

An Assessment Of Instruments Utilised By Export Promotion Agencies In Eastern Africa

Ane Massyn, North-West University, South Africa
Henri Bezuidenhout, North-West University, South Africa
Ewert P.J. Kleynhans, North-West University, South Africa

ABSTRACT

This study identifies the export promotion instruments that are applied by public export promotion organisations situated within the East African Community (EAC) countries to stimulate exports and encourage economic growth. The East African region is the fastest developing region in Africa. EAC member countries are, therefore, used as a case study. How export promotion instruments are bundled by export promotion organisations depends on the socio-economic, political and trade environment of a country as well as the structure of the country's export promotion agencies. By utilising primary and secondary data, public export promotion organisations of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda were studied. These general and country-specific instruments were identified through onsite interviews in the respective countries under investigation. The results suggest that the most important export promotion instruments applied include advertising, promotional events, advocacy and legal assistance. It also includes capacity building concerning packaging, pricing and quality requirements within foreign markets as well as assistance concerning planning and preparation for export market engagement. Foreign trade missions, trade fairs, expos, and additional services offered by trade offices and representatives abroad are also general export promotion instruments, as is the provision of information and export financing. Country-specific export promotion instruments identified during onsite interviews in the various countries include unique promotional events and product branding, use of cell phone WhatsApp groups and embassies as a channel for information, trade assistance and trade clinics. Our contribution to the field is that this study is foundational and represents the first comprehensive effort to write up these activities of the EPO's to establish viable research in the EPOs in the East Africa Region.

Keywords: Trade; Export Promotions; Trade Facilitation; Trade Support; Trade Organisations; East Africa; EAC

JEL Classification F13, F15 024

1. INTRODUCTION

The East African region is the fastest developing region in Africa. This article identifies the export promotion instruments applied by public export promotion organisations situated within the East African Community (EAC) member countries. Research concerning international trade within this region, in particular, involving export promotion organisations (EPOs) and the application of export promotion instruments by these organisations is limited (WTO 2012; 2019). EPOs aid local businesses and industries to enter the global economy, and thereby stimulate further economic development in the East African region.

The stimulation of economic development through export promotion deems this study necessary. The study investigates the EPOs of selected East African countries as a case study. This case study identifies the export promotion instruments applied by selected countries, i.e., Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, to create a baseline for other African countries to consider when adapting its export promotion instruments to the ever-changing global economy.

This article determines which export promotion instruments (EPIs) are applied by the EPOs in the EAC countries under investigation, the socio-economic, political and trade environments these organisations have to function under, and whether these instruments are relevant on the particular continent. This article progresses from the study conducted by Massyn (2020). As a baseline study, this investigation focuses solely on the contextual identification of export promotion instruments. It does not consider the successfulness of these instruments.

The article is structured as follows: The following section provides background on the export promotion organisations, then it highlights the scarcity of research on the topic, then discusses export promotion instruments, where after the East African Community member countries and their economies are investigated. This is then followed by a study of the public EPOs of these EAC countries. The various countries were visited to conduct interviews in person to obtain primary data on the relevant subject matter and the research results obtained are then reported on. The article ends with some conclusions.

2. EXPORT PROMOTION ORGANISATIONS

Export promotion organisations, also known as export promotion agencies (Lederman, Olarreaga & Payton, 2010), developed due to a lack of resources within the private sector, particularly a lack of information and expertise (Cuyvers, Dewulf & Van den Bulcke, 1994). To export to the global market, governments and other organisations developed export promotion organisations to support local firms and industries within the export sector (Seringhaus & Botschen 1991; Freixanet 2012; Broocks and Biesebroeck 2017).

These export promotion organisations (EPOs) can be governmental, quasi-governmental or non-governmental (Freixanet, 2012; Seringhaus & Botschen, 1991). EPOs can be private or public organisations and can co-exist within the private and the public sector of a country where both private and public organisations have separate but complementary roles within the export sector. Export promotion initiatives are, however, predominantly administered by a government's Department of Trade and Industry as well as subdivisions thereof (Cuyvers et al., 1994; Cuyvers & Viviers, 2012). Subdivisions include public investment organisations, promotion or branding organisations and export promotion organisations and/or agencies or boards.

In the public sector, an export promotion agency is uniquely structured to suit the needs of the economy in which it functions. The organisation can be a sub-unit of a ministry or it can be autonomous depending on the public sector's structure. It can also be classified as an export promotion authority, an agency, or it can function as part of a development board. The organisation can therefore either exist as a separate entity or merge with other entities that complement the functions of one another, as the empirical investigation of the EAC member countries has shown in the current study.

In the private sector, as identified in the onsite unstructured interviews, export promotion organisations can form part of business member organisations (BMOs). These organisations work on an industry level and closely collaborate with the public export promotion organisations in the EAC member countries.

EPOs, like other trade promotion organisations, support both private and public sectors. According to Cuyvers and Viviers (2012), role-players within the private and public sectors include political authorities, sectoral organisations, local business communities and exporters. Export promotion organisations provide public services while acting as private sector organisations (ITC, 2020).

The main objective of export organisations, according to the International Trade Centre (ITC, 2019), is to increase sustainable exports. This core objective is reached through the application of export promotion instruments to reach specific objectives, such as assisting exporters to increase their exports, supporting new exporters to endure foreign market conditions and to empower local businesses to enter the export market. These instruments can be divided into the four categories of image building, export support, marketing and research, and are predominantly used to encourage the local market to enter the export sector.

3. SCARCITY OF RESEARCH

The number of export promotion organisations increased significantly between 1980 and 2000 (Lederman, Olarreaga, & Payton, 2006), but published research concerning these organisations is limited. The current article adds to the research literature employing case studies of the public export promotion organisations and their application of export promotion instruments within Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, referred to as the East African Community member countries (EAC).

Within this context, an export promotion organisation (EPO) refers to an organisation, agency or a department of an organisation or agency that is specifically focused on promoting exports and may include investment and trade promotion organisations, boards or agencies as well as development boards. The instruments these EPOs utilise are discussed in the following section.

4. EXPORT PROMOTION INSTRUMENTS

Export promotion instruments are services but also depict export promotion programmes. These programmes assist local firms to gain a competitive advantage in specific sub-sectors and succeed in export markets (Broocks & Biesebroeck, 2017; Geldres-Weiss & Carrasco-Roa, 2016; Lederman et al., 2010). Export promotion instruments are usually partially or wholly offered by a country's public sector and are uniquely constructed in terms of the exporting needs of local firms and industries (Cuyvers & Viviers, 2012). Export promotion instruments provide practical assistance to local firms and industries that partake in and or desire to enter the global market.

Export promotion instruments can lower a firm's variable and or fixed costs concerning trade across borders by providing firms with the necessary information and guidance that may become costly if export assistance is not provided, specifically in the case of pioneering firms (Broocks & Biesebroeck, 2017; Hausmann & Rodrik, 2003). Promotional instruments provided by export promotion organisations aid potential and current exporters to establish and/or grow their trade ties in local and foreign markets. Promotional instruments are, however, structured to meet the needs of the local market and are therefore uniquely designed according to the demands of the local business community (Cuyvers & Viviers, 2012). It can be expected that public export promotion organisations of countries have a unique organisational structure and distinctively apply export promotion instruments to correspond to the demands of their private sector. Even though the socio-economic, political and trade environment of countries vary causing variation in instrument combination and application, there exists a standard set of export promotion instruments used by most export promotion organisations.

Export promotion instruments can be divided into four categories, according to Lederman et al. (2006), i.e. image building, export support, marketing and research. These categories are used to improve the export competencies of local firms and in so doing indirectly encourage national exports.

Building country image foremost focuses on fostering positive opinions of trading across borders among local businesses, particularly among business managers while mitigating pessimism concerning the risks, costs and complexities related to exports (Lederman et al., 2006; Leonidou, Palihawadana, & Theodosiou, 2011). Image building is done through advertising, promotional events, advocacy and legal assistance (Belloc & Di Maio, 2011; Lederman et al., 2006). The objective of image building is to build awareness of export opportunities and promote interest in exporting within the local business community (Seringhaus & Botschen, 1991).

Export support's central purpose is to improve the export competency of local firms (Belloc & Maio, 2011; Gillespie & Riddle, 2004; Seringhaus & Botschen, 1990). The objective of export support is to provide the necessary export training and assistance to minimise the uncertainties within the local business community concerning foreign markets. Improving export competency is promoted through training and assistance to local firms that will equip firms to trade across borders. Export support includes general export activity training as well as tailored support services (Belloc & Di Maio, 2011; Cuyvers & Viviers, 2012; Lages & Montgomery, 2005) to obtain the necessary experience and expertise required to enter and develop within export markets (Seringhaus & Botschen, 1991). Capacity building concerning packaging, pricing and quality requirements within foreign markets as well as trade financing information

and trade procedures, which include logistic procedures and customs are major features of export support (Belloc & Di Maio, 2011; Lages & Montgomery, 2005; Lederman et al., 2006; Leonidou et al., 2011).

Another facet of export support is export assistance with regard to planning and preparation for export market engagement (Seringhaus & Botschen, 1991), which includes assistance in gaining export financing (Belloc & Di Maio, 2011; Lages & Montgomery, 2005; Leonidou et al., 2011) and also obtaining the necessary export documentation, as well as export counselling (Leonidou et al., 2011).

Export marketing assists local firms in cultivating an export market presence, utilising trade mobility programmes and media campaigns in target markets (Cuyvers & Viviers, 2012; Leonidou et al., 2011; Shamsuddoha & Ali, 2006). Trade mobility programmes include foreign trade missions, trade fairs and trade expositions (expos), as well as additional services offered by trade offices and representatives abroad (Belloc & Di Maio, 2011; Cuyvers et al., 1994; Lages & Montgomery, 2005; Lederman et al., 2006; Leonidou et al., 2011). The objective of export marketing is to assist exporters to develop business networks in foreign markets and gain personal contacts with decision-makers in foreign markets (Cuyvers & Viviers, 2012).

Research concerning the export sector is conducted with the purpose of information assistance to individual firms (Leonidou et al., 2011). This comprises not only providing but also the gathering of information. On the information providing end, export promotion organisations generally provide country profiles that include online export market information and contact information details for prospective business connections as well as to potential foreign partners (Crick & Czinkota, 1995; Lederman et al., 2006; Leonidou et al., 2011). Publications and bulletins used to encourage trade are also provided by export promotion organisations (Lederman et al., 2006). Export promotion organisations conduct market surveys to gather information (Lederman et al., 2006), communicate with embassies and gather information from representatives abroad. Research is therefore undertaken by export promotion organisations to gather and supply information to the private sector.

The general export promotion instruments are used by most export promotion organisations, but the combination and application of these instruments vary due to the needs of local businesses based on a country's socio-economic, political and trade environments as described in the case of the EAC member countries. Table 2 in the Main Findings section provides a list of these instruments.

5. EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY MEMBER COUNTRIES

The East African region, specifically the EAC members, Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda, were selected for the current study. South Sudan also forms a part of the EAC but is omitted from the study due to a lack of information because it only recently gained independence in 2011 (BBC News, 2020a).

The reason why the EAC member countries are significant lies within its recent achievements concerning the region's economic development. During 2018, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) highlighted East Africa's significant development between 2013 and 2017 (UNECA, 2018). The UNECA highlights the region's average growth rate and its improvement in life expectancy. Life expectancy at birth, within the countries, have improved and an average real GDP growth rate of 6.1% in 2020 is predicted for East Africa, while the second-highest predicted growth rate in Africa is expected to be 4.3% for North Africa (African Development Bank Group, 2020). This indicates that the living standards within the member countries are improving and that their economies are developing faster than average African countries.

The socio-economic, political and trade environment of the EAC member countries selected as a case study for this paper vary from country to country and influence the combination and application of export promotion instruments. The information utilised in this section and in Table 1 is mainly based on data obtained from the World Bank (2020), the UNDP (2020) and the International Trade Centre (ITC, 2020). Table 1 provides a summary of the socio-economic, political and trade environments. This is done by considering each country's political stability rating as an indicator of its political environment; the annual percentage GDP growth as an indicator of its economic environment; the Human Development Index (HDI) as an indicator of its social environment; and the trade environment indicated by

the size of the country's imports and exports; the African Infrastructure Development Index (AIDI) ranked out of 54 African countries and the ease of doing business across borders (DB) ranked out of 189 countries.

Table 1. Summary of the EAC member counties environments

Indictor	Burundi	Kenya	Rwanda	Tanzania	Uganda
Political stability	5%	13%	48%	26%	27%
Annual GDP growth (%)	1%	5%	6%	7%	4%
HDI	0.417	0.590	0.524	0.538	0.516
Total imports (USD\$)	355888	15838226	1156652	8510629	6729377
Total exports (USD\$)	97076	5078262	353304	3795725	3087274
Infrastructure dev. (AIDI)	39	18	27	41	26
Doing business (DB)	169	112	88	183	119

Source: World Bank 2020; UNDP 2020; International Trade Centre 2020

Burundi is a landlocked country with a tropical climate situated in the Great Lakes region of Africa (Lemarchand & Eggers, 2020). The country is bordered by Lake Tanganyika, Rwanda, Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. The country has, therefore, no direct access to the ocean and harbours. The socio-economic, political and trade environment of Burundi demonstrates that Burundi is yet to recover from continuous tribal tension and the civil war that ended in 2005 (BBC, 2020b). Table 1 indicates that Burundi's political environment is most unstable, compared to the remaining countries under investigation. Burundi also has the smallest trade sector and a poor social environment in comparison with other countries. Burundi's infrastructure is ranked as 20th out of 54 countries, suggesting that Burundi has better infrastructure than more than half of the continent despite the country's socio-economic environment. Burundi's ability to trade across borders ranks at 169th out of 189 countries suggesting that the country is still in need of trade procedure development.

Kenya is a coastal country in East Africa, bordered by the Indian Ocean and various other small countries, including South Sudan, Uganda and Tanzania (Ntarangwi, Simeon & Ominde, 2020). Table 1 indicates that relative to the remaining countries under investigation, within the political environment, the country has a low political stability rating, which implies that the country is politically unstable compared to its counterparts. Kenya has a five per cent annual GDP growth rate, causing it to be the third fastest-growing country among the EAC member countries. The country has the highest HDI rating relative to the other EAC member countries and the largest trade sector relatively. Kenya ranked above Burundi at 16th out of 54 African countries. It is also noticeable that Kenya's 'trading across borders' is ranked at 112th out of 189 rankings. Kenya, like Burundi, therefore, has an above-average infrastructure compared to the rest of Africa, but it ranks relatively low in the trading across borders category.

Rwanda is a landlocked country bordered by Uganda, Tanzania, Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo (Clay & Lemarchand, 2020). Rwanda indicates a political stability rating of 48% compared to the second-best rating of the EAC member country's political stability of 27%. Rwanda therefore appears to be the most politically stable economy within the EAC. The economic environment indicates that the country's annual GDP growth percentage, six per cent, is the second-highest relative to its counterparts. The social environment of Rwanda has an HDI rating of 0.524 indicating that the country has the third best HDI rating, although in the trade environment the country has the second smallest trade sector. Rwanda's infrastructure is ranked 27th out of 54 African countries. It is ranked 88th out of 189 rankings concerning its trade across borders, which is the highest-ranking compared to its counterparts.

Tanzania is surrounded by the Indian Ocean as well as various other countries including Kenya, Uganda, Burundi and Rwanda. The country has low political stability (26%). It has the fastest growing economy at six per cent annual GDP growth rate and the third highest HDI rating, relative to the other EAC member countries. Concerning Tanzania's trade environment, the country has the second largest trade sector in the EAC group. Tanzania's infrastructure is rated as 41st out of 54 African countries, while it is trading across borders is ranked 183rd out of 189, which suggests that Tanzania is the lowest ranking and most difficult country to trade with relative to its counterparts.

Uganda is a landlocked country, bordering Kenya, Tanzania, South Sudan and Rwanda (Lyons, Semakula, Kiwanuk, Ingham & Kokole, 2020). It has an unstable political environment but is more stable than Burundi and Kenya. The country also has a relatively low annual economic growth rate of four per cent, and relatively poor social environment indicated by the second lowest HDI rating (0.516). Uganda's infrastructure ranks as the 26th country out of 54 African countries. Uganda's ability to trade across borders is rated at 119th out of 189, suggesting that although Uganda has above-average infrastructure compared to the rest of Africa, doing business with Uganda might be challenging.

With an understanding of the socio-economic background in place, the role of export promotion in assisting local businesses to enter foreign markets and earn foreign exchange becomes valuable. The export promotion instruments applied by the EAC countries are investigated by the current study, identifying which general and country-specific instruments these member countries' export promotion organisations apply. This information was obtained through the utilisation of onsite observations and unstructured interviews conducted by the authors of the current study.

The relevance of these export promotion organisations (EPOs) lies in their role and potential to facilitate further development of the EAC member countries. The socio-economic, political and trade environments of each country influence local businesses, which, in turn, affect the way EPOs are structured. This, in turn, affects the export promotion instruments that these organisations apply.

6. THE PUBLIC EXPORT PROMOTION ORGANISATIONS IN EASTERN AFRICA

The public export promotion organisations of the East African EAC member countries are the 'Agence de promotion del'investissement au Burundi' (API), Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA), Rwandan Development Board (RDB), Tanzania trade development authority (TanTrade) and the Uganda export promotion board (UEPB).

Burundi's export promotion organisation is categorised as the country's investment agency. The public investment agency has a twofold function, namely promoting foreign direct investment and encouraging local firms and industries to export. The country's investment agency's vernacular is predominantly French, due to Burundi's history. Limited information concerning Burundi's investment promotion agency is available in English and only these resources could be used in this study to identify the mission, vision and function of the export promotion section of Burundi's public investment promotion agency.

Kenya's Export Promotion Council (EPC) was established in 1992. The initial focus of the organisation was to improve Kenya's export performance by addressing bottlenecks encountered by exporters (EAC, 2020). During 2008, the EPC was recognised by the International Trade Centre (ITC) as 2008's best export promotion organisation in developing countries (ITC, 2008). During the onsite interviews it was, however, found that in August 2019, the EPC merged with Brand Kenya to form the Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA). This suggests that the export promotion agency is relatively new and is yet to establish its export promotion objectives and services. It is assumed that the new export promotion organisation will have the same, similar or improved objectives. On the request of KEPROBA, the secondary data of the EPC will, therefore, be utilised, but it should be noted that the information may be subject to future change.

Rwanda's export promotion agency previously combined with the country's investment promotion agency to form the Rwandan Investment and Promotion Agency (RIEPA). The organisation was initially an investment agency; however, the Rwandan government implemented reforms during 2004. In 2018, another merger occurred; RIEPA, together with two other public agencies, merged and formed the Rwandan Development Board (RDB). The RDB is currently (2019) an autonomous government agency that promotes exports, investment and tourism. The RDB is, therefore, a relatively new agency and does not solely focus on export promotion.

Tanzania's export promotion organisation was originally named the Board of External Trade of Tanzania (EAC, 2020). During 2009, the government introduced reforms to the country's export promotion organisation and renamed the organisation Tanzania Trade Development Authority, TanTrade (TanTrade, 2020).

Uganda's export promotion agency, the Uganda Export Promotion Board (UEPB), is a public export promotion organisation that forms part of Uganda's Ministry of Tourism, Industry and Trade (EAC, 2020). In 2012, the UEPB received an award from the ITC for being the best export promotion organisation in the least developed country (ITC, 2012).

In Burundi, the export promotion organisations are all uniquely structured as export promotion forms part of the country's investment promotion organisation, the 'Agence de promotion del'investissement au Burundi' (API), while the Export Promotion Council of Kenya (EPC) recently merged with Kenya's branding agency to form Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA) in August 2019 and the Rwandan Development Board (RDB), established in 2018, is a merger of tourism, investment and export promotion agencies of Rwanda, while in Tanzania, the Tanzania trade development authority (TanTrade), and in Uganda, The Uganda export promotion board (UEPB) are the only EAC member counties under investigation with public export promotion organisation that function as lone standing bodies although they are in close communication with other public institutions.

The available literature about export promotion organisations elaborates on the reason why these export promotion organisations are of value to the selected EAC countries' export sectors. The next section explains how the research for the current study was conducted, followed by an exposition of the results.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research investigating the application of export promotion instruments applied by the public export promotion organisations of Eastern Africa counties (EAC) systematically examined the agencies and gathered data (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2007). The research design was necessary to provide a distinct strategic framework, which facilitated the collection of data and information (Ritchie, Lewis, Nicholls & Ormston, 2014). The chosen research design is based on a thorough literature review inspired by the improved research onion model that Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019) developed and improved thereupon. The research design is built on an interpretive research philosophy with a generally inductive research approach. The methodology selected for the study is a qualitative, case study methodology that is cross-sectional and gathered primary data and information through onsite observations and unstructured interviews in the various countries.

The onsite unstructured interview questions were centred on identifying general and country-specific export promotion instruments applied by the responding organisation. The interviews made use of a questionnaire as a conversational guide to discover more country-specific instruments applied by the export promotion organisations under investigation. For a detailed country-specific breakdown of the instruments and usage, see Tables 2 and 3.

8. MAIN FINDINGS

The general export promotion instruments applied by the export promotion organisations of the EAC member countries are indicated in Table 2.

Table 2. Applied general export promotion instrument

	Instruments	API	KEPROBA	RDB	TanTrade	UEPB
Image building	Promotional events	X	X	X	X	X
	Advertising		X		X	X
	Advocacy	X	X		X	
	Legal assistance					
Export support	General export activity training		X	X	X	X
	Export requirement support.		X	X		X
	Trade financing information		X	X	X	X
	Export procedure support		X	X	X	X
Export marketing support	Trade shows		X	X	X	X
	Trade missions		X	X	X	X
	Trade expos		X	X	X	X
	Trade offices abroad					
Research	Trade representatives abroad			X	X	
	Country profiles		X			
	Online market information		X		X	
	Contacts of prospective foreign partners		X	X	X	X
	Publications		X	X	X	X
	Bulletins and newsletters		X	X	X	X
	Market surveys		X		X	X

Source: Authors' compilation according to Lederman et al., 2006

The general export promotion instruments utilised by the EAC member countries were identified during the onsite unstructured interviews as well as desk research. The instruments are categorised based on existing export promotion instrument classifications (Lederman et al., 2006).

Table 2 shows limited information on the investment and export promotion organisation of Burundi, 'Agence de promotion del'investissement au Burundi' (API), because the organisation did not participate in the interviews after numerous attempts of contacting various role-players within the organisation. Secondary data were, however, collected concerning the API's export promotion instruments. The secondary data suggested that the organisation is mainly focused on investment promotion. The API does, however, apply image building instruments, making use of social media platforms and fulfilling an advocacy role between the private and public sector (InvestBurundi, 2019). Most secondary information available on the API is in French. In terms of the application of export promotion instruments within export support, export marketing assistance and research as categories of export promotion instruments are therefore unclear.

The public export promotion organisations that participated in the onsite interviews and unstructured interviews are Kenya Export Promotion and Branding Agency (KEPROBA), Rwandan Development Board (RDB), the Tanzania trade development authority (TanTrade) and the Uganda export promotion board (UEPB).

During all the interviews, it was made clear that the export promotion organisations are autonomous public organisations. These organisations are guided by the government although it is not fully controlled by the public sector. These organisations are, therefore, empowered to present export promotion instruments that provide relevant services within the private and the public sectors of the country in which it is situated. These organisations work closely with the public sector and act as a mediator between the private and public sector.

In Kenya, the recent merger of Export Promotion Council and its branding agency did not finalise the new KEPROBA agency's export promotion objectives. Some restructuring took place in terms of internal structures of the new organisation, e.g., combined departments are now separated to form more specialised departments. KEPROBA expects the application of export promotion instruments to either stay the same or improve. The previously applied export promotion instruments were, therefore, discussed during the interviews.

During the interviews with the Rwandan Development Board (RDB), which was established in 2018, it was uncovered that the Rwandan Development Board applies export promotion instruments on an individual as well as a collective basis. The RDB has a hands-on approach, focusing on the theoretical as well as the practical needs of the local business environment. The main objective of their export promotion is to offer export support to small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and to assist existing exporters to increase their global market competitiveness. Although the organisation is part of a newly established board, the organisation seems well established and well connected with its local businesses.

The Tanzania Trade Development Authority (TanTrade) was established in 2009. The organisation emphasised the importance of networking with other countries to offer current and potential exporters a trade network. TanTrade predominantly focuses on and highlights the importance of business member organisations' export promotion services, which complement the services provided by TanTrade.

The Uganda export promotion board (UEPB) is a well-established export promotion agency, and it was evident that the organisation is small yet effective. This is due to the emphasis on resourcefulness and integration in terms of relationships and networking within the public and private sector as well as with foreign markets. The UEPB also makes use of a comprehensive, country-specific export promotion instruments such as 'export clinics'.

The export promotion organisations of the EAC member countries are structured to meet the demands of the specific country's current and potential exporters. The changes in the organisational structure of Kenya's export promotion organisation and Rwanda's export promotion organisation also suggest that their countries are willing to adapt to the changing market demands of its export sector. All the export promotion organisations under investigation strive to be optimal in providing relevant export assistance.

The organisations also concur with the ITC's main objective of export promotion organisations, which is to increase sustainable exports (ITC, 2020).

Table 3. Country-specific trade instruments, interview findings

Instruments	KEPROBA Kenya	RDB Ruanda	TanTrade Tanzania	UEPB Uganda
Image building	• Highly published, annual export week • Awards the best exporters of the year	• Brand products Made in Rwanda • Public relations unit	• Participation in events in collaboration with other agencies	• Highly published, annual export week • Awards the best exporters of the year • UEPB march • Industry-specific export clinics
Export support	• Market linkage • Kenya export development program partnered with the ITC	Individual and SME focused; • Entrepreneurship • Export coaching – support is provided according to the needs of the exporter • Workshops	• Group training sessions	• Export readiness assessments • Trade clinics • Exporters guide
Export marketing	Kenya trade week; • Export forums • Trade forums	Selected embassies represent exporters and provide trade assistance and trade information.	• Work with various foreign embassies • Use embassies as trade representatives	• Connect with various who then represents exports around the world • A cell phone WhatsApp group exists with district representatives.
Research	• Export readiness assessments • Country entry strategy based on the export development programme	• Specialised market profiles are done on request • Field research	• None specified	• Create targeted comprehensive market profiles on an individual basis • Export clinics

Source: Authors' findings

Table 3 shows the country-specific export promotion instruments revealed during the onsite visits. The interviews indicated that each export promotion organisation has a unique set of country-specific trade instruments implemented to assist local potential and current exporters. As there is a lack of information about Burundi and South Sudan, which only gained independence in 2011, these countries will not be reported on in the rest of the study.

Concerning image building instruments, Kenya (KEPROBA) utilises reports that are published often and routinely, and they award the best exporters annually. The RDB promotes brand products “Made in Rwanda” and seems to be the only country under investigation that has a separate public relations unit that manages, among other things, the image building sector of the RDB. In Tanzania, TanTrade promotes participation in events in collaboration with other governmental agencies, while Uganda’s UEPB publishes much, organises UEPB marches and industry-specific export clinics, and also presents prestige awards to the best exporters annually.

The export support instruments that Kenya focuses on emphasises the necessity of market linkages and export development programmes in partnership with the International Trade Centre (ITC). Rwanda’s export support model places a large emphasis on individuals and SMEs. The RDB specifically promotes entrepreneurship, provides export coaching and organises workshops. TanTrade provides group training sessions, while Uganda provides exporter guides, conducts export readiness assessments and organises trade clinics.

The most important export marketing instruments implemented in Kenya are trade weeks, as well as export and trade forums. Rwanda empowers selected embassies to represent exporters while they provide trade assistance and trade information to Rwandan businesses. Tanzania cooperates with various foreign embassies and uses embassies as trade representatives, which promotes export marketing while also providing some prestige to the export sector. Uganda has a cell phone-based WhatsApp group with district representatives, and UEPB connects with various role players in international trade and represents its exports worldwide.

With regard to research trade promotion instruments, Kenya provides export readiness assessments and approach country entry strategies based on export development programmes. Rwanda's trade promotion agency, RDB, undertakes field research and develops specialised market profiles on request. TanTrade in Tanzania did not, however, have any specific focus on research, while the UEPB in Uganda creates targeted comprehensive market profiles on an individual basis and organises export clinics.

The EAC member countries apply both general and country-specific export promotion instruments to meet the needs based on its local potential and current export markets.

9. CONCLUSION

This study examines the export promotion instruments (EPIs) of export promotion organisations in member countries of the East African Community (EAC). In particular, the export promotion organisations of Burundi, Kenya, Rwanda, Tanzania and Uganda were investigated. Literature concerning export promotion organisations and research on their export promotion instruments specifically of East Africa is limited and these limitations motivated the current study. The researchers visited these organisations in the various countries and obtained first-hand information and data on their export promotion instruments utilised.

In light of the research findings, it is apparent that all these public export promotion organisations are autonomous public organisations that are guided by the comprehensive vision of their governments. These organisations all use some general export promotion instruments, but every organisation adapts the instruments to meet the needs of its local market.

The API of Burundi utilises their organisation's image building instruments to create awareness within of the organisation, specifically in the global French-speaking community.

While the Export Promotion Council (EPC) recently merged with Kenya's public branding agency to form KEPROBA, a stronger export promotion and public branding unit emerged. This also adds to the image building instruments used.

Rwanda's RDB is also a relatively new organisation and has a unique export promotion focus compared to the API and Kenya's KEPROBA. The key instruments that the RDB implements are focused on export support. The RDB primarily values interaction with current and potential exporters. Within its export promotion department, it specifically provides export coaching services where the organisation combines export promotion instruments to meet the needs of its potential and current exporters. This enables them to continually adapt export promotion instruments to single and clusters of potential and or current exporters.

TanTrade of Tanzania is focused on the trade environment, nationally and internationally. On the export promotion side, they focus mainly on export marketing support. This support is centred on networking and arranging networking opportunities for current and potential exporters to build trade ties in the foreign market.

Finally, the UEPB of Uganda utilises export promotion instruments and trade clinics to promote exports while also providing marketing and research support. These instruments also enable UEPB to provide relevant services both within the public and private sectors, thereby touching on each export promotion instrument category while keeping its focus on export support.

Since literature about export promotion organisations in Africa, specifically East Africa, is limited, the current study fills the gap with regard to export promotion organisations in the EAC member countries by adding to the literature available on the EPOs of these countries. It also fills the gap in the research literature concerning the export promotion instruments applied by these organisations. The study adds to the theory that export promotion organisations are continually adapting to remain relevant within the ever-changing socio-economic, political and trade environment. This is amplified by the changes and mergers of public institutions in Kenya and Rwanda. Although it was found that the drivers of adaptation are unclear and not considered within the article's scope, it was found that it is evident that the socio-economic, political and trade environment of a country does influence an export promotion organisation, including how general and country-specific export promotion instruments are applied.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors acknowledge the support from the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the National Research Foundation (NRF). The findings, views and opinions expressed, and conclusions arrived at in this article are those of the authors and should not necessarily be attributed to the funding institutions.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

Ms. A. Massyn is an International Trade Specialist and Lecturer at Greenlibne ETC. She has a B.Com. degree in Economics and International Trade, and a B.Com.Hons. and a masters' M.Com. degree in International Trade from the North-West University, South Africa. E-mail: ane.massyn@gmail.com

Prof. Dr. Henri Bezuidenhout is full professor at North-West University, South Africa who specialises in FDI in Africa as an interdisciplinary field of study. He obtained a B.Com degree in Economics, B.Com.Hons in Econometrics and M.Com, Econometrics from the University of Pretoria, South Africa, and a Ph.D. in Economics from North-West University. And a B.A.Hons in International Relations from the University of South Africa (UNISA) and a Diploma in International Trade from ITRISA. He is widely published in this area, as well as African trade relations and the role of the BRICS countries in Africa. E-mail: Henri.Bezuidenhout@nwu.ac.za

Prof. Dr. Ewert PJ Kleynhans **Prof. Dr. Kleynhans** is a full professor and programme leader of Economics at the North-West University, South Africa. His research focuses on the international competitiveness of firms and industries. He serves as member of the national council of the South African Academy of Science and Arts. He obtained a Teacher's Diploma, a Further Diploma in Mathematics and Natural Sciences, a degree from the University of South Africa (UNISA), honours and master's degrees in Economics from the Rand Afrikaans University, South Africa, both cum laude. He obtained his doctorate (PhD) in Economics at Potchefstroom University during 2003 and in 2012 also obtained a Master's degree in Philosophy (M.Phil.) at North-West University. E-mail: epjkleynhans@gmail.com

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