

Exploring the Effects of Export Barriers in Internationalization: Based on Malaysian Agriculture SME's Export Performance in Emerging Markets

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Abstract

The aim of this research is to Exploring the Effects of Export barriers in Internationalization Opportunity: Based on Malaysian Agriculture SME's Export performance in Emerging Markets. Enhancing the export performance of Agriculture SME's industry is crucial in materializing Malaysia's in internationalization. The data will generate from 4 of FAMA officers and 16 selected Agriculture SMEs companies engaged in exporting products through interview. Semi structured interview were conducted in order to derive perceptions of Agriculture SME exporters about export barriers. The research findings will assist Agriculture exporters of small and medium-sized in becoming more competitive and in developing appropriate business plans to maintain their market position in demanding global marketplaces. Additionally, it will assist public and private sector support agencies in creating new policies or changing the existing policies to better benefit small and medium-sized agricultural enterprises.

Keywords: Export, Export Barriers, Internationalization, Agriculture SME's, Export Performance.

Introduction

Small and Medium Enterprises has been recognized as having tremendous potential for sustainable development. Surplus workers from large companies can be returned to employment, especially through the growth of SMEs (Eniola and Ektebang, 2014). Recently, there has been reassurance for the development of Agricultural Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) (Oman Observer, 2013). SMEs are anticipated to interconnect production, encourage trade, broaden job opportunities, create significant sources of revenue, etc (Hertog, 2010). On the other hand, it is conceivable to argue that agricultural cooperatives have the capability to increase performance, decrease transaction costs, enable small-scale farmers' access to markets, expand income prospects, and empower farmers to enhance their quality of life, among other considerations (Polat, 2010). The

Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024) reports that in August 2024, Malaysia's exports fell to 129159 million MYR from 131117 million MYR in July. Between 1970 and 2024, Malaysia's exports averaged 32585.12 MYR million, with a peak of 144275.50 MYR million in June 2022 and a record low of 328.10 MYR million in February 1970. The expansion of Malaysia's GDP in recent years has been mostly driven by exports, which are bolstered by an influx of foreign direct investments. Malaysia's top exports include petroleum products (7%), liquefied natural gas (6%), electrical and electronics items (36%), chemicals (7.1%) and palm oil (5.1%). The United States (9.4%), Thailand (6%) Japan (9.5%), China (13%) Singapore (14%), and the European Union (10%) are Malaysia's top export partners.

Research Background and Motivation

According to Dardak (2016) in the Agriculture policy platform, entrepreneurship in agriculture is characterized as a profession that can significantly raise people's salaries, particularly that of women and young people. It is also considered to be a factor that promotes agricultural sustainability. Participating in entrepreneurship activities may increase the nation's food supply, lower unemployment, and alleviate poverty. It can indirectly lessen the nation's dependency on food imports and guarantee food security. Small and medium-sized firms in Malaysia's agricultural industry include those engaged in farming, raising livestock, hunting, fishing, timber, aquaculture, and other related activities.

Malaysia's agricultural gross domestic product grew to 25181 million MYR in the second quarter of 2024 from 23646 million MYR in the first. Over the period from 2010 to 2024, Malaysia's GDP from agriculture was 23878.95 million MYR on average. The sector saw record lows of 19362.00 MYR in the first quarter of 2022 and record highs of 28082.00 MYR in the third quarter of 2019. (Department of Statistics Malaysia, 2024). Agriculture sector is significantly influenced by the Malaysian economy. Malaysia has a deficit food trade balance, however some agricultural products, including palm oil and fisheries, have a competitive edge. Due to their rising need for edible oil, newly industrialized countries like China, Iran, India, and Ukraine are where Malaysia's exports are growing at a rapidly increasing rate. However, it is also impossible to neglect the effects of the trade agreements between these states. Plants are primarily activities in the agriculture sector, whereas stone quarrying is a business activity in the mining and quarrying sector.

In May 2024, the value of trade in agrofood and specific agricultural products in Malaysia reached RM28.3 billion, up 16.4% from RM24.3 billion in that exact month the previous year. Exports increased by 19.7 percent, reaching RM15.4 billion. According to the Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024), Malaysia recorded RM15.4 billion in agrofood and specific agricultural product exports in May 2024, a 19.7% rise from RM12.9 billion in the same month the previous year. The factors that contributed towards this rise were agricultural inputs (3.4%), agrofood (29.6%), and other agricultural products (67.1%). The performance of agrofood exports in May 2024 was RM4.6 billion, indicating a 17.2% rise over the same period the previous year. The main drivers of this rise were Cereal and Cereal Preparations (10.7%), Miscellaneous Edible Products and Preparations (26.5%), Coffee, Cocoa, Tea, Spices, and Manufactures (33.2%). (Department of Statistics Malaysia (2024).

According to Business Times (2024), exports of mining and agricultural commodities from Malaysia, a major exporter, significantly decreased in 2023. The economists

acknowledged that an upward trend in manufactured product exports roughly contributed for the decline. This illustrates a progression towards higher value-added businesses and represents a fundamental shift in Malaysia's export dynamics. The decline in the export of mining and agricultural products is a reflection of larger changes in the demand for commodities globally, structural changes in Malaysia's economy, and rising environmental challenges that possess an impact on crucial commodities especially palm oil (Business Times, 2024).

This study's key problem issues to light export barriers on Malaysia's agriculture industry. There are numerous developing countries that lack resources, information, and data, and there are many obstacles that SMEs should indeed overcome in order to enter the export market, according to a number of export researchers (Arteaga-Ortiz & Fernández-Ortiz, 2010; Nicholson & Lashley, 2016; Paul et al., 2017; Tybout, 2000). Therefore, the export barriers in internationalization should be studied to determine some of the main internal and external barriers that may hinder the agricultural SME sector from exporting its business to the international market and the factors of prices rising.

Previous research encompasses a variety of internationalisation studies and export barriers. Nevertheless, the process of determining barriers to emerging markets in terms of agriculture SMEs is not comprehended from a comprehensive perspective, which is acknowledged as a wider and deeper one, comprising aspects from the market as well as from the firms. Several study findings that were already published focused on specific components of potential internationalisation barriers but still do not take into consideration personal attributes as a potential barrier or within the context of Agriculture enterprises.

Based on the review of the literature, this study will bring forth a few ideas that haven't been thoroughly examined before. In consideration of the fundamental study conducted by Leonidou (2004), the purpose of this research is to explore the barriers to exporting, adding a new perspective and analysing a new integrative model of conceptual framework. Practically almost all of the research on internationalisation barriers is done in technology industries (Arroteia & Hafeez, 2021; Cahen, Lahiri, & Borini, 2016), notably very limited conducted for the Agriculture industries. This is new and might contribute to the process of knowledge expansion by adding a new analysis and new model level to existing studies.

Theoretical Underpinnings and Literature Review

The definition of export-focused research provided by Leonidou, Katsikeas, and Coudounari (2010), which includes cross-border procurement and/or sales of products and services made through either indirectly or directly export channels, has been used. Export is considered as a foundational cross-border activity, incredibly beneficial for SMEs whose organizational structure, scale, and managerial style limit business capacity to invest in internationalization and market expansion abroad (Chetty & Blankenburg). Uner, Kocak, Cavusgil, and Cavusgil (2013); Holm, 2000; Navarro, Acedo, Robson, Ruzo, & Losada, 2010a).

Exporting is the most common method undertaking business on the global market besides it represents minimal risk towards the firm, requires minimal resources, and

provides a great deal of flexibility (Uner et al., 2013). One of the earliest types of economic activity is exporting (Leonidou et al., 2010). Smith's (1776) theory of absolute advantage was the first to address its theoretical foundations, followed by Richardo's (1817) theory of comparative advantage, Ohlin's (1933) and Heckscher's (1950) theories of factor endowments, Linder's (1961) theory of demand similarity, and Vernon's (1961) theory of the international product life cycle (1966). These theories served as a foundation for understanding regarding international business and provided valuable insights for explaining international economic activity between countries (Leonidou et al., 2010).

Export barriers are referred to as challenging for firms to develop, establish, or sustain trading operations in foreign markets. (Leonidou, 2000). The inaccessibility of these markets can limit a company's ability to utilize the opportunities that exist in other countries (Santos- Alvarez & García-Merino, 2016), impair their financial performance, impede their development toward internationalization, and even result in the complete cessation of their global trade operational processes (Gou et al., 2016).

Among the studies that develops a conceptual framework to explain and categorise export barriers that has the highest citations is Leonidou's work (2000). He proposed 20 barriers to exporting, including the presence of intense competition abroad, the inability to offer reasonable prices, the deterioration of international economic conditions, the lack of government support, the insufficient information to retrieve and analyse international markets, the awareness of greater business costs and risks abroad, a lack of cash flow, significant tariff and non-tariff barriers, inadequate transportation and infrastructure, foreign culture, language, and linguistic barriers, as well as the incapacity to provide technical after-sales support. His study divided these obstacles into six areas using a sample of 100 exporters from Cyprus, including company resource limitations, environmental variations, export bureaucracy and laws, government indifference, difficulty entering international markets and functioning in those markets, and competitive pressures. He therefore reached the conclusion that issues with export competitiveness, such as the presence of fierce competition overseas and the inability to offer reasonable pricing, had the most obstructing influence (Leonidou, 2000).

Based on previous research, particularly the classic authors on internationalisation through exporting (see Table 3), a typology that identifies five general types of export barriers:

(1) human capital, (2) culture, (3) product, (4) administrative (bureaucratic and tariff), and (5) finance. According to commonalities across export barriers, this categorization of export barriers was created (Mataveli, 2014), with the goal of reducing the number of barrier categories to allow scope for more theoretical research or empirical investigation. Additionally, this classification is in accordance with Kahiya's (2013) suggestion that export obstacles encompass a broad variety of obstructions connected to the attitudes and behaviours of the agents who interfere in exports as well as to the architecture of the organisations and mechanisms.

Table 1

Typology Of Export Barriers

Authors	Types of export barriers
Barker and Kaynak (1992) Hutchinson et al. (2006) Julian and Ahmed (2005) Kedia and Chokar (1986) Leonidou (1995b, 2004) Yang et al. (1992)	1. Human capital barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The management teams are not qualified to export. ● The firm lacks the specialist staff needed to export. ● Lack of understanding of the product's potential markets. ● A lack of platforms for commercialization. ● Lack of knowledge regarding the actual export process.
Brouthers and Brouthers (2001) Evans and Mavondo, (2002) Ghemawat (2001, 2007) Sousa and Bradley (2005)	2. Cultural Barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Customs regulations of export countries. ● Cultural variances across exporting countries. ● Multilingual disparities between exporting countries.
Cavusgil and Zou (1994) Hutchinson et al. (2007) Katsikeas and Morgan (1994) Lages and Montgomery (2004) Leonidou (1995a, 2004)	3. Product Barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The lack of capability for output. ● Issues with the firm's technological skills compared with those of its competitors. ● Challenges regarding company potential market adaptation. ● Discovering a distributor for business products.
Julian and Ahmed (2005) Katsikeas and Morgan (1994) Leonidou (2004) Silva and Rocha (2001)	4. Financial Barriers <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The cost of executing exchange and foreign trade processes. ● Attempts to find bank guarantees. ● Limitations regarding credit availability ● Difficulties in acquiring credit lines. ● Financial resource shortage. ● Issues with credit insurance.
Barker and Kaynak (1992) Cavusgil (1984) Leonidou (1995b) Leonidou (2004) Rabino (1980) Ramaswami and Yang (1990) Silva and da Rocha (2001)	5. Administrative Barriers (customs and non-customs) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Border restrictions. ● Export activity documentation and bureaucracy. ● Acquiring documentation and licenses. ● Duty charges. ● sanitary, phytosanitary, and quantity constraints.

Numerous studies on export performance have been conducted in the past, encompassing various disciplines and areas. Despite becoming a prevalent study topic, there is no consensus on the definition in the literature (Cavusgil and Zou, 1994). According to previous studies (Ahimbisibwe et al., 2016; Oura et al., 2016; Katsikeas et al., 2000; Cavusgil

and Zou, 1994), export performance is the accomplishment of firm objectives and findings from activities carried out by firms in export markets. It also provides a guide for any firm in analyzing its level of achievements in either of the domestic or global markets (Lages, 2000).

Nevertheless, there are certain consequences to agricultural export-oriented activities, particularly in emerging countries. The fundamental difficulty would be that agricultural exports are vulnerable to significant price changes, and when an economy is dependent on crops that are experiencing a gradual decrease in price, there is a potential that its terms of trade could worsen (Johnston and Mellor, 1961). Due to a lack of economic diversity and a reliance on a single economic sector, this issue is particularly acute in developing countries (agriculture). This implies that exports of agricultural products could have a negative impact on agricultural growth. Agricultural exports could also be endogenous since there is a positive feedback relationship between exports and growth.

Firm internationalisation continues to be significantly influenced by or impeded by management issues. Management barriers are divided into two categories. Aspects including concentration, desire, dedication, and endeavour toward globalisation are included in managerial orientation (Da Silva and Da Rocha 2001; Hutchinson et al. 2009). Regarding expectations for risk and return or preferences with relation to international activities, "perception of export market attractiveness" (Julian and Ahmed 2005; Moini 1995). The context of rationalisation processes (Eshghi, 1992), mental styles (Yannopoulos and Kefalaki 2010), and cognitive styles could also be employed to examine management barriers (Zahra et al. 2005). Furthermore, according to Welch and Welch (2004), management aspects of business internationalisation would remain the focus of increasing study attention in contrast to the environment of the international entrepreneurship (IE) field.

Barriers connected with value chain activities of internationalization are included in informational barriers. Knowledge of export processes, export documentation, international business practices, and collecting and transferring payments are some of the barriers that are most commonly found (Arteaga-Ortiz and Fernandez-Ortiz 2010; Morgan and Katsikeas 1998; Suarez-Ortega 2003). Regarding the informational barriers, there are two competing perspectives. The traditional view has been that the understanding that arises with internationalization enables overcoming knowledge barriers. Nevertheless, recent studies have revealed that these obstacles can be overcome before internationalization even starts since those managers could already possess expertise due to their engagement or global perspectives (Zheng et al. 2012).

The biggest obstacle to SME internationalisation is frequently stated as a lack of resources, particularly financial resources. SMEs would come into contact with various internal internationalisation barriers such as attitudes, a lack of information and marketing-related barriers whenever they are faced with uncertainty (Wright et al. 2007). In addition to possessing sufficient personnel and financial resources, an organization should be committed to entering and maintaining a presence in international markets and exhibit knowledge and expertise within these countries (Calof, 1994).

According to North (1990), an "institution" is any constructed by humans' structure that governs social, political, and economic interactions. Formal institutions consist of the

legal system, the government, and so on; informal institutions are made up of social and cultural elements. Formal institutions include restrictions on politics and law, which act as financial roadblocks to the internationalization of SMEs. In addition to upholding governmental and state activities, politics is the culmination of efforts undertaken by the government and other agencies and parties to determine the country's future course while considering the values and interests of citizens into consideration (Daunton, 2011). A political and legal framework is often used by the government to create the policies and guidelines that regulate daily life. As a crucial component of daily operation, business cannot be carried out in opposition to the political and legal establishment (Sethi et al., 2012).

Foreign regulations and laws and adverse operating circumstances are two examples of host-based market barriers. Adverse circumstances include the speed of business in other nations, an unfavourable economic environment abroad, red tape and bureaucracy, political unrest, corruption, and the possibility of expropriation or nationalisation (Barnes et al. 2006; Kwon and Hu 1996; Neupert et al. 2006). According to Jensen and Davis (1998), Köksal and Kettaneh (2011), and Milanzi (2012), general limits and standards, tariff barriers, non-tariff barriers, import permits and licences, and other compliance-related documentation are all examples of foreign restrictions and regulations. Foreign limits and laws signal that remnants of protectionism are still prominent in a world that is gradually heading towards free trade, while unfavourable conditions suggest that it is crucial for businesses that are expanding internationally to comprehend international surroundings.

According to Harris & Morran (2004), culture may be subdivided into many categories to make it simpler to grasp its various facets. One category is a sense of self and place. Appreciation and self-identity can be conveyed in various ways across cultures. For instance, people tend to be more modest in some cultures while bragging is more accepted in others. People are formal and rigid in certain cultures yet casual and adaptable in the others. Additionally, Harris & Morran (2004) describe communication and language, which is another category. Both oral and nonverbal communication are used. There are various distinct languages represented around the world, each having its own regional dialect. A language also has slang, which can be challenging for non-native speakers to grasp. Body language is a significant component of communication as well, and it varies among cultures. Although gestures and signals have distinct meanings in many cultures, body language is rather universal. Research Conceptual Framework

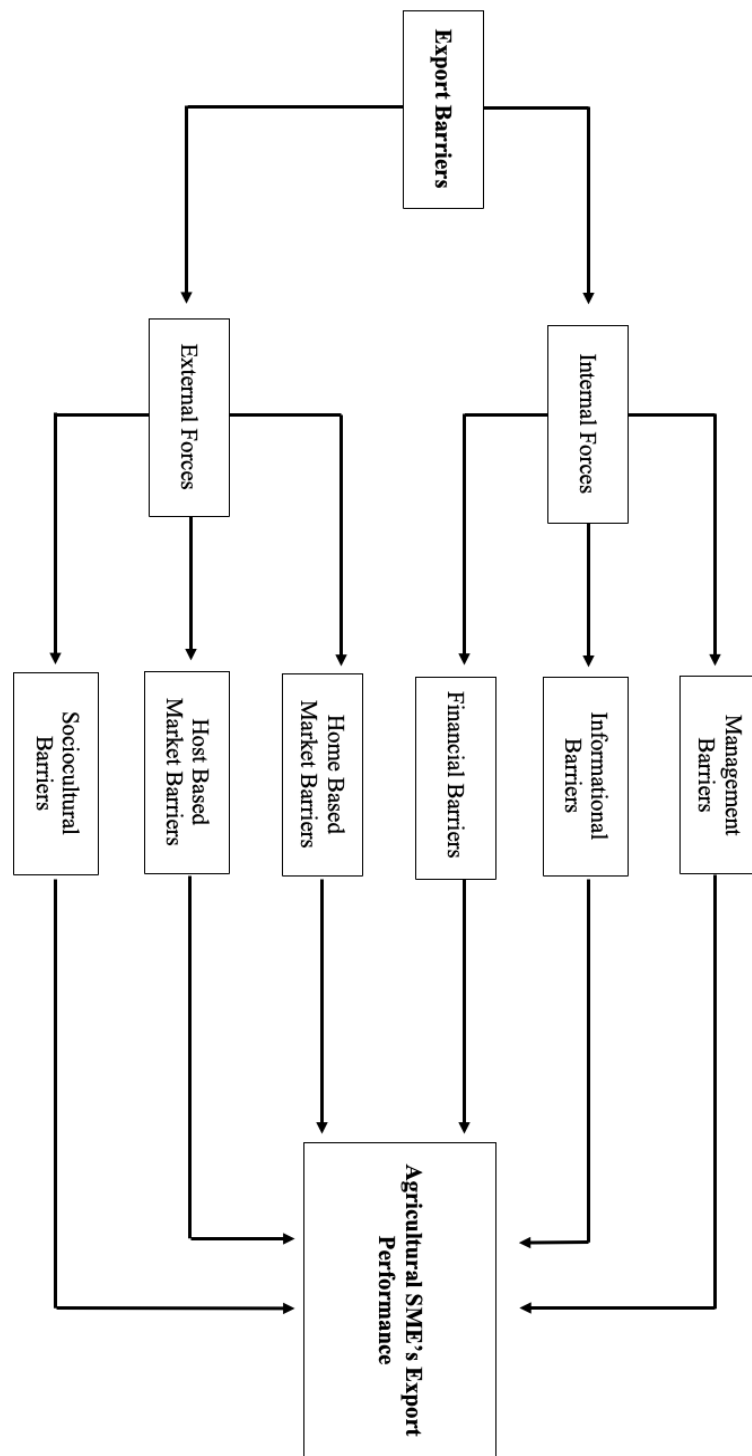


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Figure 1 illustrates, export barriers can be categorized as internal or external barriers (Tesfom and Lutz 2006; Pinho and Martins 2010). It reflects the purpose of this qualitative methods study, which was to understand the effect of export barriers in emerging markets. In the qualitative portion of this study, the author explore the barriers between dimensions

of internal barriers and external barriers on Malaysian Agriculture SME's export performance. Management, financial, and informational limitations are the root drivers of internal barriers. Internal barriers include limits related to short-term financing, labour skill deficiencies, and physical generating capacity constraints. Insufficient capacity for production, the cost and availability of labour skills, working capital financial markets, obtaining funding for exports, and acquiring sufficient protection are the limitations on resources that are most frequently investigated (Arteaga-Ortiz and Fernandez-Ortiz 2010; Crick 2002; Suarez-Ortega 2003).

According to Tesfom and Lutz (2006), external obstacles can be broadly classified as home-based market barriers, host-based market barriers, and sociocultural barriers. These three groups of limitations are among the most challenging to circumvent for companies intending to expand internationally. Incremental Internationalization theory and Resource Based View Theory provided support for this study. Export barriers have certainly been tested in many developed economies, as indicated by the scholarly overview on this topic, however limited research has been carried out in developing countries such Malaysia, particularly in the agriculture industry. Thus, the aim of this research is to comprehensively investigate export constraints which affect the internationalisation of Malaysian agriculture SMEs.

Research Motivation

This research will contribute to our understanding of how export barriers affect agriculture SMEs on what, how, and precisely why these preferences arise. Therefore, the research will address that perceived gap and its issues. In order to close the gap between the deliberate implementation of export strategies for enterprises and the acquisition of competitive advantage, this study focusses on the numerous insights carried out through various agriculture exporters in the business globe. This study is important in several ways. First is it will give new knowledge to literature review for future research. This study is one of the efforts of researcher to increase knowledge on export barriers among the Agriculture SMES sector and export performance. It can provide the latest information related to SMES export challenges. This research can be useful for agriculture SMES, government, and business persons in terms of how they can take action towards their organization's internationalization performance level. The impact of export barriers SMEs encounter in developing countries is insufficiently examined in the literature currently in circulation (Nicholson & Lashley, 2016; Paul et al., 2017; Williams, 2015).

Methodology

The study intends to use based on basic interpretive qualitative method (Merriam, 2002), which researcher believed able to come out with a better and good understanding on research topic to gain competitive advantage by Agriculture SME's exporters. The study will sample 15 Agriculture exporters registered Malaysia out of a population by individuals as the unit of analysis such as manager/owners and public agencies of agriculture SME'S sector which are mainly registered and operated in Malaysia. The sample design will use for the snowball sampling was focused on the population of agriculture SMES. According to Patton (1990), snowball or sampling chains are approaches for finding rich information. The process begins by asking the participant to set properly. The information and the data collection from ten participants gathered through interview. In this study, the researcher chooses face-to-

face interview with the participant. This interview will be the question that addresses in lights the point of export barriers and have been recorded and divided to certain slots.

The qualitative data from the study will undergo transcription and reported in themes and sub-themes. The relationship between the independent and dependent variables will be explained through thematic analysis methods. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), thematic analysis is a method for identifying, analysing, and reporting all patterns within the data. This approach also allows data to be explored and description in more detail. The thematic analysis process that was applied to the transcripts elicited the key concepts that were evident in the data and the themes that rising from the transcript are viewed as essential in determining the understandings from the participant. Figure 4.2 below shows the process of the thematic analysis modified from Braun and Clarke (2006).

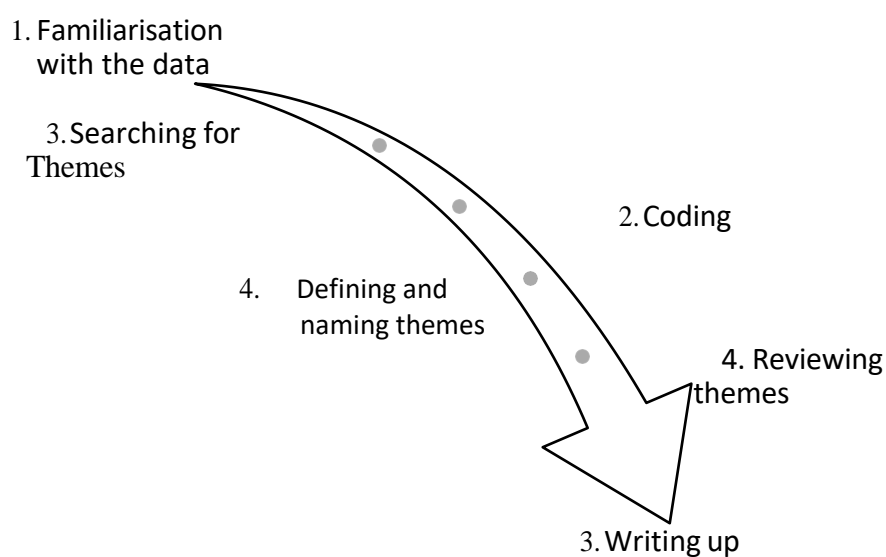


Figure 2: Process of Thematic Analysis Sources: Braun and Clarke (2006)

Figure 2 familiarity with this information is common to all types of subjective examination. Researcher must engage in and turn out into comfortable with their personal information; read and re-read the information (and tuning to the recorded sound information at least once, if applicable) and note any understanding of the underlying explanatory perceptions of participant. Data were analysed consists of notes taken and the transcript of the conversation that has been retyped in the form of writing based on audio recordings during the interview was conducted.

Table 2

The demography details of the participants

Demography	Details of Participants
	4 of Federal Agriculture Marketing Authority (FAMA) officers. 16 of Agriculture SME's Companies Owner/Manager
Level of position	Public Officer, Owner and Manager
Working Experience	Working in Agriculture sector
Purpose of the Study	(1) To explore the barriers hinders Malaysian agriculture from engaging export activities. (2) To explore the causes of the barriers that happen Malaysian Agriculture SME's in exporting. (3) To investigate the implication of the export barriers toward firm export performance in Malaysian Agriculture SME's?

Conclusion

It is hoped that the findings of this research or study, which focus the form of an illustration of the barriers that Malaysian agriculture SMEs face as endeavouring to export, can be practically useful for agriculture SMEs which aren't presently exporters instead desire to expand their business across one, and additionally for exporters who are interested in expanding their export market. It is anticipated that this research could assist policy makers particularly the Malaysian government create an internationalisation strategy that is particularly appropriate for Agriculture small and medium-sized enterprises.

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