horizontally and vertically at a global level with external stakeholders, including trade unions, customers, suppliers and local governments to develop cross-border business associations (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2018).

Varying networking activities are executed to enhance the development of export involvement, ranging from marketing functions, workshops, trade missions, and trade shows to incorporate networking practices into an SB's ongoing export activities (Francioni *et al.*, 2016). Networking facilitates vigorous links with other global SBs to reduce the issues of uncertainties through the dissemination of information to address internal and external constraints (Zhu, Warner & Sardana 2020).

The weaknesses of foreign networking lie in its inability to effectively endorse owner-manager's dynamic capabilities, and abilities to determine their competitive strength (Zhu *et al.*, 2020). It consumes significant amount of time and effort to attend workshops, general meetings, and other export events given the resource constrained nature of SBs.

- **Joint-venture**

JVs denotes an agreement between two or more entities to fulfil the goals of the project (Stoian *et al.*, 2018). JV is a well-known instrument employed by SBs to tap into export markets as a form of shared ownership, strategic resources, risks, and opportunities (Stoian *et al.*, 2018). As indicated earlier, SBs operate in a resource constrained environment. JVs help to counter this shortcoming by giving owner managers access to emerging markets, thereby promoting scale efficiencies in order to deepen their export involvement in those markets (Stoian *et al.*, 2018). JVs support export involvement by helping managers to access various competencies and capabilities to address ongoing export constraints by minimising exposure to risks. JVs are perceived as a mediating factor towards foreign information accessibility and resources, thereby boosting export involvement (Stoian *et al.*, 2018).

- **Global Agents**

Global agents, also known as distributors or local intermediaries, are used as a tool to explore export markets by tailoring offerings to local customer demands. This is facilitated by their knowledge of the local heterogeneous market (Vapa & Tankosić, 2019). This knowledge is critically important since customisation of export products and services is heavily determined by global agents. Cragg *et al.* (2019) suggest a systematic evaluation when selecting global distributors (Vapa & Tankosić, 2019). The choice of global agents has a significant influence on export-oriented activities. As a result, a selection of foreign distributor determines capacity of export involvement in export markets (Audretsch & Caiazza, 2016).

Increased uncertainties, due to disorders in markets and industries, lead to risks and disarray, resulting in inconsistent delivery costs (Lampadarios, 2015).

Variations in the regulatory environment linked to local markets result in misalignments as it significantly influences associations between a SB and global agent presenting a forward interrelation with local customers and backward links with a SB (Vapa & Tankosić, 2019).

Overall, there is not a one-size fits all strategy when selecting global agents. The selection process largely depends on costs and service delivery analysis (Vapa & Tankosić, 2019). Ultimately, global agents promote accessibility to local export markets, leading to a consistent increase in export involvement when the adequate distributor is assigned (Audretsch & Caiazza, 2016).

- **Strategic Alliances**

Alliances denote a process in which two or more SBs concur to share resources, risks and benefits to achieve pre-determined goals (Coo, 2017). Strategic alliances are known to promote new knowledge, allowing SBs to reduce barriers associated with conducting business in a foreign market (Coo, 2017). Engaging in strategic alliance activities means that SBs with distinct skills and capabilities to reduce cost and to achieve scale efficiencies by increasing export activities (O'dwyer and Gilmore, 2018).

By contrast, the attainment of appropriate foreign market information is rather limited, due to the biased nature of strategic alliances that are largely determined by personal relationships instead of a coherent identification of associates, leading to poor decision-making processes (O'dwyer & Gilmore 2018).

Strategic alliances increase awareness and support by facilitating access to new marketing function activities and technological innovations with the intentions of raising export involvement (O'dwyer & Gilmore 2018, Nakos, Dimitratos & Elbanna, 2019).

4.2.6 Export involvement implementation and control

It must be observed that export involvement process is the integral part of this study; however, the implementation and control aspect are as crucial to gain a complete overview.

The implementation phase in the export involvement process links the participation of all stakeholders with the overarching export goals of the SB to achieve efficacy in communication and cooperation (Azari, Madsen & Moen, 2017, Louw & Venter, 2019).

This phase is concerned with the optimisation of resources to facilitate strategic drivers as key role players in the strategic implementation (Louw & Venter, 2019, Pearce and Robinson, 2014). Strategic drivers within the context of export involvement are cultural variations in export markets (which represents the ways of doing things to accommodate changing preferences).

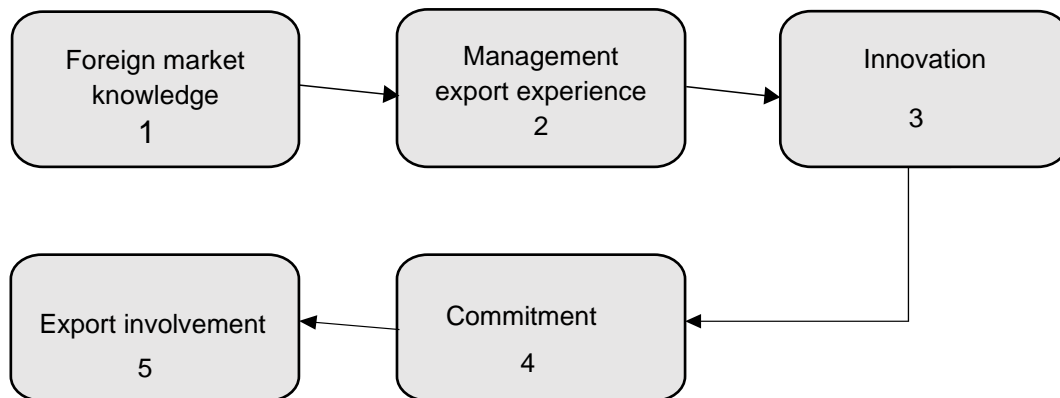
In addition, the structure of the industry and market (conducting the systematics analysis of industry and market to determine and matching their characteristics with those of the SB) export objectives (which further describe export goals with a direct and a clear distinction).

Export drivers and analytical tools aim to contribute towards successful implementation and process enhancement (de Guimaraes, Severo & Vieira, 2017). Considering the inconsistent nature of export markets and industries, unforeseen circumstances may emerge, which may negatively influence the implementation of export processes. For this reason, strategic control and evaluation are recommended for process assessment and export orientation purposes (de Guimaraes, Azari *et al.*, 2017). The rapidly changing export market demands practical solutions from pockets of excellence to provide reports to the export process in order to determine inconsistencies in projected capability of export involvement (Azari *et al.*, 2017)

4.2.7 Other views on export involvement processes

Two models of export involvement processes are discussed and delineated in this section. The first is that of Yan, Wickramasekera and Tan (2018), who contributed to the development of a conceptual model which consists of Conceptual Elements of Export Processes. The second model is a common export involvement process developed by Evangelista & Mac (2016).

Figure 4.3: Conceptual elements of export involvement process



Source: Adapted from Yan *et al.* (2018)

1. Resource optimisation
2. Alternatives to accumulate foreign information
3. Adaptative capacity to harness export processes
4. Identify main driving forces of export involvement
5. Increase intended capacity of export involvement

Figure 4.3 delineates conceptual elements of export involvement processes by outlining five key comprehensive drivers of export activities. These are: foreign market knowledge, management export experience, innovation, commitment and implementation.

Foreign market knowledge is concerned with the formulation of new practices that enable organisations to generate new knowledge and incorporate change in business, leading to a reduction of (internal and external) constraints (Stoian *et al.*, 2018). When SBs lack foreign market knowledge and export experience, export processes are negatively influenced (Stoian *et al.*, 2018). Such disabilities may act as threats, limiting the achievement of higher export involvement in a rapidly changing turbulent export market environment (Rua *et al.* 2017). Foreign market knowledge suggests that managers ought to be involved in knowledge creation practices to achieve self-efficacy and confidence in the design of export routines and activities. This will aid understanding and detect misalignments in the internal and external environment, with the aim of attaining unambiguous levels of export involvement (Rua *et al.* 2017).

The second conceptual element of export involvement is management export experience, which suggests that prior export experiences help minimise hazards associated with doing business in foreign markets (Sandberg *et al.*, 2019).

This also helps to reduce the resource scarcity with reference to export involvement by proposing adequate export experience to help managers apply appropriate resources in areas that may trigger export involvement growth (Tan *et al.*, 2018). Due to severe market and industry uncertainties, a prime directive of export experience is the assessment of an SB's strategic resources after a systematic alignment with its internal and external environment to determine threats and opportunities (Sandberg *et al.*, 2019)

When executing export activities using accumulated export experiences, innovative activities become inevitable, as they act as a mediator between a SB and its target market (Bagheri *et al.*, 2019). When innovative activities are incorporated into export involvement processes, they promote inward and outward aspects of the SB to trigger technical knowledge related to export involvement.

Innovation does not necessarily give rise to development in export involvement; however, it produces a prolonged execution of export activities (Bagheri *et al.*, 2019). In addition, principal directives of innovation are the accurate alignment of managerial capabilities and competencies. It is crucial to note that innovative activities tend to vary according to the SB's export processes, target market, and export involvement growth projected. Innovation choices, as postulated by Efrat *et al.* (2017) are determined by the goals and objectives being chased.

For instance, Saridakis *et al.* (2019) claimed that the innovation concept formulates goals aimed at enhancing products and services, and or embarks on searching for efficient ways to enhance export processes. In a nutshell, innovation has a direct and indirect influence on the execution of export activities in respect to the market being targeted, yet the extent of influence on an SB's export involvement remains unclear, though it increases management commitment (Bagheri *et al.*, 2019; Saridakis *et al.*, 2019).

Management commitment is a critical directive towards successful implementation of export involvement processes (Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017). Management commitment towards export involvement tends to vary due to resources, market and industry volatility, and management characteristics, resulting in increase-decrease-re-increase commitment (Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017). Such inconsistencies stem from internal and external forces posing a negative influence on the implementation phase (Dominguez & Mayrhofer, 2017). Commitment reflects positively on export involvement as it minimises perceived constraints, aligning activities that may minimise the effect caused by industry and market turbulences to attain the planned export processes (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2018).

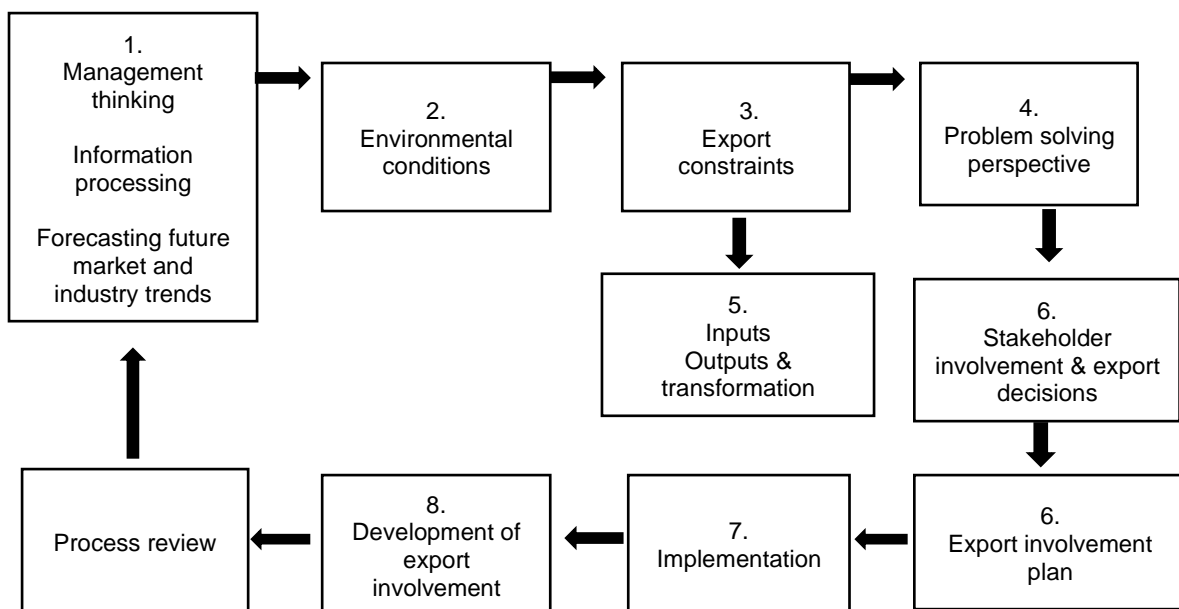
Managers who accumulated commitment towards exporting are likely to increase their involvement in foreign markets (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2018). Such managers tend to acquire external support to learn more

about financial and non-financial initiatives from government bodies, noting that such a support may vary according to an SB's development in export involvement (Yan *et al.*, 2018).

This process is continuous since it aims to inspire and empower SBs through a continuous informational and experiential learning process to stimulate the development of export activities (Love *et al.*, 2015). Talebi, Tajeddin, Rastgar and Emami (2017) also seek to understand the complexity of export markets, using a conceptual planning model in determining key elements and interconnectedness of dimensions influencing management long-term decisions affecting export involvement. Rebs, Brandenburg & Seuring (2019) delineated that most SBs fail to align a conceptual perspective with the export involvement process as market and industry influences are selectively examined, leading to oversight in realising export opportunities. Considering that the findings of Banson *et al.* (2015) were based within the agricultural sector, it therefore cannot relate to all industries.

Bocconcelli *et al.* (2016) aim to better understand key factors that promote or hinder export development and involvement to determine a pattern or order and the interrelations of such factors. This is done to identify export involvement processes employed by SBs functioning in the exporting markets and industries across all sectors. This is illustrated with reference to the export involvement process cycle as depicted in Figure 4.4, which is followed by a brief discussion thereof.

Figure 4.4: Common export involvement process



Source: Adapted from: Evangelista and Mac (2016)

- **Management thinking** - Systems thinking seeks to analyse interconnectedness between various elements to determine how they fit together to influence the advancement of

export involvement. Management thinking within the context of exports, focus on gaining an understanding of the authentic exchange between the SB and its environment through a shift from foreign information processing to export knowledge creation to arrive at consistent forecasts and predictions about market trends and patterns.

- **Environmental conditions** - The application of a systems thinking approach is concerned with the dynamic analysis of environmental conditions (internal and external) to determine a way in which a SB is influenced in order to identify opportunities and threats. This was also included in a study by Chan & Ma (2016).
- **Export constraints** - On-going export constraints derive from resource inefficiencies, unlike larger firms that have accumulated sets of resources over time, given the complex markets in which they function. Export challenges have been evolving over time due to inconsistencies identified in internal and external environments. SBs vary in the strategies, resources, and target markets they pursue. In addition, export constraints are determined by management commitment and perceptions towards exporting.
- **Problem solving perspective** - Foreign information processing converted into export knowledge does not necessarily generate problem solving capabilities when the management thinking perspective is linear.

Problems solving perspectives view export constraints as small individual parts that cannot be effectively addressed in isolation due to the increasingly complex nature of export markets that continuously evolve over time. System thinking managers eradicate silo mentality through a better understanding of a problem a whole. This is also confirmed by (Freixanet, Rialp & Churakova, 2020; Rebs *et al.*, 2019)

- **Inputs, transformation and outputs** - The successful production of goods and services of global standards largely depends on management foreign knowledge, commitment and perceptions towards intended growth of export involvement. Imran *et al.* (2018) suggest that poor quality standards explain inefficient implementation of export processes. Production processes are closely linked to technological innovation and marketing function led by management characteristics (Imran *et al.*, 2018). It is important to mention that some SBs are confronted with challenges in converting resources into export processes when using latest technologies, leading to inconsistent export involvement.
- **Stakeholder involvement and export decisions** - The involvement of stakeholders is critically important for the successful implementation of export processes. It is fundamentally determined by the awareness of expectations of all parties involved in the supply chains. Stakeholders include communities, suppliers, government, and local business partners.

- **Process implementation** - This involves linking goals and plans into a set of actions to determine threats and opportunities in the internal and external environment for the further development of management capabilities to remain relevant. When export involvement processes are implemented, it provides an overview of export involvement capabilities.
- **Development of export involvement** - The progress of this aspect is determined by aligning internal (management characteristics and resources) and external elements such as (market and regulatory framework). Such elements are closely associated to export process and stages of export involvement.
- **Process review** - The review of processes is deemed as the heartbeat of export involvement. Maintaining appropriate export processes is a repetitious process focusing on detailed organisational goals and objectives, which begins with management thinking.

The export involvement stages discussed above are followed by export businesses across all sectors, yet there is not a one size fits all process due to variances in strategies, target markets and industries in which business operate (Tan *et al.*, 2018). Moreover, different SBs experience different stages of export involvement are confronted with different stages of evolutions in industries and markets, hence dynamics, while the competitive nature of industries and markets vary.

These processes acknowledge the varying nature of SBs' export involvement and suggest incremental process improvement in leveraging technology to achieve the intended outcome of export involvement (Tan *et al.*, 2018). The processes further allow managers to customise their solutions to accommodate preferences in the markets.

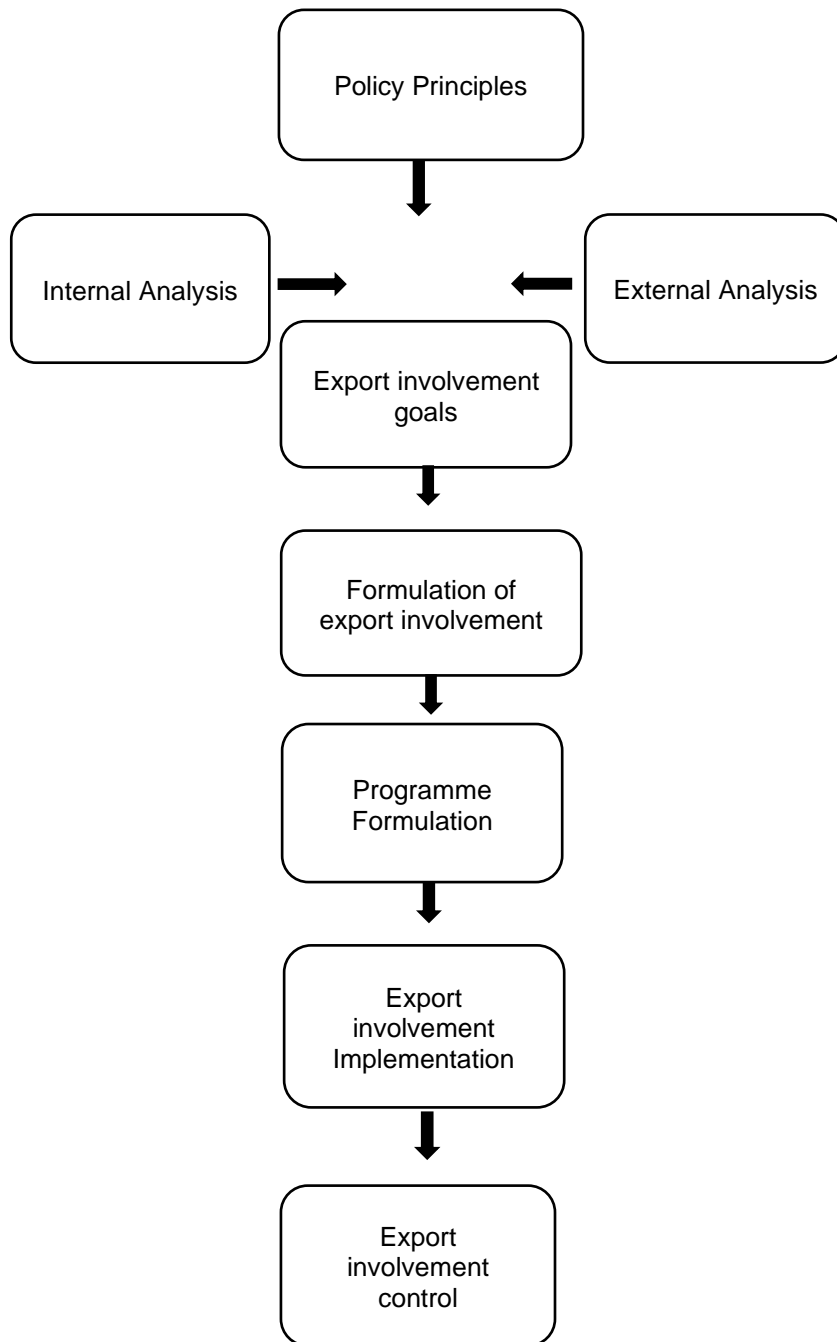
4.3 A CONCEPTUAL MODEL FOR EXPORT INVOLVEMENT PROCESS IN SOUTH AFRICAN SBs

This study welcomed perceptual differences of export involvement processes employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane. This study focused on the export processes discussed by Stouraitis, *et al.* (2016) and Coudounaris (2018). This process involved components of export involvement process, export prerequisites, environmental analysis, objectives, and the choice of export process, which were discussed in greater detail. The discussion was concluded by conversing export involvement implementation and control, which are the other two phases of export involvement process.

When discussing export involvement processes Vapa & Tankosić (2019), Dana *et al.* (2016), and Tan *et al.* (2018) held the view that there is not a one size fits all concerning export involvement processes in considering various issues facing SBs at different stages (regular or irregular) of their export involvement. In addition, the choice of export process is also driven by distinct management characteristics through an opportunistic attitude and commitment towards export involvement.

The above studies have structured the discussion towards the conceptual model of export involvement processes employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane. This conceptual model is depicted in Figure 4.5, which is discussed in the section below.

Figure 4.5: Conceptual model for export involvement process



Source: Adapted from Haddoud 2017, Coudounaris (2018)

The study has received varying perceptions on export involvement processes. Dynamic export routines, driven by internal and external forces and uncertainties that enable the export involvement of SBs facilitate the export choice by helping them achieve their goals and objectives. A conceptual model for export involvement processes begins with policy principles that relate to processes and practice. Such interconnected policy principles are used as a tool to reflect on export involvement growth and to assess a way in which owner-managers can position themselves to overcome internal and external constraints when export activities are carried out. This point has also been echoed by Yan, *et al.* (2018), Haddoud (2017), Coudounaris (2018), Ribau and Moreira (2017), and Lejpras (2018), who suggested that export involvement policies ought to promote the creation of new innovations, using conceptual studies and the latest technologies to deal with export-oriented constraints. The owner-managers should incorporate export policies in all stages of export involvement, linking each stage with the appropriate policy to stimulate an increase in export involvement. An unambiguous understanding of export policies may result in an increase, decrease or re-increase in export involvement, which is determined by management characteristics (Pickernell *et al.*, 2016).

When this conceptual model is used, the export involvement process employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane should be clear, given the internal and external analysis is incorporated in the model (Bose, 2016). The environmental analysis should provide insights that will increase management commitment towards investing in strategic resources raising export involvement in other global markets (Bose, 2016). When an environmental analysis is carried out timeously, it will trigger foreign market knowledge and export commitment to ultimately influence export decisions in a positive outlook to align itself with the expectations of stakeholders involved in value and supply chains (Bose, 2016). A positive interconnection between policy principles and environmental analysis highlights that owner-managers can formulate export goals and objectives. Within these components, managers ought to set out deadlines for the implementation and determinative outcomes projected, considering that timelines and expected outcomes may vary in different organisations. This statement is also echoed by (Njinyah, 2017; Haddoud, 2017; Co0, 2017; Freel, Liu & Rammer, 2019).

Concerning export involvement goals, a grouping of strategies is essential, which may require the involvement and the approval from the stakeholders. This aspect is also discussed in the King Committee on Corporate Governance (2020). It is also seconded by Robinson, Sun and Arrigoni (2020), Greyling (2019), and Grama-Vigouroux, Saidi, Berthinier-Poncet, Vanhaverbeke and Madanamoothoo (2019). Such strategies are then reduced to practical programmes in order to determine what strategies and actions are deemed as more adequate solutions to mitigate export challenges and increase export involvement.

The implementation of export processes is determined by resources required to enable business growth by increasing the value of export goals.

An efficient implementation is governed by stakeholder buy-in to avoid conflicts of interests in changing situations, given the dynamic nature of export involvement. Therefore, export processes demand continuous control, which involves monitoring and evaluation on export activities, roles and responsibilities, as well as tools and practices employed in the attainment of export goals. This is also supported by Heiss (2017) and Santoro, Mazzoleni, Quaglia and Solima (2019).

Under these circumstances, new meanings can be explored while inconsistent export processes help SBs discover new perceptions by promoting process improvements.

Table 4.1: Summary of literature on export involvement processes

Concept	Description	Author and year
Export orientation, development and growth	Conceptual and dynamic development of export activities are critically significant to increase the export involvement.	Yan <i>et al.</i> 2018 Bodlaj, Kadic-Maglajlic and Vida, 2020 Kim and Hemmert, 2016 Dana <i>et al.</i> , 2016 Kahiya and Dean, 2015 Alaya, Maseda, Iturralde and Arzubiaga, 2019 Colclough, Moen and Hovd, 2019 Pagano and Castellani, 2016 Dominguez and Mayrhofer, 2017 Ferreras-Méndez <i>et al.</i> , 2019 Liu, Park and Whang, 2019 Battaglia <i>et al.</i> , 2018

Export processes for SBs	Export involvement processes employed by SBs are highlighted in the current study	Stouraitis <i>et al.</i> , 2016 Evangelista and Mac 2016 Cragg, 2019 Sinkovics <i>et al.</i> , 2018 Francioni <i>et al.</i> , 2016 Stoian <i>et al.</i> , 2018 O'dwyer and Gilmore 2018 Caiazza, 2016 Revindo <i>et al.</i> , 2017
Management characteristics		Alaya, Maseda, Iturralde and Arzubiaga, 2019 Jin and Cho 2018 Dominguez and Mayrhofer 2017 Catanzaro <i>et al.</i> , 2020 Kotorri and Krasniqi (2018) Wang <i>et al.</i> , 2017 Karipidis <i>et al.</i> , 2019 Reis and Forte, 2016 Kayabasi and Mtetwa, 2016 Mohsenzadeh and Ahmadian, 2016 Spyropoulou, <i>et al.</i> 2017 Nakku <i>et al.</i> , 2019

Table 4.1 provides a detailed synopsis of paramount studies on export involvement processes employed by SBs. The above studies emphasized that export involvement processes are entirely determined by management characteristics as they are significantly dynamic, nonlinear and less deterministic.

It was noted that government support is essential to sustain export involvement processes as they focus on the informational and experiential needs of a SB (Sharma *et al.*, 2016). It was also evident that SBs face constraints at different export involvement stages, which calls for customised export assistance.

However, low levels of awareness and participation subsequently result in ambiguous export involvement (Malca *et al.*, 2019). This may suggest a lack of trust and inconsistencies in the accessibility, timelines, and reliability of export programmes. Inconsistencies in the export programmes, involve aspects such as inadequate targeting and failure to address the needs of SBs at various stages of involvement (Sharma *et al.*, 2016). Hence, designing customised export programmes with identified varying constraints may foster a more pertinent and efficient involvement in foreign markets. This is in contrast with the findings of (Sharma *et al.*, 2016), which revealed that management characteristics serve as a potential indicator for successful involvement in foreign markets.

The current section focused on export involvement processes employed by SBs and government assistance export programmes. Such aspects aimed to address the issues of aligning management characteristics with industry and market dynamics to attain the intended development in export involvement.

4.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, export involvement processes, components and key aspects were discussed. The two export processes (sequential and dynamic) were discussed in detail. Various studies provided perspectives in favour of, and against such processes.

The current chapter provided the orientation on various export involvement process and aspects. Sequential and dynamic processes were discussed, based on various views for, and against these perspectives, based on existing literature. A theoretical analysis of these two perspectives were discussed from the outlook of SBs involved in export markets and industries. It was further revealed that export involvement processes are not a one size fits all due to export market dynamics and the competitive nature of industries that propel organisations in different directions.

The export involvement process cannot be viewed as an isolated event but is completed by interpreting and analysing a SB and its interconnectedness with its internal and external environments.

These two perspectives can be perceived as a systematic procedure to address export constraints in order to explore market opportunities by aligning managerial characteristics with market and industry dynamics influencing each SB differently.

Owner-managers are significantly involved in both the formulation and implementation of export involvement processes due to the smaller size of the businesses explored in this study. Existing literature revealed that the size does not necessarily influence export involvement competency; however, export constraints threatens to limit export growth.

It is critically important to note that export involvement processes vary according to the uniqueness of the organisation. Rua *et al.* (2017) discovered that what works in one SB cannot work in the other. This is confirmed by findings and interactions with participants of this study, which will be discussed in the subsequent chapters.

To conclude the comments on export involvement processes in this chapter, Haddoud (2017) emphasised the importance of government support through various forms of export programmes in differing stages of export involvement to minimise ambiguity in export involvement, while promoting growth.

CHAPTER 5: RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

5.1 INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the research design and methodology employed to address objectives and to answer questions. Research questions are summarised while the research designs and methodology employed are clearly defined. The kind of research method selected forms the crucial part of research design is also delineated. The current chapter further explains the analysis of subjective data, its interpretation, and research methods incorporated. Ethical considerations, trustworthiness and integrity form the essential part of this study.

Research is defined as an examination or enquiry aimed at exploring new information through knowledge development in light of new facts (Ngozwana, 2018). Research suggests that the development of new facts can be applied through qualitative and quantitative perspectives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The strength of both qualitative and quantitative methods can be achieved by using a mixed method to attain insights that may be difficult to accomplish if a single perspective is employed.

5.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The purpose of a research design, as defined by Abutabenjeh (2018), is to gain answers to the problem identified in the research. The research design helps to identify data sources, how it relates to us, how we can manage its flow and how we can make sense of it to develop new meanings and knowledge. The research design further provides a broader view of what we observe, in order to define the social structures, we live in (Abutabenjeh, 2018). It provides a conceptual framework to evaluate one's ethical beliefs, values, assumptions and practices. The research paradigm is used to provide the researcher's view of the world, driven by a set of shared beliefs that explains the interpretation of a dataset that outlines the desired outcomes of the phenomenon being studied (Ngozwana, 2018).

This study is exploratory in nature and has employed the constructivist paradigm, which suggests that reality is a subjective matter that is constructed by people in multiple social ways (Ngozwana, 2018). The constructivist paradigm allows human beings to observe realities that enable the assessment of factual possibilities based on the experiences of their interest (Ngozwana, 2018).

Fundamental assumptions revealed by Ngozwana (2018) and Bairagi and Munot (2019) attributed to the constructivism paradigm are listed below:

- Learning is a process that connects people with the world to gain a better understanding of complex knowledge about their social reality.
- In a constructivism perspective, peer discussions, collaborations and joint efforts are highly recognized in understanding the patterns and dynamics of the phenomenon.

- The constructivism approach recognizes that the contexts and values play a pivotal role in constructing knowledge through shared prior experiences and emerging concepts.
- Constructivists suggest that vigorous involvement in active interactions are critically important for constructive learning.

The researcher used the constructivism paradigm on the basis of interacting with participants to promote knowledge transfer and to discover new meanings about the export involvement processes employed in their establishments (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The researcher further acknowledged that contexts and values tend to vary in different environments. For instance, factors that results in success in one setting may not necessarily result in success in another setting. The constructivist paradigm is at the heart of shared people's lived experiences, rather than isolated experiences, yet the researcher learned that gaining a better understanding of individuals' realities and how they relate to the phenomenon in question is critical to constructing the meaning of participants' experiences.

The export involvement processes allow owner-managers to act jointly with other stakeholders by sharing ideas and opinions. This study aims to discover the interactions between export involvement processes and government support assistance through export programs in attaining unambiguous competencies of involvement in export activities.

The exploratory study is useful to discover problems, new notions, and new meanings thereof, using flexible research designs to gather and analyse the dataset in an in-depth fashion (Bairagi & Munot, 2019). Leedy and Ormrod (2016) further revealed that this type of study helps researchers arrive at conceptual distinctions by selecting participants that will address objectives in order to reach definitive conclusions with a clear mindset. Given its primary nature, exploratory may also be dependent on secondary data including literature, formal, and informal discussions with participants through interviews and observations (Bairagi and Munot, 2019). The researcher developed an interview guide to provide a structured focus of the main topics of the study to assist in collecting relevant information (Dodgson, 2017).

As mentioned by Creswell (2018), the research design constitutes a blueprint that guides a phenomenon to enhance the consistency, rigour, and credibility of the study. The research design promotes the discovery of new meanings and a better understanding of lived experiences in a natural setting (Dodgson, 2017). The appropriate research design helps to facilitate the harmony and consistency between the research objectives and questions as an attempt to understand the phenomenon in question under critical natural settings.

A quantitative perspective was not that appropriate for this study because of its non-human interactive nature unlike the qualitative perspective (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

This study aims to increase the awareness of the current phenomenon by acquiring new insights in order to develop answers to research questions (Tracy, 2020).

Unlike quantitative research, qualitative data as revealed by Tracy (2020), cannot be coded into numerical format due to its subjective nature as it adequately works with fewer participants by analysing each participant intensively to gain a better understanding. It is particularly appropriate when researching peoples' lived experiences, subjective, views and perceptions, such as export involvement processes and government supported export programs (Terry, Hayfield, Braun & Clark, 2017). Qualitative research enables researchers to collect systematic data in order to construct accurate descriptions of participants lived experiences and views (Terry *et al.*, 2017).

This study employed qualitative research, semi structured interviews and participants observations. The interviews were carried out using the interview guide to bridge a gap between the researcher and participants, covering essential topics of the study to maintain consistency during the exchange and connecting objectives and questions (Tracy, 2020). Semi-structured interviews, as suggested by van den Berg and Struwig (2017) and Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmich (2000), enable affordances such as participants open responses by promoting lines of discussions and interactions to discover new connotations about the topic being investigated. Semi-structured interviews were used in this study to facilitate trust-building by identifying emotions and experiences of authenticity as a crucial element of trustworthiness (Tracy, 2020). Open-ended and closed-ended questions, probing and prompts were employed to achieve extensive feedback from participants to record perceptions, experiences, and knowledge about the topic being researched (Pathak & Intrat, 2012). The interview guide helped the researcher to identify key topics of the phenomenon by using flexibility and adaptability on the part of the researcher (Pathak & Intrat, 2012). Follow-up questions were also used, enabling new discoveries by allowing the researcher to focus on the topic at hand without any possible deviations (Dodgson, 2017). The semi-structured interviews afforded the researcher the freedom to customise the interview questions to fit participants in natural settings, leading to the gathering of rich information through dialogues and participant observations (Creswell, 2018).

The incorporation of participant observations assisted the researcher to gain first-hand information about participants and their environment, including their actions and reactions, which increased the trustworthiness of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). In this study, the researcher became a member of the participants by obtaining a consent form to gain varying insights to address objectives (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

Semi-structured interviews, interview guides, and observations also assisted the researcher to determine the data saturation level (Tracy, 2020).

The data saturation level as defined by Tracy (2020) is a position that determines a sense of closure, because no additional information is discovered. A phenomenological research design was used to explore the current phenomenon in the historical context from which it emerged (Dodgson, 2017).

5.3 RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of conducting research is to gain perceptions about the topic being studied in order to discover facts and to reach meaningful conclusions (Gemma, 2018). Conducting research, as revealed by Tracy (2020) and Creswell (2018), promotes the expansion of views by collecting meaningful information when little is known about the topic being investigated. Research aims to bestow reality and truths through effective assessment of theories, concepts, processes, and practice (Kankam, 2019). The reality and truths uncovered will enhance the formulation, implementation and evaluation process and ultimately, decision-making processes (Kankam, 2019).

Alharahsheh and Pius (2020) define research philosophy as a set of interconnected assumptions and beliefs that provides the basis for data collection, analysis, and utilisation. The research discovers the underlying nature of reality, values, knowledge, and the contribution of data in the body of knowledge (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020).

Ontology refers to the investigation of practical issues that are significantly supported by an existing theory (Romani, Barmeyer, Primecz & Pilhofer, 2018). Ontology, as discussed by Romani, *et al.* (2018), aims to determine real issues and how they relate to each other in order to gain a better understanding, or ontological perspective, of the topic being investigated.

Epistemology is concerned with the investigation of information in order to reach meaningful conclusions (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017). Epistemology suggests that researchers should produce claims that are justifiable, credible, and believable to expand and contribute to the body of knowledge (Kivunja and Kuyini, 2017).

Ultimately, this study is found in the interpretivism research philosophy, which suggests that reality and knowledge are established by human beings in a social environment (Romani *et al.*, 2018). Interpretivism holds the believe that interpretation of knowledge is largely determined by experiences and behaviour that humans incorporate into their actions (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). Interpretivism is in contrast with positivism in that it conducts research in an in-depth manner, enabling human beings to arrive at decisions that are not linked to laws or policies of nature or social science (Kankam, 2019).

Interpretivism enables researchers to gain both a qualitative and a quantitative data set (Creswell, 2018). Positivism is perceived to be objective and significantly rigid, while interpretivism is cooperative and subjective (Tracy, 2020).

5.4 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND/ QUESTIONS

5.4.1 Primary research objective

(i) The **primary** objective of the study is to explore the export involvement processes employed by SBs operating in the City of Tshwane.

5.4.2 Secondary research objectives

(ii) To explore the influence of government support in the export involvement of SBs in the City of Tshwane.

(iii) To explore the perceptions of SB owner-managers on government support export programmes.

(iv) To learn about export involvement components employed by SBs in City of Tshwane.

(v) To explore the industry analysis tools employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane.

It was envisaged that export involvement processes are deemed an outcome of management characteristics and capabilities to use foreign market knowledge to exploit opportunities for achieving greater capabilities in export involvement.

5.4.3 Primary research question

(i) What are the export involvement processes employed by SBs operating in the City of Tshwane?

5.4.4 Secondary research questions

(ii) What is the influence of government support in the export involvement of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane?

(iii) What are the perceptions of SB owner-managers on government support export programmes?

(iv) Which export involvement components are employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane?

(v) Which industry analysis tools are employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane?

5.5 SAMPLING

Sampling is a procedure used to recruit participants of the study (Boddy, 2016; Mohajan, 2018). Sampling further outlines a way in which semi-structured interviews, the interview guide, and observations ought to be matched to ensure that findings and data collected are effectively aligned (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Sampling allowed the researcher to incorporate participants, settings and circumstances in order to attain substantial data (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). Sample size is determined by the research questions and objectives of the topic under study.

The size of the sample is driven by the research design considerations, to enable the generalization of the phenomenon under investigation (Moser & Korstjens, 2018). After an extensive assessment, a sample of 17 SBs operating in the City of Tshwane in the Gauteng region were selected. Within the context of national and global settings in relation to export involvement, government is a significant player in the diversification of export opportunities in the City (Mohajan, 2018). Due to this, the City is known to be a premium destination of choice that attracts the global investor community, which has produced potential participants for the phenomenon under this study. The study consisted of 17 participants; however, participants insisted that three colleagues partake in the interview symposium. This means that a total of 20 participants were involved in this study.

Developing a rapport goes to the heart of qualitative interview procedures (Tracy, 2020). The rapport perspective in this study made participants feel more comfortable to share sensitive information about their lived experiences, thereby exercising flexibility in their responses. Owing to challenges experienced by the researcher in finding the appropriate participants, the researcher used the Internet to locate participants with long-term experience in export involvement within their respective industries. Participants in this study were located within the automotive, logistics, tourism, and agricultural sectors.

The research objectives and the literature review are used to define, interpret, and explain the current phenomenon, resulting in the development of themes and research questions. Because this study seeks to identify possible differences in views between various participants, such words as “the selection of participants” is preferred, as opposed to the use of the word “sampling”. The next section will discuss the selection of participants, measuring instruments, interpretation, and data analysis.

5.6 THE SELECTION OF PARTICIPANTS

The interpretation of events and experiences is understood and defined in various contexts under different situations. Therefore, the appropriate selection of participants is critically significant, as explained by Gaus (2017) and Tracy (2020), due to the following reasons:

- Develop theories that will enable generalisation of findings, as it is not feasible to study the entire population.

- Enables researchers to study a manageable number of participants, leading to reduced costs.
- Time availability suggests a smaller number in order to attain a consistent comparison of findings.

Due to the above cognition, the researcher only had access to owner-managers operating within the City of Tshwane with the aim of gaining a better understanding of export involvement processes employed in their establishments, and how government assistance export programs influence their competencies in export involvement.

This study employed purposive sampling in detailing the owner-managers to be included in the sample. Ames, Glenton and Lewin (2019) defines selection of participants as a strategy that allows the incorporation of own judgement when selecting a sample. This study selected participants who corresponded with the objectives and whose experiences and interests are adequately aligned with the export involvement processes employed by owner-managers (Ames *et al.*, 2019). This method is useful when the researcher aims to gain access to a specific group of subjects by rejecting those who do not fit the inclusion criteria given its cost and time effective nature. It is deemed appropriate in this study, since a limited number of data sources were only restricted to the City of Tshwane, to make a purposeful contribution to the study.

The purposive perspective was of use to the researcher in reducing errors of judgment by selecting participants that will help address objectives resulting in lower levels of bias and higher levels of credibility, despite the structures and environments in which SBs operate (Tracy, 2020; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

As indicated earlier, the sample was drawn from the Internet. The target population was significantly large as it consisted of owner-managers of different genders, colour, and ethnic groups. Consequently, 20 participants, including their three colleagues were selected to describe the major influences of a larger population concerning the export involvement processes employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane, and government support in influencing their export activities. The method of sampling was non-random to allow the researcher to identify the central tendency amongst different participants. This method is appropriate when the researcher seeks to achieve low levels of variability in experiences given the heterogenous nature of selected participants (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmich, 2000).

The research used the following criteria in selecting potential participants specifying key attributes to qualify partaking in the study:

- The participant must be in a managerial position.
- The participant must have at least 12 months involvement in export activities.

- The participants must operate in the City of Tshwane.

It is essential to indicate that participants' demographic and business information will be described in Chapter six.

As indicated by Ames *et al.* (2019) and Diamantopoulos and Schlegelmich (2000), the sample size cannot be determined without the proper assessment of the influences relative to theoretical and practical perspectives, because the time scales and resources needed cannot be established, resulting in poor planning. Due to this, the researcher decided on 20 participants to deliver credible findings, resulting in the development of themes and better meanings (Diamantopoulos & Schlegelmich, 2000).

Saturation is increasingly known to be a gold standard employed to determine purposive sample size in social science research (Lowe, Norris, Farris & Babbage, 2018). Saturation is known as a point where concepts, categories, and themes cannot be filled with new additional data (Lowe *et al.*, 2018). Ultimately, the recommended number of 20 participants may increase over time if saturation is not reached.

It is essential to note that this method afforded the researcher a freedom of flexibility when choosing the participants, due to its subjective nature. It further enabled the researcher to select members with rich export experiences in their respective industries to share valuable information about export involvement processes and the influence of government support when export activities are carried out.

Researcher bias, due to error of judgement on what is deemed significant when selecting members of the study, may limit the credibility and replicability of the study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The lack of study generalisation due to researcher bias may be noted as another limitation.

Despite these limitations, the researcher took necessary measures to minimise them as much as possible to enhance the reliability of the study. The researcher minimised bias by using a wide range of credible sources to develop a comprehensive understanding and to enhance the confidence of this study. Findings of this study were reviewed by peers and experts in the same field to determine the quality of the manuscript. The name of the researcher was hidden to minimize bias when the manuscript was sent for a reviewing process. A rapport was established by the researcher to build an interconnection between the researcher and the participants and to establish relationships of mutual trust and respect.

5.7 MEASURING INSTRUMENTS

A semi-structured interview guide was employed as a primary instrument to collect data to cover the main topics stemming from the objectives and questions (Akinyode & Khan, 2018; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

The interview guide also included follow-up questions and comments deriving from participants responses and expressions using previous and existing studies (Kallio, Pietila, Johnson & Kangasniemi, 2016). Some participants provided the researcher with company information, such as invoices, Requests for Quotations (RFQ), certificates of compliance, and other information.

Questions asked were related to export involvement processes employed and how government assistance export programs had a role in the development of export activities. Such questions were participant-orientated open and closed-ended to invite elaborative answers. The application of this method assisted in achieving rich data to address objectives and enhance the trustworthiness of the study (Kallio *et al.*, 2016). Moreover, questions in the interview guide were distinctly worded while leading questions were avoided where possible (Kallio *et al.*, 2016).

5.7.1 Questions included in the Interview guide

Table 5.1 below, attempts to provide reasoning in relation to the interview questions alongside authors who contributed to the literature to this effect. The interview guide consisted of introductory questions such as academic and industry related qualifications. Demographic factors, such as sector, position, qualifications, years of experience and so on were included.

Open-ended questions were used to gain elaborative and conversational responses from demographic factors, which allowed the interview to be a true reflection of participants.

Table 5.1: Questions in the interview guide and research questions

No	Question	Reasoning	Author and year
1.	How long have you been part of management in your business?	Management Characteristics, unsystematic risks associated with industry and export market dynamics. In addition, RBV suggests that a SB possesses a bundle of unique capabilities, core competencies, knowledge and skills	Alexy, West, Klapper and Reitzig, 2017, Jeronimo et al., 2019, Alonso & Bressan, 2016, Dassler, 2015.
2.	In gaining knowledge of how the export market works, what educational background did you acquire?	Education and skills increase managerial commitment to export activities. In addition, export qualifications and educational background increases export readiness, thereby contributing to intended levels of involvement	Fernandez-Ortiz, Ortiz and Emeterio, 2015 Santhosh, 2019

3.	<p>During your tenure, what were the major changes you observed in relation to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The manner in which your business operates? • The external environment? • Resource availability? 	<p>Environmental analysis tools are concerned with the alignment of management characteristics with environmental factors. Such tools help managers visualize organisational strengths and weaknesses</p>	<p>Ivančić, Mencer, Jelenc, Dulčić, 2017, Butarbutar and Lisdayanti, 2020, Chebo and Kute, 2019, Chan and Ma, 2016</p>
4.	<p>Describe the export involvement process within your business</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is involved and what are their key roles? • What tools do they employ in the implementation phase? 	<p>Export involvement processes range from sequential or gradual to evolutionary or dynamic processes. Some businesses apply both, some apply one perspective, depending on varying internal and external constraints confronting the SB. Export process (s) do not have a deterministic structure due to dynamic nature of the environments associated with export markets</p>	<p>Gkypali, et al., 2021 Akbar <i>et al.</i>, 2019 Figueroa <i>et al.</i>, 2014 Wang <i>et al.</i>, 2018 Wąsowska, 2016 Revindo <i>et al.</i>, 2017 Dominguez, 2018 Gerschewski, ScottKennel and Rose, 2020 Tan <i>et al.</i>, 2018 Namada <i>et al.</i>, 2017 Lecerf and Omrani, 2019 Breckova, 2016</p>
5.	<p>Do you participate in government support export programs?</p>	<p>The capacity of export involvement is also determined by the level of support received from government</p>	<p>Coudounaris, 2018 Torres <i>et al.</i>, 2015 Njinyah, 2017</p>
6.	<p>What do you think can be done to enhance export involvement processes?</p>	<p>Export involvement process (s) is non-linear and dynamic. For progressive improvement to occur, it suggests a review and continuous assessment to predict current and future threats and opportunities.</p>	<p>Akbar <i>et al.</i>, 2019 Figueroa <i>et al.</i>, 2014</p>

7.	<p>How has your experience influenced the capacity of export involvement in your organisation in regards to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying opportunities in export markets? • Building global partnership? • Achieving an unambiguous development of export involvement? 	<p>Prior export experience increases capabilities and competencies. Resource Base Review suggest the development of skills, experience and foreign knowledge</p>	<p>Dassler, 2015. Safari and Saleh, 2019 Celec and Globocnik, 2017 Figuroa <i>et al.</i>, 2014</p>
8.	<p>When examining your current export involvement process, what works well and what are you proud of?</p>	<p>This is concerned with continual evaluation of export constraints when switching from sequential to dynamic processes. Identifying the influence of internal and external constraints at different stages of export involvement</p>	<p>Revindo <i>et al.</i>, 2017 Dominguez, 2018</p>
9.	<p>How involved are you in your day-to-day export activities?</p>	<p>The extent of involvement is determined by management characteristics such as commitment, attitude and perceptual differences towards export activities. Noting that management commitments shift in response to industry and export market uncertainties.</p>	<p>Dai and Li, 2019 Behmiri <i>et al.</i>, 2019 Kipsaat, 2019 Rodil <i>et al.</i>, 2016</p>
10.	<p>What are the training interventions you implemented to improve your export involvement?</p>	<p>Actions that owner managers take to enhance the employees through learning and growth opportunities. Resource based review suggests the development of new skills, learning and knowledge</p>	<p>Padachi and Bhiwajee, 2015 Boso <i>et al.</i>, 2019</p>
11.	<p>Do you have employee orientation for new management team members?</p>	<p>Resource based review is concerned with equipping employees with essential information, skills and capabilities to prepare them to execute export activities</p>	<p>Jeronimo <i>et al.</i>, 2019</p>

12.	What other roles do you play in your organisation?	The competency of involvement is determined by management characteristics such as attitude and commitment	Behmiri <i>et al.</i> , 2019
13.	Do you have any comments on what has already been discussed?	The aim is to make a provision for new themes, concepts, and categories that may emerge during interviews and observations.	To emerge during interactions with participants
	Research Questions	Reasoning	Author and year
1	What are the export involvement processes employed by SBs operating in the City of Tshwane?	Identification of export processes helps an SB to determine their stages of involvement to minimize risks and variability over time in foreign markets	Gkypali <i>et al.</i> , 2021
2	What is the influence of government support in the export involvement of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane?	Export programmes act as an external agent to boost export involvement to help SBs achieve unambiguous growth in foreign markets	Boso <i>et al.</i> , 2019
3	What are the perceptions of SB owner-managers on government support export programmes?	Perceptions about export programmes helps to determine their effectiveness to form a basis for evaluation and monitoring	Sharma <i>et al.</i> , 2016
4	Which export involvement components are employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane?	Perceived export involvement components are often regarded critical to execute competent functions in a dynamic and turbulent export market	Malca <i>et al.</i> , 2019 Jin and Cho 2018 Miocevic and Morgan (2016)
5	Which industry analysis tools are employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane?	Industry analysis tools assist to locate the main constraint influencing export involvement competencies	Swoboda and Olejnik, 2019

5.8 DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

Challenges such as ambiguity and data variability were taken into account during data collection and analysis. In addition, due to size and complexity of the dataset, it is often not easy to transform it into findings (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). To manage such shortcomings Akinyode and Khan (2018) suggest follow-up conversations via emails and telephone calls to gain extended clarity and to invite greater discussion in order to reduce data ambiguity and variability (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). The researcher employed a member checking concept, which placed participants as co-data analysts and co-data

interpreters to discover meanings of participants' realities and the researcher's understanding of those realities. Member checking enables an active involvement of participants in the co-building of research findings in collaboration with the researcher (Tracy, 2020).

Given the above views, there were situations where emails and telephone calls were used to gain additional information from participants. As highlighted in various sections of the study, owner managers involved in export activities who operate from the City of Tshwane were selected to obtain data. The data was then broken down into various parts using the Atlas.ti software program to attain meanings (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The researcher read and re-read data in detail with a different focus to gain familiarity in order to identify patterns, themes, categories, and subtexts in the data to explain different phenomena observed. As indicated earlier, the data collection process included semi-structured interviews and participants' observations. Some participants agreed to being recorded, while some declined, due to the sensitivity of company information, and actively interacted comfortably when the recording was off. In line with ethical guidelines, participants were reminded of voluntary participation and that there is no punishment or loss of gains in participating in this study due to rejecting the recording.

A thematic analysis was employed to determine potential similarities and pattern meaning within the dataset (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018).

It further offers the interpretation, deep thinking about the essentials, meanings, and implications that exist within data (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). The analysis was carried out using Atlas.ti to make sense of data by gaining a better understanding that will help address research objectives by reaching quality findings (Mohajan, 2018). The Atlas.ti program afforded the researcher the opportunity to analyse compound data concealed in formless structure (Creswell, 2018). This was attained by identifying primary data segments, assessing their significance in relations to others, and visualising the comprehensive similarities to draw purposeful deductions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). For instance, the researcher used a wide range of primary material, including text, audio and video recordings, and pictures (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The reason for using a thematic analysis and Atlas.ti software, is due to the theoretical flexibility associated with them (Akinyode & Khan, 2018). In addition, the interpretation of data is directed by the reflexivity of the researcher's personal assumptions on participants lived experiences relative to export involvement processes and government support export programme's influences on the development of SBs' involvement in export activities (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Thematic analysis is a process of exploring similarities and interconnections between datasets, while Atlas.ti software, as noted by Leedy and Ormrod (2016) is used to find connections and new meanings by bringing flexibility in complex data to gain a deeper understanding.

The researcher applied six steps of thematic analysis identified by Leedy and Ormrod (2016), and Terry *et al.* (2017). Such steps suggest that qualitative analysis is a repetitious process as it entails moving back and forth between the steps to explore similarities and relationships before moving to the next step.

The thematic analysis steps are outlined as follows:

- **Step 1** involves identifying similarities through data familiarisation, which involves theme discerning, theme describing, theme assessment, coding, and categorisation in preparation for report writing.
- **Step 2** involves coding by reading the text line by line and word for word in relation to the literature, and integrating codes with literature relevant to the research objectives
- **Step 3** involves creating themes, and linking them with patterns. The researcher achieved this by linking similar words, phrases, and sentences that may influence research objectives. Such elements were organised according to common characteristics.
- **Step 4** encompasses a theme assessment by aligning extracts with dataset and research objectives. This was done by reducing the volume of the dataset in a flexible manner to increase the quality of findings. The researcher achieved this by using credible sources to develop preconceived concepts with the purpose of conceptualising patterns.
- **Step 5** focuses on naming themes by connecting those with similar ideas and concepts to capture significant elements about the dataset. This allowed the researcher to analyse constructed data at various levels in a gradual manner.
- **Step 6** is the write-up phase, where the researcher focuses on articulating the story of the dataset and comparing it with existing literature.

Data was transcribed and typed into MS Word documents. Data was edited to perform a data cleaning exercise for error observation and error service. Only at this phase was data imported into Atlas.ti software. Atlas.ti. was used to analyse unstructured data by identifying patterns, which were coded and grouped into words, phrases, sentences and paragraphs to form themes.

This was done to address the research objectives and to answer the research questions and connect it with the literature.

5.9 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Ethical considerations highlight the importance of ethical principles and data integrity when conducting research on export involvement processes employed by SBs and how government support export programs influence the development of export activities (Arifin, 2018).

While Creswell (2018) reveal that ethical considerations emphasise the adherence to ethical principles, including protection from harm, informed consent, respect for colleagues and protection of participants' rights. Such principles are the pillars of ethical practices.

Data collected through interviews and observations will be used solely for the purpose of research. Participants were audibly informed of their rights, particularly the right to withdraw from the study. Participants were further assured of their protection from harm, distress, disadvantages, and risks while study benefits were maximized.

The following ethical principles were employed in this study:

- Voluntary participation

This study was conducted on a voluntary basis. Based on this criterion, participants were informed that the decision to accept or decline participation in the study rested upon them and that they were free to withdraw from the study anytime. Voluntary participation reflects participants' willingness to take part in the study after explaining risks and benefits associated with the study (Cooper & Schindler, 2014).

- Informed consent

All participants who took part in the study were informed of the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study. Participants were further informed of their roles in the study and the duration of their involvement. After having explained the implications, participants were provided with a detailed informed consent letter to sign prior to participation. The researcher adhered to the ethical principles of respect, do no harm, and protection of participants' rights. These principles were followed with the purpose of maintaining the well-being of participants.

TEDA granted the researcher a permission letter to conduct the study, and the database of participants was located from the internet. The researcher located 20 owner-managers who are involved in export activities operating in the City of Tshwane. Gatekeepers who are involved in controlling access rights and permission to interact with export businesses in the City of Tshwane were contacted to build mutual trust and confidence. It is important to note that permission to conduct the research was granted and support was provided.

- Confidentiality

Confidentiality and protection of participants' private information was maintained by removing crucial identifiers, such as participants' names and physical addresses.

Participants were informed that the information obtained from interviews and observations will only be used for research purposes. This was done to increase trust and accordingly appropriate settings were chosen for all study procedures and discussions to occur at participants' convenient private venues.

- Anonymity

Participants were assured that their names and company private information will not be recorded. Data obtained during interviews and observations will not be shared with a third party, other than the study supervisor, and no identifying information will be shared that is linked to participants' identities.

As suggested by Cooper and Schindler (2014), the application of ethical standards aims to generate sound and credible findings by avoiding various aspects of academic misconducts such as plagiarism and fabrication of data. Academic research is constructed on the foundation of trust in order to minimise risks (Tight, 2015). Ethical risks were reduced by ensuring that interview questions were unambiguous and easy to understand. This was done by linking all questions to the main topic being investigated. This was done to avoid bias and to maintain consistency.

Confidentiality and privacy of participants was protected by concealing information linked to their names and or business addresses.

Moreover, it is critically imperative for researchers to be wary of the context of conflicts and commit to do no harm and moral shame to human subjects (Gear, Eppel & Koziol-Mclain, 2018). As indicated by Gear *et al.* (2018) in any conflict there are dividers and linkers, the researcher's efforts should be directed at refraining from any form of harm, be it psychological, physical, legal, social, economic, and so on. Furthermore, the researcher moved beyond harm depletion by avoiding possible exploitation and oppression of participants by means of explaining the purpose, risks, and benefits of the study. The researcher adhered to all ethical standards by conducting the research with high integrity. The researcher further applied and obtained formal ethical clearance from the designated institution, which is attached as an appendix to this study.

5.9.1 Piloting the interview guide

The researcher conducted a pilot study of three interviews to determine the quality of the questions and to enhance the interview processes while gaining some knowledge and experience (Majid, Othman, Mohamad, Lim & Yusof, 2017). As deduced by (Majid, et al. (2017) and (Pruzan, 2016) pilot study assist in identifying the potential limitations early in order to allow necessary adjustments to the main study.

The pilot study assisted the research to enhance the validity and credibility of the interview guide (Malmqvist, *et al.*, 2019). Another interview was carried out with a peer in the field of export involvement. This interview was conducted in order to identify research methods that appropriate and those that are inappropriate to the main study by capturing the main attributes related to the topic being studied as indicated by (Malmqvist, *et al.*, 2019). The researcher collected feedback from participants to determine any inconsistencies in the interview guide to improve effectiveness in the questions (Malmqvist, *et al.*, 2019).

5.10 TRUSTWORTHINESS

The criteria linking trustworthiness and integrity of qualitative data are credibility, validity, dependability, transferability, reliability, and confirmability. Trustworthiness aims to describe how believable the findings of the study are, mainly in the analysis and interpretation of data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

Credibility is deemed as a paramount criterion used to evaluate the quality and the integrity of the qualitative study (Mohajan, 2018). It suggests that prolonged interactions with participants, persistent observations, and peer reviews that are used to ensure qualitative findings derive from data (Saunders *et al.*, 2012). This is to ensure that findings are consistent to address research objectives and questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The researcher aimed to achieve the interconnectedness between data and existing literatures.

Validity is concerned with the extent of data accuracy to influence the generalisation of findings (Hadi & Closs, 2016; Saunders *et al.*, 2012). Validity also serves to evaluate the researcher's level of confidence linked with the appropriateness of findings based on the research methods employed in the study (Hadi & Closs, 2016). It further aims to align the appropriateness of descriptions, analysis, interpretations, and conclusions (Hadi & Closs, 2016).

Reflexivity promotes validity by minimising the element of bias, since bias cannot be entirely removed by enhancing the effective engagement between participants and the researcher (Amankwaa, 2016). The researcher used a reflective perspective to contemplate the extent to which personal background, values and belief systems may have influenced research findings (Amankwaa, 2016). This was done to limit the element of bias and subjectivity. Reflectivity perspective assisted the researcher to creatively synthesise an informed analysis and interpretation of findings in line with the literature to answer research questions and objectives using inductive reasoning (Amankwaa, 2016). Research strategies such as triangulation were used to enhance the validity and the credibility of the phenomenon being studied (Amankwaa, 2016; Leedy & Ormrod, 2016)

Dependability is closely associated with reliability as it is concerned with observable variability in the study (Lemon & Hayes, 2020; Saunders *et al.*, 2012). The researcher managed the extent of variability by gaining additional insights in the form of grouping participants with similar experiences to produce sound deductions. For instance, the researcher aimed to sustain stability of data over a certain period under different circumstances by constantly aligning data with the literature to achieve study credibility (Kalu & Bwalya, 2017). Transferability is concerned with the degree to which findings can be applied outside of the context of the study, which is driven by similarities observed in such contexts (Lemon & Hayes, 2020). As noted by Lemon and Hayes (2020), transferability rests on the researcher who attempts to transfer similar findings in various settings using different participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). In this context, the researcher is answerable to search for additional information by creating links and connections in line with the findings and literature (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Confirmability of findings is central to qualitative research as it seeks to ensure that data collected is linked to all essential elements of the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The researcher achieved this by ensuring that participants' views and lived experiences were captured as a true reflection of the present phenomenon, while minimising the perceptions of the researcher. Furthermore, the researcher made follow-up discussions via telephone calls and emails to afford a meaningful engagement by allowing them to share meaningful insights (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). Participants were informed of the availability of study recommendations and conclusions upon request for their reflections. The researcher incorporated member checking to enhance the accuracy of findings, and to determine if there was a need for additional data to be collected. Member checking assisted the researcher to minimise errors, while enhancing the credibility of the study.

Reliability is known as the standard used to confirm the truthfulness of data analysis and interpretation (Goodell, Stage & Cooke, 2016). It further describes the magnitude at which research procedures are able to produce similar findings in different circumstances and yet the replications do not cause any dynamics and inconsistencies of findings (Goodell *et al.*, 2016). The notion of reliability is significantly determined by consistent analysis and interpretation of the dataset (Goodell *et al.*, 2016). Consistency based on unvarying analysis and interpretation of data was critically considered by the researcher. As suggested by Leedy and Ormrod (2016), a qualitative enquiry acknowledges the uniqueness of participants' varying circumstances. However, it also supports repetitive lived experiences instead of diverse experiences. Leedy and Ormrod (2016) proposed interactions with participants to gain additional information as well as follow-up discussions through telephone calls and emails to achieve saturation. In light of the above suggestion, there were instances where an email was sent to gain a comprehensive understanding of the phenomenon (Amankwaa, 2016). The saturation point led to the emergence of themes for qualitative thematic analysis that assisted the researcher to yield credible findings.

A signed declaration by the researcher will also be available upon request. The researcher used reflexivity as an attempt to determine validity in order to assess the credibility of findings.

Achieving the generalisation of results is paramount in order to be make it feasible for the study to be explored in different settings and contexts (Amankwaa, 2016).

5.11 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher discussed research design and methodology. Research objectives, research questions, and research methods employed were also considered. The type of research employed in the study as part of the research design was also discussed. Furthermore, other key aspects considered were units of analysis. The researcher described a manner in which data was analysed and interpreted. Ethical considerations, trustworthiness and integrity elements were also considered towards the end of the chapter. The next chapter will focus on the presentation, analysis, and interpretation of findings.

CHAPTER 6: DATA ANALYSIS AND RESEARCH FINDINGS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Primary data in the current study was carried out during December 2019 and January 2020 in the automotive, logistics, tourism and agricultural sectors with the aim of exploring the export involvement of SBs and government support (export programmes). These sectors are located within the global network, and are exhibiting higher export involvement, with a sound comparative advantage within the South African economy (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2018/19). The purpose of the chapter is to report on findings of the qualitative research. The chapter will commence with a biographical profile of the participants' business information, in the context of seeking to determine the extent of export involvement of SBs. This is followed by the analysis of responses (themes) concerning export involvement and government support. Themes serve to address the research objectives, which were extracted from Atlas.ti. The findings of the current chapter include field notes captured by the researcher during the data collection process, which encompass participants' responses to questions incorporated in the interview guide. Qualitative instruments employed are semi-structured interviews and participant observations with the intention to obtain, analyse, and interpret the dataset.

6.2 DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION OF PARTICIPANTS

This section reports on the demographic information of participants. Table 6.1 below, reports on the biographical information of participants in their respective sectors. This includes gender, race, level of education, position, and years of experience.

Table 6.1: Biographical information of participants

Primary document number	Interview Number	Sector	Gender	Race	Education level	Position	Years of management experience
1	INT1	Automotive	Female	White	Short course	Manager	20
2	INT2	Automotive	Male	White	Short course	Manager	16
3	INT3	Automotive	Male	White	Short course	Owner-manager	10-20
4&5	INT4	Logistics	Male	White	Short course	Owner/manager	40
6	INT6	Logistics	Female	White	Matric	Owner/manager	30
7	INT7	Logistics	Female	White	Matric	Owner/manager	10-20
8	INT8	Logistics	Male	Asian	Matric	Owner/manager	27

9	INT9	Logistics	Male	Black	Matric	Owner/manager	7
10&11	INT10	Logistics	Female	Black	Matric	Owner/manager	15
12	INT12	Logistics	Female	White	Matric	Manager	16
13	INT13	Logistics	Male	Black	Matric	Owner/manager	20
14	INT14	Tourism	Male	White	Incomplete B Com	Owner/manager	24
15	INT15	Tourism	Male	White	Incomplete B Com	Owner/manager	24
16&17	INT16	Tourism	Male	White	Diploma	Owner/manager	20
18	INT18	Tourism	Female	White	Matric	Manager	36
19	INT19	Agriculture	Male	White	Incomplete LLB	Manager	17
20	INT20	Agriculture	Male	White	Matric	Manager	10-20

Table 6.1 depicts that participants were predominantly white males with incomplete post matric qualifications. The table also shows the sectors involved in the current study, the positions of participants, and the years of experience in export involvement. This was done to ensure that participants meet the inclusion and exclusion criteria as set out in Chapter 1, Section 1.11.4.

6.3 BUSINESS INFORMATION

This section reports on the businesses that participated in the study. Elements in the table sector, area of expertise, and mode of entry used to enter into the export markets.

Table 6.2: Business information

Primary document number	Interview number	Sector	Area of expertise	Government Support (export programmes)	Joint venture	Global networking & agents	Strategic alliance
1	INT1	Automotive	Parts manufacturer	Yes	Yes	No	No
2	INT2	Automotive	Parts manufacturer	Yes	Yes	No	No
3	INT3	Automotive	Parts manufacturer	Yes	Yes	No	No
4&5	INT4	Logistics	Logistics services	No	No	Yes	Yes
6	INT6	Logistics	Logistics services	No	No	Yes	Yes
7	INT7	Logistics	Logistics services	No	No	Yes	Yes

8	INT8	Logistics	Logistics services	No	No	Yes	Yes
9	INT9	Logistics	Logistics services	No	No	Yes	Yes
10&11	INT10	Logistics	Logistics services	No	No	Yes	Yes
12	INT12	Logistics	Logistics services	No	No	Yes	Yes
13	INT13	Logistics	Logistics services	No	No	Yes	Yes
14	INT14	Tourism	Tourism services	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
15	INT15	Tourism	Tourism services	No	No	Yes	Yes
16&17	INT16	Tourism	Tourism services	No	No	Yes	Yes
18	INT18	Tourism	Tourism services	No	No	Yes	Yes
19	INT19	Agriculture	Machine producer	No	No	No	No
20	INT20	Agriculture	Meat producer	No	No	No	No

Table 6.2 depicts information about businesses that participated in the study. This also includes information about businesses that are member managed and or manager managed. The study is aimed at SBs with a growing export involvement, as they will assist in answering the research questions. The area of expertise suggests that businesses can tailor their products or services to fit customer demands. Businesses were also selected that used government support export programmes to determine the influence in assisting SBs overcome constraints enabling growth of export involvement. In the current study, entry modes used by participants to access export markets were joint ventures and global networking to establish strategic alliances. SBs in the study are defined in accordance to the NSBA Act of 2003-2004 in Chapter 1 (see section 1.5), in which SBs employ 50 or less people generating an annual turnover of R150 000 to R25 million.

6.4 DATA ANALYSIS

The purpose of the study is to explore the role of government support (export programmes) and the export involvement of SBs (see chapter 1 section 1.2.4). Qualitative data analysis employs words to describe a phenomenon, instead of numbers, allowing the researcher to identify patterns, trends, themes and associations within datasets (Scott & Garner, 2013). It is concerned with data reduction, without losing the essence of the phenomenon. Qualitative data analysis helped the researcher to further explore constraints and strategies used by SBs to grow their export involvement. This was achieved by examining and analysing insights within datasets.

Qualitative thematic analysis is known for its theoretical flexibility in exploring similarities between the data (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Qualitative thematic analysis encompasses assimilations, describing and reviewing themes and coding (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The purpose of thematic analysis is to identify and analyse pattern meaning within datasets (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

Thematic analysis has been employed in the current study to identify similarities and patterns across datasets. Data analysis process was executed using inductive coding. Inductive coding was deemed suitable in the current study to identify key themes and to reveal the influence of government support in export involvement of SBs. Inductive coding assisted the researcher to assign order on the field by describing what has been observed in terms of categories using open-ended and closed-ended questions in the semi-structured interview guide and participant observations to gain insights on the phenomenon (Tracy, 2020). Interviews and participants' observations were transcribed by the researcher to provide contextualised data as suggested by (Tracy, 2020). Self-transcribing qualitative data is deemed suitable when exploring sensitive phenomenon such as government support and export involvement of SBs (Tracy, 2020). For this reason, some participants declined interviews and observations as they were not confident and comfortable discussing them, even after the reassurance of privacy and confidentiality by the researcher. The researcher firstly browsed through all the transcripts. The researcher then re-read the transcripts to gain insights and awareness of data sets.

Similar words, expressions, and sections of data sets were labelled (coded). The labelling process included participants' actions, activities, opinions, and lived experiences deemed relevant to answer the research questions (government support-export programmes and export involvement of SBs). Labels (codes) were assigned to represent key aspects of data and to capture the essence of data sets. Repeated words, expressions, and phrases were sorted (coded) into categories based on the similarities to reduce the data sets (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). Codes and categories were synthesised in the reflection of data sets and existing literature, using bottom-up inductive reasoning as recommended by (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016).

The purpose of coding is to link data sets with existing literature to address research questions (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Existing literature and data were used to develop key concepts (codes). Labelled words and sections of data sets were coded, using preconceived codes in the consideration of research questions and objectives.

Atlas.ti was used to make sense of datasets and to gain insights from code frequency (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The software program, Atlas ti. was employed to enhance the trustworthiness of data analysis (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). Atlas.ti assisted the researcher to adjust the scope of analysis to focus on the datasets that will address research questions. Transcribed interviews were saved on Atlas.ti.

The researcher protected participants' identities by using the Atlas.ti referencing structure. For instance, the primary document number is represented by (P01), while the interview number is referenced (INT01). P= stands for participant while INT= stands for interview.

6.5 FIELDNOTES

Field notes are crucial components in qualitative research, as they represent critical datasets of the study (Ritchie & Lewis, 2003). It is notable that field notes enhance the dataset, leading to a rich context of qualitative data analysis process. Tracy (2020) explains that deciding what to note is determined by the research questions and the focus of the study. In the current study, field notes allowed the insightful awareness of government support in the export involvement of SBs alongside constraints inhibiting the increase of export involvement. This led to a significant contrast between high, moderate, and low export involvement of SBs in global markets. Personal reflective notes of the researcher were captured, including emotions, expectations, experiences, future insights, and perspectives. Some photos and videos were taken to serve as evidence of data analysis phases. Some participants respectfully rejected photos and videos to protect their identity and company information. Those who agreed to be recorded were specific about sections of the data collection to be recorded. Conversational interactions were high when the recording was off. The researcher explained the purpose and procedures of the research prior to data collection and obtained consent forms from participants and reminded participants about their voluntary participation in the study, as recommended by Cooper and Schindler (2014). Field notes also included the researcher's assumptions about certain phenomena regarded as prominent for annotations to address research questions. The researcher used her judgement in determining what was worthy to be documented in the field notes (Tracy, 2020).

6.6 PARTICIPANTS

Leedy and Ormrod (2016) explain the unbiased role played by the researcher during interviews and observations to gather credible insights. Table 6.3 depicts insights related to the environment and the conditions experienced by the researcher during interviews and observations.

The researcher used pseudonyms to protect participant identity and company information. The researcher provides a narrative about the interviews and observations of each participant.

Table: 6.3: Interview context

Interview 1	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery elements noted</p> <p>The interview was conducted at the participant’s office. She rejected an audio recording and requested the researcher to journal her responses. It was a challenge as she speaks fast. The researcher arrived 20 minutes before the interview. The interview was interrupted by telephone calls; however, the participant picked up the receiver and informed the person about the interview in progress. The participant is an export sales manager who is responsible for selling components and parts to local and global consumers. Her vast experience in the automotive industry was evident. She has been in this role for 3 years and has entered into a joint venture with a company from Switzerland. Regulatory, political, and economic differences were a notable criticism to a business export involvement.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>The participant shared business information concerning plant layout and costeffective manufacturing processes. The participant indicated that the plant’s team has the knowledge and expertise to help the company produce parts in a cost-effective way. The participant mentioned acute constraints, including resources, social unrests, competition, and exchange rates. She also shared strategies developed to manage constraints in order to enhance their export involvement.</p>
Interviewee 2	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The researcher arrived at a participant’s place of work to learn that the intended participant was on urgent paternity leave. An alternative production manager was arranged at short notice. The interview took place in a boardroom and the participant rejected the audio recording. The participant was open to sharing information about business challenges and success. He offered to assist the researcher with any further clarity if the need arose. The participant is in a joint venture with a German business to gain market access and scale efficiencies.</p> <p>At the time, the participant had been in a plant production management role for 1 year and has 20 years of experience in the</p>

	<p>automotive sector with previous companies. The participant shared insights on strategies developed to maintain their export involvement. He further shared some light on exporting constraints facing the business. Lack of skilled workers and resources were some of the constraints mentioned.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>The researcher observed that the participant's export involvement is positioned within the major OEMs' supply chains. The participant arranged a plant tour for the researcher to learn about various manufacturing processes within the plant. The participant mentioned that the plant focuses on tracing best solutions for dynamic applications in various sections of the production line. He also shared light on business successes and issues related to their export involvement. Government support in strengthening their export involvement was made evident by presenting some signed agreements (documents) and certificates.</p>
Interviewee 3	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The interview was booked by the researcher via telephone calls and emails. The researcher made several calls and sent emails, which were eventually replied to by the switchboard employee. When the participant finally confirmed the appointment, he apologised for the delay and provided the researcher with the interview date. The researcher arrived 15 minutes before the interview and waited for the participant as he was attending a Skype meeting. The participant is a co-owner and has entered into a joint venture with an automotive business from India to strengthen his export involvement. At the time, the participant was a director and shared critical insights about the role of government in their business. He also shared government strategies that added significant value in the growth of their export involvement within the OEMs' supply chains. The participant described constraints from internal and external environments threatening their export involvement.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>The participant offered the researcher a plant tour. Health and safety standards were adhered to as the researcher was given protective clothing. The participants shared insights on business success stories driven by government support (export programmes). Lack of skilled workers and power issues were one of the acute constraints confronting the business.</p>
Interviewee 4 & 5	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>At the time, the participant was training a new employee who also raised detailed questions and comments about the business export involvement. The participant is the business owner with vast experience in export within the logistics (freight forwarding) sector. The participant was open to sharing some of the export challenges facing the business, including lack of government support, regulatory environment and port delays. The participant followed questions listed in the guide and volunteered to assist the researcher after the</p>

	<p>interview if the need arose.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>As noted on the observation notes, the participant was clear about export related challenges and other challenges facing the business. He further shared insights on export opportunities and planned strategies aimed to deepen his export involvement.</p>
Interviewee 6	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The interview was planned by the researcher and was conducted at the participant's place of work. The interview was interrupted by customers and a dog barking. The researcher arrived an hour prior to the appointment and waited for the participant as she was busy with daily business duties. The participant owns a logistics (freight forwarding) and a component part manufacturing business. Most responses were concerned with export challenges such as poor infrastructure, port delays, exchange rates, and social ills contributing to higher exporting costs. The participant also shared strategies used to manage the impact resulting from aforementioned challenges.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>As noted on the observation notes, the participant shared examples of how she uses profits generated by one business to support the other (cross subsidisation) when it is not generating returns. Observations ended on a lighter note as customers purchased her auto parts.</p>
Interviewee 7	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The intended participant highlighted her limited involvement in export activities. She referred the researcher to a colleague with higher levels of export involvement. The researcher arrived at the participant's place of work 30 minutes before the appointment. At the time, the participant was preparing a client's shipment to London, and was constrained for time but managed to answer questions on the side. The participant shared some insightful interests on internal and external constraints to export (services) involvement. As an export sales manager, she indicated that global networking with other logistics SBs in foreign countries is used as a critical marketing instrument to increase their export involvement. Regulatory framework on export practices was one of the notable constraints confronting the business.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>The participant indicated that one of constraints facing most small businesses is a lack of access to export market information. Despite her export involvement, the business has export constraints stemming from internal and external environments. Lack of access to other export markets was also indicated as a limitation to export involvement.</p>

Interviewee 8	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The interview was held at a local mall in Tshwane South Africa. The participant has vast experience in export as he shared several industry dynamics and strategies developed in response to dynamics. The participant requested the researcher to switch off the recorder when sharing sensitive business information. The participant's request was observed. The participant is a business owner. Despite his export experience, he can concur that lack of marketing skills is one of the key elements limiting his export involvement; however, lack of government support was one of the notable constraints.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>As a business owner, it was evident that he has significant influence in the business and was open to share strategies to expand his export involvement without increasing the size of his business. The participant also shared instances where sales volumes were impacted due to delays at South African ports.</p>
Interviewee 9	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The interview took place at a local mall in Tshwane South Africa and the participant was contacted via email and telephone. The researcher waited for the participant, as he was late due to traffic. The participant was welcoming, and his apology for a late arrival was observed. He was open to sharing insights about business. The participant declined audio recording as he was sharing sensitive information about his business and industry constraints. Despite his experience in exports services, the participant indicated extensive internal and external challenges facing his business. Lack of resources and limited foreign market knowledge were some of the key constraints noted.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>As a business owner, he indicated lack of support from government to overcome export related challenges. He provided long detailed practical examples of business development and dynamics. Participant seemed unaware of government support (export programmes).</p>
Interviewee 10 &11	Narration

	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The participant was with his PA and a client, who sat in on the interview . The PA contributed meaningful comments on export involvement and challenges facing the business while the client was silent throughout. She also shared detailed instances where sales volume increase and decline. The participant owns two businesses supplying export services. He provided detailed</p>
	<p>examples of how he transfers profits generated from one business to boost the other business that is generating less profits (cross-subsidisation). The researcher arrived 10 minutes before the interview and waited for the participant as he was attending a church service. The apology for late arrival was offered and observed. The duration of the interview with both participants lasted for 68 minutes. Some parts of the interview were not recorded, as requested by the participant. The participant is significantly passionate and seemed extensively involved in exports. The participant was insightful about strategies he developed to increase his export involvement, despite evident challenges stemming from within the business and the industry. The participant indicated that a lack of education, lack of government, support, and inability to identify other export markets were some of key constraints hindering business export involvement.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>The researcher observed lack of resources in funding the growth of export involvement. The office space at the time was inadequate. Health and safety standards were not adhered to. Exporting constraints were evident as he seemed to be unaware of government support (export programmes)</p>
Interviewee 12	Narration

	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The interview was carried out at the participant's place of work. The participant was constrained with time as she had another meeting scheduled. At the beginning, she seemed reluctant to answer some of the questions in the guide due to protecting business information. She also declined audio recording. Later in the interview, she offered to assist the researcher with any clarity seeking questions. The interview lasted for 35 minutes. At the time, the participant was in a sales manager role and indicated to using global networks as a marketing tool to grow the export involvement. She was open to sharing current and future business strategies to deepen her export involvement. Export regulations seemed to be one of the concerning elements.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>The participant shared examples of current business practices aimed at increasing export involvement.</p> <p>Reviewing current training programmes for employees to enhance business export involvement was one of the highlighted strategic plans. The business seemed to be expanding their export involvement without government support, as she has no knowledge of export programmes.</p>
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Interviewee 13	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The participant was contacted during peak season (December 2019) and he declined the interview, citing excessive customer orders, workload, and deadlines to fulfil. The interview was postponed to January 2020. He is a co-owner and a branch manager and answered all questions in the guide. He was insightful about industry dynamics, due to his level of export involvement. The interview lasted for 90 minutes. The participant indicated they were making use of global agents to grow the export involvement and had no knowledge of government support (export programmes). Field observations</p> <p>Despite his export involvement, constraints were observed. Unfamiliar business practice, language, and cultural constraints were cited. Lack of government support and regulations were also mentioned.</p>
Interviewee 14	Narration

	<p>Interview scene and elements noted</p> <p>The interview was carried out at the participant's place of work. The participant is the owner and was happy to share information about business export involvement. The business is exporting services. The participant was forthcoming about receiving incentives from government programmes to foster growth in export involvement. Strategies to increase the export involvement were notable.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>Observations revealed that government support has made a meaningful contribution to export involvement as he shared some of company documents as evidence. The participant described several enablers and constraints facing the business. A further observation to the participant, like other participants relates to strategies developed to respond to constraints to grow their export involvement.</p>
Interviewee 15	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The participant was helpful in sharing business challenges and successes in export involvement. The researcher arrived 15 minutes before the appointment. The participant co-owns the business with his partner who was also present but did not share information about the business information. The interview lasted for 70 minutes. The participant identified several aspects contributing to export (services) involvement. Forming relationships with key partners in the supply chain was one of the highlighted aspects.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>Participants are aware of government support (export programmes) however did not show much interest in such.</p>
Interviewee 16 & 17	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>Interacting with this participant was a blessing. The participant decided to invite her partner to join the conversation. The partner shared valuable information about challenges facing the business. South African Airways and exchange rates were some of the eminent challenges. The interview lasted for 45 minutes. Most responses focused on demand creation to enhance export involvement. Forming partnerships and strategic alliances were some of the elements highlighted by participants.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>Both participants shared strategies developed to deal with industry dynamics. The researcher observed that government is a client of the participants. Participants are not using government support (export programmes) to enhance their export involvement and did not show any interest.</p>

Interviewee 18	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>The participant was welcoming and agreed to meet with the researcher. As a sales manager, her responses were focused on challenges facing the business due to dynamics in the global business environment, despite several attempts to try to keep focus on the guide. The interview lasted for 80 minutes. The participant has an extensive knowledge of export (service) involvement and was generous in sharing insights on business constraints.</p> <p>Competition was one of the notable constraints to export involvement. The participant also highlighted economic and political dynamics as some of the issues influencing export involvement of the business.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>The business seemed to be thriving as their export involvement increased to other global markets as indicated by the participant.</p>
Interviewee 19	Narration
	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>Participant postponed the interview due to ill health. Ultimately, the interview was carried out at his house and he was generous with his time. The interview was interrupted by a telephone call, which the participant cancelled. As a business owner, he provided a broader picture of business dynamics from the export involvement perspective. His knowledge and experience in export (activities) involvement was evident as he shared strategies used to manage dynamics. Market analysis, innovation, and proactiveness were some of the additional strategies highlighted to maintain the export involvement. The participant was with a customer at the time and did not add or share any valuable information.</p> <p>Field observations</p>
	<p>This participant expressed his passion for customer service. In his opinion, product quality and on time delivery (logistics management) were significantly mentioned as one of the key strategies used to strengthen his export involvement. Government support did not seem to be a constraint in his business success.</p>
Interviewee 20	Narration

	<p>Interview scenery and elements noted</p> <p>Scheduling the interview with this participant happened naturally, as he was extensively welcoming. The interview took place at an open plan office in the presence of other employees who were listening and did not say anything about the business. The participant is an export manager, his export experience was evident. The participant was open to sharing sensitive information about the business, which added value to the current study. Lack of market research and regulatory environment were some of constraints facing the business as indicated by the participant. He shared documents as evidence of some of the successes on export involvement of the business.</p> <p>Field observations</p> <p>As an export manager he shared insights on internal pressures aiming to reduce prices due to the complexity of the global environment in which the business operates</p>
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Note: The current study is limited to SBs operating in the City of Tshwane, as it is regarded as a foremost business hub presenting economic opportunities through an array of export programmes (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2028/2019).

One of the main features of the City is that it presents solid projects diversifying the export basket within the automotive, logistics, tourism, and agricultural sectors. The South African government, as the main contributor, has profiled the City as an international destination of choice for global investors (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2028/2019).

In a qualitative study, reflective practice is widely accepted as a fundamental part of the methodological processes (Scott & Garner, 2013). Rigour in qualitative research acknowledges trustworthiness of the study, advocating critical thinking and awareness of situational dynamics in social practice (Creswell, 2018). Reflective practice is deemed appropriate in qualitative studies as it asserts meaning making and knowledge production that occurs through interviews and observations (Scott & Garner, 2013). Qualitative researchers are required to be systematic in reflective practice to discover how insights are created and re-created in a particular setting or context (Creswell, 2018).

The researcher achieved this by ceasing pre-conceptions while assessing the consequences of bias and outside influence, since qualitative data is subjective in nature (Creswell, 2018).

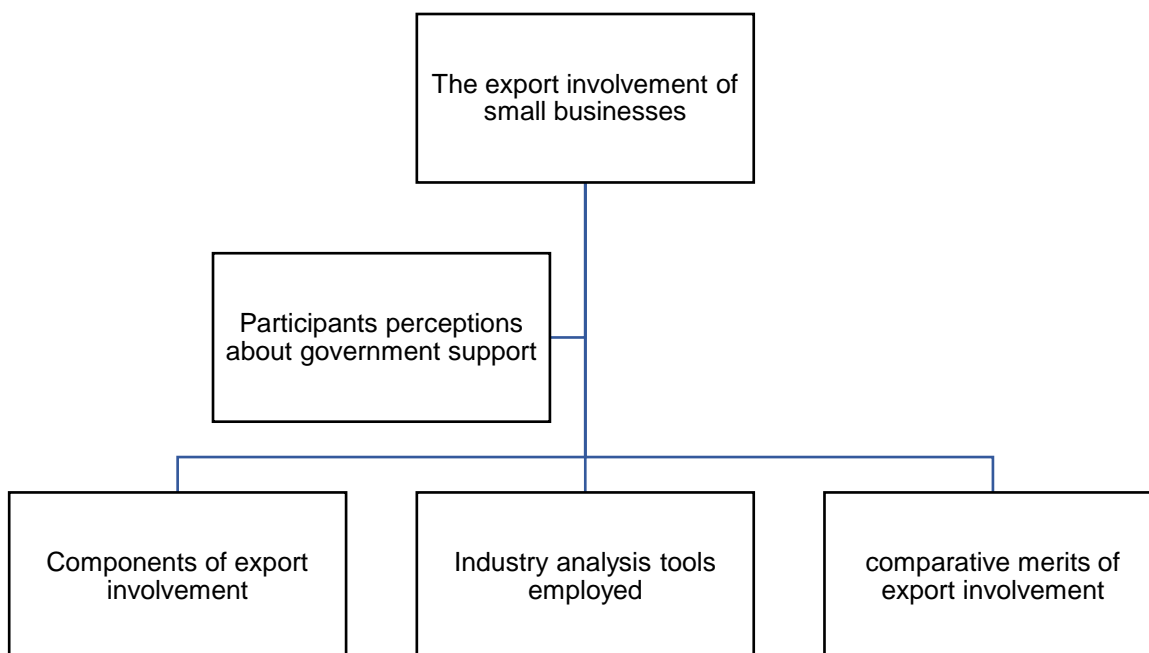
In this study, the researcher cohered to reflective practice by observing settings, similarities and patterns, which were noted in reflective journals and field notes. The researcher observed that out of 20 participants, six were owner-managers, seven were manager-managed, while four were business partners.

The researcher’s intuition was that the export involvement of owner-managers was low when compared to manager-managed and business partners. However, participants did not ask for researcher’s perspective in this regard. Findings reveal that owner-managers can reduce risks attached to exporting as core decision-makers, thereby deepening their involvement due to their flexible nature (see chapter 6 section 6). Participant 4&5, 8, and 14 were observed to be content with the business size and did not exhibit any interest in expanding the size of their businesses due to its flexible nature. The researcher also observed Participants 16 and 17, who were business partners at the time, framing their collective efforts in raising their export involvement and competitiveness. These participants were sharing practical examples by presenting company documents, exhibiting their export commitment to achieve service excellence. While Participant 15 was with his business partner at the time, but did not share any business information, the researcher was interested in his inputs as he nodded a couple of times. Interviews with Participants 6, 10&11 and 19 were interrupted by customers, which presented a learning opportunity to the researcher as transactions occurred. Other observations were noted on the reflective journal.

Twenty interviews and observations amounted to 8.85 hours of recorded time, noting that some of the interviews and observations were not recorded as some participants rejected audio recordings to protect company information, while transcribed interviews and observations amounted to 118 pages. The average number of pages per participant amounted to $9.63 = 10 (118/17)$. The contribution of colleagues as noted in Participants (4&5), (10&11) and (16&17) were included as they also participated.

6.7 PREVALENT THEMES IN THE STUDY

Figure 6.1: Themes of the study



Source: Researcher’s Compilation

The purpose of this study is to explore export involvement and government support of SBs in the City of Tshwane. This section reports on themes that emerged during interviews and observations (see table 6.3). Creswell (2018) suggested that coding qualitative data is a repetitive process that occurs in cycles (first-level and second-level cycle). In the first cycle the researcher explored similarities within datasets reading word for word and line by line to identify first impressions, as suggested by Van Zyl (2014). The second cycle of coding in this study was concerned with the synchronisation of codes developed in the first-level, with the purpose of addressing research objectives as maintained by Creswell (2018). To understand government support in the export involvement of SBs, synchronised codes were categorised into themes. Themes were collapsed and expanded into sub-themes to obtain insights on frequencies, sequences, commonalities, and variances within datasets. This was achieved by labelling categories to address research objectives.

Major themes identified were 1) The export involvement of SBs. 2) Perceptions about government export programmes. 3) Components of export involvement. 4) Industry analysis tools employed. To produce and reproduce new meanings for the interpretation of the dataset, a hermeneutic inquiry was incorporated as a research methodological process. This was achieved under a consideration of the reflections of the whole research context.

6.7.1 The export involvement of small businesses

This theme serves to address three sets of questions; namely, when and how SBs get involved in export activities or (export involvement). The export involvement of SBs was underscored to address the objectives 'when and how SBs participate in export activities (export involvement). Consequently, the role of SBs in export, the involvement, the extent of their involvement, and the constraints were considered as sub-themes. These sub-themes were considered an integral part of the research question of when SBs get involved in export activities and how they are involved. Such questions were critical in addressing the research objectives to promote the awareness of export involvement of SBs in the City of Tshwane.

6.7.1.1 When and how do SBs get involved in export activities

Export involvement is linked to acute constraints deriving from the internal and external environment influencing the extent to which SBs participate in the global markets (See Table 6.3). All participants indicated that such constraints threaten to undermine the export involvement of SBs, thereby limiting their growth opportunities. Despite notable constraints, most participants indicated that they started exporting once they gained the experience required to assist in deepening their export involvement.

In addition, most participants have an export background from previous employment. However, export experience does not rule out the element of constraints confronting the businesses, given the complexity of the global environment in which they operate.

Participant 1 mentioned that she started exporting after gaining export experience. Below is her response when asked about her export involvement:

“My export experience is nearly 20 years; however, I’ve been in the export sales manager role for three years promoting export market-oriented activities” (also see, P01:INT01).

Participant 1, in her current role as an export sales manager, has an influence on production, sales, and marketing activities. Her response was akin to Participant 20, who indicated that export experience and government support plays a critical role in their export involvement:

“My experiences in the export markets played an essential role in managing the effects associated with complexity of foreign markets thereby paying more attention to factors affecting our export involvement” (also see, P20:INT20).

Participant 6 is significantly involved in the export activities of the business. As an export manager, the participant was ambiguous about her general influence in the export involvement of the business; however, she underscored the growing importance of export experience in her current role.

“My export experience has led the business to better outcomes by shaping a way in which we perceive our export involvement within the adversity that exist in foreign markets however adversity has also led the business to some export opportunities” (also see, P06:INT06).

It was also evident that regardless of the export experience, some participants were unclear about the way in which their experiences are transferred from one foreign market to the other to safeguard the export involvement. Given the complexity of the global environment, some export experience may not be relevant in other export markets. It is also crucial to note that the extent of export experience is critical, and is closely driven by a manager’s commitment and zeal towards the export involvement of the business. To explore this, the researcher identified the extent of the export involvement of participants. For example, participants shared practical instances of actively soliciting export orders to underpin their export involvement.

The following participant presented documents, such as quotations, orders, and invoices and explained:

“Even though we do not receive export orders as much as we want to, but they do come to keep our doors open. This is a bad month; orders will start picking next month. Like any other business there are good and bad months” (also see, P08:INT08).

Most participants indicated that they were processing a fair amount of export orders using their export experiences, and thereby strengthening their export involvement. Moreover, some participants indicated that their experiences in the foreign markets ranged between five to 40 years. However, the above quotation is contrary to the rich experience in inducing growth in their export involvement. This means that, it is possible that their export involvement competency is unclear.

This may be driven by the fact that the export involvement of the business observes the growth of business offerings within its domestic markets over a certain period in the reflection of changing consumer preferences (Rekarti, Doktoralina & Saluy, 2018). This puzzle is often underlined in larger exporting organisations with complex reporting structures (Goedhuys & Sleuwaegen, 2016). Given the flexible nature of SBs' structures and inefficiencies, misalignments are often identified and resolved in time (Bodlaj, *et al.*, 2020).

A fair amount of export sales seem to contribute towards the survival of the business in foreign markets, and are used to enhance their export involvement (Manolopoulos, Chatzopoulou & Kottaridi, 2018). In addition, most participants indicated ways in which resources are optimised to enhance the exploitation of opportunities and to adapt to changing market conditions (Manolopoulos, *et al.*, 2018).

Regarding a fair amount of export orders, below is the response from Participant 15:

“It is sometimes challenging to trace our export involvement since our export orders or sales do sometimes fluctuate due to several reasons, variations in product demand being one of them. So, competition takes the centre stage sometimes in our export involvement as sometimes my experience in the foreign markets cannot safeguard our product demand” (also see, P15:P15)

This response indicates an average level of commitment and interest in intensifying export involvement, although some participants were unclear on ways in which they solicit orders, due to the constraints they are confronted with.

This remains blurry, as it is difficult to distinguish between high, moderate, and low levels of export involvement. This finding may not influence the credibility of the study, since the area of focus is based on exploring export involvement and not measuring the part of participants.

When Participant 6 was asked about the rate at which he processes export orders, he stated:

***“I run two businesses alone using my prior management export experience and educational background focusing on key issues that continuously affect my export involvement from sales to operational perspective. The degree of my export involvement depends on the exchange rates and social ills. Running two businesses somehow ease constraints and help me share my profits, for instance, when one business is facing a low demand, which often happens, I use profits generated by the other business to keep my export involvement stable.*”**

It is often difficult to trace the level of export involvement between high and low, as I am focusing on many aspects of the business. I facilitate export tasks including attending meetings with customers, competitors and suppliers, this workload is often causing emotional distress” (also see, P06:INT06).

It was clear that Participant 6 is involved in most export activities, including strategic planning. As an owner-manager, it was also clear that she has been performing administration and operational activities alone for quite some time. Participant 19 shared similar sentiments, as he mentioned that he feels at ease when he carries out all export related activities and administration tasks alone:

“I depend on Internet, Google and my experience to market new clients, I learn as the time goes by and it has not been easy to know exactly my export sales because I do everything alone” (also see, P19:INT19)

It was observed that most participants are committed to their establishments as owner-managers, also those serving as line managers for small businesses. It became evident that exporting constraints deriving from internal and external forces played an influential role in export involvement, resulting in their inability to differentiate between high and low export involvement in their establishments. It was also clear that constraints are export related and not necessarily product or service related at the heart of management skills and effectiveness, rather than exporting skills. Since the study is exploratory in nature, its focus is not to measure skills and effectiveness, as it is not a concern.

6.7.1.1 How do SBs become involved in export activities

Participants shared detailed insights on when and how they got involved in export activities to deepen their involvement. Most participants indicated that using their export experience though the level of involvement (high moderate or low) remains ambiguous. Participants' intentions and commitment to strengthen their export involvement were acute. Participant 1 indicated that the presence of government support has impacted their export involvement in various ways. She responded as follows:

“Government support through export programmes has helped to ease constraints linked with export involvement as export experience alone is not enough to maintain our export activities” (Also see, P01:INT01).

Participant 1 gave an impression of being aware of export programmes by indicating that government has invested resources to strengthen the involvement of small establishments. Participant 14 also shared similar sentiments, and was quoted as follows:

“It is not easy to get involved in export activities because trying to do business global can be very challenging. There are plenty problems that are facing our business operation but with the help of export programmes, we do try hard to manage export problems” (Also see, P14:INT14).

Only a few participants seem to have a detailed knowledge of export programmes to ease constraints. A low level of awareness of export programmes, among some participants was evident. It may be apparent that they have other means of accessing export markets other than that of government support (export programmes). Participant 9 indicated his unawareness of the programmes as follows:

***“I actually do business with one of government departments in Tshwane no one has mentioned anything about export programmes.
I don't know about the type of assistance they can offer my businesses I'm sure it won't hurt to try as I currently struggle with a lot of things” (Also see, P09:INT09).***

Most participants were unaware of the export programmes aimed at strengthening their export involvement. It was evident that those that are participating in the programmes seem to handle constraints better than those who are not. Participant 6, who was also unaware of the export programmes, expressed her emotional distress associated with export involvement (see Chapter 3 in Section 3.8.1).

Some participants, who are unaware of government support, indicated they accessed export markets by collaborating with foreign partners to help lessen constraints. Participants indicated that they joined specific global networks. Participants were vocal about benefits and incentives they receive from belonging to a network. This method seemed risky as some participants mentioned risks associated with the networks. Participant 12 belongs to a network, offered the following:

“Some of the answers to our internal problems that often threaten to limit our export involvement is global networking. This network came at the right time when we needed it the most” (Also see P12:INT12).

Some participants did mention risks associated with global networks and the use of global agents, including knowledge leakage, as discussions may arise during the interactions leading to a disclosure of critical information about the company. Participants 4&5 were quick to indicate risks associated with global networks and their perception was indicated as follows:

“Partnerships can be stressful in a sense that we may need to share customers, technology, and confidential information about the business. I have trust issues particularly when costs are involved, which is why I prefer to oversee all export activities” (Also see, P4&5:INT:4&5)

From the above, it is evident that there are mixed feelings about mode of entries used by participants to access foreign markets through export involvement. It was revealed that some participants claimed to be unaware of global networks, global agents, and government programmes. Participant 9 was of one of the participants who claimed to be unaware, but interested in taking part in government support export programmes. Despite his business dealings with some of government departments, his claims were quoted as follows:

“I am keen to participate in export programmes as I believe it will strengthen my export involvement. I may gain new knowledge from interacting with other export business owners” (Also see, P09:INT09)

While some participants indicated a lack of awareness of export support programmes, some showed interest in the programmes. However, a lack of consistencies within government structures was prevalent, making it an issue to access the support. Some participants indicated that administrative issues within government agencies are making difficult for SBs to reach out.

Some of these concerns are consistent with DTI (2018/19) and SEDA (2018/19), who argued that the lack of cooperation that exists amongst government agencies results in failure to reach intended SBs.

Participant 9 was clear about his interests in export programmes while others were also clear about their lack of interests on export programmes. Table 6.4 highlights the number of participants who are aware but partially interested, and participants that are not aware, but interested in the export programmes. It also depicts the number of participants who currently use global networks and or global agents, those who are aware but partially interested.

Table 6.4: The level of awareness and use of government export programmes

Participants	Aware and Interested	Unaware but partially Interested	Currently partaking in the programmes	The use of global Networks and global agents
P1	-	-	Been in the programmes for years but entered through customers	-
P2	-	-	Been in the programmes for years but did not state the number of years	-
P3	-	-	Been in the programmes since the inception of the business	-
P4 & P5	-	The participant indicated a lack of interest in export programmes	-	Participant indicated risks associated with global networking
P6	-	Participant cited a lack of BBBEE compliance from her part justifying her lack of interest	-	Participant did not mention global networking or agents. It is assumed that she is unaware
P7	Participant indicated a willingness to partake if available to her	-	-	Currently belonging to a specific agent but did not specify the terms and years
P8	-	Participant is aware but did not consider programmes attractive	-	Participant has been using global agents since the start of his business

P9	Participant showed signs of interest as he is aware	He indicated the administration element as a barrier	-	Presently using global agents
P10 & P11	-	Participant is keen to partake in export programmes	-	Participant works with global agents
P12	-	Participants indicated interest when the opportunity arise	-	A permanent member of a global network
P13	-	Participant did not show signs of interest	-	Currently in use of global agents
P14	Aware and interested	-	Been in the programme but was not clear about the terms	-
P15	-	No signs of interest	-	-
P16 & P17	Aware	No signs of interest	-	A permanent member of a global network
P18	Aware	No signs of interest	-	A permanent member of a global network
P19	Aware	Participant cited lack of BBBEE compliance from his part, justifying his lack of interest	-	Presently using global networks
P20	Aware	Participant cited lack of BBBEE compliance from his part justifying his lack of interest	-	Presently using global networks

P=stands for participant

Source: Author's own compilation

Table 6.4 attempts to answer the question: how SBs become involved in export activities, as it highlights the mode of entry opted by participants.

Participant 1, 23, (&3) and 14 indicated that they participated in export programmes, which according to their experiences played a critical role in their export involvement. Participants indicated that they used to export on a smaller scale; however, after entering export programmes their rate of export involvement was steadily growing. To a certain extent, this was credible, given observations in a natural setting to justify a steady growth as they produced awards, certificates, pictures, and documents as evidence. Participants did indicate that, it was significantly challenging to access government export programmes, citing a lack of coordination and cooperation amongst government agencies. Participant 12 indicated that the conditions surrounding the programmes are more focused on the capabilities of the business than that of the owner-manager or export manager, he argued as follows:

“A business cannot exist without the owner. The owner plays a crucial role in strategic planning and implementation as they bring their export experiences into the business, so government agencies should consider that when designing export programmes” (Also see, P12:INT12).

Most participants are unaware of the export programmes, which was concerning. This finding poses a question on the awareness strategy (campaign) used by government to reach the intended audience. Based on what most participants claimed, it is worthwhile to take into consideration that the decision rests upon SBs, whether or not they wish to join the programmes, as long as they are aware of them. Participants indicated that they cannot join export programmes that they are unaware of. To a certain extent, this finding justifies participants' ambiguity on the variance between high, moderate, and low export involvement. The absence of clarity on the extent of export involvement interrogates the effectiveness of export experiences, government support, global networks, and the use of global agents, claimed to be used by participants.

This knowledge gap was indicated by all participants. As indicated earlier, the current study is exploratory in nature, so the aforementioned elements are not of concern. For instance, Participant 18 has no interest in export programmes due to a lack of awareness; however, she is a permanent member of the global network but failed to pinpoint the extent of export involvement and her inputs were as follows:

“There is a good side and a not so good side about global networks. All I can say is it advisable to conduct a detailed research on a network before signing up to their terms” (Also see, P18:INT18).

Given the above, the researcher could not help noticing inconsistencies in most responses. However, a fair amount of export involvement was observed owing to detailed export knowledge and practical insights from some of the participants. It was noticed that some participants enter into export markets for the right reasons, but constraints seem to slow down their export involvement.

To some extent, internal and external forces lead to the demise of export involvement, as indicated by some participants. For an example, Participant 8 and 9 were significantly ambiguous about their export involvement, as they indicated not to be interested in government programmes. The question that came into the researcher's mind was how they accessed export markets as they claimed to be exporting a fair amount of goods. Below is Participant 8's response:

“I am not interested in such programmes as they are meant for beginners, I have passed that stage. I market my business by forming relationships with other export businesses”
(Also see, P08:INT08)

The above was in contrast with Participant 9, who was keen, and believed that once given an opportunity, it may help him moderate constraints that are currently troubling his business. He commented as follows:

“Administrative barriers when dealing with government agencies are my main concern, export programmes seem like a valuable support structure for export businesses. I will do my research on such programmes to see how my business can benefit from them”
(Also see, P09:INT09).

All in all, participants' responses did not precisely address objectives as anticipated. However, they shed some light on export constraints and entry modes used to enter into export markets. There seems to be a misalignment on the definition of export involvement, as all participants failed to mirror the definition with their current circumstances (see definitions in Chapter 1 section 1.2.1).

It was notable that some participants learnt about industry dynamics through interactions with other exporters during export programmes and global networking, causing a shift from low export involvement to high export involvement. While those that are not interested in export programmes, and prefer handling all export activities alone, seem to be confined in a moderate and low export involvement position.

It was apparent that most participants give more attention to internal matters and less attention to export matters, which may be the reason for failing to differentiate between levels of export involvement. At this point, based on the above, it seemed that participants' ability to assess their export involvement ranges from low to moderate levels. Perceptual variances amongst participants concerning government support (export programmes), may be of assistance in gaining a broader view of the impact resulting from government support (export programmes) on participants' export involvement.

6.7.2 Participants perceptions about government support

There seem to be a mixed set of perceptions and attitudes, coupled with significant differences in knowledge and experiences about government supported export programmes.

These inconsistencies may explain low levels of awareness and participation in the programmes, which may imply a lack of confidence in government initiatives from the participants' part. All participants were significantly ambiguous in relations to export orders (sales) to determine the export involvement. Some participants indicated that their export involvement is not only determined by export activities or total sales, but by the improvement plans aimed to moderate the impact resulting from export constraints.

However, most focused their responses on current and future improvement strategies to strengthen their involvement. Most participants indicated that the complex and turbulent nature of the global environment exhibits a mixture of threats and opportunities pressuring SBs to formulate suitable actions. Moreover, export experience and knowledge seem to affect decision-making processes, which in turn influences the level of commitment in export involvement.

Participants' perceptions concerning export programmes reveal that government support is predominantly determined by the extent of export involvement, instead of reviewing programmes accessibility to its intended audience and its efficacy. Since the export involvement of most of participants is unclear, they seem to be discouraged to solicit export assistance.

Participants indicated that programmes should be flexible and adaptable to appropriately fit the unique needs of SBs. Moreover, they stated they had experienced difficulties in accessing government support, citing administrative barriers. It became evident that administrative factors within government structures influences participants' perceptions (negatively or positively).

It is noteworthy that the above perceptions are significant enough to be examined; however, not all of them are a threat to promoting an increase in export involvement. Since the study aims to explore government support in the export involvement of SBs, perceptions on export programmes are deemed significant.

It was evident that participants' perceptions vary significantly. When aiming to understand the perceptions of SBs concerning government support, the following sub-themes were indicated.

6.7.2.1 The awareness and the use of government support (export programmes)

As indicated earlier, perceptions concerning the awareness and the use of export programmes vary significantly. It became apparent that a link exists between awareness and use of export programmes. This is consistent with a study done by Torres *et al.* (2016) which confirmed that the link is weak, as being aware of government support does not necessarily imply usage. Furthermore, this questions the reliability of benefits associated with export programmes as articulated by participants.

This sets a scene for the development of export involvement, being mindful of internal and external constraints confronting SBs, as highlighted by most participants (Haddoud *et al.*, 2017).

When asking participants who are presently aware and using the export programmes how the programmes influenced the growth and development of their export involvement, Participant 1 responded as follows:

“In our early stages of export involvement, the internal challenge we were facing amongst many was product quality acceptance since we serve a global market. This challenge derived from shortage of skilled workers. Product quality raised serious problems in our export involvement as it was exposing deficiencies in our management skills and our production processes. The export programme is helping us understand international standards expected by different market segments. Honestly speaking we are not there yet as I have realised that learning is a continuous process” (Also see, P01:INT01).

Participant 14 had the following response:

“Adhering to quality standards required in different foreign markets is still identified as an internal constraint deriving from insufficient export market information because understanding changing consumer needs is not a once off task, it involves continuous learning. Acquiring market information requires time and money, as we all know that resources are very scarce. I try to maximize what I already have to strengthen my export involvement as export programmes did not really add much significance in my business development” (Also see, P14:INT14)

The statement from Participant 1 suggests a positive effect of export programmes in their export activities and the extent to which government provides institutional support to moderate export constraints. This finding is in line with Haddoud *et al.* (2017), who argued that export programmes reduces the effect of constraints on business export involvement, allowing the process of foreign market information to flow, to enhance decision-making process. The extent to which participants benefit, remains ambiguous, judging from Participant 14's response. This response seems to suggest that government export assistance significantly depends on the extent of business export involvement (Nakku, Agbola, Miles & Mahmood, 2020). A low extent implies slim opportunities of being accepted in the government supported export programmes, as concurred by most participants who are aware of the programme but partially interested in participating in such (Nakku, *et al.*, 2020). This finding was also supported by Participant 9 and (4&5) who additionally maintained their limited awareness of the programmes, since the requirements include the extent of export involvement. The response of Participant 9 was as follows:

Being aware of export programmes is one thing while the awareness of the precise programme (s) suitable for the unique needs and problems that often confronts my business is the other critical issue to reflect on. This seems very blurry from the part of government because I believe that since these programmes are built specifically for SBs, they should be designed with our needs and constraints at the forefront” (Also see, P09:INT09).

Participant 4&5 indicated the following:

“There is one thing I am certain about government services is that their service delivery is extremely slow. I am aware of the export programmes however gaining access to them it is very difficult. They are quick to promise good things but come to the implementation, they are very slow. I would rather continue to hustle for export opportunities as I have always been doing even though it’s tough but consulting with government agencies it’s a no no” (Also see P4&5:INT4&5).

Judging from Participant 1’s comment, export programmes do make some level of contribution to the export involvement of SBs. Just like any other programme, there are inclusion and exclusion criteria, since the economy is facing a scarcity of resources (Nakku, *et al.*, 2020). Any organisation or business operates under the scarcity of resources.

Participant 1 indicated that, programmes offer opportunities to meet and interact with other SBs during seminars and workshops to share export related information.

It is worthwhile to note that Participant 8 indicated they had attended some of the export workshops hosted by one of government agencies:

“Attending export workshop did not make a significant contribution in light of the challenges facing my business. For an example, we are facing an extensive foreign competition and regulatory issues mainly at the ports. Ports delays are killing the export business. I did raise concerns and recommendations in this regard at that workshop but today; I am still sitting with the same problem and many others” (Also see, P08:INT08).

It became evident that export involvement is determined by several circumstances surrounding the business, as articulated by most participants.

Export involvement is not linear; it fluctuates, depending on many factors, including managerial export experiences, skills, and external problems, including the regulatory framework (see Chapter 2 section 2.3) it is also consistent with a finding by Boso, *et al.* (2019), who revealed that the fundamental headache limiting the growth of export involvement points to management skills, rather than export or external challenges. In essence, participants were open to sharing real challenges by emphasizing that they cannot prevent problems from happening, but they mainly focus on strategies to deal with them as they occur.

6.7.2.2 Possible solutions proposed

All participants concurred that once constraints (internal or external) are identified and attended to, repeating them is implausible. Participants indicated that their ways of attending to problems is to apply flexibility and adaptability in their policies, strategies, and processes in anticipation of such problems, given the complex global environment in which they operate. This is in line with Bodlaj *et al.* (2020) who argued that flexibility in handling dynamics from (internal and external) environments eliminates the need to pre-empt them, saving resources for the businesses. In view of this, when Participant 20 was asked, “What are the planned changes to foster the increase in export involvement?” His answer was as follows:

“Product quality was identified a serious problem that was threatening our export involvement. We know we had to act swiftly by applying changes in our production process and in our health and safety procedures to meet the ever-changing needs of foreign markets. We attended to the problem by conducting a research focusing on information gathering to arrive at well-informed decisions. We are still learning continuously as we are steadily enhancing our export involvement despite constraints that still exists including shortage of training materials to keep our employees up-to-date with the latest trends” (Also see, P20:INT20)

Participant 16 & 17’s responses were as follows:

We learned that mistakes can bring severe cost implications. We acknowledged that one of our niche markets was marginally neglected, as we were not gaining much returns from it. We are planning to increase marketing activities in this market by providing incentives to customers in the reflection of our scarce resource. We have hired a project manager to oversee the development of this market. We do understand that it is not going to be easy, but we are prepared to meet varying needs of customers” (Also see, P16&17:INT16&17).

Participant 12 focused her responses on growing her relationships with other exporters from the global networks:

Once we became members of a global network, we were introduced to buyers, suppliers, and customers within the supply chain. Sustaining and developing new relationships will not make our export problems disappear but will help us deal with them without causing a serious damage in the business image in light of customers” (Also see, 12:INT12).

6.7.2.3 The progress in export involvement

The process of export involvement can be achieved when SBs examine all export involvement determinative elements influencing export activities. As described by most participants, the unbalanced and ambiguous nature of their export involvement is driven by a range of constraints. Most participants emphasised a variance in their export involvement developmental stages, which can be difficult compared to each other, as they are all confronted by different challenges, and the way in which they respond may in turn differ.

It may be imperative for SBs to identify all determinative elements to achieve a stable growth in export involvement.

In light of determinative elements, participants were asked what key essentials they are content with in relation to the extent of their involvement in exports. The possession of peculiar capabilities was notable from Participant 20's answer:

“I can safely say that my products separate me from my counterparts because I normally start the manufacturing process once I receive an order from the client. The manufacturing processes in my business are guided exactly by customer specifications and I believe that the procedure sets a boundary to help me deal the with limitations that often threatens my business” (Also see, 20:INT20).

This response does not necessarily relate to the research topic. Having said that, it gives an overview of how the last-mentioned participant maintains their export involvement.

Participant 4 & 5 emphasised the importance of having a good attitude and perceptions about export involvement in the presence of many challenges. Their interesting responses were summarised by the following:

“A mind-set tends to shape the environment of the business. If a manager has a positive or negative attitude and perceptions that will determine the level of export commitment as critical resources of the business. My attitude has shaped the way in which I respond to challenges.

I decided a long time ago to display a good attitude and perceptions on export activities despite complexities so that I can represent a good business image” (Also see, 4&5:INT4&5).

Participants 4&5 focused on export attitude and perceptions as their strength in shaping their business environments. This finding is also consistent with García, Gaitán, Cataluña and Moreno (2016), who discovered that management attitude and perceptions are critical resources in export developmental phases. Participant 20 indicated capabilities in terms of just-in-time production, which is closely related to Participants 4&5’s responses (attitudes and perceptions), in that a positive attitude and perception in exports as identified by García *et al.* (2016), may trigger growth in the SB’s capabilities, resulting in higher export growth.

6.7.2.4 On-going export involvement challenges

Incorporating challenges between internal and external constraints, most on-going export involvement challenges are commonly tabulated as derived from the external environment (Haddoud *et al.*, 2018).

The interplay between socio-cultural and procedural variances of countries, as noted by Haddoud *et al.* (2018), may have a detrimental impact on product or service quality expectations. By contrast, Sharma *et al.*, 2016 *et al.* (2016) discovered that product or service quality is unrelated to ongoing export involvement challenges *per se* but interrogates management skills and manufacturing processes used (internal matter). Evidence for this was provided by Participant 20, indicating a disproportionate persistence of high-level quality expectations emanating from changing consumer needs in foreign markets. A determinative outcome for consistent growth in export involvement is understanding principles of global quality standards (Pasape, 2018). This may be attained through consistent honesty about key underlying topics (challenges) confronting the export involvement of business at an issue level (See Chapter 3, section 3.2.6).

Participant 18 highlighted the differences between topics and issues confronting her business. For instance, global competitiveness (topic) while the underlying problem (issue) is financial instability, since being globally competitive calls for innovations in products or services and value creation processes.

This participant indicated that issues are much more serious, as they influence the reputation of a business. Such views have evidences to appear commonsensical, as noted by Pasape (2018), from cost implications and overviews, as quality impacts on business identification within a global context. When asked what their ongoing export involvement challenges were, Participant 18 responded as follows:

“It is difficult to balance between high, average and low-quality standards when our business offerings are compared against competitive global standards.

What I have learned about export business is that international quality is interlinked with high costs, presently we struggle with funding to keep up with competitive global standards” (Also see P18:INT18).

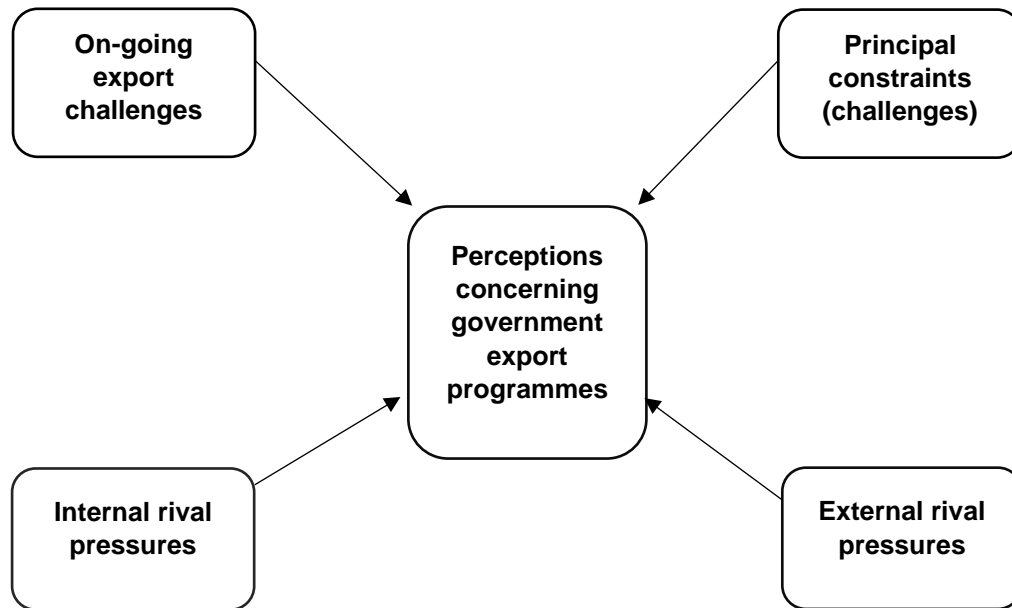
“While Participant 12 raised concerns about the use of global agents:

“Using global agents is of great importance in the export involvement context however trust issues are inevitable. Interacting with global agents normally results in the creation of new ideas. However, I had cases where resources were privately captured by global agents and this affected our profits, all I say is one can never be careful enough” (Also see, P12:INT12).

Despite the use of global networks as a marketing tool to intensify export involvement, since they have a potential to address (internal and external) environmental issues. However, accessing new emerging export markets remains a concern for Participant 7, and her response was cited as follows: ***“Amongst many other issues that is limiting our ability to tap into new emerging markets, our fragile capacity in terms of skilled workers or (experts) to conduct market research and other marketing activities remains an acute challenge. This challenge is linked to regulatory environment which raise our operational costs as we are expected to comply even when the business is facing low returns” (Also see, P07:INT07).***

Given the above views, it may be safe to say that SBs involved in export activities are a microcosm of the complex global environment. With this in mind, participants’ perceptions are at the centre of challenges, which threatens to limit their export involvement. A remedy to such challenges was not evident due to a variance in the extent of export involvement, resulting from different types of constraints and resource development. While it is worthwhile to note that the perceptual differences that exist concerning government support, was significantly forthcoming. Figure 6.1 provides a brief outline of participants’ challenges.

Figure 6.2: Perceptions concerning government supported export programmes



Source: Author's own compilation

Considering perceptions on government support, export programmes do make a certain contribution in the export involvement of some participants. However, the degree of awareness and its use seem to vary significantly, according to the rate of export involvement. This finding seems to suggest the inability to reach intended SBs, thereby creating inconsistencies on possible benefits to be gained from the export programmes.

Perceptions about the extent of export involvement are also shaped by internal and external rivalry pressures. Rivalry pressures can either be positive, to match export involvement traits of the business, or they can negatively affect SBs' exporting activities. Some internal pressures may be controllable, as participants often regard them as a diffusion for export involvement stature. Rivalry pressures (internal and external) calls for managers to be systematic and insightful when responding to defend their export involvement.

To understand rivalry pressures in the global context, Porter's Five Forces (PFF) will be incorporated as an analytical tool to get an overview of interdependences between (internal and external) rivalry pressures (Juliana & Nyoman, 2019). This will help to explore unique insights of how each force affects the export involvement of SBs. Moreover, it will also assist SBs to address challenges by providing avenues to review the current status quo of their export involvement as it gradually evolves, given the dynamic nature of (internal and external) pressures.

Placing PFF at the heart of export involvement SBs' (internal and external) pressures can be secluded, analysed, and addressed. If such organised process is followed, it will place SBs in a defensive position against pressures and other threats limiting the growth of export involvement.

The following section will be underlining the dynamism surrounding components of export involvement used by participants.

6.7.3 Components of export involvement

Export involvement is better understood by examining its components, which may differ according to business traits and the extent of export involvement on one end, and managerial perceptions and commitment on the other end (Jin & Cho, 2018). Most participants highlighted that the extent of export involvement tends to fluctuate, given variances in (internal and external) constraints. Consequently, some constraints lose attention and or capture relevance over time. For instance, most participants highlighted regulations as constraints limiting their export involvement. When such constraints are reviewed by policy makers, as suggested by Pietrovito and Pozzolo (2019), they diminish over time, allowing the business to raise the level of export involvement (See Chapter 4, section 4.2).

6.7.3.1 Export marketing function

Jin and Cho (2018) argue that SBs participating in export involvement functions are those with existing products or services known in export (foreign) markets (see Chapter 1, section 1.2.1). This was not wholly required; however, participants seem excited to share insights on marketing and technological innovation functions, and how they use them to deepen growth in their export involvement.

Participant 16&17 indicated that, what may be considered key export components in one SB, may be less significant in another. His practical response concerning this statement was summarised as follows:

“Our marketing function is largely dependent on the relationships we continuously build with our partners, buyers, suppliers and competitors. Export marketing decisions are taken in the consideration of customers” (Also, see P16:INT17).

Participant 14 highlighted that components to promote export involvement are viewed differently, given different challenges, resource development, and the capacity of export involvement. While Participant 2 was more detailed and responded as follows:

“The marketing function in our business has caused conflicts since all functions compete for resources. For example, we need sufficient resources to adjust products specifications to serve varying demands of foreign markets. Production and marketing functions play an important role in ensuring that consumer preferences are met.

It can be a tricky process sometimes when you deal with different individuals” (Also see, P02:INT02).

Participant 14 emphasised using export experiences to develop unique capabilities, such as marketing intelligence and information management to enhance his export involvement. Hiring 12 managers, and increasing operational hours to 24/7, while using research and development as a marketing tool. His response was as follows:

“The analysis of targeted market in terms of demand and the selection of market entry is an integral part of our marketing function. We focus on understanding what customers need by spending time discussing and exploring the unknown about that market to gain sufficient information. Developing formal and informal training needs to equip employees with new skills” (Also see, 14:INT14).

Participant 2's response was not utterly fitting in the current topic; however, such a response provided an overview of the importance of communication amongst different functions within the business to reduce conflicts. It was evident that marketing is a critical function to understand the varying needs and preferences of customers and to avoid defective communication that may emerge.

6.7.3.2 Technological innovation function

All participants raised global competitiveness as one of the obstructions to export involvement resulting to inconsistencies in export activities. An increase in global competitiveness stimulates rivalry, resulting in a fall in export sales, despite export experience and management global background as indicated by most participants. The overlap between (internal and external pressures) as already suggested by Jin and Cho (2018), leads to unintended outcomes, by raising export involvement costs. Participants indicated that technologies consistent with industry dynamics, coupled with skilled labour at a global level has aided the transfer of innovative ideas into export activities to maintain global standards. Technology has been identified by all participants as a critical component and a common denominator in consistent growth in export involvement (Chapter 1, section 1.2.1 Chapter 3, section 3.2.1.1).

Participant 20 was hazy about how technological innovation added value to his export involvement and his global competitiveness as his response was as follows:

“I have uploaded my products and services on YouTube to reach out to customers so that they can see if my offerings meet their specifications and their business structures” (Also see, P20:INT20).

The researcher probed further to get more clarity, with the hope of receiving a more detailed comment from Participant 20. His additional response was as follows:

“The use of Internet has reduced my operational costs as customers can now order using Takealot.com” (Also see, P20:INT20).

This response raised more doubts instead of clarity in this regard. Contrary to Participant 20, Participant 16&17 were more explicit in their responses, linking technological innovations to practical business tasks at hand, which are parallel to export involvement goals of the business.

“We decided to take advantage of the latest industry technologies started by conducting market research to introduce new service packages that are globally accepted. This project has cost us a lot of money as we had to travel in and out of the country to ensure that new services are relevant to our targeted markets. At first it appeared as if this project will corner us into under-resourced position as we ended up employing new graduates with fresh minds and new energy to take part in the project” (Also see, P16&17:INT16&17).

Participant 12 indicated using technological innovation in business tasks, by indicating the importance of market research and global management. Her response was as follows:

“Creating new ideas while accessing new technologies has formed part of our daily tasks over time. We hired researchers on a temporary basis to conduct market research to safeguard service quality given fierce and fluctuating nature of foreign markets. We used technology to cope within the complex export markets since our end-game is to increase export activities” (Also see, P12:INT12).

Participant 12 was clear about the use of technology and how it impacts resource deployment and service quality in their quest to achieve export involvement growth.

Participant 3 responded as follows:

“We are forced to produce global quality standards otherwise we are out of the game. Our main market demands for us to periodically review our product development, design, and production processes. We use technology and innovations to keep up-to-date as we suffer from the limitation of skills in research because it is hard transforming our ideas into daily activities without research” (Also see, P03INT:03).

Keeping up with conflicting consumer preferences and dynamism in foreign markets seemed to be highlighted topics under this sub-theme. The next section will explore the interrelations between export marketing and technological innovations and their impact on export involvement, as indicated by some participants.

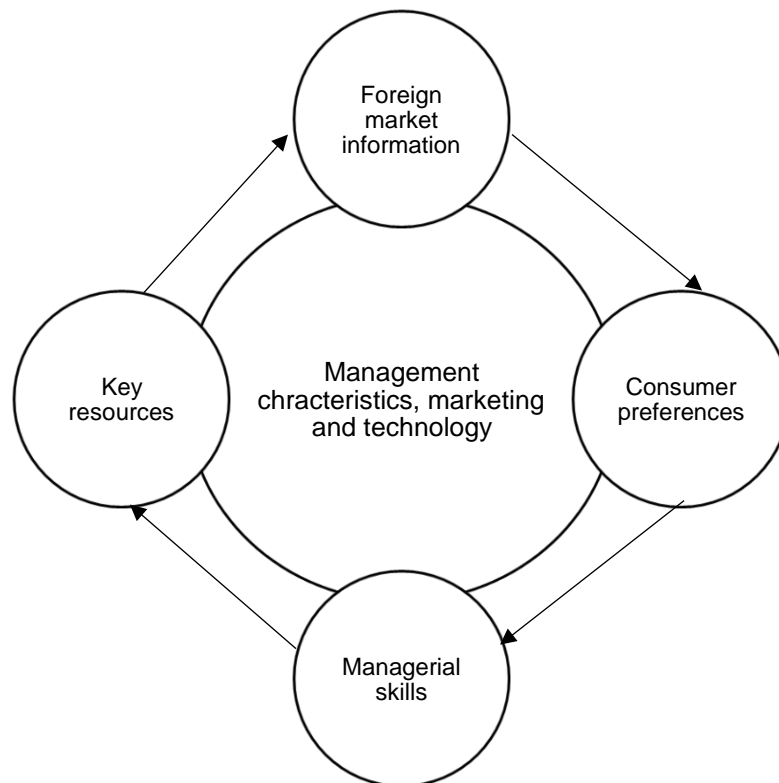
Some concerns emerged during probing, as some participants seemed more interested in sharing practical examples than others. Figure 6.1 outlines the interdependence between export marketing and technological innovation.

In this section, various export involvement components were mentioned that influenced businesses at some level. Export marketing and technological innovation were indicated during 20 interviews and observations including (4&5, 10&11 and 16&17) participants.

6.7.3.3 Interdependence between export marketing and technological innovation

The interdependence between export marketing and technological innovation is outlined in Figure 6.2 and described in detail below. Key elements as indicated in the figure below were highlighted by participants.

Figure 6.3: The summary of interrelations between export marketing and technological innovations



Source: Jin and Cho (2018)

Figure 6.3 depicts managerial skills as a first point of departure, followed by the availability of key resources, such as foreign market information to realise changing consumer preferences.

When participants were asked about the relationship between export involvement and its components, responses varied according to management experiences, attitude, commitment, and capabilities in business traits, how they perceived economic assistance and or government supported export programmes. It should be appreciated that most responses were a combination of negative and positive reactions concerning export involvement.

All responses (negative and positive) were associated with finding ways to cope with the complex nature of global markets, particularly the regulatory environment, constraints to exporting, and other contributing factors that threaten to limit export involvement.

As already indicated, most participants believed that export marketing and technological innovation are complementary in as far as export involvement is concerned. Moreover, both functions are at the heart of (internal and external) pressures, as already suggested by Jin and Cho (2018), since they serve as two of the main determinative outcomes that underpins the extent of export involvement between (low-moderate-high). Some participants use Porters five competitive forces to cope with competitive pressures, deriving from marketing and technological advancements.

Participant 16 and 17 indicated that export marketing and technology are a direct link to customers, and are used to forecast future events, given the dynamic nature of export markets and their response was described as follows:

“When executing export marketing activities, we research the latest global brands to reach customers latest preferences. The growing competitive pressure has taught us to be in constant communication with our clients, suppliers, and competitors using social platforms to provide relevant services. There are always new kids on block in this industry and sometimes it is difficult to maintain the intended level of export involvement” (Also see, P16&17INT:16&17).

It is notable that marketing and technology are viewed as complementary key resources linking businesses with customers and other supply chain members, thereby helping managers maintain relationships.

Participant 8 indicated that despite his long-term export experience, limited marketing skills have led him to outsource technological skills to build marketing capabilities with an eye to respond to turbulent export dynamics. The participant also indicated that this limitation was an acute threat to his export involvement:

“I have parted with a significant amount of money when I hired someone to teach me tricks of using export marketing and technology simultaneously to boost my declining

export sales. When I started using them I discovered that they are attractive resources to sort of like enhance export sales. I am slowly getting there” (Also see, P08:INT08).

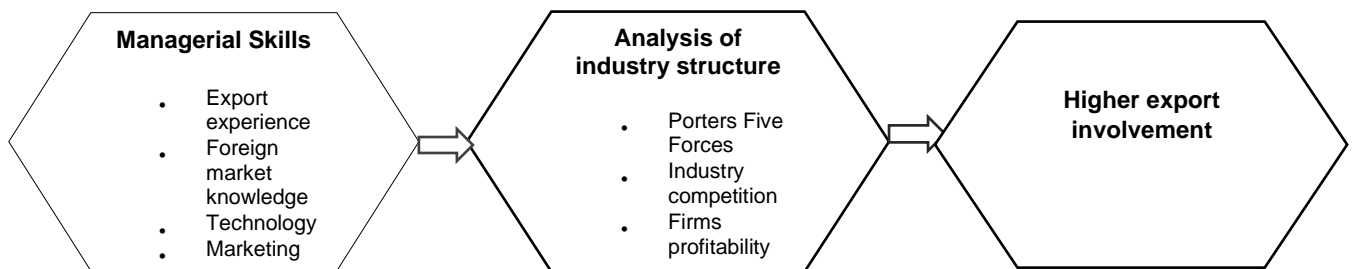
Not all participants have a formal understanding of a link between marketing and technology; however, in their response one can notice that to some extent, two functions form part of their activities. Perhaps some participants are oblivious about it. In such a context, Participant 7 is an example:

“Lacking marketing research skills coupled with lack of government support has resulted in a decrease in resource-orientation. Technology is my strength as I have used it to develop new services by incorporating it with my ideas. Forming relationships with customers and some competitors helps me to develop new ideas and to somehow gain more resources and profits” (Also see, P07:INT07).

It became apparent that participants’ perceptions and experiences on marketing and technology function varied according to the business characteristics, targeted markets, and management skills. Participant 7 was not clear about his technological capabilities other than his ability to create ideas. To his credit, he was open about a lack of managerial skills and put an action plan in place to remedy this challenge. Participant 7 seems to lack skills and experiences of both aspects and relies on outsourcing services to keep his export involvement afloat.

As indicated in the literature (see Chapter 2, section 2.5), managers with export marketing and technological skills tend to achieve higher levels of export involvement. Consolidating participants’ responses in Figure 6.3, it can be concluded that growing export involvement is informed by managerial skills, and analysis of industry structures, using Porter’s forces.

Figure 6.4 Export involvement components used by participants



Source: Author’s Compilation

Figure 6.4 outlines key components of export activities that are closely linked with export involvement; namely, managerial skills and the analysis of industry structure using PFF. Anastasiu *et al.* (2020) argue that such key components play a pivotal role in export involvement, as they constitute key resources of the SB.

Managerial skills, as indicated by Sharma et al., 2016 *et al.* (2016) inform the development of practices, strategies, and activities with the intentions of facilitating the enhancement of export involvement.

The analysis of industry structure by employing PFF, underpins growth in export activities. Understanding the industry structure informs a suitable formulation of strategic plans, with the aim of responding to dynamics directly linked with complex foreign markets.

Participants were unclear about PFF, though some indicated its practice and key elements were incorporated in their export activities. For example, challenges to market entry, competition, suppliers, and customers were highlighted to indicate certain levels of insights. They conduct industry analysis in consideration of uncertainties.

One of the limitations closely linked to PFF, as discovered by Beshay (2017), was that it simplifies the complexity of industry due to its lack of intuition in informing adequate strategy formulation to manage existing and emerging dynamics. None of the participants mentioned this limitation.

All in all, participants' perceptions were guided by what they are aiming to achieve, which is fundamentally driven by their skills (marketing and technology) and the way in which they conduct industry (market) analysis by identifying all relevant factors influencing the export involvement. Another strategic tool indicated by participants was Resource Based Review (RBV). The following section will focus on industry analysis tools used that are most anticipated to promote export involvement in the existence of constraints, thereby allowing participants to compete with rivals in export industries.

6.7.4 Industry analysis tools employed

It became apparent that most participants consider the analysis of the business and the industry as a whole. Some tools emerged during exporting activities and practices to address industry constraints deriving from internal and external forces, were noted as they also form part of the literature chapters (Chapter 3, section 3.2.2).

An SB's attractiveness, as suggested by Jin and Cho (2018) is driven by its internal and external elements deriving from understanding industry structure. The analysis of industry structure and its attractiveness goes to the heart of PFF, allowing SBs to select the force that is value adding by exploring significant associations. Such forces are bargaining power of buyers, entry barriers, rivalry, substitutes, and bargaining power of suppliers. Porter's industry analysis focuses on external elements posing as threats in limiting business growth potentials (Jin & Cho, 2018).

Porter's forces can be employed internally in each business's functions and externally in any industry to determine the influence of each force in the business development. Porter's forces suggest that each business has a set of underlying elements influencing its growth, and its aim is to assist businesses to sharpen their returns by exploiting strategic opportunities in the industry.

It further highlights functions within the organisation that will possibly prevent growth, due to internal inefficiencies, as indicated by most participants. Jin and Cho (2018) discovered that Porter's forces emphasise the significance of maintaining relations with customers, suppliers, buyers, and competitors in the reflection of challenges deriving from internal and external disciplines.

The influence (negative or positive) resulting from each force may shape the industry, business attractiveness, and its growth potentials. Porter suggests that each force represents the strength and weaknesses of the business and its industry. Strengths imply higher returns while weaknesses imply low impact on returns. Moreover, such strengths and weaknesses are determined by traits and dynamics of the SB and its industry, which are deemed to change over time.

Internal disciplines, as recommended by Porter, are resources, core competencies, and capabilities, while external disciplines are macroeconomic elements. However, the industry is a fundamental aspect, as it represents the dominant environment in which a SB operates. Porter considers the external discipline as the main determinant of the SB's failure, or success, despite the size of the SB (small or large SBs) as it determines the entry mode and the extent of product diversification.

Resource Based Review (RBV) lays a groundwork for the disposition of valuable resources leading to growth of export involvement as indicated by most participants. RBV encourages the effective management of rare, unique, and non-substitutable resources. Moreover, resources are declared as strengths and or threats of the SB, in that some resources have the potential to foster growth, while some may result in business failure to exploit strategic opportunities.

Both Porter's forces and RBV were highlighted by participants, and are sub-themes in this section. Political, Economic, Socio-culture, and Technological (PEST) analysis was a less well-known tool, as indicated by participants. PEST analyses which elements influence the export involvement of SBs in any industry. No other industry analysis or management tools were indicated thereafter.

Participant 20 and other owner-managers seemed uncertain about the application of PEST analysis. Initially some participants had a satellite view, linking PEST analysis with the external environment. However, Participant 20 indicated they apply it to address production process issues affecting the business cost structure. This finding shifted the order of PEST application from the assessment of external threats and opportunities to addressing internal (production) issues.

This confusion may be driven by various responsibilities undertaken by owner-managers, co-owners, and section managers, which Participant 20 executed in his business as an export manager. This finding indicated an ambiguous distinction about areas of responsibilities amongst the aforementioned managers.

Table 6.5 depicts the number of expressions highlighted by participants to indicate the most used industry analysis tools in pursuit of the development of export involvement.

Table6.5: Summary of expression in relations to industry analysis tools

Tool	RBV	PFF	PEST
Number of expressions	66	22	5
Comments	The word “RBV” was frequently highlighted	The word “PFF” was the second being admired	The “PEST” was highlighted only five times

Source: Author’s own compilation

RBV and PFF were commonly highlighted by participants. Probing questions were asked as a plan to follow up and to develop critical thinking concerning industry analysis tools used. There seem to be uncertainties regarding the application of PEST analysis, as some participants refer to it as internal analysis used to address production issues, instead of assessing external environments to exploit opportunities. The response from Participant 20 was directed at production processes instead of external assessment when PEST analysis is applied. His comment was as follows:

“We follow a lot of production processes to try and achieve operational efficiency. Various raw materials and technologies are used that require a lot of interaction within the plant and outside. PEST analysis helps us to achieve quality expected from analysing the external environment” (Also see, P20:INT20).

Participant 20 appeared confused when he matched PEST with production processes; however, he provided some light on how tasks are executed in the consideration of the external environment. Participant 3 was more coherent in his response, by matching trends in the external environment with production processes:

“We sometimes monitor trends in the markets and then apply changes in production processes and activities to meet what customers want. Different production processes in different sections of the plant cause a chain reaction when the wrong trend is detected, this incident has happened before when [name hidden to protect identity] provided information that was not a true reflection in the market

We have learned from this lesson as it affected how our resources are deployed and lowered our export sales at the time. This has taught us to understand important resources to use to improve our involvement in export activities” (Also see, P03:INT03).

The application of RBV by Participant 9 created a disorientation of what RBV intends to achieve and his response was as follows:

“Our culture is a very important resource because it has shaped our beliefs, values, and attitudes. We are now able to relate to our customers, global agents, and suppliers across all cultures. We have discovered that when we match our culture with that of our global customers it triggers our innovation in marketing” (Also see, P09:INT09).

RBV perspective considers strategic resources that are non-substitutable, rare, and hard to copy by competitors, with the intentions of promoting strategic positioning of the SB (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2.1). Such resources are a true reflection of cost reduction, while enhancing customer value using unique knowledge, reputation, and image. The insights of participant 09 about RBV were significantly ambiguous, in that the application of RBV in his business did not match the characteristics of RBV. The passion is his commitment, relating to a resourceful mind set was highly appreciated and his additional response was quoted as follows:

We operate under an extensively complicated global environment than we can imagine. Every day presents new experiences and challenges. We have no choice but to have a resourceful mindset linking our complementary ideas with our partners to maintain and re-produce new resources. We are committed to keep our doors open in the presence of on-going challenges” (Also see, P09:INT09).

Participants were open to sharing experiences on how they managed to stay afloat in an adverse global environment that is often aligned with resource scarcity and constraints. Most participants indicated that such adversity (resource inadequacy) shaped their perceptions on how export activities ought to be coordinated in the reflection of resources and capabilities to promote export involvement. Participants 16 and 17 provided detail about the application of RBV and PFF to balance internal and external adversity, and the response was summarised as follows:

We have realised that for us to fully understand what is going on externally, we need to know our problems from within. Industry challenges affect the way we planned to achieve our export goals. For example, problems derived from [name hidden to protect identity] which were outside of our control affected our export sales seriously. At the time of the incidence we were earning just enough to cover our expenses. In this situation we knew we had to act immediately by setting aside strategic resources that will help us recover from the situation derived from [name hidden to protect identity]. Understanding both environments has helped us to deal with situations even far worse than what was caused by [name hidden to protect identity]” (Also see P4&5:INT4&5).

Although Participants 4&5 were not transparent about detailing their relationships with suppliers, competitors and buyers in regard of providing a satellite view on how they controlled the situation at hand in the application of industry analysis tools.

They were also not explicit about their core competencies and capabilities, for the sake of safeguarding business information. However, they did shed some light on how they responded to dynamics from internal and external disciplines. Participant 8 was significantly subtle and unclear about the industry analysis tools he uses in his business:

“When something is about to happen, my customers always inform me because they are steps ahead of me. Most of them are holding high positions in governments and are highly knowledgeable as some of them are involved in the policy formulation decisions. They inform me sometime ahead about possible industry dynamics so that I can start preparing my business for any industry changes I may need to implement and resources to be allocated to export activities” (Also see P08:INT08).

This was significantly confusing as none of the industry analysis tools were indicated by the participant in question. This finding raised more questions than answers, even after probing with the hope of exploring a different version. However similar responses emerged. Participant 19 alludes to his core competencies that are driven by customer demand:

“When I begin the production process more often than not, I follow exactly what customers have specified in their requests, which is then driven by the structure of their plants. I sometimes offer my suggestions here and there based on my experiences but in the end, I am driven by the design and specifications of clients” (Also see, P19:INT19).

The success of any business of all sizes, as advocated by Wellner and Lakotta (2020) is determined by the industry structure in which it functions. An argument by Nagano (2020) indicates that an RBV perspective enables the SB to frame its ability to realise its goals in the deliberations of capabilities and core-competencies. Participant 6 indicates the influence of economic dynamics in her business and her response was captured as follows:

“The instability of the exchange rates often results in a fluctuation of my export sales as I am forced to adjust prices. I often experience price dilemma because I sometimes need to increase prices and when I do that I lose customers and when I lower prices I lose profits, so often end up not knowing what to do” (Also see P06:INT06).

RBV and PFF were in the spotlight as the most used strategic (industry analysis) tools. To a certain extent, participant insights on the application of the tools were insufficiently verified, in that very little was shared in relation to their strategic positioning and formulation.

A metaphor amongst indicated tools was significantly blurry in that their reflections on tools were short in the coherence of the internal (resource) and external industry perspectives. A conclusive argument by Pickernell *et al.* (2016) stated a systematic view of the industry in which a SB operates in coherence with the internal matters (resources) holds the outcomes of the SB (negative or positive) (Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.1 and 3.2.2.2). Most participants provided a satellite view on the application of tools in the realisation of their export involvement. The need to explore comparative merits of export involvement as indicated by participants is discussed in the following chapter section.

6.7.5 The comparative merits of export involvement

In the context of export activities, export involvement is a multidimensional outlook propelled by internal and external components. As a result, the extent of export involvement was insufficiently substantiated in the face of industry and business dynamics. The merits of export involvement aimed to address sub-themes, such as development of export experience, management export experience, and export involvement in coping with adversity. Constraints to exports can only be viewed as problematic when they trigger business failure in export markets, as Sinkovics *et al.* (2018) suggests that traits of failure are linked to short-sightedness of foreign market knowledge on continuous dynamics associated with the industry and global environment.

A lack of underpinning of export involvement at an organisational level was significantly evident. There seems to be a gap between export activities and organisational traits, which in turn impacts on the extent of export involvement. As indicated earlier, varying extent of involvement in export activities rests upon conditions from (internal and external) disciplines, which necessitate different approaches to cope with uncertainties. In this view, the merits of export involvement appear to be ambiguous, coupled with a lack of clarity in the application of strategic tools and inconsistencies in export activities. Fundamental constraints facing most SBs, as discovered by Cardoza, Fones, Farber, Duarte and Gutierrez (2016) are at the heart of management skills (internal matters). Organisational strategies and industry analysis tools, as argued by Jin and Cho (2018) ought to be formulated in view of both disciplines.

Most participants are conversant with constraints affiliated to exports obstructing the involvement, although the question of how they deal with such constraints remains blurry. The prime constraint indicated by most participants was inadequate foreign market information and the absence of export assistance (export programmes) to exploit opportunities, despite their long-term export experience.

A continual development of involvement in export activities, as indicated by Bally *et al.* (2019), hinges on a depth of understanding of accessible foreign market information and industry (market) dynamics in which the business wishes to explore.

In light of the above, it became apparent that Participant 9 held a traditional view of acquiring foreign market information. His ambiguous export involvement did not come as a surprise and his answer was as follows:

“I normally observe and analyse different domestic markets and how customers react on specific products or service. Based on products or services that customers buy the most in my home country I will then find ways to enter into export market in a foreign country because customers like more or less the same things. I also access information about new markets in foreign countries through friends and customers as they know more about what is in demand” (Also see, P09:INT09).

This was one of the doubtful responses of explaining the extent of export involvement using inadequate foreign information to exploit opportunities from emerging markets. What was apparent about Participant 9 was that his perceived strength in the domestic market is his weakness in the foreign markets. He did provide evidence (documents) of his export sales; however, the behavioural patterns justify his export decisions and ambiguity in export activities.

Because of missing merits placed on export involvement and lagging information related to foreign markets, Participant 7's response was based on the notion of resource constraint in coping with export uncertainties. The participant indicated that she had investigated foreign market information to exploit opportunities through global networking; however, sufficient information did make resource constraints disappear, as uncertainties may be difficult to control. Her response was summarised as follows:

“It is impossible to know in advance what is going to happen tomorrow, no one knows so it is no use to predict something that you cannot control. We depend on what our fellows are telling us about any change in the global markets because they are far advanced than us by attending annual general meetings, workshops, and exhibitions. We deal with uncertainties as they come which requires resources, but our members help us when we run out of resources. We discovered that we cannot deal with problems in isolation, when we joined this network we were grouped with other companies offering similar export services, we basically help each other to fight the problem of resource constraints facing many small businesses” (Also see P07:INT07).

It became clear that internal challenges (resources) are a rather sensitive topic for most participants, as they inform a set of business aspects, including the choice of entry.

Some participants were generous to share planned and emergent strategies; however, they highlighted that some of strategies failed to reach the implementation phase due to internal matters.

This sensitive finding is supported by Paul *et al.* (2017) who maintained that resources influence decisions related to the choice of entry in the foreign markets as they dictate the fulfilment of exporting goals.

Participant 18 indicated how they plan to manage information flow about foreign markets, not only to boost their export involvement, but also to detect and assess dynamics within the markets:

“One of our past mistakes was that we get too excited about closing deals with customers and then overlook the continuous search of foreign market information to reduce risk elements that may obstruct our export growth in the future. We maintain the information amongst key members about market patterns and habits, supply sources, competitive sources and buying behaviours of customers and competitors. An understanding of all these has helped us to cope with market uncertainties and today our export orders are steadily growing”. (Also see, (P18:INT18)

Participant 18 detected past mistakes and acted in an effort to defend their export activities from declining. It became evident that when foreign market information is discovered, analysed, and managed, it can lead to enhanced export involvement in export activities through the efficient use of limited resources. This finding is in line with Pineda *et al.* (2017) who discovered that managers with timely data about on-going foreign market information respond more efficiently than those with limited knowledge.

Pascucci, Bartoloni and Gregori (2016) argue that understanding foreign markets alone is insufficient to help SBs cope with industry dynamics. Other elements that come into play include culture, language, socio-economic, and ethnicity may threaten the growth of export activities. Participant 6 indicated how social ills created barriers in her export involvement, and her feedback was summarised as follows:

“I have difficulties in coping with social ills that attacked our business in 2019 due [name hidden to protect identity] as it was severely damaging our image and service delivery since we were losing money and clients every day. It got to a point where I was unable to pay salaries on time as social ills resulted in a significant chain reaction. This is an unfortunate event that is beyond my control. All I could control within my means was to assign resources in areas where they are needed the most. We are in a process of developing new strategies to cope better in the future in case this happens again” (Also see, P06INT06).

Contextual information relating to the merits of export involvement was observed to be non-linear due to variances of lived experiences, attitudes, and deliberations on export involvement.

Participant 6, 19, and 20 appeared to operate from a reactive mindset, by responding to problems when they occur. Grankvist and Karlsson (2017) maintained that SBs aiming to raise export involvement ought to incorporate a reactive approach to respond to market turbulence.

Some participants were observed to be proactive, vigorous, and combative in pursuit of competencies in export involvement, by being purposive about strategic positioning to exploit foreign market opportunities despite global dynamics. While others indicated to be reactive towards export market pressures, often with low levels of foreign market insights and proficiency.

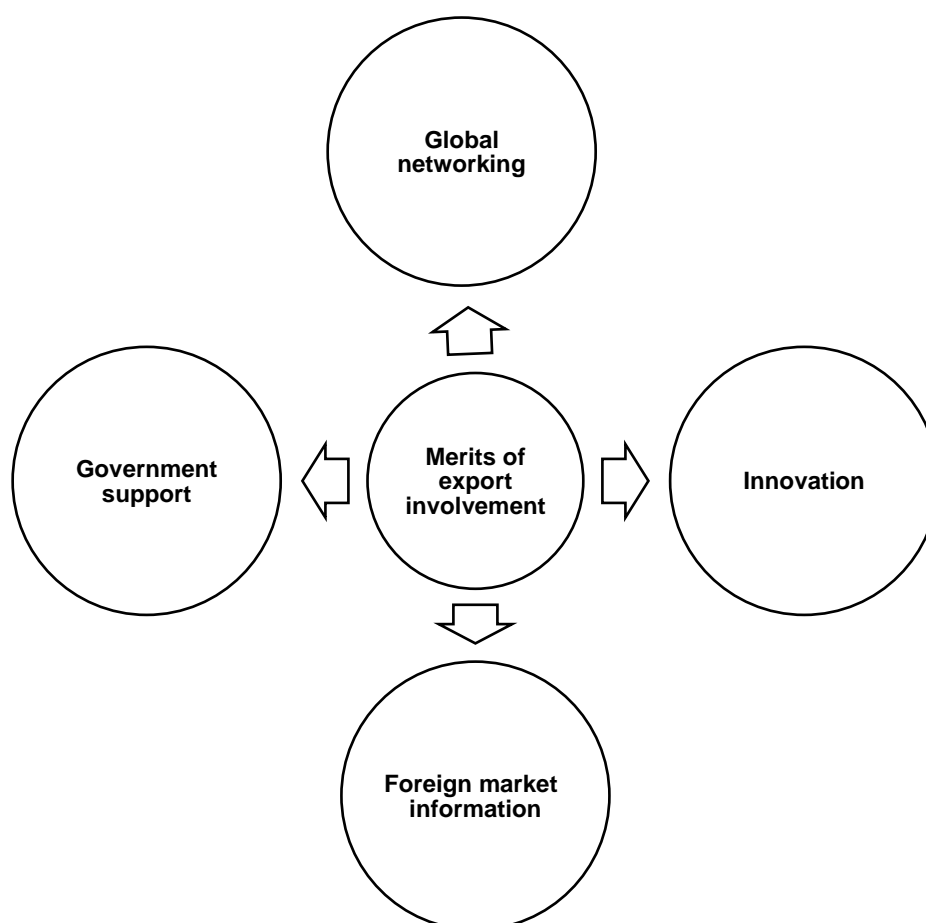
This finding confirmed that some participants did place significant merits on their involvement in exports activities. Their perceptions, attitudes, and behaviours are geared towards enhancing decisions related to export involvement despite not receiving any export assistance from government. While others indicated average commitment towards export activities and risks allied as, they allude to small-scale adjustment levels on market complexities, due to resource inadequacies amongst many reasons.

This necessitated managers applying robust proactive approaches, including seeking government support to further export involvement. A proactive approach, as indicated by Ribau *et al.* (2017) includes obtaining foreign market information, developing market opportunities, and building a new network of global relations leading to increased export involvement. A reactive approach entails responding to rivalry and export pressures in the absence of sufficient foreign market details and insights (Roy, Silvestre & Singh, 2020). Feriyanto, Sugandini and Muafi (2019) argue that both approaches have the potential to allow a SB to respond to global pressures, thereby reducing their vulnerability.

It is apparent that there is a link between export involvement merits and participants' deliberations as some can merge strategies with actions. Some were determined to seek government support to increase the likelihood of export involvement success. This finding is supported by Njinyah (2017) who argues that government assistance programmes raise collaborations to stimulate innovation and enhance export activities.

Furthermore, a continuous information gathering about foreign (emerging) markets appeared to be costly for most participants. Njinyah (2017) suggests an optimal use of limited resources has been associated to consistent export involvement. Figure 6.4 depicts the merits of export involvement extracted from participants' responses.

Figure 6.5 Merits of export involvement



Source: Author's own compilation

Figure 6.5 depicts the merits of export involvement as indicated by some participants. The starting point is to employ the proactive approaches (process) by embarking on information searching activities, seeking government support, and networking with other exporters to generate innovation and critical thinking. Figure 6.4 further explains that foreign market information is informed by global networking, while government support informs innovation.

The proactive process is regarded as continuous as it describes SBs that are unceasingly probing to exploit opportunities with the help of internal strengths. The proactive process, as explored by Stouraitis *et al.* (2016), allow SBs to deepen their export involvement from the position of strength, permitting the SB to develop new skills and technological know-hows.

While a reactive approach conversely considers a response to environmental pressures, as advocated by Stouraitis *et al.* (2016), often search for solutions globally to resolve internal inefficiencies, using limited foreign market knowledge.

The above factors are viewed as a prerequisite for consistent export involvement in that they provide an unambiguous distinction between proactive and reactive SBs. A proactive process act as a catalyst aimed at increasing export activities. It must be noted that all participants displayed both attributes; however, the reactive approach was the most highlighted.

6.8 COMMON THEMES OF THE STUDY

In the course of thematic analysis, some themes that were affiliated to the current study and interview guide surfaced. Such themes were not precisely linked to research objectives but were compared with existing themes, which were used to address objectives to ensure consistency. Qualitative data analysis may lead to the emergence of common themes providing substantiating evidence to the topic (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). This has allowed the current study to develop other themes as supplementary since they were linked to export involvement though they were not necessarily consistent with research questions and objectives. Such themes were labelled “other focal points” and “self-focused” in the researcher’s journal as recommended by (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). For instance, themes that were labelled “focal points” are those that influenced the extent of participants’ involvement in export activities such as regulations and political and socio-cultural attributes.

6.8.1 Regulations, political attributes and socio-cultural attributes

Export involvement goes to the heart of regulations and political and socio-cultural conditions that may support or limit export involvement of SBs (Sinkovics *et al.*, 2018). Such attributes (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.1) connects regulations and political and socio-culture with the export involvement of SBs to determine the level of influence. Kahiya and Dean (2015) and Rahman, Yaacod and Radzi (2016) reinforce the significance of regulations and politics in the promotion export activities exhibited by SBs. Sibiya and Kele (2019) deduced that SBs are vulnerable to regulatory frameworks due to their size. For this reason, regulations may influence their capacity to enhance activities in exports. Prasanna *et al.* (2019) introduced a notion of linking regulations and socio-cultural and political attributes with industry structure in which a business operate. This set the stage for the relatedness between regulations and export involvement as deduced by Rahman *et al.* (2016) indicating that regulations directly influence exporting decisions and course of actions.

It is universally recognised by any society that regulations and political and socio-cultural attributes have the potential to pose significant challenges for SBs operating in export industries (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2.1).

It was discovered by Fornes and Cardoza (2019) that developing countries such as South Africa are characterised by a fragile regulatory anatomy that has a significant impact on SBs’ export involvement. In this instance, political associations of SBs’ play a pivotal role in promoting the acceleration of export activities (Fornes & Cardoza 2019).

During interviews and observations, it was evident that major challenges confronting the export involvement of SBs goes to the heart of the regulatory environment, which incorporates bribery and corrupt activities in the administration of taxes, which are executed by politicians and government officials. Some participants alluded to having no choice but to participate in corrupt activities, with the aim of deepening export involvement by tapping into other foreign markets. Ullah (2020) asserted that such challenges are culpable for the ambiguity and fluctuating in export involvement of many small establishments. This was not surprising as most participants proposed government assistance in export to overcome constraints associated with exporting. Participants believed that such a support system would equip them with relevant marketing skills to foster the commitment in exports. Such support may include financial and no financial support as indicated by (SEDA, 2018/19; DTI, 2019/19).

Participants 4&5 indicated the following comment about regulatory environment and government export assistance:

“Government assistance it’s a great idea. I see they do have great plans to support us; the problem is that they are very slow in implementing such plans. I have tried to enquire via telephone calls and emails, but I could not get through to someone who specifically deal with our challenges. I decided to go visit one of their offices, but the queues were really discouraging. Perhaps if they can try to improve their service delivery I will try to pursue the support again” (Also see, P4&5:INT4&5).

Participants 4&5 added the following suggestions:

“Export assistance should be designed to suit special needs of a business. We all face different challenges and we operate in different industries. We are not exposed to the same things. They should also monitor our stages of export involvement to ensure that we are growing” (Also see, P4&5:INT4&5).

Most participants seem to lack trust in government agencies, as most of challenges presented are homogeneous in nature. This finding is supported by Ullah (2020), who infers that such challenges are often traced to countries confronted with political and socio-cultural instability. Participant 13 had this to say:

“Government regulations are not making it easy for us to run our export business because of restrictions in their policies. They are only concerned about receiving tax from us, they are not really concerned about our export development and our struggles” (Also see, P13:INT13).

Participant 13 added another comment

“What I have noticed is that regulations and policies somehow are opening a door of corruption. I feel like officials are taking advantage of us because the tax they are charging is too much, that is why I say that most of our money problems comes from regulations” (Also see, P13:INT13).

Based on the above comments, it became clear that the regulatory environment does bring certain challenges that are accompanied by bribery and corrupt activities exposing some participants to a fluctuating export involvement. Rahman *et al.* (2016) discovered that SBs’ challenges starts as early as the business registrations, administrations, and the taxation system of the initial export involvement phases. This is seconded by Tsukanova (2019) and Vaikunthavasan, Velnampy and Rajumesh (2019), who suggest that SBs have more expenses than they are able to manage. Participant 7 commented on the implications of compliance costs in the business and had the following to say:

“Complying with government restrictions does not only place us in an unfavourable financial position but it also takes too much time from our daily activities. We had to hire someone on a fixed contract to ensure that we are not behind with the tax, as we all know what happens when one doesn’t pay tax. We don’t get support from the government we actually pay government to keep our business running” (Also see, P07:INT07).

Participant 2 indicated that government regulations made a positive contribution to their export involvement in areas such as finance, innovations, and management skills:

“In this industry we are expected to attend global seminars and exhibitions, such trips are often financially covered by government. We have been to many places to learn about industry dynamics and government would cover all costs. It was not easy to get into the programme, but I can advise other small businesses not give up but to keep on knocking on all doors as these programmes were initiated for us. We also get taxed less because we are involved in community activities” (Also see, P02INT02).

There seems to be perceptual differences concerning the regulatory environment, as some participants claimed that government compliance through regulations often causes a decline in their export involvement as they are expected to pay taxes even when sales drop.

As indicated in the literature (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2.1), regulations have significant cost implications in areas such as production and marketing.

Political relationships seem to play a role in some participants’ rate of export involvement as they sell their export products and service to government departments. Participant 9 indicated that they had close relations with some of the officials and his response was noted as follows:

“Our biggest market is government [name hidden to protect identity] we have a great relationship with them. I can be honest to say the tendering process is time consuming and sometimes they don’t pay on time. But we have been awarded a few contracts by different government agencies. There is a lot that needs some improvements from government side, which sometimes impact on us. For instance, when they don’t pay on time it sometime impact on us because it causes delays on our salary payments” (Also see, 09INT:09).

Participant 8 included lack of funding from government and private institutions affiliated with some of government agencies. His answer was summarised as follows:

“I have made numerous attempts to access funding from government agencies and banking institutions I did not get positive results perhaps it’s because I don’t have personal relations with any government official. They asked for a lot of paperwork I did submit, I waited for months I did not get any feedback I ended up giving up. I finance my business with the money I earned from my previous employers and my family members also contribute. I run the business alone and I struggle with some business aspects such as marketing and advertising. I really need assistance from government” (Also see, P08:INT08).

It is evident that politicians have a significant influence in government and financial institutions, while officials influence regulations and procedures (see Section Chapter 2) (Gaganis, Pasiouras, and Voulgari, 2019). This finding has also been accentuated by Ryoo and Jin (2020) and Ullah (2020). SB owners who are able to offer politicians an enticement in order to gain distinct resources stand a better chance of raising their export activities.

Most participants contributed a few propositions as remedial measures, such as collaborations with various stakeholders in society, including government, private sectors, and other SBs. The collaboration will aim to provide sufficient support to SBs to obtain strategic resources and to strengthen the improvement plans in logistics and production infrastructures.

Significant issues that came to light were strategic resources, logistics, and production infrastructure to eradicate immoral conduct linked to corruption and bribes.

As noted by SEDA (2018/19) and DTI (2018/19), the government mandate is based on three objectives: to provide financial and non-financial support to SBs, to create a demand for South African goods and services, and to decrease compliance and regulatory costs.

This section of the study was intensively discussed by participants and was noted during interviews and observations. All 20 participants indicated important aspects that are linked to this section (theme).

It was evident that all participants are familiar with strategies formulated by government in support of SBs' development in exports. The codes indicated under this theme are the most highlighted by participants.

Participants were eager to discuss their perceptions of socio-cultural conditions and the impact thereof on the demand for export goods and services. Some made comments of government support, as indicated in the objectives developed by the DTI.

For example, Participant 13 stated:

“Culture has affected my business in some way because some customers prefer things to be done in certain ways for example some clients prefer their merchandise to be packed and delivered in a certain way. They will make us buy expensive packaging materials and select expensive transport mode to protect their merchandise” (Also see, P13:INT13)

In general, the participant was clear about how his exporting involvement and actions are influenced by socio-cultural aspects and the cost implications thereof. The following response from Participant 6 was similar to comments made by Participant 13 and her response was captured as follows:

“Since I started this business, I have always known that social ills can have a serious effect on a business but what we have experienced in 2019 was unique. What was sad about the situation was that we had no control over the situation and yet it affected our export sales seriously” (Also see P06:INT06).

Most participants indicated an impact of social ills in their export operations. To their credit, some participants indicated to have incorporated a social management practice, which is informed by RBV to deal with social issues. Participants 12 indicated the following:

“Collaborative relationships with other partners in the supply chain and other stakeholders such as community has assisted to detect challenges such as strikes before they occur so that we can start preparing ourselves” (Also see, P12:INT12).

Participant 1 expressed their views about the importance of maintaining good relations with the community in which the business operates, and explained as follows:

“We try to be transparent with the community by informing community members about some business decisions that we feel might impact their environment. We also ensure that when we secure big contracts we recruit from the community to improve their living standards” (Also see, P012:INT012).

The participant was not clear about the views of the community when their strategies are unfavourable to the well-being of the community. The participant was also unclear about the involvement of the community in the business decision-making processes. This ambiguity raised the issue of planning when key decisions are made. Van and Nguyen (2019) advocated that the involvement of communities in which a business operates is pivotal in the planning phases of existing and future projects in order to optimise benefits and reduce risks. Likewise, Motlaghi and Mostafavi (2017) touched on the perceptions of communities may also reduce harmful effects resulting from socio-cultural conflicts (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.6).

Participant 16&17 shared comments on:

“Our industry is recognised as an export industry because we sell traveling packages across different countries. This exposes us to various customary cultures and communities. This exposure has presented both opportunities and threats in our business. For example, in [name hidden to protect identity] women are regarded as inferior since this industry is male dominated in [name hidden to protect identity] often we lost several contracts because of my gender. My partner and I decided that he needs to be present whenever big deals need to be negotiated in [name hidden to protect identity] as we have picked up a pattern of gender inferiority” (Also see P16&17:INT16&17).

Participant 6, 12, 13 and (16&17) and others (not indicated) were specific about the conundrum and the dilemma experienced and how it impacted on their export involvement extents and export actions. Participants also indicated strategies in place as remedial measures to reduce harmful effects with the intentions of optimising benefits. Participants’ commitment and perceptual differences relating to regulations and political and socio-cultural aspects was inspiring. In spite of challenges experienced, participants continuously made reference to objectives articulated by the DTI, calling for collaboration to facilitate a risk reduction driven by regulations and political and socio-cultural aspects.

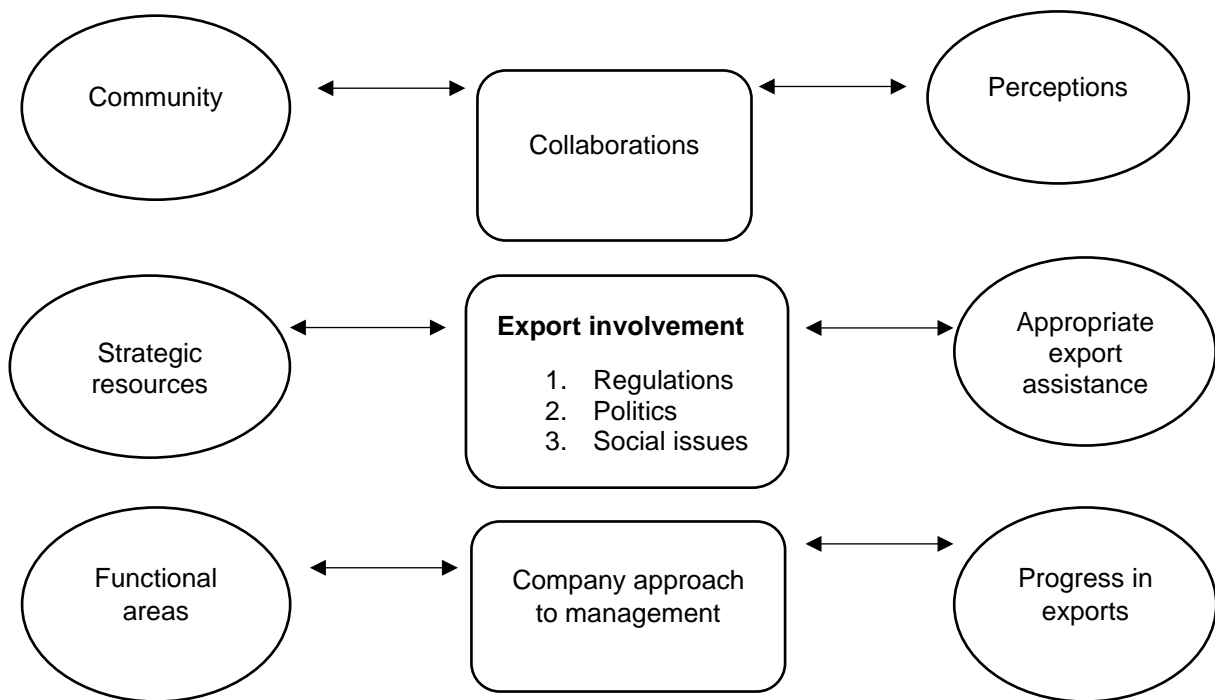
Some of these aspects lead to the generation of the abuse of power, which manifests itself through corruption, bribery, and poor policy formulation. At an organisational level, as outlined by Qi, Zou, Xie, Meng, Fan and Cao (2020), bribes are not clear-cut; however, it normally emerges in a form of resource constraints and continuous management interactions with corrupt government officials, in order to cope with inadequacies.

Most participants believed that collaboration with government would facilitate a critical review, and propositions on how regulations and political and socio-cultural aspects can be used to promote the development of SBs, as highlighted by (DTI, 2018/19). Moreover, collaboration will result in the review of notions, sources, and the outcome of regulations and political and socio-cultural aspects.

As outlined in Chapter 3 of the current study, DTI, through the Integrated Small Enterprise Development Strategy (ISEDS) called for a decrease of the regulatory burden on SBs' participation in export activities. Perceptual differences of SBs as stakeholders are taken into considerations.

It became apparent that the socio-cultural concept was important to most participants, as it links regulatory environment, politics, and communities. Some participants further suggested the notion of contributing towards education, health, and other social services in communities. Figure 6.6 is a summary of participants' views under this theme.

Figure 6.6: Regulations, politics and socio-cultural influences of SBs' export involvement



Source: authors own compilation

Figure 6.6 depicts regulations, politics, and socio-cultural factors influencing the export involvement of SBs. These factors were examined in the reflection of STA (see Chapter 3, section 3.2.2.2). STA is used to identify potential factors that hinders or promotes the success of an organisation by recognising the links of export involvement as a whole, and how each section influences the other.

This implies that there are various factors that come into play where export involvement is concerned. This suggests that society and government recognise the importance of SBs' export involvement to the health of the economy. Government provides financial and non-financial support to SBs involved in export. In turn, SBs participate in community engagement activities to reduce socio-cultural constraints linked to export activities. Interacting with the community enhances the spirit of oneness through collaborating efforts that promote living standards. Deepening the commitment on export involvement leads to the developing of strategic resources, approaches, and progress in export activities.

6.8.2 The development of export activities

It became evident that the extent of export involvement is not limited to size of the SB but to strategies, commitment, and attitude towards exports dynamics (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2). Studies by Yan *et al.* (2018) and Kahiya and Dean (2015), infer the worth of SBs that have received worldwide recognition for their dynamic and flexible nature in promoting innovation and autonomous decisiveness. The development of export activities exhibited by SBs over decades has increased as they enter the global arena in their early phases, due to structural flexibility linked to exporting (Méndez, *et al.*, 2018).

Some participants exhibited the potential to reach consistent export involvement; however, constraints are making it harder to achieve higher levels of exports. Most participants are unable to enjoy benefits attached to export involvement due to an array of challenges, structural handicaps, and shortage of government support being some of issues.

Export involvement, by its definition, comprehends the principles of systems thinking and proactive and reactive approaches, which incorporate management skills characteristic of the SB, and export strategies (Kraus, Mitter, Eggers & Stieg, 2016). These approaches encourage insights and analysis of complex problems associated with export in order to continuously search for export opportunities (Feriyanto, Sugandini and Muaf (2019) and Hakim and Zulkarnain, 2020). Gancarczyk and Gancarczyk (2018) claim that the application of the aforementioned approaches results in the introduction of new products and services to outpace competitors.

Freixanet, Rialp and Churakova (2020) indicated that the STA allows export managers to view export complexity as a set of interconnected problems. Challenges facing SBs in the current study are viewed according to a systems approach to understand links and relations.

A proactive approach, by its nature, encompasses innovative capabilities in promoting new opportunities in a heterogeneous export market, while a reactive approach focuses on responding to market dynamics using lower levels of adaptation.

Given different challenges confronting participants, it became evident that knowledge in the application of both approaches tends to vary. Table 5.6 provides a summary of the participants who applied proactive or reactive approach in the formulation of export strategies. The table further indicates participants who draw strengths from both approaches by applying proactive behaviours before disorder and reactive behaviours after the disorder. Participants indicated perceptual differences in relation to the formulation of export strategies; however, export involvement and the manner in which participants address export challenges determine the approach, or export strategies used to remedy the influence.

Table 6.7: Summary of approaches indicated by participants

Participants	Proactive or reactive	Export strategies	Comment (if applicable)
1	Proactive	Yes	Strategies implemented through government support
2	Proactive	Yes	Strategies implemented through government support
3	Proactive	Yes	Strategies implemented through government support
4&5	Proactive and reactive	Yes	Supported by direct and indirect relationships
6	Proactive and reactive	Not really	Implementation is supported by business relationships
7	Proactive and reactive	Yes	Implementation is supported by business relationships
8	Reactive	No	Supported by direct and indirect relationships
9	Reactive	No	Supported by direct and indirect relationships
10&11	Reactive	No	Supported by direct and indirect relationships
12	Proactive and reactive	Yes	Implementation is supported by business relationships
13	Reactive	Yes	Supported by direct and indirect relationships
14	Proactive and reactive	Yes	Implementation is supported by business relationships
15	Proactive and reactive	Yes	Supported by direct and indirect relationships
16&17	Proactive and reactive	Yes	Supported by direct and indirect relationships
18	Proactive and reactive	Yes	Implementation is supported by business relationships
19	Reactive	Not really	Supported by direct and indirect relationships
20	Reactive	No	Supported by direct and indirect relationships

Source: Authors own compilation

Table 6.7 depicts choices of participants being underpinned either by government support, or direct indirect relations, and or business relationships. As indicated earlier, participants operate in different industries, including export services and manufacturing. 16 out of 20 participants indicated they had planned export strategies, while four participants formulated strategies as a reactive approach to reduce the harmful effect caused by a heterogeneous export market.

Most participants linked export strategy with consistent involvement, in that it fosters appropriate structural adaptation to export involvement actions. Export involvement is evaluated by the priority and urgency given to export activities and perceptions associated with export risks (Ismail, Alam & Hamid, 2017).

All participants seem to have some knowledge of proactive and reactive approaches to address export constraints. Participants who employ a proactive approach have a vast knowledge of foreign markets. Participants 4&5 have more than 36 years export experience and shared comments on planned export strategies and other strategies to address market complexities. Their response was captured as follows:

“We are always hunting for new market opportunities to stabilize our export sales because competition in this industry is too much. Despite the fact that we suffer from resource shortages but dedicate time and efforts to find a strategy that will fit in a specific market. There are plenty problems in this industry, but we are pressing on and we have managed to introduce new export services to strengthen our image globally and to improve our export services. This industry changes all the time, we send our employees for training to ensure that we remain ahead of our competitors” (Also see, P4&5:INT4&5).

Still on the same question, Participant 16&17 were deliberate about their export development and were intentional about increasing their export sales. Their response was as follows:

“In 2019 we have been travelling a lot, collecting information about potential new markets because we are planning on strengthen one of our markets. This market [name hidden to protect identity] has been neglected for years. We have new value-added services planned for this market. We will be launching in 2020 and we plan on providing incentives to our customers. This is a big project as we have hired experts from different industries. We are doing all we can to minimise risks associated to this industry. Every day is an opportunity to learn new things. Serving global customers is not an easy task”. (Also see, P16&17:INT16&17)

Participant 3 indicated that his proactiveness in developing export strategies is facilitated by government export assistance. His response was captured as follows:

“Government make strategic decisions on our behalf we have little influence on our export activities as everything is planned for us. Being in the export programme has been a blessing to us as our export sales were facilitated by the support we receive from government.

We get training on marketing, sales and other functions within the business. When we need to travel to attend exhibitions, workshops annual meetings, all our travelling expenses are covered through export programmes.”

“It has not been easy, we often do experience problems such as difficulties in finding appropriate expertise and skills, we sometime outsource such skills on a temporary basis to maintain the global standards” (Also see P03:INT03).

As indicated earlier, sixteen participants indicated that they formulated export strategies to grow export involvement in foreign markets. When formulating such strategies, some failed to reflect on internal and external pressure constraints. While others view the process of formulating export strategies as a whole that is influenced by specific parts. Participant 15 commented on export strategies as follows:

“We did realise that when we plan to enter into a new market, as management our mindset and attitudes had to be adjusted because we did not have enough information about this market. We started by examining our resources including marketing experts who will help us promote our services to see if we can achieve higher sales volumes in export. Adjusting the attitude and behavior of employees was a big challenge because people react differently to export challenges and this has somehow impacted the business negatively” (Also see, P15:INT15).

While Participant 6 had the following to say:

“When we identified a new market, we focus all our energies to coping with challenges in that market so that we can achieve higher sales. The mistake we did was to neglect the impact of the exchange rates and compliance costs” (Also see, P06:INT06).

Participants seemed to struggle to find a balance of internal and external elements in the formulation and deployment of optimal export strategies. The patterns of export involvement growth, as claimed by Chan and Ma (2016), rest upon an SB's ability to interact with its internal and external environment. As a result, some fail to penetrate existing markets, and rather opt to enter to a new market.

This is what Participant 1 had to say:

“Our prices normally get extensively affected when the exchange rates changes. For instance, in 2019 we had incurred additional costs due to changes in our production processes which led to higher administration and distribution costs” (Also see, P01:INT01).

Despite ongoing challenges that seem to increase the vulnerability of participants, their attitude, and commitment to export activities are at a higher level.

They seem to be more determined to expand export involvement, even when they have a minor influence on export market dynamics. Commitment to export is driven by the knowledge a SB possesses about export markets, while industry dynamics influence managers' perceptions about export challenges (Ismail, *et al.*, 2017). Knowledge about foreign markets promotes a steady growth in exports through ongoing interactions with other export counterparts (Ismail, *et al.*, 2017).

Some participants indicated that their process of planning export strategies to access foreign market opportunities is enabled by the use of global networking and global agents. This is in line with Gao, Ren, Zhang and Sun (2015) who discovered that such interactions enable critical thinking in order to foster innovation and customisation of products and services.

The development of export activities begins by actively seeking foreign opportunities in the consideration of internal and external dynamics (Gao, *et al.*, 2015). Most participants indicated that they discover opportunities when their export strategies are consistent with both environmental factors; however, it became apparent that their interpretations of environmental factors vary significantly.

It was appreciative to discover that participants are attentive of the dynamism and complexity of the business environment that considers the extent of uncertainties confronting the business. This awareness signals export strategies in place to address notable uncertainties.

6.8.3 Management export experience

Export experience continues to play a pivotal role in export involvement, as it influences the success or failure of a business in foreign markets (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.1). Perceptual variances in relation to export experiences and education were evident as they all shared positive and negative comments.

In light of positive comments, when asked about export experience, most participants indicated that the experience in exports reduces risks and uncertainties related to complexities associated with export markets. Sandberg *et al.* (2019) infers that export experience is accumulated over time through a persistent search of export market information, resulting in a commitment towards export activities.

Moreover, the experience in exports facilitates the collection of relevant information to brace an SB's export decisions by evaluating dynamics and patterns in a competitive environment (Sandberg, *et al.*, 2019).

Some participants use the latest technologies to keep progress of their experiences by reviewing the export impact on the industry and SBs' export involvement. Some achieve this through research activities by forming business relationships with other export counterparts.

Adebayo, *et al.* (2019) argue that export experience and foreign market information without the appropriate educational background may have little or no impact on the success of the export activities. Appropriate export decisions are often backed by managers' educational background.

None of the participants completed a formal qualification. To address educational inadequacies, most participants develop employee training to promote innovativeness in order to deepen export activities. Participant 12 emphasised the importance of employee training and export experience, but described it as being costly. Her answer was summarised as follows:

“Pairing export experiences with finding effective training programmes to equip my staff with the knowledge I progressively acquired has been one of the expensive activities, especially when we don’t get any financial support. This opened doors to risks and opportunities because we need to make sure that the information imparted on employees during training and workshops is secured and cannot be leaked to any of our competitors.

Training employees has stabilised our export involvement because employees become more confident to execute important tasks such as negotiating prices with customers”
(Also see, P12:INT12).

When Participant 8 was asked about export experience and how it impacted his export development, his response was as follows:

“I have been exporting for six years, I often feel like six years is not enough to fight the competition in such a huge global front. What I have noticed about the export market is that knowledge that is competitive you only gain it when you have a lot of experience. For example, the knowledge I acquired from [name hidden to protect identity] did help to boost our export sales but only for a short space of time. I decided to enroll with [name hidden to protect identity] to gain educational background with the hope of balancing my export experience with a formal qualification” (Also see P08:INT08)

Not only did Participant 8 share his export experiences, but also his challenges and remedies to address the situation. It became apparent that his commitment and attitude towards export activities was influenced by his insufficient export experience to combat global pressures. This finding is supported by Mansion and Bausch (2019) and Malca, Vines and Acedo (2019) who revealed that exporters with insufficient export experiences are likely to generate less returns, which may result in an unwillingness to commit to higher degrees of export involvement.

Participant 1 appeared to be appreciative of the latest technologies in promoting operational efficacy, and raised a concern about costs associated with the application of such technologies:

“With the introduction of the new component part, we needed to make changes in the plant structure and manufacturing process to accommodate the new change.

Some of the processes that needed to be adjusted, I advised my staff not adjust them because I was trying to avoid higher costs. This is a part where my 15 years of experience in this industry helped me, I sometimes feel like I need to enrol and gain some formal qualification in order to come up with more solutions” (Also see, P01INT01).

Participant 16&17 have been in the export industry for 20 years. It became evident that they both have vast experience in export markets as they shared different strategies to respond to various internal and external challenges. This is what they had to say:

“20 years of experience does not mean that we don’t encounter problems. This industry is very dynamic, it evolves all the time. Years of experience help us to manage risks and uncertainties. Cultural differences are one of the problems we face in different export markets for example, customers invest emotions on specific export services related to their culture such as [name hidden to protect identity] they expect things to be done in a certain way”. (Also see P16&17:16&17).

Participant 4&5 have over 36 years of experience, which is the longest of all the participants. They shared interesting industry experiences and their responses were cited as follows:

“We’ve been in the export industry for more than 36 years, things have not been always like this. We’ve been through a lot of ups and downs, but we managed to spread our export services in several markets. We are happy with our business size we are not planning grow big to avoid complex reporting structures. We take decisions quickly to respond to challenges” (Also see, P4&5:INT4&5).

It became clear that export experiences determine export activities. All participants indicated that the outcomes of export activities are determined by the strategic resources a SB possesses. Some participants seemed not to be enjoying their years of experience due to countless dynamics associated with export markets, since such dynamics affect their export positioning. Participants follow different market patterns to enhance their involvement in exports. For instance, Participant 6 uses her experience and informal market research activities to foster service innovations. This finding is consistent with Lin and Wei Ho (2018) who argued that most SBs conduct less structured market research, allowing them to evaluate current and future strategies to improve innovations and to address inefficiencies.

Some participants seem confident about taking advantage of their export and industry experiences to identify opportunities that are significant in promoting export involvement.

Participant 2 shared experiences of discovering several export opportunities; however, after an intense analysis, a choice was made on a significant opportunity. Makri, Katsikea and Theodosiou (2019) also discovered that the export market presents many opportunities.

The appropriate decision on the exploitation ought to be made in the true reflection of an SB's resources. While Blackburne and Buckley (2017) weigh in to say that foreign market opportunities ought to be examined and interpreted to discover new meanings and patterns that will allow a SB to cope within the complex global environment.

Participants 16&17 indicated that they use export experience to transfer knowledge to new entrants in the industry to combat the replication of past mistakes:

“Our aim is help other business owners avoid making the same mistakes we did in the past, we must move away from traditional ways of performing export activities since we operate in the modern business environment” (Also see, P16&17:INT16&17).

Concerning management experience, Participant 2 indicated the following:

“I have been in the industry for 20 years; however, in the production management role it's been 1 year”. (Also see, P02INT:02)

Some participants have prior export experience, which promoted a speedier understanding of the complexities associated with export markets, while some had previous international experiences. This finding is supported by Adebayo, Alheety and Yusoff (2019) who infers that prior work experiences within the export industry significantly supports various stages of export involvement, thereby increasing managers' desire and commitment towards export activities.

The extent of export involvement is informed by characteristics of the SB (Dai & Li, 2019). Characteristics encompass managerial experiences in overseas markets, which influence the strength or weaknesses of the product or service (Dai & Li 2019). SBs' characteristics shape the way in which managers respond to opportunities and threats offered by the export markets, using internal capabilities and core-competencies (Dai & Li, 2019).

A higher level of confidence and commitment to export activities became evident from the responses of more experienced managers. The strong conviction stems from work experiences acquired from overseas, training in export processes and dynamics and some educational background.

Table 6.1 is a summary of participants export experiences, managerial experience, and educational background. Participants' export and managerial experiences range from 5 years to 40 years. None of the participants completed a formal qualification.

6.9 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, the researcher reported on findings on export involvement of SBs located in the City of Tshwane. Verbatim quotes were used to bestow rich descriptions of dataset. In qualitative enquiry, verbatim quotations are important to underpin the experiences and claims of participants (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). The aim of the current study was to explore the export involvement of SBs and government support through various export assistance programmes.

The following overarching themes discussed that resulted from the coding process are: the involvement of SBs in export activities, participants perceptions about government support, components of export involvement, industry analysis tools employed, and comparative merits of export involvement. Sub-themes surfaced to reflect on constraints in pursuit of export involvement and to address research questions and objectives of the current study. Additional themes extracted from the main themes were: regulations, political attributes and socio-cultural attributes, the development of export activities and management export experience. Additional themes were generally significant in the study, and were indicative of the influences that exist between SBs export involvement and government support.

Findings provide some contribution in the body of knowledge, mainly in the areas of export involvement and government support. Despite extensive literature on the aforementioned elements, some exhibited no or little influence, hence a need to unpack the influence of government support in the export involvement of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane. The current study upholds the value of SBs' export involvement, offering a specific focus on government support in the promotion of export activities.

The next chapter will focus on data interpretation by offering conclusions and recommendations.

Small Businesses (SBs) in the city of Tshwane increasingly engage in export activities due to higher growth rates. The South African government recognises the significance of SBs, resulting in support programmes to increase involvement in export markets. However, SBs still face export challenges from internal and external sources.

This study explored export involvement processes of SBs in the City of Tshwane. 20 participants took part in a qualitative data collection method using semi-structured interviews. Atlas.ti software was used to analyse the data.

Findings suggest that SBs are confronted with varying constraints affecting commitment in export involvement processes. Low levels of awareness and participation in export programmes make it difficult to determine their contribution to the export involvement of SBs.

Recommendations are for an evaluation of government export programmes accompanied by export education and training programmes to ensure that SBs achieve desirable outcome of export involvement in various export markets.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter seeks to interpret findings with the aim of matching them against research objectives along with the literature explored in the current study. In a qualitative enquiry, it is of prime importance for researchers to further debate on a phenomenon being investigated in order to gain a better understanding (Leedy & Ormrod, 2016). In the current study, the researcher explored existing conditions of SBs in terms of export involvement and government support. As recommended by Leedy & Ormrod (2016), prevailing knowledge gaps were identified by contrasting findings with existing literature, allowing the researcher to offer appropriate recommendations to enhance research rigour. Such relevant recommendations are directly linked with SBs involved in exporting activities operating within the City of Tshwane as the intended target. This chapter will end by highlighting key weaknesses the researcher experienced during the course of the study, thereby adding a scholarly insight to the existing body of knowledge on the export involvement of SBs.

7.2 CENTRAL THEMES IN THE STUDY

The first aspect in this section is concerned with addressing secondary objectives, while the final aspect focuses on the primary objective. As claimed by Gear *et al.* (2018), this can be attained by ensuring that conclusions and findings are consistent with the body of evidence suggested by the literature. In order to attain a better understanding of government support and the export involvement of SBs, appropriate recommendations and conclusions will be offered. As indicated earlier, the correction will conclude with the primary objective.

7.2.1 The involvement of small businesses in the export activities

As already indicated earlier, export involvement is extensively ambiguous owing to variances of risks, which calls for different strategic resources to deal with a compound export environment. The inconsistencies in the development of export activities exhibited by SBs may be explained by the heterogeneity of the export marketplace and internal and external constraints influencing competency of export involvement.

Managers' attitudes and perceptions towards constraints and benefits and export experiences and foreign market knowledge influence the levels of export activities and of involvement. This may provide a complete clarity for the lack of inconsistencies.

The unequal attention given to export involvement and its developmental phases with, specific focus on internal and external matters, coupled with a failure to examine SBs' characteristics against key elements influencing management capabilities to reach intended outcome of involvement, seem to have a significant effect on the growth of most participants. In this view, it may be essential for SBs to critically review key elements and other numerous elements to maintain stability in export involvement.

Most participants rely on their export experiences to deepen their involvement; however, they seem to lack the understanding of transferring experiences gained from one export market to the other, given rapidly changing global dynamics. For example, participants export experiences range from 5 to 40 years; however, they seem to struggle to adapt to new export markets, thereby failing to spot new opportunities upon entry, due to lack of foreign market information.

Given such inconsistencies, management export experiences seem insufficient to resolve internal inefficiencies that are deemed manageable and appeared more influential than external matters. Most participants regard internal inefficiency as strategic resources, capabilities, and approaches used to establish a consistent export involvement and overcome associated risks. Such internal inefficiencies make it problematic for most participants to follow patterns in foreign markets that tend to vary due to changing consumer preferences and quality standards.

It became apparent that capabilities of export involvement are linked to export experiences; however, management experience seems to have little effect on competencies in export experiences. For example, some participants use government supported export programmes to raise export involvement. Most participants alluded to conducting market research to access export markets; however, the assessment of the appropriate market, as well as various modes of entry was unclear. For example, most participants lacked foreign market information to enhance their decision-making processes prior to their export involvement, while some gained foreign market knowledge during the export involvement.

It remained evident to most participants that the impact of government supported export programmes on their export involvement cannot be substantiated, despite its extensive contribution to some participants. Most participants believe that the selection criteria to access government support places significant focus on SBs with substantial competencies in export involvement, while less focus is given to a systematic evaluation of each programme in reaching and fulfilling the needs of other intended audiences.

Despite the above inconsistencies, commitment, and determination towards export activities in reaching intended capacity of involvement was notable. As suggested by most participants, training and development requires urgent attention, as it may assist to enhance export involvement.

7.2.2 Participants perceptions about government support

Participants were asked about the impact of government support in their export involvement. This question was coupled with probing questions that enabled participants to share information in order to deepen and expand the context of perceptions, experiences, and attitudes in relation to government support. It became evident that the awareness, use, and views about government support vary significantly. Export programmes' accessibility, and reliability to deliver intended goals, was noteworthy amongst most participants. Some participants were unaware of the export programmes, but partially interested in participating, while some were aware of such programmes but not interested due to a lack of accessibility. Those who were aware and exhibit export activities through government support, recounted export incentives and attending workshops, exhibitions, and seminars. Such events played a critical role in export activities as indicated by some participants.

Conversely, some participants who are unaware of export programmes do not consider them appropriate in fulfilling their unique needs, given the different constraints in a heterogeneous export environment. It was evident that the awareness levels and appropriateness of export programmes significantly influence the desired extent of participants' involvement in various export activities. For instance, some participants believed that such programmes are not necessarily designed to reflect varying SBs' characteristics, in that they fail to reach the intended audience, hence the lack of awareness appeared to be high. In light of this, participants proposed programmes be adjusted in alignment with the unique needs and interests of owner-managers and export managers.

The lack of government support did not really influence export involvement, as most participants seem to exhibit proactive and reactive approaches to explain their unwillingness to participate in government support programmes. Their proactive and reactive attitude enables participants to face risks, thereby exploiting export opportunities while stimulating innovativeness to respond to market and industry dynamics. Participants explained that a proactive approach encompasses a search for foreign market information with the intention to explore patterns in order to evaluate threats and opportunities while forming global relations.

Ongoing challenges indicated by participants are identified in all phases of export involvement although they vary in each phase since a SB strategy is significantly fixated on its internal and external environments. For example, participants identified internal constraints (strategic resources and capabilities, management skills, and operations), and external constraints (regulations, procedural, structural, socio-economic and other constraints) as threatening to limit export involvement. Participants regarded aforementioned constraints as opportunities to be exploited and limitations to be managed and avoided.

- **Opportunities**

Some participants indicated that they executed R&D activities while some preferred outsourcing to enhance product and service quality. Participants indicated that this is attained by acquiring foreign market information in order to develop and enhance their core competencies in the use of the latest technologies and in the execution of marketing activities. Participants added that they accessed foreign knowledge to exploit innovative export opportunities by shielding their involvement from a compound competitive environment. In this view, R&D also led to the formation of collaborations between complementary SBs through the increasing use of global agents and global networks.

- **Constraints of the study**

All participants indicated that strategic resources were a key constraint hindering export involvement growth. By comparison, participants indicated that this lack limits their flexible nature to adapt to industry and market dynamics. Some participants mentioned that resource constraints limit their flexibility to explore risks in an attempt to deepen their involvement in the export markets. Most participants agreed that resource constraint is informed by a lack of access to government support and lack of access to funding. In this view, the capacity of participants to exhibit export activities may be compromised.

By contrast, it was evident that notable constraints hold no power to stop the determination of participants from pursuing a consistent export involvement. The flexible nature of SBs in adapting to a global dynamic environment was evident in all participants. Their export accomplishment offers a complete explanation for the dedication and commitment to involvement, despite constraints threatening to limit their growth.

7.2.3 Components of export involvement applied by SBs in the City of Tshwane

It was evident that components of export activities differ according to the characteristics of the SB, approaches employed, constraints, and the target market that managers aim to explore. 17 out of 20 participants viewed marketing and technological innovation as major components contributing to an increase in export activities, as they encompass business processes and approaches employed. This is accomplished through a search of foreign market information to enhance export decisions by developing short-term and long-term marketing and technological planning linked to a substantial consistency in involvement. By contrast, most participants lacked sufficient foreign market knowledge to exploit opportunities.

A total of eight participants indicated that a critical search of foreign market information does not warrant extended levels of export involvement in the presence of constraints of operating in a heterogeneous export environment. Some suggested that foreign market information is parallel to skilled labour and experts, which suggest the implication of costs.

A total of 11 participants indicated that they execute marketing and technological activities informally as they lack expertise in such fields and alluded to being all-rounders instead of specialists. This may mean that they have no or little impact in enhancing export activities due to the unplanned and sporadic nature of executing marketing and technological activities. Some outsource such expertise, which in turn raises cost implications to limit export involvement.

Despite the above challenges, most participants alluded to have developed global networks, paying little in terms of membership fee costs for attending business events such as annual meetings, workshops exhibitions and so on. As communicated by some participants, global networks and the use of global agents have assisted to stabilise export involvement, thereby helping to ease resource constraints through temporary collaborations with other exporters. To some extent, such networking has helped participants to apply proactive and reactive approaches by reinforcing innovation in the execution of marketing and technological advancements.

Participants also raised the issue of trust in managing knowledge acquired to enhance marketing and technological innovation. Some participants mentioned short-term collaboration to maintain flexibility in case of unforeseen circumstances.

Some participants execute key components of export activities with the help of government support through financial and non-financial interventions. Financial interventions include export grants and tax concessions, while non-financial interventions include information services and skills development, as indicated by participants.

In contrast to the above, 6 participants, including the ones that presently participate in the government support incentives alludes to an ambiguous association between a SB unique conditions and programmes priorities in as far as marketing and technological innovations to enhance their export involvement. For instance, 1 of 6 participants concluded by indicating misplaced priorities on the part of government in terms of adequate programmes to address marketing and technological innovative issues. Participants indicated that this misalignment is due to a time lapse between a consultation request and the actual manifestation of the request to address key components (marketing and technology), as participants described struggling in dealing with the latest developments in the export market. Participants indicated they encountered several functional issues that require intervention from the programmes intended to service their export issues and deduced a mismatch between the objectives of programmes and the business objective, which may raise exporting constraints. Participants also noted an outcome gap between various programmes of export involvement, which may raise the efficacy concerns on the part of the programmes.

All in all, despite reasonable concerns, participant's commitment was significantly evident. Given their flexible nature, participants were determined to explore other foreign markets to increase their involvement.

7.2.4 Industry analysis tools employed

Participants were explicit about industry analysis tools employed with the intention of improving their involvement in exports. Tools discussed are central to internal and external issues. Such tools were discussed in the reflection of RBV and PFF while other tools used by participants to counter global market pressures emerged during interviews and observations.

From the industry analysis tools standpoint, RBV and PFF have received significant attention from academic literature (Hussein & Muchemi, 2019; Campbell & Park, 2017; Campbell, Mweru & Muya, 2016). Most participants agreed to avoiding risk failure by allowing some time to gain meaningful insights about the external environment (industry and markets). This finding is supported by Butarbutar and Lisdayanti (2020) and Alshura and Assuli (2017) who raised the gravity of reconciling internal and external environmental tensions to enhance strategic decisions. Participants indicated significant influence arising from internal and external tensions causing negative fluctuations in exports when a balanced dimension to address such tensions is not planned.

Participants did not necessarily apply any industry analysis tools. For instance, PFF was only raised 22 times, as it places more focus on the external environment. Most participants alluded to possessing insufficient foreign knowledge to exhaustively understand the risks in foreign markets with a specific view to determine key elements influencing the export involvement. PEST analysis is used to assess politics and socio-economic dynamics of a country; however, most participants applied a reactive approach to counter tensions as they occur. Some participants indicated that they applied PEST analysis to resolve internal tensions, including production inadequacies. Other surfaced approaches were not in alignment with the academic literature. This finding confirms a more compound association between the understanding of the formal use of recognised industry analysis tools and export involvement competency. In addition, it provides a complete explanation of the ambiguous rate of export involvement amongst all participants.

RBV, however, was a well-known tool used by most participants and was discussed in the context of internal constraints from a standpoint of resource inadequacies, and was raised 66 times. However, its application was extensively misinterpreted. For instance, core competencies and capabilities indicated by most participants have no or little influence on the export progress and involvement, and as a result, they lacked a distinctive approach emphasized in RBV.

7.2.5 Merits of export involvement

When merits of export involvement were considered, perceptual differences among participants emerged as far as leveraging export activities based on their commitment, behaviours, and attitude on export risks and involvement. Most participants asserted that the aforementioned elements are one of the significant drivers to further their involvement in exports. Key themes discussed were the development of export experience, management export experience, and export involvement capabilities in coping with adversity.

Marketing and technological innovations formed part of the discussion as key components of export involvement. Such components will be discussed under development of export activities, and export management experience perspectives.

- **Development of export activities**

From the development of export activities perspective, only four participants alluded to receiving government support and incentives to further their export activities. In light of this, the support helped in the deployment of adaptive strategies shaping their commitment and behaviour towards exporting constraints. Some participants stated that they moderate their involvement using prior export experiences, considering the lack of government support. Most participants mentioned the assessment of export programmes to encompass systematic planning as a key external driver towards consistent involvement. This seemed to present a negative effect on export involvement as mentioned in the literature (see Chapter 3, section 3.2).

- **Management export experience**

A total of 18 out of 20 participants identified prior export experiences as building blocks to reaching higher merits of export involvement. 20 participants alluded to the application of proactive and reactive approaches based past experiences to carry out export related activities. On the same note, 17 participants could concur that export experiences may present little effect on export involvement given the heterogeneous nature of the compound export markets. Participant 4&5, 7 and 14 expressed the challenging nature of incorporating foreign market knowledge with business characteristics to adapt strategic decisions with dynamics in the export markets. This finding confirms a complex association between management export experiences and heterogeneity of foreign markets on the export involvement (see Chapter 4, section 4.2 Chapter 4).

- **Capacity of export involvement**

It is evident that the capacity of export involvement is ambiguous in nature due to variances in elements influencing the growth of export activities (see Chapter 6, section 6.7.1.1).

Most participants seem to differ in attitudes, actions, and commitment towards export. Furthermore, all participants executed arbitrary and unsystematic remedies in response to the analysis of constraints in the reflection of (internal and external) tensions since no industry analysis tool(s) is formally employed and used. The failure to examine all elements in a systematic manner seems to threaten the export development of most SBs (see Chapter 4, section 4.2).

It may be deduced and confirmed that export involvement is influenced by various dimensions, such as export experience. It was apparent that export constraints are subjective in nature and driven by managers' perceptual differences, as some managers spend a significant time on exporting problems, and less time is allocated to increasing the extent of export involvement. Most participants alluded that exporting constraints are experiential in nature in that they helped to establish the source of export problems by developing a better understanding. In this view, such problems are not likely to be replicated as adjustments are deployed to exploit opportunities to further the involvement in exports.

It became apparent that resources and capabilities are linked to export involvement, as these support an SB's intentions by promoting efficacy in planning to reduce constraints. Most participants stated that their success in export activities is determined by how they perceive exporting obstacles driven by an SB's characteristics and strategic resources. It is apparent that export activities and experiences inform export processes, which subsequently influence the level of export involvement (see Chapter 4, section 4.2). The next section will discuss the export involvement processes employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane.

7.2.6 Export involvement processes employed by SBs in the City of Tshwane

This section serves to summarise all the above themes as it forms part of the study. During interviews and observations evidence suggested that there is no one size fits all in as far as export processes. This finding is echoed by Rekart, Doktoralina and Saluy (2018) who suggested that export processes are determined by various elements and evolve with time, given macroeconomic issues. Such differences have an influence on the outcomes of processes and patterns linked to export involvement. It can be deduced that participants follow different export involvement processes given variances in resource and innovation (See Chapter 1, section 1.3). This is in line with Imran *et al.* (2018), who suggest selecting a fit-in-export process based on export experiences and business characteristics since different processes present different impacts on the extent of involvement.

Moreover, Kahiya and Dean (2015) revealed that export involvement processes are closely associated with the scope of constraints confronting SBs at various stages in the process resulting from contrary associations between SBs and government support causing significant inconsistencies in the capacity of involvement

It became apparent that some participants lack foreign market information to enhance exporting decisions related to processes. As a result, they casually select a process in order to reactively adjust to industry and market dynamics. This is contrary to academic literature, which reflects on a critical systematic examination of adequate resources in line with environmental patterns for each level of export involvement (Chapter 4, section 4.2.2). It can also be confirmed that resources determine the exporting process a SB plans to select. Rodriguez (2019) discovered a link between export processes, resources, and opportunities, with consistency in export involvement. Such a link provides a complete explanation of the extent of export involvement (high-moderate-low).

It can be deduced that a systematic selection of export processes should be considered to enhance growth of export involvement. By definition, SBs are resource constrained and lack appropriate foreign market insights, which threatens the development of export activities (Chapter 4, section 4.2.1.1). Some participants, including Participant 13, stated that battling to coordinate export activities suggested that developing relationships helped to moderate the impact resulting from industry and market dynamics. Some participants, however, follow export processes that are incorporated into government export programmes. However, such participants suggested a specific process to address their export challenges, as opposed to a general one size fits all process.

The dissimilarities of exporting processes seem to suggest that SBs ought to shift from existing routines developed for specific markets and develop new export processes for other new foreign markets due to the heterogeneous nature of a compound global market. This finding is in line with Namada *et al.* (2017) who suggest that once a process becomes an ongoing pattern, it may influence an SB's strategic positioning (see Chapter 4, section 4.2). Such a departure may pose cost implications, given the resource inadequate nature of most SBs. It became apparent that a systematic examination of a SB characteristics, resources, and activities with existing export processes may help to better understand how export involvement is impacted by the aforementioned elements. In this view, it became apparent that some participants are confronted with challenges to convert resources into export processes using latest technologies that result in ambiguous export involvement. This inefficiency was discovered by Namada *et al.* (2017) who suggested that this may result in failure to exploit foreign market opportunities, causing ambiguity in export involvement and contributing to inconsistencies in export processes (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.6).

It has been discovered that export activities, resources, business characteristics, and export processes serve as mechanisms to grow export involvement. The challenge lies in outlining a way forward. Considering that most participants are challenged by resources and insufficient foreign markets knowledge, pursuing certain export processes calls for adequate resources and capabilities. Considerable time and effort are needed to formulate efficient export processes if a business aims to grow its involvement.

With all themes discussed, the following can be concluded:

- It is important to note that despite experiential knowledge in exports, resources and information about potential foreign markets have been observed to be problematic for most participants given the nature of their size. Information about potential markets help SBs reduce the element of possible risks by enhancing decision making processes related to substantial consistent export involvement, as is discussed in the literature (see Chapter 6, section 6.7.2.1). Substantial information about potential markets will help SBs keep track of patterns in order to enhance decisions about resources, business characteristics, export processes and activities and their influence on export involvement outcomes. Foreign information promotes an efficient selection of appropriate export processes.
- It is evident that participants do not make a considerable effort to enquire about government support through export programmes. Perceptual differences were observed in terms of awareness level and competency of export programmes, to servicing the heterogeneous needs of SBs. Some participants did not believe that such programmes were designed in consideration of their needs and export challenges. This completes the explanation of lack of awareness and failure to reach the intended audience.
- Insufficient time and effort are afforded to components of export involvement, hence the lack of understanding in translating components into export activities. Participants seem to apply unsystematic approaches in the decision-making process when linking export marketing activities and technological innovation. Hence, the outcomes determinative of export involvement is misplaced.
- It became apparent that little is known about global quality standards and product or service adaptation to bridge the gap of cultural differences across export markets. It has been evidenced that some participants were challenged by product quality acceptance, which raised cost implications. As concurred by some participants, quality inconsistency goes to the heart of business characteristics and management skills, and much less to exporting challenges. This may indicate a limited understanding of the association between acceptable quality and export activities, hence ambiguous export involvement.

- Despite the knowledge of internal and external tensions influencing exporting processes and activities, participants still struggle to find a match between environmental tensions to reduce the harmful effect on export involvement. Participants struggle to control internal tensions that are deemed controllable (see Chapter 1, section, 1.2.1) much less external tensions, which may be difficult to handle. All participants indicated that such tensions present direct and indirect influence on resources, business characteristics, and export involvement.
- Participants seemed to have short-term solutions instead of long-term solutions, hence the absence of adaptive and systematic thinking to resolve new exporting challenges.
- Their solutions have little relevance to ongoing exporting challenges. Despite the use of technological innovation, participants seem to struggle to develop innovative solutions to further export involvement.
- Despite inconsistencies, it is important to emphasise that participants' commitment and willingness to learn and gain insights on industry and market dynamics was encouraging.

In consideration of the above, Rodriguez (2019) noted the importance of export processes, activities, and appropriate industry analysis tools as an attempt to enhance the understanding of internal and external constraints and their impact on competent export involvement. This can be attained by using timely foreign marketing information to enhance exporting decisions (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.4).

7.3 RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Based on the outcome of interviews and observations, the current section serves to provide appropriate recommendations for future research. Key economic members involved in the current study are SBs operating in the City of Tshwane, SEDA, and the DTI.

7.3.1 Recommendations

The following are recommendations for SBs

- **Export experience and skills assessment**

Based on findings and conclusions, it became evident that export involvement of participants remains the unknown element. This finding may derive from several elements, for instance, lack of foreign market knowledge to exploit potential opportunities was evident, while proactive adaption to foreign quality standards generally influence the extent of export involvement.

Based on interviews and observations, all participants hold had extensive export experience ranging from five to 40 years. It was concerning that participants indicated export experience; however, the differentiation between industry and geographic market experience is unknown yet limited foreign market information was notable.

It may be significantly important to have a better understanding of each as they have an influence on the export involvement. An understanding of both elements will help participants to better interpret elements that affect the extent of export involvement.

It became apparent that constraints affecting participants is central to management skills, and much less to exporting constraints. Participants developed certain skills related to exporting activities given extensive export experience ranging from five to 40 years. There seem to be a need for the assessment of such skills. Export involvement largely depends on pertinent skills assessment to better understand market patterns and behaviours. Tailor-made skills assessment to fulfil the unique needs of the SB following a systematic thinking approach will help participants further develop a new set of skills to pursue new opportunities in emerging foreign markets.

- **Promoting innovation through R&D**

The interdependence between exporting activities and R&D activities were noteworthy during interviews and observations. If such interdependence is systematically monitored, it may result in the expansion of foreign knowledge and may raise export involvement, allowing the SB to commit to pursuing other foreign markets. Such elements should not be treated in isolation since they are regarded as strategic decisions that a SB must make according to its extent of involvement in exporting activities. Support from government through financial and non-financial interventions in all stages of export involvement may help SBs minimise risks in a compound heterogeneous export environment.

The following are recommendation for SEDA

- **Evaluation of government support**

Most participants alluded to the assessment of government support to review its appropriateness in addressing their challenges within dynamic industries and export markets. Such an evaluation will not only benefit SBs, but also government in the rationalisation of financial resources deployed in the design, and in identifying gaps in the programmes for future developments. The basis of the evaluation should be motivated for an SB's progress reports informed by its achievements and challenges that are parallel to industry and market dynamics (see Chapter 4, section 4.2.5).

To arrive at a meaningful evaluation, government ought to consider internal and external elements affecting SBs in their quest of competent involvement in exports. In addition, a systematic and cyclical evaluation may help to underpin all key elements hindering participants from reaching their full potential. In this view, it may be important to emphasise learning from former mistakes to develop efficient evaluation processes of the export programmes.

- **Financial and non-financial intervention**

Most participants commented that they received little or no formal support from government agencies even when an attempt is made to enquire about support. While some participants raised the challenge of receiving low quality support from one of the government agencies, reducing the awareness and the use of export programmes. This indicates gaps in intervention opportunities on the part of government. Lack of funding and lack of business skills assistance was extensively emphasised by most participants to explain their inconsistencies in export involvement.

Interventions such as financing, skills training, mentorship, business advice and enhanced access to foreign market opportunities will add value to their involvement in exports, while reducing the uneven quality of support indicated by some participants.

Extra caution ought to be given to increasing the broader awareness of export programmes so that the intended audience can be reached and assisted. This can be attained through the systematised promotion of export programmes' benefits for economic development, as indicated in the literature see (Chapter 3, section 3.3).

- **An intense SB needs assessment**

Given the resource constrained nature of SBs facing most participants, due to their size, a critical needs assessment may be essential. Most participants disclosed they used tailor-made solutions for challenges, given the unique nature of their business and managerial characteristics. Participants indicated that their needs are assumed to be equal; for instance, some indicated that they do not need business advice services (consultancy) due to their extensive experience and background, while some reported a lack in this area.

The assessment process should be abstracted from clear objectives with low bureaucratic structures, based on diverse policies. In addition, the assessment should be designed in consideration of internal weaknesses, which are deemed to prohibit SBs in maintaining an adaptive capacity when pursuing new export markets. Reflecting on challenges in each export involvement stage may help in detecting mismatches that may exist among resources, activities, and processes, in order to minimise risks and facilitate a creative, inductive environment with diverse policies.

- **Diversification of policies**

Most participants reported operating under a structured policy framework that has little or no influence on the intended outcome in involvement in exports. The inconsistency in policies subverted the development of exporting activities (see Chapter 3, section 3.9). Some indicated a mismatch between day-to-day realities of the business and government policies. This finding suggests that rigid policies lack insights related to the diverse industry and markets in which SBs operate.

Diverse policies consider varying challenges confronting SBs through critical thinking about key interventions and strategies to be formulated with the aim of toning up export involvement and deduced by offering contributions and recommendations. This can be attained by reflecting on how best policies can be diversified to construct a conducive environment for SBs. To better understand SBs' struggles, a collaboration between government and SBs may influence ways in which the autonomy of SBs can be enhanced to raise involvement. This may be attained by encouraging transparency through corruption reduction practices.

- **Transparent corruption reduction practices**

Most participants concurred on the detrimental nature of corruption in the quest for growing involvement in exports. The harmful nature manifests itself in bribery, which offers a positive and negative influence in terms of export growth. Some participants indicated that such an act has influenced their export involvement in different ways. Participants suggested that anti-corruption efforts made little or no progress due to uneven collaboration within government structures, combined with a lack of transparency. As a result, corruption may be difficult to eradicate, but it could be lessened (see Chapter 2, section 2.4).

Corruption reduction efforts calls for internal periodic controls through a transparent and systematic ethical prescription. Establishing training and developmental needs of officials may to be critically compelling to eradicate corruption opportunities. Such findings shine a light on DTI (2018/19) and SEDA (2018/19) encouraging moral conduct and ethical sensibility by contextualising underlying elements contributing to corruption. This may help to detect the origins of corruption DTI (2018/19) and SEDA (2018/19). In this regard, it was deduced that officials are not capacitated to exhibit corrupt activities without businesses who are seeking economic opportunities.

The following are recommendations for DTI and TEDA

- **Interventions to develop export capacity**

Most participants indicated that challenges in identifying market opportunities do not only stem from a lack of adequate foreign market information and resource scarcity on their part, but also DTI and TEDA inabilities to create such opportunities for export development.

Differing opinions regarding what constitutes underlying export capacities were indicated. Most participants attested to difficulties in adhering to global standards in as far as quality is concerned, due to a lack of capacity, among other reasons. While some were confronted with a low-skilled workforce to produce high levels of quality products or service consistent with the export marketplace. In addition, external factors presented production and cost implications, which toned down their involvement to a certain extent.

DTI, in collaboration with TEDA, may increase the export capacity of SBs by enhancing production capacity in their processes to encourage quality that is consistent with global standards. This may be coupled with product or service uniqueness, and acceptable quality as key aspects of foreign opportunities, to deepen the export involvement. DTI and TEDA may assist in promoting accessibility to suitable technologies to help SBs cope with constraints by facilitating innovation and growth to foster export involvement.

7.3.2 Future research

The above recommendations consider the importance of assessing improvements exhibited. Recommendations for further research derive from Paul *et al.* (2017) which assisted to identify knowledge gaps in this study. Initiating a roadmap for further research based on the above recommendation is imperative.

The growth in export involvement of SBs operating in the City of Tshwane can be utilised as insights for future thinking. The consideration of such can inform heart-to-heart discussions amongst policy makers at national government level about how best consistent export involvement of SBs can be promoted and maintained.

Skills assessment, R&D activities, evaluation of policies and corruption reduction practices were some of the required interventions of export involvement and government support, noting the importance of assessing any betterment of the export involvement. Future research may focus on exploring the efficacy of government support in the export involvement of SBs.

7.4 STUDY LIMITATIONS

Although other limitations have been identified in the current study, it is imperative to note that it is limited to SBs involved in export activities operating in the City of Tshwane. This eliminates opportunities to assess, compare, and explain variances with the intentions of achieving an error-free consideration of what may be happening in other SBs across South Africa. Generalisation of findings may be limited since the study did not consider circumstances surrounding SBs in other South African provinces. In qualitative research, as indicated by Leedy and Ormrod (2016), findings from different participants are compared using a snapshot study since they are taken at different moments.

As a result, findings may be different under different occurrences. Another important limitation is that no government officials were interviewed, even though export programmes received significant criticism. Such interviews would likely have produced compelling new meanings to this study and varying findings, conflicting the current status quo.

7.5 STUDY CONTRIBUTION

Competent export involvement is facilitated by government support in the provision of financial and non-financial support to cope with varying constraints linked to export markets (Haddoud *et al.* 2018). Government support plays a pivotal role in addressing recurring export involvement problems and varying patterns in the involvement stages (DTI, 2018/19; SEDA, 2018/19).

While Paul *et al.* (2017) argue that determinative outcomes of export involvement are based on the combination of management perceptual differences, attitudes, and commitment towards export activities. The exposure of such elements, combined with government support ensures consistent export involvement (Alrashidi, 2016). Despite continuous government support through export programmes, SBs are confronted with exporting issues at different stages of involvement. There is a need to explore the efficacy of government support in the export involvement and progress of SBs given the financial and non-financial incentives. Several prior studies that examined government support recommended increasing the development of export involvement to achieve consistent growth. Few studies have systematically assessed the influence of government support on the export involvement of SBs in an in-depth manner. Furthermore, varying export involvement constraints in each developmental stage tend to differ in nature. This may necessitate theory building in the field of ongoing export challenges in the presence of government support. Consequently, a mixture of theories and perceptual differences will shed some light on government export programmes designed to address the unique ongoing challenges confronting each business.

Insufficient research has been carried out on the role and the influence of government support on the export involvement of SBs operating within the City of Tshwane. There seem to be no evidence to suggest a similar study has been carried out in this context previously in South Africa. This study may inform decisions taken by business owners, export managers, policymakers, and academics to develop comprehensive theories in the field of export involvement and government supported export programmes. Further, the study adds to the knowledge in the literature by revealing a compound association between management characteristics and government support, and its unclear influence on export involvement. Additionally, this study contributes to the comprehensive discussion on ways in which internal and external constraints can be managed to attain export involvement outcome. This study may be used to construct business frameworks and models for export involvement progress in emerging markets.

In the current chapter, conclusions were offered to suggest the prevalence of SBs export involvement and government support. Recommendations and interventions were outlined for SBs, SEDA, and DTI. The current section referred to the contribution of the study to the body of literature and discussed the study limitations. It can be confirmed that conducting the current study was worthwhile and provided fresh insights, and it would be interesting to observe what may be revealed by further similar studies in the future.

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APPENDIX A: ETHICS CERTIFICATE



UNISA DEPARTMENT OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE

24 October 2019

ERC Reference #: 2019_CEMS_BM_091
Name: Ms Zandile Charmaine Ngwenya
Student #: 60049790
Staff #: 90015479

Dear Zandile Charmaine Ngwenya

**Decision: Ethics Approval
From 24 October 2019 to
23 October 2022**

Researcher(s): Ms Zandile Charmaine Ngwenya
E-mail address: ngwenzc@unisa.ac.za
Telephone #: 073 443 2395

Supervisor (s): Mr Kgaugelo Sammy Boya
E-mail address: bhovask@unisa.ac.za
Telephone #: Tel: (012) 429-3979

**STRATEGIC GLOBAL EXPANSION OF SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE,
GAUTENG PROVINCE.**

Qualification: M Com _ degree

Thank you for the application for research ethics clearance by the UNISA Department of Business Management Ethics Review Committee for the above-mentioned research. Ethics approval is granted for 3 years, from 24 October 2019 to 23 October 2022.

The low risk application was reviewed by the Department of Business Management Ethics Review Committee on 15 October 2019 in compliance with the Unisa Policy on Research Ethics and the Standard Operating Procedure on Research Ethics Risk Assessment. The decision will be tabled at the next Committee meeting on 06 November 2019.

The proposed research may now commence with the provisions that:

1. The researcher(s) will ensure that the research project adheres to the values and principles expressed in the UNISA Policy on Research Ethics.



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2. Any adverse circumstance arising in the undertaking of the research project that is relevant to the ethicality of the study should be communicated in writing to the Department of Business Management Ethics Review Committee.
3. The researcher(s) will conduct the study according to the methods and procedures set out in the approved application.
4. Any changes that can affect the study-related risks for the research participants, particularly in terms of assurances made with regards to the protection of participants' privacy and the confidentiality of the data, should be reported to the Committee in writing, accompanied by a progress report.
5. The researcher will ensure that the research project adheres to any applicable national legislation, professional codes of conduct, institutional guidelines and scientific standards relevant to the specific field of study. Adherence to the following South African legislation is important, if applicable: Protection of Personal Information Act, no 4 of 2013; Children's act no 38 of 2005 and the National Health Act, no 61 of 2003.
6. Only de-identified research data may be used for secondary research purposes in future on condition that the research objectives are similar to those of the original research. Secondary use of identifiable human research data requires additional ethics clearance.
7. No field work activities may continue after the expiry date (23 October 2022). Submission of a completed research ethics progress report will constitute an application for renewal of Ethics Research Committee approval.

Note:

*The reference number **2019_CEMS_BM_091** should be clearly indicated on all forms of communication with the intended research participants, as well as with the Committee.*

Yours sincerely,



Chairperson: Prof. Thea Visser
Department of Business Management
E-mail: vissed@unisa.ac.za
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Executive Dean: Prof. Thomas Mogale
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APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT



APPENDIX B: INFORMED CONSENT

From: Ms ZC Ngwenya (60049790)
Department of Department of
Management
Cell: 081 734 5213/ Tel: (012) 429-
6608
November 2019

Dear Prospective Participant

Informed consent for participation in an academic research project

EXPORT INVOLVEMENT PROCESSES EMPLOYED BY SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE, GAUTENG PROVINCE.

You are herewith invited to participate in an academic research study conducted by Zandile Charmaine Ngwenya, a student in the Master of Business Management at University of South Africa.

The purpose of the study is to explore export involvement processes employed by small businesses in the City of Tshwane, Gauteng Province.

All your answers will be treated as confidential, and you will not be identified in any of the research reports emanating from this research.

Your participation in this study is very important to us. You may however choose not to participate, and you may also withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences.

Your willingness to participate in an interview will be highly appreciated. Please answer the questions as completely and honestly as possible. This should not take more than 50-60 minutes of your time.

The results of the study will be used for academic purposes only and may be published in an academic journal. We will provide you with a summary of our findings on request.



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Yours sincerely,

Zandile Charmaine Ngwenya

I, _____ herewith give my consent to participate in the study. I have read the letter and understand my rights with regard to participating in the research.

Participant's signature Date



University of South Africa
Pretoria Street, Muckleneuk Ridge, City of Tshwane
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APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE



APPENDIX C: INTERVIEW GUIDE

EXPORT INVOLVEMENT PROCESSES EMPLOYED BY SMALL BUSINESSES IN THE CITY OF TSHWANE, GAUTENG PROVINCES

INTERVIEW GUIDE

1. How long have you been part of management in your business?
2. In gaining knowledge of how the export market works, what educational background did you acquire?
3. During your tenure, what were the major changes you observed in relation to:
 - (a) The manner in which your business operates?
 - (b) The external environment?
 - (c) Resource availability?
4. Describe the export involvement process within your business
 - (a) Who is involved and what are their key roles?
 - (b) What tools do they employ in the implementation phase?
5. Do you participate in government support export programs?
6. What do you think can be done to enhance export involvement processes?
7. How has your experience influenced the capacity of export involvement in your organisation in regards to:
 - (a) Identifying opportunities in export markets?
 - (b) Building global partnership?
 - (c) Achieving an unambiguous development of export involvement?
8. When examining your current export involvement process, what works well and what are you proud of?
9. How involved are you in your day-to-day export activities?
10. What are the training interventions you implemented to improve your export involvement?
11. Do you have employee orientation for new management team members?
12. What other roles do you play in your organisation?



13. Do you have any comments on what has already been discussed?

I thank you kindly for your time and I appreciate your valuable inputs.



APPENDIX D: PERMISSION LETTER



Tshwane Economic Development Agency

Investment Promotion and Funding

1001 10th Avenue, Suite 101, Tshwane
Tshwane 001, Tshwane 001, Tshwane 001

29 July 2019

To whom it may concern

Permission to Conduct Research at Tshwane Economic Development Agency

I Mr Floyd Moloko; Senior Export Manager at Tshwane Economic Development Agency grant Ms Zandile Ngwenya the permission to conduct research on small businesses involved in export activities. However, Ms Zandile Ngwenya is obligated to do a presentation in one of our export training meetings so that small business owners who are interested in participating in her study can agree or decline. Our next export training will be on the first week of October 2019.

Ms Ngwenya is doing a research under supervision of Mr Kgaugelo Sammy Boya in the Department of Business Management at the University of South Africa (UNISA). The research is in the fulfilment of a requirement of Master of Commerce Degree in Business Management The topic of the study is: Export involvement processes employed by small businesses in the City of Tshwane.

If you have any queries please feel free to contact me on 012 358 6523, 082 6760 665 or email at: floydm@tshwane.gov.za

Regards

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Floyd Moloko", written over a dotted horizontal line.

Mr Floyd Moloko

Date

07/2019

NFlaatten (Charperson) IA K _____ F N. S:rg I F. Docratl, ' Sedibe I Shange S t;cgaldl (CEO)

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TSHWANE

Open Rubric

APPENDIX E: ATLAS.ti DATA ANALYSIS PROCESS

Atlas.ti is computer software that allows researchers to provide the interpretation concealed in the unstructured data. In qualitative data, Atlas.ti is used to make sense of complex data to gain a deeper insight by systematically organising data sets. Atlas.ti is relevant for analysing any type of qualitative data in any field or industry (Kalpokaite & Radivojevic, 2019).

The primary data, including pdf, text, pictures, videos, and other relevant data, is uploaded into Atlas.ti, which examines the data to construct similarities and discover meanings, patterns, and categories to answer compound questions (Oswald, 2019). Once the primary data is assigned in the project, a file is created to be given a code, a file name to be saved and confirmed. Atlas.ti has a code-and-retrieve function, which assists in finding connections between codes. At the same time, Atlas.ti allows flexibility of categories and codes while promoting modification where necessary.

Atlas.ti allows researchers to contrast and evaluate data to determine its significance in relations to others by conceptualising their comparability (Creswell, 2018). Ultimately, Atlas.ti allows researchers to visualize data, and so arrive at quality conclusions.

APPENDIX E: PROFESSIONAL LANGUAGE EDITOR'S LETTER

Marianne Kapp Language Services — *marscar@gmail.com*
Cape Town

13 April 2021

To whom it may concern,

This letter confirms that the manuscript detailed below was edited for proper English language grammar, punctuation, spelling, and overall style by a qualified and highly experienced native English-speaking editor:

Manuscript title: **Export Involvement Processes Employed by Small Businesses
in the City of Tshwane**

Author: **Zandile Charmaine Ngwenya**

Neither the research content nor the author's intentions were altered in any way during the editing process. The editor makes no claim as to the accuracy of the research content or objectives of the author. The document above as edited is grammatically correct and ready for publication; however, the author has the ability to accept or reject the editor's suggestions and changes after the editing process is complete, and prior to submission to any journal or examining body.



Marianne Kapp

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