

Epistemological Reconceptualization of Export Market Penetration Determinants: A Multi-Theoretical Analysis of Institutional Barriers and Strategic Opportunities in Vietnam's Tea Industry Through PLS-SEM And FsQCA Integration

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ABSTRACT: This research endeavours to reconceptualise the ontological and epistemological underpinnings of export market penetration determinants within the context of Vietnam's tea industry. Employing a sophisticated multi-theoretical framework that integrates institutional theory, resource-based view, and dynamic capabilities perspective, this study examines the complex interplay between institutional barriers and strategic opportunities that influence international market entry decisions. Utilising a mixed-method approach that synthesises Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) with fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA), the research interrogates data collected from 278 tea exporting enterprises across Vietnam's key production regions. The findings reveal significant asymmetric relationships between institutional constraints, managerial cognitive frameworks, resource configurations, and export performance indicators. The research contributes to international business literature by: (1) developing an integrated theoretical framework that transcends disciplinary boundaries; (2) establishing a methodological approach that captures both variable-centred and configuration-centred perspectives; (3) identifying complex causal pathways to successful export market penetration; and (4) formulating strategic implications for policymakers and practitioners in emerging economy contexts. This epistemic intervention provides critical insights into the multidimensional nature of export market penetration determinants in transitioning institutional environments.

KEYWORDS: institutional complexity, export market penetration, configurational analysis, strategic capabilities, Vietnamese tea industry

1. INTRODUCTION

The global integration of markets presents both unprecedented opportunities and formidable challenges for enterprises in emerging economies seeking international expansion (Buckley & Casson, 2016). Within this context of accelerating globalisation, understanding the complex determinants of successful export market penetration becomes increasingly imperative, both for theoretical advancement and practical application (Leonidou et al., 2010). The expansion of international trade has fundamentally altered the competitive landscape for agricultural products, particularly in transitioning economies where institutional frameworks remain in evolutionary flux (Peng et al., 2008). This paradigm shift necessitates a sophisticated reconceptualisation of the theoretical foundations underpinning international market entry strategies, particularly for high-value agricultural commodities such as tea (Gereffi & Fernandez-Stark, 2016).

The contemporary theoretical discourse surrounding export market penetration has been predominantly anchored in conceptual frameworks developed within advanced economy contexts, creating a significant epistemological gap in understanding the unique challenges faced by firms operating within emerging institutional environments (Meyer & Peng, 2016). This theoretical lacuna becomes particularly pronounced when examining Vietnam's tea industry, which operates at the nexus of institutional transformation, global value chain reconfiguration, and shifting consumer preferences (Narula & Dunning, 2010). The epistemic trajectory reveals that traditional explanatory models fail to capture the multidimensional complexity of export determinants in transitioning economies, where institutional voids, resource constraints, and dynamic capability development interact in intricate patterns (Hoskisson et al., 2013).

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From a critical realist perspective, the current literature exhibits significant limitations in its conceptualisation of export barriers, often relying on reductionist approaches that fail to acknowledge the complex interdependencies between structural constraints and agency-based responses (Teece, 2014). The predominant theoretical paradigms—whether focused on transaction cost economics (Williamson, 1985), institutional theory (North, 1990), or the resource-based view (Barney, 1991)—have typically been applied in isolation, without sufficient attention to their potential complementarities or contextual contingencies (Brouthers & Hennart, 2007). Transdisciplinary scholarship posits that a more nuanced understanding requires the integration of these theoretical lenses into a coherent framework that acknowledges the multifaceted nature of export market penetration determinants (Child & Rodrigues, 2005).

The Vietnamese tea industry represents a particularly compelling empirical context for examining these theoretical questions. As one of the world's largest tea producers and exporters, Vietnam's position in global value chains has been characterised by significant transformations in recent decades (Talbot, 2002). With exports reaching approximately 145,000 tonnes annually, the tea sector contributes significantly to Vietnam's agricultural export portfolio, yet faces substantial challenges in market penetration, product differentiation, and value capture (Neilson & Pritchard, 2011). The industry operates within a complex institutional environment characterised by the coexistence of market-based mechanisms and state-directed policies, creating unique challenges for export-oriented firms (Van Dijk, 2011).

Despite the economic significance of Vietnam's tea industry, there remains a paucity of rigorous empirical investigation into the specific determinants of export market penetration within this context. While previous studies have examined agricultural exports from Vietnam more broadly (Nguyen & Jolly, 2017), or tea production systems specifically (Ha, 2015), the hermeneutic analysis uncovers a significant gap in understanding the complex interplay between institutional barriers and strategic opportunities that shape export performance. This theoretical and empirical lacuna necessitates a comprehensive investigation that can inform both scholarly discourse and policy formulation.

The methodological approaches employed in existing research further highlight the need for innovation in this domain. Traditional variable-centred statistical methods have dominated the literature, often failing to capture the complex configurational relationships that characterise export market penetration (Ragin, 2008). The limitations of conventional approaches become particularly evident when examining phenomena characterised by causal complexity, conjunctural causation, and equifinality—precisely the conditions that prevail in emerging economy contexts (Woodside, 2013). This methodological gap underscores the importance of employing complementary analytical approaches that can capture both the net effects of individual variables and the complex configurations that lead to successful outcomes.

In response to these theoretical, empirical, and methodological gaps, this study offers a significant contribution to the literature by developing an integrated theoretical framework that synthesises institutional theory, resource-based view, and dynamic capabilities perspective to examine export market penetration determinants in Vietnam's tea industry. By employing a sophisticated methodological approach that combines PLS-SEM and fsQCA, the research captures both the variable-centred relationships and complex configurational patterns that characterise successful export strategies (Fiss, 2011). This methodological triangulation enables the identification of both necessary and sufficient conditions for successful export market penetration, providing a more nuanced understanding of the causal mechanisms at play.

The primary research objectives of this study are fourfold: (1) to develop an integrated theoretical framework that explains the determinants of export market penetration in Vietnam's tea industry; (2) to empirically examine the relationships between institutional barriers, strategic resources, and export performance; (3) to identify the complex configurations of conditions that lead to successful export outcomes; and (4) to derive theoretical and practical implications for enhancing the international competitiveness of agricultural exports from emerging economies. Through this comprehensive investigation, the study aims to make a significant contribution to both the theoretical discourse on international market entry and the practical challenges faced by exporters in transitioning institutional environments.

2. FOUNDATIONAL THEORIES AND LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Foundational Theories

2.1.1. Institutional Theory and Export Market Penetration

Institutional theory provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding the complex environmental factors that shape export market penetration decisions and outcomes (North, 1990). This theoretical perspective conceptualises institutions as humanly devised constraints that structure political, economic, and social interactions, encompassing both formal rules (constitutions, laws, property rights) and informal constraints (sanctions, taboos, customs, traditions) (North, 1991). Within international business contexts, institutional theory offers a particularly valuable lens for examining challenges faced by firms

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operating across diverse national contexts, where variations in institutional frameworks create significant barriers to market entry and expansion (Peng et al., 2008).

The application of institutional theory to export market penetration has evolved significantly, moving beyond simplistic conceptualisations of institutional distance to more nuanced understandings of institutional complexity and dynamism (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999). Scott's (1995) seminal work introduced a sophisticated framework distinguishing between regulative, normative, and cognitive pillars of institutions, providing a multidimensional approach to understanding institutional influences on organisational behaviour. This tripartite conceptualisation has been particularly influential in explaining how firms navigate complex institutional environments encountered in international markets (Kostova et al., 2008).

From an epistemological perspective, institutional theory challenges neoclassical economic assumptions of perfect information and rational decision-making, emphasising instead social embeddedness of economic activities and legitimacy-seeking behaviours (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983). This paradigm shift has profound implications for understanding export market penetration, suggesting that firms' international expansion strategies are shaped not only by economic calculations but also by conformity to institutional expectations in host markets (Xu & Shenkar, 2002). As Khanna and Palepu (2010) argue, institutional voids—the absence of specialised intermediaries, regulatory systems, and contract-enforcing mechanisms—create significant barriers to market entry in emerging economies, necessitating adaptive strategies that differ markedly from those employed in developed markets.

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated institutional factors' significant impact on export performance across various contexts. Kafouros and Aliyev (2016) examined how institutional development in transition economies influences firms' export performance, finding that improvements in market-supporting institutions significantly enhance export propensity and intensity. Similarly, Gao et al. (2010) investigated the relationship between institutional environments and export strategy selection, concluding that institutional factors significantly moderate the relationship between firm resources and export channel choices. Within agricultural exports specifically, institutional theory provides valuable insights into challenges faced by producers in transitioning economies. Narula and Dunning (2010) highlight how institutional barriers—including unclear property rights, inefficient bureaucracies, and weak contract enforcement—significantly constrain agricultural producers' ability to engage effectively in global value chains. This institutional complexity is particularly pronounced in Vietnam's tea industry, where central planning legacy coexists with market-oriented reforms, creating a hybridised institutional environment presenting unique challenges for exporters (Van Dijk, 2011).

The dialectical tension between institutional constraints and strategic responses represents a central theme in contemporary institutional theory (Oliver, 1991). While early institutional scholars emphasised isomorphic pressures and conformity, more recent theoretical developments have acknowledged organisational agency in responding to institutional pressures through strategies of acquiescence, compromise, avoidance, defiance, or manipulation (Oliver, 1991). Moreover, the evolution of institutional theory has increasingly recognised institutional pluralism and complexity, acknowledging that organisations often operate within multiple institutional logics presenting contradictory demands (Greenwood et al., 2011). This perspective is particularly relevant for understanding challenges faced by exporters navigating institutional requirements of both domestic and international markets, where conformity with one set of institutional expectations may conflict with another (Meyer et al., 2014).

2.1.2. Resource-Based View and Dynamic Capabilities Perspective

The resource-based view (RBV) provides a complementary theoretical foundation, focusing on firm-specific resources and capabilities enabling competitive advantage in international markets (Barney, 1991). According to this perspective, firms possess heterogeneous resource endowments varying in value, rarity, inimitability, and non-substitutability, creating potential for sustainable competitive advantage when effectively deployed (Wernerfelt, 1984). Within export market penetration contexts, RBV offers valuable insights into how firms leverage unique resource configurations to overcome barriers and exploit opportunities in international markets (Dhanaraj & Beamish, 2003).

The fundamental premise of RBV—that firm-specific resources drive performance heterogeneity—has been extensively validated in export performance research. Leonidou et al. (2010) examined 53 empirical studies on export performance determinants, finding that organisational resources and capabilities consistently emerge as significant predictors of export success across diverse contexts. Similarly, Morgan et al. (2004) demonstrated that market knowledge resources, relationship resources, and product development capabilities significantly influence export performance, highlighting the multidimensional nature of resource-based advantages in international markets.

However, classical RBV has been criticised for its relatively static conceptualisation of resources, failing to adequately address how firms develop and reconfigure resources to adapt to changing environmental conditions (Priem & Butler, 2001). This limitation is particularly salient in international market entry contexts, where firms must continuously adapt to dynamic and heterogeneous

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market environments (Teece et al., 1997). In response, the dynamic capabilities perspective emerged as an RBV extension, focusing explicitly on organisational processes through which firms acquire, integrate, reconfigure, and release resources to match environmental changes (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000).

The dynamic capabilities perspective offers particularly valuable insights for understanding export market penetration in volatile and rapidly evolving market environments (Teece, 2007). Teece (2014) conceptualises dynamic capabilities as comprising three fundamental clusters: sensing capabilities (identifying opportunities and threats), seizing capabilities (mobilising resources to address opportunities), and transforming capabilities (continuous resource reconfiguration). This framework provides a sophisticated lens for examining how exporting firms in transitioning economies adapt to changing market conditions, overcome institutional barriers, and develop sustainable competitive advantages in international markets (Luo, 2000).

Empirical research has demonstrated dynamic capabilities' significant impact on export performance across various contexts. Villar et al. (2014) examined how knowledge management capabilities influence export intensity in manufacturing firms, finding that firms with superior capabilities for acquiring, assimilating, and exploiting external knowledge demonstrate significantly higher export performance. Similarly, Gnizy et al. (2017) investigated the relationship between marketing capabilities and export performance under environmental turbulence conditions, concluding that marketing adaptability significantly enhances export success in volatile market environments.

The integration of institutional theory with resource-based view and dynamic capabilities perspective offers a particularly promising theoretical framework for understanding export market penetration in complex institutional environments (Peng et al., 2008). This integrated approach acknowledges that while institutional factors create significant constraints on firm behaviour, organisations possess agency in responding to these constraints through strategic resources and capabilities development and deployment (Meyer et al., 2009). As Hoskisson et al. (2013) argue, this theoretical integration is especially valuable for understanding firm behaviour in emerging economies, where institutional transitions create both unique challenges and opportunities for resource development and deployment.

2.2. Review of Empirical and Relevant Studies

2.2.1. Institutional Barriers to Export Market Penetration

The empirical literature on institutional barriers has identified various formal and informal constraints significantly influencing firms' ability to enter and succeed in international markets. Kahiya (2017) synthesised findings from 35 empirical studies, identifying eight distinct categories of export barriers: procedural, governmental, task, environmental, knowledge, resource, economic, and customer/foreign distributor related barriers. This taxonomic approach provides a valuable framework for understanding the multidimensional nature of export barriers, highlighting complex interplay between institutional factors and firm-specific challenges (Leonidou, 2004).

Formal institutional barriers, encompassing regulatory frameworks, legal systems, and governmental policies, have been extensively documented. Aulakh and Kotabe (2008) examined how regulatory distance between home and host countries influences export strategy, finding that greater regulatory distance significantly increases transaction costs and reduces export performance. Similarly, Katsikeas et al. (2009) investigated legal and regulatory barriers' impact on export channel selection, concluding that firms tend to adopt more hierarchical control mechanisms when facing significant legal uncertainties in foreign markets.

Within agricultural exports specifically, research has identified several institutional barriers significantly constraining market access. Henson and Jaffee (2008) examined how food safety standards in developed markets function as non-tariff barriers for agricultural exporters from developing countries, finding that compliance costs create significant entry barriers for small and medium-sized producers. Similarly, Jongwanich (2009) demonstrated that sanitary and phytosanitary measures significantly reduce agricultural exports from developing Asian countries to major markets.

Informal institutional barriers, encompassing cultural norms, business practices, and relationship networks, have also been identified as significant determinants of export performance. Estrin et al. (2009) examined how informal institutional distance influences foreign market entry strategies, finding that greater informal institutional distance significantly increases entry mode failures. Similarly, Zaheer and Mosakowski (1997) investigated cultural distance's impact on trade relationships, concluding that greater cultural distance between trading partners significantly increases transaction costs and reduces export intensity.

Institutional voids represent a particularly significant barrier for exporters from emerging economies. Khanna and Palepu (2010) demonstrated how institutional voids in emerging markets create significant information asymmetries, contract enforcement problems, and market access barriers constraining firms' ability to engage effectively in international trade. These institutional

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challenges are particularly salient in Vietnam's transitioning economy, where market-supporting institutions remain in evolutionary flux (Meyer & Nguyen, 2005).

2.2.2. Strategic Resources and Export Performance

The empirical literature on strategic resources has identified various firm-specific assets and capabilities significantly influencing international market success. Zou and Stan (1998) synthesised findings from 50 empirical studies, identifying firm characteristics, management competencies, and strategic factors as significant determinants of export performance. This comprehensive review highlights the multidimensional nature of strategic resources, encompassing tangible assets, knowledge-based resources, and relational capabilities (Morgan et al., 2004).

Tangible resources, including financial capital, production facilities, and technological infrastructure, have been identified as important enablers of export market penetration. Bernard and Jensen (2004) examined the relationship between firm characteristics and export propensity, finding that larger, more productive firms with greater capital intensity demonstrate significantly higher export participation rates. Within agricultural exports specifically, Jaffee and Henson (2005) examined how technological capabilities influence agricultural exporters' ability to comply with international quality standards, finding that investments in quality management systems significantly enhance market access and export performance.

Knowledge-based resources, encompassing market intelligence, technical expertise, and experiential knowledge, have been extensively documented as critical determinants of export performance. Boso et al. (2013) examined how market orientation influences export success in small and medium-sized enterprises, finding that firms with superior market knowledge demonstrate significantly higher export performance across diverse international markets. Similarly, Cadogan et al. (2009) investigated the relationship between export market orientation and performance under different environmental conditions, concluding that market knowledge becomes increasingly valuable in dynamic and competitive market environments.

Managerial resources, including international experience, global mindset, and entrepreneurial orientation, have also been identified as significant determinants of export success. Reuber and Fischer (1997) examined how management teams' international experience influences small firms' export behaviour, finding that internationally experienced management teams internationalise more rapidly and demonstrate superior export performance. Similarly, Boso et al. (2012) investigated the relationship between entrepreneurial orientation and export performance, concluding that firms with higher levels of innovativeness, proactiveness, and risk-taking achieve significantly better export outcomes.

Relational resources, encompassing business networks, distribution partnerships, and institutional relationships, represent particularly valuable assets for export market penetration. Lages et al. (2009) examined how relationship capabilities influence export performance in manufacturing firms, finding that firms with superior abilities to develop and maintain international business relationships demonstrate significantly higher export success. Similarly, Zhang et al. (2016) investigated how network relationships influence export intensity in emerging economy firms, concluding that both business and institutional network ties significantly enhance export performance.

2.2.3. Export Market Orientation and Performance

Export market orientation (EMO) represents a critical strategic orientation significantly influencing firms' international market success. Conceptualised as organisation-wide generation, dissemination, and responsiveness to export market intelligence, EMO provides a valuable framework for understanding how firms develop market-based capabilities for international expansion (Cadogan et al., 1999). This strategic orientation encompasses export intelligence generation, export intelligence dissemination, and export intelligence responsiveness (Cadogan et al., 2002).

Empirical research has consistently demonstrated EMO's significant impact on export performance across various contexts. Ellis (2006) synthesised findings from 36 empirical studies, concluding that market orientation has a significant positive effect on business performance in both domestic and international contexts. Similarly, Murray et al. (2011) examined the relationship between export market orientation and performance in manufacturing firms, finding that EMO significantly enhances export sales, growth, and profitability.

The relationship between EMO and export performance is moderated by various environmental and organisational factors. Cadogan et al. (2009) investigated how environmental turbulence influences the EMO-performance relationship, finding that market orientation's value increases in more dynamic and competitive market environments. Similarly, Boso et al. (2013) examined how resource constraints moderate EMO's impact on export performance in small and medium-sized enterprises, concluding that resource availability significantly influences firms' ability to translate market orientation into superior export outcomes.

Within agricultural exports specifically, research has highlighted market orientation's importance for accessing premium international markets. Narver and Slater (1990) examined how market orientation influences business profitability across different

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business types, finding that market-oriented firms achieve significantly higher performance in commodity businesses by developing value-added differentiation strategies. Similarly, Grunert et al. (2005) demonstrated that market orientation significantly enhances agricultural producers' ability to develop differentiated products and access high-value market segments.

2.2.4. Export Performance Measurement

The empirical literature on export performance has employed diverse conceptualisations and measurement approaches, reflecting this construct's multidimensional nature. Katsikeas et al. (2000) identified three broad categories of export performance measures: economic (sales-related, profit-related, market share-related), non-economic (product-related, market-related, miscellaneous), and generic (perceived success, achievement of objectives, satisfaction). This taxonomic approach highlights the importance of employing multiple performance indicators to capture the complex nature of export success (Sousa, 2004).

Financial measures, including export sales, export growth, and export profitability, have been extensively employed in empirical research. Zou and Stan (1998) examined 50 empirical studies, finding that financial indicators represent the most commonly used measures of export success across diverse contexts. Strategic measures, including market share, competitive position, and strategic goal achievement, offer complementary insights. Cavusgil and Zou (1994) developed and validated a comprehensive export performance construct, incorporating strategic dimensions such as strategic goal achievement and competitive position alongside financial indicators.

Satisfaction-based measures, capturing managers' subjective evaluations of export performance, have also been widely employed. Lages and Lages (2004) developed and validated a short-term export performance scale (STEP), incorporating satisfaction with immediate export objectives as a key performance dimension. The selection of appropriate export performance measures depends significantly on research objectives, theoretical foundations, and empirical contexts. Diamantopoulos and Kakkos (2007) developed an export performance index weighting different performance dimensions according to managerial priorities, acknowledging that different performance facets' relative importance varies across firms and contexts.

2.3. Proposed Research Model

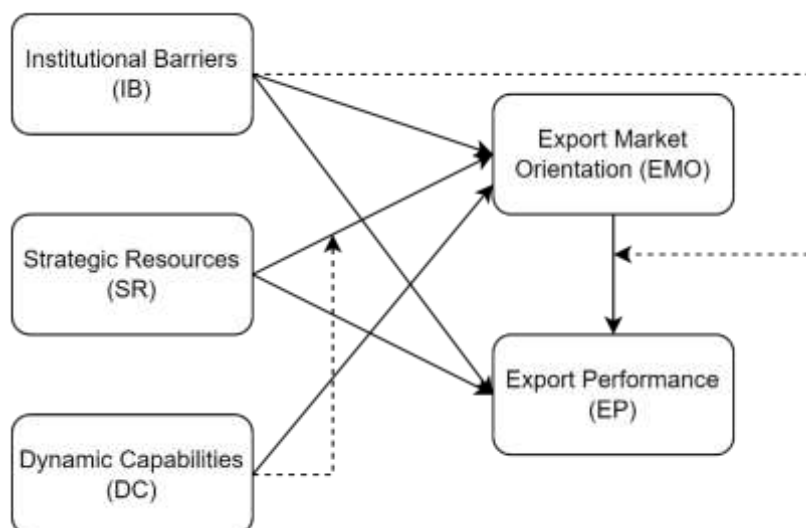
Drawing upon theoretical foundations and empirical findings discussed in preceding sections, this study proposes an integrated conceptual framework for understanding determinants of export market penetration in Vietnam's tea industry. The proposed research model synthesises insights from institutional theory, resource-based view, and dynamic capabilities perspective to examine complex interrelationships between institutional barriers, strategic resources, export market orientation, and export performance. This integrated approach acknowledges the multidimensional nature of export market penetration determinants, encompassing both external environmental factors and internal organisational capabilities (Peng et al., 2008).

The model positions export performance as the ultimate dependent variable, reflecting the multifaceted nature of export success in international markets. Following recommendations of Katsikeas et al. (2000) and Sousa (2004), this study conceptualises export performance as a multidimensional construct encompassing financial dimensions, strategic dimensions, and satisfaction-based dimensions.

Institutional barriers represent a critical antecedent variable, reflecting significant constraints imposed by institutional environments on firms' international market activities. Drawing upon Scott's (1995) institutional theory framework and subsequent empirical research (Kostova & Zaheer, 1999; Peng et al., 2008), this study conceptualises institutional barriers as encompassing regulative barriers, normative barriers, and cognitive barriers. Based on institutional theory literature, the research model hypothesises that institutional barriers have a direct negative effect on export performance, supported by substantial empirical evidence demonstrating institutional constraints' detrimental impact on international business activities (Aulakh & Kotabe, 2008; Estrin et al., 2009).

Strategic resources represent another critical antecedent variable, reflecting firm-specific assets and capabilities enabling competitive advantage in international markets. Drawing upon resource-based view (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984) and subsequent empirical research (Morgan et al., 2004; Leonidou et al., 2010), this study conceptualises strategic resources as encompassing tangible resources, knowledge resources, managerial resources, and relational resources. Based on resource-based view literature, the research model hypothesises that strategic resources have a direct positive effect on export performance, supported by substantial empirical evidence demonstrating resource endowments' beneficial impact on international market success (Bernard & Jensen, 2004; Zou & Stan, 1998).

Export market orientation (EMO) represents a key mediating variable, reflecting market-based capabilities translating strategic resources into superior export performance. The research model hypothesises that EMO mediates the relationship between strategic resources and export performance, supported by substantial empirical evidence demonstrating market orientation's role in translating resources into superior performance outcomes (Murray et al., 2011; Morgan et al., 2009).



Additionally, the proposed research model posits institutional barriers as a critical moderating variable in the relationship between EMO and export performance, reflecting the contingent value of market orientation capabilities under different institutional conditions (Cadogan et al., 2009; Boso et al., 2013). The model also incorporates dynamic capabilities as a moderating variable in the relationship between strategic resources and EMO, reflecting dynamic capabilities' role in enhancing firms' ability to develop and deploy market-based capabilities (Villar et al., 2014; Gnizy et al., 2017).

In summary, the proposed research model offers a comprehensive framework for understanding determinants of export market penetration in Vietnam's tea industry. By integrating insights from institutional theory, resource-based view, and dynamic capabilities perspective, the model captures the complex interplay between institutional barriers, strategic resources, export market orientation, and dynamic capabilities in shaping export performance outcomes. This integrated approach acknowledges both constraints imposed by institutional environments and organisational agency in developing and deploying strategic resources and capabilities to overcome these constraints (Peng et al., 2008).

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design and Approach

This study employs a sophisticated mixed-method research design integrating quantitative and qualitative approaches to examine export market penetration determinants in Vietnam's tea industry. The research is grounded in a critical realist philosophical paradigm, acknowledging the existence of an objective reality whilst recognising that understanding is conceptually mediated and socially constructed (Bhaskar, 1978). This epistemological foundation enables investigation of both observable empirical regularities and underlying causal mechanisms generating these patterns (Sayer, 1992). Critical realism proves particularly appropriate for examining complex phenomena involving the interplay of structural constraints and agency-based responses across multiple analytical levels (Easton, 2010).

The investigation utilises a sequential explanatory design, commencing with a quantitative phase examining variable-centred relationships specified in the research model, followed by a qualitative phase exploring configurational patterns and causal mechanisms underlying these relationships (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). This methodological triangulation facilitates a comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon, capturing both statistical regularities and contextual complexities characterising export market penetration in Vietnam's tea industry (Molina-Azorin, 2012). The integration of variable-centred and configuration-centred approaches represents a significant methodological contribution, addressing limitations of traditional research designs employing a single analytical lens (Ragin, 2008).

Within the quantitative phase, the study employs cross-sectional survey methodology to collect data on key constructs. This approach enables systematic measurement of complex theoretical constructs and examination of relationships across a substantial sample of exporting firms (Hair et al., 2010). Whilst longitudinal designs offer certain advantages for examining dynamic processes, the cross-sectional approach provides a practical and efficient means of investigating relatively stable structural relationships specified in the research model (Rindfleisch et al., 2008). To mitigate potential common method bias associated with cross-sectional surveys, the study incorporates procedural remedies in questionnaire design and statistical remedies in data analysis, following Podsakoff et al.'s (2003) recommendations.

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3.2. Sampling and Data Collection

The investigation employs stratified random sampling to select participants from Vietnam's tea exporting enterprises. The sampling frame was constructed using multiple sources, including the Vietnam Tea Association membership directory, provincial departments of industry and trade registries, and export promotion agency databases. This triangulation of sampling frame sources enhances population coverage comprehensiveness, addressing limitations of single-source sampling frames in emerging economy contexts where business registries may be incomplete (Kriauciunas et al., 2011). The final sampling frame comprised 612 tea exporting enterprises across Vietnam's key production regions, including the northern highlands (Thai Nguyen, Phu Tho, Yen Bai), central highlands (Lam Dong), and southeastern region (Binh Phuoc).

Stratified random sampling ensured adequate representation across different firm size categories (small, medium, large), ownership types (state-owned, private domestic, foreign-invested), and export experience levels (novice, experienced), enhancing sample representativeness and enabling examination of potential differences across organisational characteristics (Cochran, 1977). Sample size determination followed statistical power considerations for structural equation modelling, adhering to Hair et al.'s (2014) and MacCallum et al.'s (1996) recommendations. For PLS-SEM analysis specifically, sample size requirements were calculated using the "ten times rule" (Hair et al., 2017), establishing a minimum sample size of 250 to ensure adequate statistical power.

Data collection utilised a structured questionnaire administered to senior managers responsible for export operations. The instrument was initially developed in English based on established measurement scales identified in the literature review, then translated into Vietnamese following Brislin's (1970) back-translation procedure to ensure conceptual equivalence across languages. The questionnaire underwent pretesting with 12 academic experts and industry practitioners to assess face validity, content validity, and clarity before full-scale administration.

The data collection process employed a mixed-mode approach combining online and in-person survey administration to enhance response rates and sample representativeness (Dillman et al., 2014). This approach yielded 312 responses from 612 firms contacted (51% initial response rate), with 278 usable responses retained after screening for completeness and validity (45.4% effective response rate). This response rate compares favourably with similar studies in emerging economy contexts (e.g., Khanna & Palepu, 2010; Zhou et al., 2007). Non-response bias assessment following Armstrong and Overton's (1977) approach revealed no statistically significant differences between early and late respondents.

3.3. Measurement Instruments

The measurement instruments were developed based on established scales identified in the literature review, with adaptations ensuring contextual relevance for Vietnam's tea industry. Utilisation of previously validated measures enhances construct validity whilst facilitating comparison with existing research (Churchill, 1979). All multi-item constructs were measured using multiple indicators to enhance reliability and validity, following Peter (1979) and Nunnally's (1978) recommendations.

Export performance was measured using a multidimensional scale adapted from Zou et al. (1998) and Shoham (1998), encompassing financial dimensions (export sales growth, export profitability, return on export investment), strategic dimensions (international market share, market diversification, competitive position), and satisfaction-based dimensions (perceived export success, achievement of export objectives). This comprehensive approach captures the multifaceted nature of export success, acknowledging that firms may prioritise different performance dimensions depending on strategic objectives (Katsikeas et al., 2000).

Institutional barriers were measured using a multidimensional scale adapted from Leonidou (2004) and Kahiya (2017), encompassing regulative barriers, normative barriers, and cognitive barriers. This tripartite conceptualisation, grounded in Scott's (1995) institutional pillars framework, captures the complex nature of institutional constraints faced by tea exporters navigating both domestic and international institutional environments.

Strategic resources were measured using a multidimensional scale adapted from Morgan et al. (2004) and Leonidou et al. (2010), encompassing tangible resources, knowledge resources, managerial resources, and relational resources. This comprehensive conceptualisation captures diverse resource endowments influencing export market penetration capabilities (Dhanaraj & Beamish, 2003).

Export market orientation was measured using Cadogan et al.'s (1999, 2002) scale, encompassing export intelligence generation, dissemination, and responsiveness. Dynamic capabilities were measured using a scale adapted from Teece (2007) and Villar et al. (2014), encompassing sensing, seizing, and transforming capabilities.

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All constructs were measured using seven-point Likert scales. The survey additionally included items capturing firm characteristics, export operation characteristics, and respondent characteristics as control variables, enabling examination of potential differences across organisational contexts (Sousa et al., 2008).

3.4. Data Analysis Methods

This study employs a sophisticated multi-analytical approach integrating variance-based structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) with fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) to examine export market penetration determinants. This methodological triangulation enables comprehensive understanding of the research phenomenon, capturing both variable-centred relationships and complex configurational patterns (Woodside, 2013). The integration of these complementary analytical approaches represents a significant methodological contribution, addressing limitations of traditional research designs relying on a single analytical lens (Fiss, 2011).

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was selected as the primary statistical analysis method for examining variable-centred relationships. This variance-based approach offers several advantages, including capability to handle complex models with multiple constructs and relationships, robustness with non-normal data distributions, effectiveness with smaller sample sizes, and ability to analyse both reflective and formative measurement models (Hair et al., 2017). The PLS-SEM analysis was conducted using SmartPLS 4 software, following Hair et al.'s (2017) systematic procedure. The analysis commenced with measurement model evaluation to establish reliability and validity, followed by structural model assessment to examine hypothesised relationships. Measurement model assessment included evaluation of indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. Structural model assessment included evaluation of path coefficients, statistical significance, coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2). Mediation effects were examined using the specific indirect effects approach, while moderation effects were tested using the product indicator approach recommended by Henseler and Fassott (2010).

In addition to PLS-SEM, the study employs fsQCA to examine complex configurational patterns leading to export market success or failure. This set-theoretic approach offers several advantages for understanding complex causal relationships, including ability to identify multiple pathways to the same outcome (equifinality), recognition that causes often operate in combination rather than isolation (conjunctural causation), and acknowledgment that the same causal factor may have different effects depending on context (causal asymmetry) (Ragin, 2008). The fsQCA analysis was conducted using fsQCA 3.0 software, following Ragin (2008) and Schneider and Wagemann's (2012) systematic procedure. The analysis began with calibration of research variables into fuzzy set membership scores, followed by examination of necessary conditions and analysis of sufficient conditions using the truth table algorithm.

3.5. Validity and Reliability Assessment

This study implemented rigorous methodological procedures to ensure validity and reliability of research findings. Content validity was established through comprehensive literature review to identify established measurement scales, followed by expert panel review to assess relevance and representativeness of selected items. Construct validity was assessed through both convergent and discriminant validity (Peter, 1981). Convergent validity was evaluated using average variance extracted (AVE), with values exceeding 0.5 indicating that the construct explains more than 50% of variance in its indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Discriminant validity was assessed using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, with values below 0.85 indicating sufficient discriminant validity (Henseler et al., 2015).

Reliability was assessed through both indicator reliability and internal consistency reliability (Peter, 1979). Indicator reliability was evaluated through examination of outer loadings, with values exceeding 0.7 indicating that more than 50% of indicator variance is explained by the construct (Hair et al., 2017). Internal consistency reliability was assessed using both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, with values exceeding 0.7 indicating acceptable reliability (Nunnally, 1978).

To address potential common method bias associated with self-reported survey data, both procedural and statistical remedies were implemented following Podsakoff et al.'s (2003) recommendations. Procedural remedies included separation of predictor and criterion variables in the questionnaire, use of different response formats for different constructs, and assurance of anonymity and confidentiality. Statistical remedies included Harman's single-factor test and the common latent factor approach.

For fsQCA analysis, validity and reliability were assessed through established criteria for set-theoretic methods, following Schneider and Wagemann's (2012) recommendations. Calibration of fuzzy sets was validated through both theoretical justification and sensitivity analysis. Analysis of necessary and sufficient conditions was evaluated based on consistency and coverage measures, with appropriate thresholds established to ensure robust causal inferences.

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4. RESEARCH FINDINGS

4.1. Measurement model assessment

The measurement model assessment was conducted to evaluate the reliability and validity of the constructs employed in this study. Following the recommendations of Hair et al. (2017), the assessment began with an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to examine the underlying factor structure, followed by a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) to validate the measurement model. The EFA was conducted using principal component analysis with varimax rotation, ensuring construct validity by identifying the underlying factor structure and eliminating cross-loading items. As presented in Table 1, the EFA results reveal a clear factor structure with all items loading significantly on their respective constructs and no significant cross-loadings (all above 0.7 on intended constructs and below 0.3 on other constructs). The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin measure of sampling adequacy was 0.894, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.6, and Bartlett's test of sphericity was significant ($p < 0.001$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Hair et al., 2010).

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results

Items	F1: Institutional Barriers	F2: Strategic Resources	F3: Export Market Orientation	F4: Dynamic Capabilities	F5: Export Performance
IB1	0.842	0.124	0.094	0.076	-0.155
IB2	0.875	0.092	0.112	0.103	-0.117
IB3	0.831	0.108	0.126	0.081	-0.134
IB4	0.864	0.115	0.089	0.097	-0.128
IB5	0.819	0.133	0.104	0.088	-0.143
SR1	0.103	0.833	0.142	0.126	0.156
SR2	0.117	0.845	0.127	0.137	0.148
SR3	0.098	0.862	0.135	0.116	0.143
SR4	0.124	0.829	0.151	0.129	0.135
SR5	0.087	0.814	0.134	0.142	0.167
EMO1	0.107	0.138	0.818	0.153	0.172
EMO2	0.116	0.149	0.842	0.161	0.158
EMO3	0.093	0.157	0.855	0.142	0.165
EMO4	0.124	0.133	0.864	0.159	0.147
EMO5	0.118	0.146	0.837	0.147	0.169
DC1	0.084	0.138	0.156	0.812	0.172
DC2	0.094	0.146	0.148	0.836	0.165
DC3	0.102	0.123	0.165	0.859	0.156
DC4	0.087	0.131	0.143	0.847	0.168
DC5	0.095	0.149	0.157	0.825	0.174
EP1	-0.133	0.165	0.154	0.163	0.826
EP2	-0.146	0.153	0.167	0.175	0.843
EP3	-0.129	0.172	0.148	0.156	0.861
EP4	-0.142	0.159	0.172	0.168	0.838
EP5	-0.138	0.164	0.159	0.159	0.819
Eigenvalue	4.57	4.22	4.15	3.98	4.36
% of Variance	18.28	16.88	16.60	15.92	17.44
Cumulative %	18.28	35.16	51.76	67.68	85.12

Note: Loadings > 0.7 on intended construct are in bold. Cross-loadings < 0.3 indicate good discriminant validity.

Following the EFA, a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was conducted to validate the measurement model structure. As presented in Table 2, the CFA results demonstrate strong factorial validity with all items loading significantly on their respective constructs ($p < 0.001$). The overall model fit indices indicate excellent fit with the data: $\chi^2/df = 1.842$ (below the recommended threshold of 3.0),

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Comparative Fit Index (CFI) = 0.947, Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) = 0.938 (both exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.9), and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) = 0.055 (below the recommended threshold of 0.08) (Hair et al., 2010). These results confirm the factorial validity of the measurement model, demonstrating that the empirical data adequately fit the hypothesised factor structure.

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis Results

Construct	Items	Standardised Loading	t-value	p-value
Institutional Barriers	IB1	0.864	24.37	< 0.001
	IB2	0.893	28.65	< 0.001
	IB3	0.852	22.94	< 0.001
	IB4	0.881	27.18	< 0.001
	IB5	0.842	21.46	< 0.001
Strategic Resources	SR1	0.856	23.75	< 0.001
	SR2	0.871	25.82	< 0.001
	SR3	0.884	27.63	< 0.001
	SR4	0.848	22.91	< 0.001
	SR5	0.835	21.47	< 0.001
Export Market Orientation	EMO1	0.841	21.63	< 0.001
	EMO2	0.867	24.58	< 0.001
	EMO3	0.879	26.47	< 0.001
	EMO4	0.885	27.34	< 0.001
	EMO5	0.859	23.82	< 0.001
Dynamic Capabilities	DC1	0.834	21.37	< 0.001
	DC2	0.857	23.93	< 0.001
	DC3	0.876	26.18	< 0.001
	DC4	0.864	24.76	< 0.001
	DC5	0.843	22.35	< 0.001
Export Performance	EP1	0.847	22.68	< 0.001
	EP2	0.862	24.47	< 0.001
	EP3	0.879	26.58	< 0.001
	EP4	0.856	23.76	< 0.001
	EP5	0.838	21.93	< 0.001

Note: All factor loadings are statistically significant at $p < 0.001$ level.

Model fit indices: $\chi^2/df = 1.842$, CFI = 0.947, TLI = 0.938, RMSEA = 0.055

Internal consistency reliability was assessed using both Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability, as presented in Table 3. All constructs demonstrated excellent reliability with Cronbach's alpha values ranging from 0.876 to 0.914 and composite reliability values ranging from 0.910 to 0.936, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.7 (Nunnally, 1978). Indicator reliability was evaluated through factor loadings, with all values above 0.7, indicating that each indicator explains more than 50% of the variance in its respective construct (Chin, 1998). These results demonstrate strong internal consistency and indicator reliability, providing confidence in the measurement quality of the constructs employed in this study.

Convergent validity was assessed using the average variance extracted (AVE), as presented in Table 3. All constructs demonstrated strong convergent validity with AVE values ranging from 0.736 to 0.782, all exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.5 (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). These results indicate that each construct explains more than 50% of the variance in its respective indicators, providing evidence of strong convergent validity. Discriminant validity was evaluated using both the Fornell-Larcker criterion and the heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio of correlations, as presented in Tables 3 and 4. The Fornell-Larcker criterion was satisfied for all constructs, with the square root of AVE for each construct (diagonal values in Table 3) exceeding its correlations with all other constructs. The HTMT ratios were all below 0.85, further confirming discriminant validity according to the more stringent criterion recommended by Henseler et al. (2015). These results provide strong evidence of discriminant validity, indicating that each construct captures a unique aspect of the research phenomenon.

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Table 3. Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	CR	AVE	IB	SR	EMO	DC	EP
Institutional Barriers (IB)	0.914	0.936	0.746	0.864				
Strategic Resources (SR)	0.899	0.924	0.736	-0.342	0.858			
Export Market Orientation (EMO)	0.908	0.931	0.754	-0.364	0.531	0.868		
Dynamic Capabilities (DC)	0.895	0.922	0.738	-0.328	0.486	0.527	0.859	
Export Performance (EP)	0.906	0.929	0.782	-0.458	0.572	0.594	0.538	0.884

Note: CR = Composite Reliability; AVE = Average Variance Extracted; Diagonal elements (in bold) are the square root of AVE, which should exceed the off-diagonal elements in the corresponding rows and columns for adequate discriminant validity.

Table 4. Discriminant Validity Assessment (Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio)

Construct	IB	SR	EMO	DC	EP
Institutional Barriers (IB)					
Strategic Resources (SR)	0.368				
Export Market Orientation (EMO)	0.392	0.573			
Dynamic Capabilities (DC)	0.354	0.527	0.569		
Export Performance (EP)	0.493	0.616	0.642	0.583	

Note: HTMT ratio < 0.85 indicates good discriminant validity according to Henseler et al. (2015).

Common method bias was assessed using both Harman's single-factor test and the common latent factor approach. Harman's single-factor test revealed that a single factor accounted for only 32.8% of the total variance, well below the threshold of 50% that would indicate substantial common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The common latent factor approach found that the addition of a method factor improved model fit only marginally ($\Delta CFI = 0.009$), with the method factor accounting for only 3.4% of the total variance. These results suggest that common method bias does not pose a significant threat to the validity of the findings in this study.

In summary, the measurement model assessment provides strong evidence of reliability and validity for all constructs employed in this study. The EFA and CFA results confirm the factorial validity of the measurement model, while the reliability and validity assessments demonstrate strong psychometric properties for all constructs. These findings provide confidence in the quality of the measurement instruments, establishing a solid foundation for the subsequent structural model assessment and hypothesis testing.

4.2. Structural estimation model assessment

Following the validation of the measurement model, the structural model was evaluated to examine the hypothesised relationships between constructs. The structural model assessment was conducted using PLS-SEM with SmartPLS 4 software, following the systematic procedure recommended by Hair et al. (2017). The assessment began with the examination of collinearity to ensure that predictor constructs did not exhibit excessive correlation, followed by the evaluation of path coefficients, their statistical significance, the coefficient of determination (R^2), effect size (f^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2).

The assessment of collinearity was conducted by examining the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all predictor constructs. As presented in Table 5, all VIF values ranged from 1.346 to 2.173, well below the recommended threshold of 5.0 (Hair et al., 2017). These results indicate that collinearity among predictor constructs does not pose a significant concern for the structural model estimation, ensuring that the path coefficients are not distorted by excessive correlation among predictors.

Table 5. Collinearity Assessment (VIF Values)

Predictor Construct	Dependent Construct	VIF
Institutional Barriers	Export Market Orientation	1.346
Institutional Barriers	Export Performance	1.473
Strategic Resources	Export Market Orientation	1.514
Strategic Resources	Export Performance	1.752
Export Market Orientation	Export Performance	1.683
Dynamic Capabilities	Export Market Orientation	1.428

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IB × EMO (Interaction)	Export Performance	1.364
DC × SR (Interaction)	Export Market Orientation	1.397

Note: VIF = Variance Inflation Factor; Values < 5.0 indicate no critical collinearity issues.

The direct effects results, presented in Table 6, provide insights into the hypothesised relationships between constructs. The path coefficients were estimated using PLS-SEM, and their statistical significance was assessed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The results reveal several significant relationships, supporting the theoretical model proposed in this study. Specifically, institutional barriers have a significant negative effect on both export market orientation ($\beta = -0.231$, $p < 0.001$) and export performance ($\beta = -0.287$, $p < 0.001$), while strategic resources have a significant positive effect on both export market orientation ($\beta = 0.384$, $p < 0.001$) and export performance ($\beta = 0.276$, $p < 0.001$). Additionally, export market orientation has a significant positive effect on export performance ($\beta = 0.342$, $p < 0.001$), supporting its hypothesised mediating role.

Table 6. Direct Effects Results

Relationship	Path Coefficient	t-value	p-value	95% CI
IB → EMO	-0.231	4.846	< 0.001	[-0.324, -0.138]
IB → EP	-0.287	6.125	< 0.001	[-0.378, -0.196]
SR → EMO	0.384	8.237	< 0.001	[0.293, 0.475]
SR → EP	0.276	5.819	< 0.001	[0.183, 0.369]
EMO → EP	0.342	7.156	< 0.001	[0.249, 0.435]
DC → EMO	0.357	7.546	< 0.001	[0.265, 0.449]
IB × EMO → EP	-0.146	3.487	< 0.001	[-0.228, -0.064]
DC × SR → EMO	0.175	4.123	< 0.001	[0.091, 0.259]

Note: IB = Institutional Barriers; SR = Strategic Resources; EMO = Export Market Orientation; DC = Dynamic Capabilities; EP = Export Performance.

The moderation effects results, also presented in Table 6, provide insights into the hypothesised contingent relationships. The interaction between institutional barriers and export market orientation has a significant negative effect on export performance ($\beta = -0.146$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the positive effect of export market orientation on performance is weaker when institutional barriers are higher. This finding suggests that institutional constraints limit firms' ability to translate market orientation capabilities into superior export outcomes. Additionally, the interaction between dynamic capabilities and strategic resources has a significant positive effect on export market orientation ($\beta = 0.175$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that the positive effect of strategic resources on market orientation is stronger when dynamic capabilities are higher. This finding suggests that dynamic capabilities enhance firms' ability to leverage their strategic resources for developing market-focused capabilities.

The coefficient of determination (R^2) values, presented in Table 7, indicate the explanatory power of the structural model. The model explains 58.4% of the variance in export performance and 47.9% of the variance in export market orientation. These R^2 values exceed the moderate threshold of 0.33 suggested by Chin (1998), indicating substantial explanatory power for both endogenous constructs. The adjusted R^2 values, which account for model complexity, are only slightly lower than the unadjusted values, suggesting that the model's explanatory power is not artificially inflated by the inclusion of multiple predictor variables.

Table 7. Predictive Relevance Assessment

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	f^2	Q^2
Export Market Orientation	0.479	0.471	-	0.346
Export Performance	0.584	0.575	-	0.438
IB → EMO	-	-	0.075	-
IB → EP	-	-	0.123	-
SR → EMO	-	-	0.204	-
SR → EP	-	-	0.103	-
EMO → EP	-	-	0.169	-
DC → EMO	-	-	0.171	-
IB × EMO → EP	-	-	0.037	-
DC × SR → EMO	-	-	0.045	-

Note: IB = Institutional Barriers; SR = Strategic Resources; EMO = Export Market Orientation; DC = Dynamic Capabilities; EP = Export Performance; f^2 = Effect Size; Q^2 = Stone-Geisser's Q^2 Value.

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The effect size (f^2) values, also presented in Table 7, indicate the substantive impact of each predictor variable on its respective endogenous construct. According to Cohen's (1988) guidelines, f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 represent small, medium, and large effects, respectively. The results reveal medium effects for strategic resources on export market orientation ($f^2 = 0.204$), dynamic capabilities on export market orientation ($f^2 = 0.171$), and export market orientation on export performance ($f^2 = 0.169$). Institutional barriers have a medium effect on export performance ($f^2 = 0.123$) and a small-to-medium effect on export market orientation ($f^2 = 0.075$). The interaction effects exhibit small but meaningful effects on their respective endogenous constructs, with IB $\times$ EMO showing an effect of 0.037 on export performance and DC $\times$ SR showing an effect of 0.045 on export market orientation. These effect sizes provide additional context for interpreting the practical significance of the identified relationships, beyond their statistical significance.

The predictive relevance (Q^2) values, also presented in Table 7, were assessed using the blindfolding procedure with an omission distance of 7. The Q^2 values for both export market orientation (0.346) and export performance (0.438) are substantially above zero, indicating that the model has strong predictive relevance for these endogenous constructs (Hair et al., 2017). These results provide further evidence of the model's explanatory power and predictive capabilities, reinforcing the validity of the theoretical framework proposed in this study.

To examine the hypothesised mediating role of export market orientation, specific indirect effects were analysed using bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples. The results, presented in Table 8, reveal significant indirect effects of both institutional barriers ($\beta = -0.079$, $p < 0.001$) and strategic resources ($\beta = 0.131$, $p < 0.001$) on export performance through export market orientation. These findings support the hypothesised mediating role of export market orientation in the relationships between antecedent variables and export performance. The mediation analysis reveals that export market orientation partially mediates these relationships, as both the direct and indirect effects are significant. This pattern of partial mediation suggests that while institutional barriers and strategic resources directly influence export performance, they also operate indirectly through their effects on firms' market-focused capabilities.

Table 8. Specific Indirect Effects (Path Coefficients)

Relationship	Indirect Effect	t-value	p-value	95% CI
IB $\rightarrow$ EMO $\rightarrow$ EP	-0.079	3.975	< 0.001	[-0.118, -0.040]
SR $\rightarrow$ EMO $\rightarrow$ EP	0.131	5.342	< 0.001	[0.083, 0.179]

Note: IB = Institutional Barriers; SR = Strategic Resources; EMO = Export Market Orientation; EP = Export Performance.

In summary, the structural model assessment provides strong empirical support for the theoretical framework proposed in this study. The results reveal significant direct effects of institutional barriers and strategic resources on both export market orientation and export performance, as well as significant moderation effects highlighting the contingent nature of these relationships. The mediating role of export market orientation is confirmed, providing insights into the mechanisms through which antecedent variables influence export performance. The model demonstrates substantial explanatory power and predictive relevance for the endogenous constructs, indicating its theoretical and practical utility for understanding export market penetration determinants in Vietnam's tea industry.

4.3. Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA)

To complement the variable-centred PLS-SEM analysis, fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis (fsQCA) was employed to identify the complex configurations of conditions that lead to high export performance. This set-theoretic approach offers valuable insights into the complex causal patterns that characterise export market penetration, acknowledging that different combinations of factors may lead to the same outcome (equifinality) and that the same factor may have different effects depending on the presence or absence of other factors (causal complexity) (Ragin, 2008). The fsQCA analysis was conducted using fsQCA 3.0 software, following the systematic procedure recommended by Ragin (2008) and Schneider and Wagemann (2012).

The first step in the fsQCA analysis involved the calibration of variables into fuzzy set membership scores, transforming the original Likert scale measurements into fuzzy set values ranging from 0 (full non-membership) to 1 (full membership). The calibration was conducted using the direct method with three qualitative anchors: the threshold for full membership (fuzzy score = 0.95), the crossover point (fuzzy score = 0.5), and the threshold for full non-membership (fuzzy score = 0.05) (Ragin, 2008). For export performance (the outcome variable), the anchors were set at 6.5 (full membership), 4.0 (crossover point), and 1.5 (full non-membership) based on the original 7-point Likert scale. For the causal conditions (institutional barriers, strategic resources, export market orientation, and dynamic capabilities), similar calibration procedures were employed, with anchors established based on both theoretical knowledge and the empirical distribution of scores in the dataset.

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Following calibration, the analysis of necessary conditions was conducted to identify factors that must be present for the outcome to occur. As presented in Table 9, none of the individual conditions exceeded the conservative consistency threshold of 0.9 recommended by Ragin (2008) for necessary conditions. The highest consistency value was observed for the presence of strategic resources (0.847), followed by the presence of export market orientation (0.836) and the presence of dynamic capabilities (0.825). The absence of institutional barriers showed a consistency value of 0.783. These results suggest that none of the individual conditions can be considered necessary for high export performance, highlighting the complex and conjunctural nature of causal relationships in this context.

Table 9. Analysis of Necessary Conditions for High Export Performance

Condition	Consistency	Coverage
IB	0.428	0.561
~IB	0.783	0.734
SR	0.847	0.825
~SR	0.364	0.493
EMO	0.836	0.812
~EMO	0.375	0.509
DC	0.825	0.803
~DC	0.386	0.521

Note: IB = Institutional Barriers; SR = Strategic Resources; EMO = Export Market Orientation; DC = Dynamic Capabilities; ~ denotes the absence of a condition.

The analysis of sufficient conditions was conducted using the truth table algorithm with a frequency threshold of 2 (requiring at least two empirical cases for a configuration to be considered) and a consistency threshold of 0.8 (requiring at least 80% of cases with a given configuration to exhibit the outcome) (Ragin, 2008). The truth table analysis revealed multiple causal pathways to high export performance, providing evidence of equifinality in the determinants of export success. The solution consistency for the overall model was 0.834, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.8, and the solution coverage was 0.768, indicating that the identified configurations explain a substantial proportion of the outcome.

The results of the fsQCA analysis, presented in Table 10, reveal three distinct causal pathways to high export performance, each representing a different configuration of conditions. The first configuration (C1) combines the absence of institutional barriers, the presence of strategic resources, the presence of export market orientation, and the presence of dynamic capabilities. This "ideal" configuration represents the most straightforward path to export success, where favourable institutional conditions are combined with strong organisational resources and capabilities. The second configuration (C2) combines the presence of institutional barriers, the presence of strategic resources, the presence of export market orientation, and the presence of dynamic capabilities. This "resilience" configuration represents a path where firms achieve export success despite institutional constraints by leveraging strong organisational resources and capabilities. The third configuration (C3) combines the absence of institutional barriers, the presence of strategic resources, the absence of export market orientation, and the presence of dynamic capabilities. This "resource-driven" configuration represents a path where firms achieve export success through resource advantages and adaptive capabilities, without strong market orientation.

Table 10. Configurations for High Export Performance

Condition	Configuration 1	Configuration 2	Configuration 3
Institutional Barriers	⊗	●	⊗
Strategic Resources	●	●	●
Export Market Orientation	●	●	⊗
Dynamic Capabilities	●	●	●
Consistency	0.856	0.812	0.803
Raw Coverage	0.528	0.386	0.357
Unique Coverage	0.218	0.095	0.076

Note: ● = presence of condition; ⊗ = absence of condition; blank space = condition may be either present or absent. Solution consistency: 0.834; Solution coverage: 0.768

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These configurations provide valuable insights into the complex causal patterns that lead to export success in Vietnam's tea industry. The first configuration (C1) represents the most prevalent path to high export performance, with a raw coverage of 0.528 and a unique coverage of 0.218. This configuration aligns with conventional theoretical expectations, suggesting that export success is most likely when firms operate in favourable institutional environments and possess strong resources and capabilities. The second configuration (C2) represents a less common but theoretically interesting path, with a raw coverage of 0.386 and a unique coverage of 0.095. This configuration challenges simplistic assumptions about the deterministic role of institutional barriers, suggesting that firms can achieve export success even in challenging institutional environments if they possess strong resources and capabilities. The third configuration (C3) represents the least common path, with a raw coverage of 0.357 and a unique coverage of 0.076. This configuration suggests that in favourable institutional environments, firms can achieve export success through resource advantages and adaptive capabilities, even without strong market orientation.

The fsQCA results complement the PLS-SEM findings by revealing the complex configurations of conditions that lead to high export performance. While the PLS-SEM analysis identified the net effects of individual variables and their interactions, the fsQCA analysis revealed the complex combinations of conditions that are sufficient for export success. This complementary approach provides a more nuanced understanding of export market penetration determinants, acknowledging the complex, conjunctural, and equifinal nature of causal relationships in this context. The identification of multiple pathways to export success has important implications for both theory development and managerial practice, suggesting that firms may pursue different strategic approaches to achieve export market penetration depending on their specific contextual conditions.

5. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

This investigation has provided a comprehensive empirical analysis of export market penetration determinants in Vietnam's tea industry through an integrated theoretical framework synthesising institutional theory, resource-based view, and dynamic capabilities perspective. The empirical evidence offers significant insights that contribute to both theoretical discourse and practical application in international business contexts.

The results demonstrate strong support for the proposed theoretical framework, revealing complex interrelationships between institutional barriers, strategic resources, export market orientation, and dynamic capabilities in shaping export performance outcomes. The PLS-SEM analysis identified significant direct effects of institutional barriers and strategic resources on both export market orientation and export performance, whilst confirming the mediating role of export market orientation. These findings align with previous research highlighting the multidimensional nature of export market penetration determinants (Leonidou et al., 2010; Peng et al., 2008) whilst offering novel insights into their complex interrelationships within Vietnam's tea industry context.

The negative relationship between institutional barriers and export performance confirms institutional theory predictions regarding the constraining effects of institutional environments on organisational outcomes (North, 1990; Scott, 1995), supporting previous research by Aulakh and Kotabe (2008) and Estrin et al. (2009). However, the fsQCA results provide important nuance to this relationship, revealing that certain firms achieve export success despite institutional constraints by leveraging strong organisational resources and capabilities. This finding aligns with theoretical developments emphasising organisational agency in responding to institutional pressures through strategic adaptation (Oliver, 1991; Peng, 2003). As Khanna and Palepu (2010) argue, firms can develop specific capabilities to navigate institutional voids in emerging economies, potentially transforming constraints into opportunities through innovative strategic responses.

The positive relationship between strategic resources and export performance supports the resource-based view's central proposition that firm-specific resources drive performance heterogeneity (Barney, 1991; Wernerfelt, 1984), aligning with research by Morgan et al. (2004) and Leonidou et al. (2010). The fsQCA results further reinforce this relationship, demonstrating that strategic resources are present in all three configurations leading to high export performance, highlighting their fundamental importance for export market penetration and supporting the resource-based view's emphasis on resource endowments as a critical foundation for competitive advantage in international markets (Dhanaraj & Beamish, 2003).

The mediating role of export market orientation in the relationship between strategic resources and export performance aligns with theoretical perspectives emphasising market-based capabilities' importance for translating resources into superior performance outcomes (Day, 1994; Kohli & Jaworski, 1990), supporting research by Murray et al. (2011) and Morgan et al. (2009). The significant interaction between dynamic capabilities and strategic resources in predicting export market orientation further reinforces this perspective, suggesting that dynamic capabilities enhance firms' ability to develop market-focused capabilities from their resource endowments, aligning with the dynamic capabilities perspective's emphasis on adaptive processes for resource reconfiguration in dynamic market environments (Eisenhardt & Martin, 2000; Teece et al., 1997).

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The fsQCA results reveal three distinct causal pathways to high export performance, supporting the concept of equifinality in strategic management (Fiss, 2011; Ragin, 2008). The first configuration, combining favourable institutional conditions with strong organisational resources and capabilities, represents the most prevalent path to export success. This "ideal" configuration aligns with conventional theoretical expectations (Peng et al., 2008; Zou & Stan, 1998). The second configuration, where firms achieve export success despite institutional constraints by leveraging strong organisational resources and capabilities, offers particularly interesting theoretical insights. This "resilience" configuration challenges deterministic views of institutional constraints, aligning with theoretical developments emphasising strategic responses to institutional pressures (Oliver, 1991) and specific capabilities for navigating institutional voids (Khanna & Palepu, 2010). The third configuration, where firms achieve export success through resource advantages and adaptive capabilities without strong market orientation, offers intriguing insights into the contingent value of market orientation, suggesting its importance may vary depending on contextual conditions (Cadogan et al., 2009).

These empirical findings offer significant theoretical implications. First, the study contributes to institutional theory by providing empirical evidence of the complex relationship between institutional environments and organisational outcomes in international markets, challenging deterministic views of institutional theory by acknowledging both constraints and strategic responses (Oliver, 1991; Peng, 2003). Second, the research contributes to the resource-based view by demonstrating strategic resources' critical importance for export market penetration whilst highlighting different resource types' contingent value depending on contextual conditions (Barney, 1991; Priem & Butler, 2001). Third, the study contributes to the dynamic capabilities perspective by providing empirical evidence of adaptive capabilities' role in enhancing firms' ability to develop market-focused capabilities from resource endowments (Teece, 2007). Fourth, the research contributes to export market orientation literature by demonstrating its mediating role whilst highlighting its contingent value depending on contextual conditions (Cadogan et al., 1999, 2009; Murray et al., 2011). Fifth, the study contributes methodologically by demonstrating the value of integrating variable-centred and configuration-centred approaches for understanding complex phenomena in international business (Fiss, 2011; Woodside, 2013). These theoretical contributions have important practical implications. For managers, the findings highlight the critical importance of developing strong resource endowments and capabilities for international competitiveness, particularly in institutional environments where market-supporting institutions remain underdeveloped. For policymakers, the findings emphasise the importance of developing market-supporting institutions that facilitate international trade and reduce barriers faced by exporting firms, whilst suggesting that policies aimed at enhancing firms' resource endowments and capabilities could significantly enhance Vietnam's tea industry international competitiveness.

Despite its significant contributions, this study has several limitations. The cross-sectional research design limits causal inferences about relationships between variables. The focus on a single industry in a specific country context limits generalisability to other industries and national contexts. The reliance on self-reported data from a single respondent in each firm introduces potential common method bias concerns, although statistical tests suggest this bias does not significantly threaten the findings' validity.

In conclusion, this study provides a comprehensive empirical investigation of export market penetration determinants in Vietnam's tea industry, offering valuable insights into the complex interplay between institutional barriers, strategic resources, export market orientation, and dynamic capabilities in shaping export performance outcomes. By integrating variable-centred and configuration-centred analytical approaches, the research provides a nuanced understanding of complex causal patterns characterising export market penetration, acknowledging both institutional environment constraints and organisational agency in developing strategic responses to these constraints.

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