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(Review Article)

Exploring the dynamics of product quality and failures in export trade: A systematic literature review

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Abstract

This study conducted a systematic literature review on product quality and failures in export trade, aiming to uncover causes, dimensions and practical steps for improvement. It examined 181 scholarly articles, employing in-depth content analysis and visual aids for clarity. The first finding of the study revealed that nine factors emerged as the major dimensions of goods quality in the export trade context, including: conformance, durability, reliability, features, aesthetics, usability, serviceability, environmental impact and innovation. The second finding revealed that thirteen factors emerged as the major dimensions of service quality in the export trade context, including: cultural sensitivity, service compliance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibility, competence, courtesy, credibility, transparency, security, consistent availability, service customization and service innovation. The third finding of the study revealed that twelve factors emerged as the key dimensions of goods failure in the export trade context, including: manufacturing defect, maintenance complexity, component failure, assembly failure, durability issues, performance flaw, user interface failure, inferior quality, packaging/design failure, product adaptation failure, logistics failure and technical incompatibility. Other findings were also made, and the study recommended that export companies should conduct thorough market research, prioritize cultural sensitivity, implement quality management systems, embrace manufacturing automation, and maintain strong supplier relationships to ensure consistent high-quality products and successful foreign market entry.

Keywords: Product Quality; Product Failure; Export Trade; International Marketing; Going Global

1. Introduction

Product failure is a popular phenomenon that has pervaded the domain of export trade in the global marketplace for decades. It is often a result of a complex interplay between manufacturers' internal factors and broader external dynamics (Mora, 2023). According to Dijksterhuis (2016), product failure occurs when a good or service is incapable of satisfactorily meeting the needs and requirements of the target consumers. It is an unfavorable outcome for exporting companies because it undermines their reputation, erodes consumer trust, and jeopardizes their market position in the increasingly competitive global marketplace (Valero & Grewal, 2023). Beyond immediate financial losses, product failure can inflict long-term damage on brand equity, resulting in diminished customer loyalty and reluctance among prospective buyers to engage with the company's offerings. Moreover, in an interconnected world where information travels swiftly through digital channels, instances of product failure can quickly escalate into public relations crises, attracting scrutiny from regulators, media, and advocacy groups (Nguyen, 2021). This not only amplifies the financial and legal ramifications for export companies, but also tarnishes their corporate image and corporate social

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responsibility standing. To this end, several scholarly investigations have focused on developing effective ways to mitigate incidents of product failure, much of which revolve around quality (Tumusiime & Asiimwe, 2023).

In the views of Ojwang and Omondi-Ochola (2024), product quality refers to the characteristics and attributes of a good or service that enable it to fulfill or exceed the expectations and requirements of consumers. It has become the holy grail for contemporary export companies due to its perceived ability to facilitate successful exporting campaigns especially in highly competitive global markets (Asamoah & Kumah, 2018). This is because in such a crowded marketplace, where numerous alternatives vie for attention, product quality serves as a powerful differentiator that can set export companies apart from their competitors. As such, export companies have begun to recognize that delivering goods and services of superior quality not only satisfies customer expectations but also cultivates brand loyalty, fosters positive word-of-mouth, and enhances overall customer satisfaction (Zungu & Phiri, 2022). Moreover, the significance of product quality extends beyond mere customer satisfaction; it directly impacts the bottom line of export companies (Reyes-Rodriguez & Hernandez-Perez, 2020). This is because high-quality products often command premium prices and enjoy greater demand, thereby contributing to increased sales revenue and profitability.

This is particularly critical, given that in the fiercely competitive arena of global trade, where profit margins are often razor-thin, export companies cannot afford to overlook the pivotal role of product quality in sustaining long-term business success (Al-Majali et al., 2021). Furthermore, in an era characterized by heightened consumer awareness, stringent regulatory standards, and rapid technological advancements, the definition of product quality continues to evolve. Beyond traditional metrics such as reliability and durability, contemporary consumers place increasing emphasis on factors such as sustainability, ethical sourcing, and social responsibility (Mwarami, 2019). Consequently, export companies are striving to adapt to these shifting paradigms by integrating these dimensions of quality into their product development processes and supply chain management practices. To that end, this study systematically reviewed extant relevant literature to enable export companies identify the key dimensions of product quality and failure in contemporary times in order to take appropriate steps to mitigate the incidents of product failure in contemporary times.

1.1. Research problem

In today's hypercompetitive global market landscape, poor quality exports is one of the leading causes of business failure for exporting companies (Dogan et al., 2020; Saboori et al., 2022). This is because poor quality exports not only jeopardize an exporting company's reputation but also undermine its competitiveness in a dynamic marketplace where consumer expectations are relentlessly high. As such, substandard products can result in customer dissatisfaction, erode brand loyalty, and trigger negative word-of-mouth, ultimately leading to loss of market share and revenue decline. To put it in perspective, in 2020, German automaker Volkswagen faced backlash over quality issues with its vehicles, including engine defects and emissions scandals, resulting in substantial financial penalties and damage to its brand reputation (Zhang et al., 2021). Similarly, in October 2016, South Korean smartphone manufacturer, Samsung permanently discontinued the production and export of the Galaxy Note 7 model phones due to repeated incidents of battery explosions and high rate of recalls (Vincent, 2016). In addition, in January 2020, one of the world's largest automakers, Toyota issued a global recall for 3.4 million vehicles, due to an electronic malfunction that hindered the deployment of airbags. Following the announcement of the recall, Toyota's stock dropped by 4 percent in Tokyo trading in the same month (Lim, 2023).

In light of the adverse impacts of poor-quality exports on the viability and reputation of exporting companies in today's hypercompetitive global market, there emerges a critical imperative for a systematic literature review to elucidate the key dimensions of goods/services quality in export trade. By synthesizing existing research findings and insights, such a review enables a comprehensive understanding of the multifaceted factors contributing to goods/services failure in export contexts. This holistic perspective is essential for exporting companies to identify and address potential vulnerabilities across their product lines and supply chains proactively. Moreover, a systematic review will facilitate the identification of best practices, benchmarks, and industry standards pertaining to export quality management, thereby empowering exporting companies to benchmark their performance and implement targeted quality improvement initiatives. In essence, a systematic literature review can serve as a foundational step towards establishing a robust framework for mitigating preventable incidents of goods/services failure and enhancing the competitiveness of exporting companies in the global marketplace. To this end, this study carried out a systematic literature review to actualize the following objectives:

- Explore the major dimensions of goods quality in export trade available in contemporary literature;
- Explore the major dimensions of service quality in export trade available in contemporary literature;
- Identify the key dimensions of goods failure in export trade available in contemporary literature;

- Identify the key dimensions of service failure in export trade available in contemporary literature;
- Explore the major factors driving goods failure in export trade in contemporary literature;
- Explore the major factors driving service failure in export trade in contemporary literature;
- Suggest practical steps for effectively preventing the occurrence of goods/service failures in export trade.

2. Conceptual review

2.1. Export trade

Export trade refers to the process of selling goods or services produced in one country to buyers located in another country (Wang & Zhao, 2019). It is a fundamental component of international commerce, facilitating the exchange of goods and services across borders. Export trade involves a series of interconnected processes, starting from the production or procurement of goods to their delivery and payment by overseas buyers (Petrovic & Tykvová, 2023). Businesses involved in export trade often navigate various factors to ensure success. These include understanding market demand and preferences in target countries, adhering to international trade regulations and customs requirements, and managing logistics effectively to ensure timely delivery (Manchin & Olarreaga, 2022). Additionally, export-based businesses often establish robust communication channels with overseas partners to negotiate contracts, handle documentation such as invoices and customs declarations, and address any issues that may arise during the transaction process. With respect to its significance, Liu and Shi (2021) maintained that export trade not only generates revenue for businesses but also contributes to economic growth by fostering international cooperation, creating job opportunities, and promoting innovation and competitiveness in domestic industries. It is a dynamic and essential aspect of the global economy, driving cross-border transactions and facilitating the exchange of goods and services on a global scale (Kiyota & Stern, 2018). However, the success of export trade relies on factors such as market demand, quality of products, competitive pricing, efficient logistics, and adherence to international trade regulations (Johnson & Noguera, 2019; Fusheng, 2020).

2.2. Product quality in export trade

Product quality in export trade encompasses goods quality and service quality. This is because the concept of product is basically made up of goods and services. In the context of export trade, goods quality refers to the overall characteristics, features, and attributes of a good intended for international markets, ensuring it meets or exceeds the expectations of consumers in diverse foreign markets (Kang & Heo, 2021). To ensure goods meant for export trade are of high quality, the materials used to produce them must be of high quality to withstand transportation and varied environmental conditions (Saat & Tan, 2019). In this effort, design considerations are crucial to cater to different cultural preferences and usage scenarios (Mwesigwa & Mawejje, 2023). In addition to that, performance and reliability are paramount to uphold the brand's reputation and customer satisfaction globally. Moreover, compliance with international standards and regulations is essential for market access and consumer safety. Overall, these components collectively ensure that exported products maintain a consistent level of excellence, providing value and reliability to consumers worldwide while fostering trust and loyalty towards the brand (Donkor et al., 2022). Similarly, in the context of export trade, service quality refers to the overall excellence, reliability, and satisfaction experienced by customers when utilizing services provided by a company operating internationally (Muthee et al., 2023). It encompasses various aspects such as the efficiency of service delivery, responsiveness to customer needs, accuracy and consistency of service provision, as well as the overall experience throughout the service encounter in the foreign market (Donkor et al., 2022). Service quality also extends to aspects like communication effectiveness, cultural sensitivity, and adherence to international standards and regulations (Chinyamunzore & Mapunda, 2021).

2.3. Product failure in export trade

Given that the term ‘product’ is a combination of goods and services, the concept of product failure comprises both goods failure and service failure. In the context of export trade, goods failure refers to the occurrence of defects, malfunctions, or substandard quality in physical products associated with a service offering provided by a company operating internationally (Zhang & Li, 2019). This failure can encompass various issues such as manufacturing defects, poor material quality, transportation damage, or discrepancies between the product received and the one promised. Also, in the context of export trade, goods failure can adversely impact customers’ overall experience and satisfaction, potentially leading to loss of trust, and damage to the company's reputation (Singh & Sharma, 2020). Against this backdrop, effective quality control measures and adherence to international standards are essential to mitigate goods failure and ensure the reliability and integrity of exported goods to foreign markets (Abebe & Gebreegziabher, 2022). On the other hand, service failure in export trade refers to instances where services exported to foreign markets fail to meet the expectations or requirements of customers in those markets (Lee & Kim, 2018). This can occur due to various reasons such as cultural differences, language barriers, or inadequate adaptation of the service to the local market (Rodriguez & Lopez, 2021). For example, a company offering financial services may experience service failure if their processes do not align with the regulatory framework of the foreign market or if their customer support does not cater to the cultural preferences of the target customers. Such failures can have significant consequences for exporting companies, including loss of customers, damage to reputation, and financial losses (Gupta & Das, 2019). This is because customers in foreign markets may have different preferences, values, and expectations compared to domestic markets. Therefore, service providers need to thoroughly understand the nuances of the target market and adapt their services accordingly to minimize the risk of service failure (Chen & Wu, 2020).

3. Methodology

This research utilized a systematic literature review approach, which facilitated a thorough examination, review, and synthesis of pertinent literature to address the research questions methodically. Initially, a comprehensive online search was conducted across eight (8) research databases, resulting in the selection of 558 articles deemed potentially relevant for further scrutiny. The research databases included: Journal Storage, Scopus, ScienceDirect, ScienceGate, ResearchGate, Google Scholar, Academia.edu, and BASE. By employing the Mendeley reference manager software, 218 duplicate entries were identified and removed, narrowing down the article pool to 340 potential articles. To ensure that the articles selected aligned closely with the study's objectives, the following specific inclusion-exclusion criteria were established:

- Articles published completely in English Language.
- Articles with publicly available full texts online.
- Articles published between 2018 and 2024.
- Articles published in peer-reviewed non-predatory journals (Beall’s List used to verify).
- Articles on quality and/or failures in import trade.

Following this, the initial pool of 340 potential articles was meticulously evaluated against predefined inclusion-exclusion criteria to refine the selection. From this pool, 159 articles were purposefully excluded as they did not meet the necessary standards outlined in the criteria. Consequently, the final review consisted of 181 highly relevant scholarly articles. The articles selected and included in this study were then analyzed using in-depth content analysis method facilitated by flowcharts to accelerate data interpretation. This method of analysis enabled the researcher to delve into and scrutinize the articles, extracting information crucial for addressing the research questions.

3.1. In-depth content analysis of extant literature

In this section, the chosen articles are scrutinized according to the study's objectives. Each specific objective is analyzed individually to guarantee that the overall aim of the research is thoroughly examined.

3.1.1. Research objective one: The major dimensions of goods quality in export trade available in contemporary literature

This unit discusses the major dimensions of goods quality in export trade available in extant literature. The analysis of relevant articles revealed that nine (9) factors emerged as the major dimensions of goods quality in the export trade context. These factors include: conformance, durability, reliability, features, aesthetics, usability, serviceability, environmental impact and innovation. A comprehensive review of these relevant factors is presented on the account of relevant scholars.

Conformance

Product conformance refers to the degree to which a good meets the specified requirements and standards set by the manufacturer or relevant authorities in foreign markets (Olabarria & Zabaleta, 2018). In the context of goods exported to foreign markets, conformance is crucial as it ensures consistency and reliability in meeting the expectations of customers in foreign markets (Brunel & Sutter, 2019). This is because when goods are exported, they traverse various regulatory frameworks, cultural contexts, and environmental conditions, making adherence to standards paramount (Gaetano & Caridi, 2018). Also, a good that conforms to these standards not only assures customers of its quality and reliability but also minimizes the risk of rejections, returns, or legal issues in foreign markets (Robles & Nava, 2019). Consequently, product conformance serves as a linchpin for building trust, sustaining brand reputation, and facilitating smooth market penetration in international trade, thus underscoring its significance as a major dimension of quality for exported goods (Chung, 2019; Bollen, 2020; Al Kendi & Al-Qaradawi, 2020).

Durability

Product durability refers to the ability of a good to withstand wear, usage, and environmental factors over an extended period without significant deterioration in its functionality or performance (Maphunye & Maphunye, 2022). In the context of export trade, product durability holds paramount importance due to the complex and often arduous journey goods undertake to reach foreign markets (Barajas & Márquez, 2022). For instance, long-distance transportation, varying climate conditions, and different handling practices can all pose challenges to the integrity of goods (AlHarrasi & AlHarrasi, 2021). Therefore, durable goods not only withstand these stresses but also ensure customer satisfaction by maintaining their quality upon arrival (Hatibu & Mwegelo, 2021). Moreover, in foreign markets, where customers might have limited access to repair or replacement services, durable goods offer longevity and reliability, enhancing brand trust and loyalty (Perez-Gonzalez & Crespo-Muro, 2021). As such, product durability emerges as a critical dimension of quality in export trade, ensuring that goods maintain their value and functionality throughout their lifecycle in diverse global contexts (Long & Chen, 2020; Sokolova & Taran, 2020).

Reliability

Product reliability in the context of export trade refers to the consistent performance and durability of goods over time and under various conditions, ensuring they meet or exceed the expectations of consumers in foreign markets (Kiiru & Gitobu, 2022). It encompasses factors such as functionality, safety, and longevity, all of which contribute to the overall trustworthiness of goods (Okello & Kuteesa, 2023). In foreign markets, where consumers may have limited access to support services or face different environmental conditions, reliability becomes paramount (Turner & Wilkinson, 2023; Woon & Chen, 2024). This is because a reliable product not only fosters customer satisfaction and loyalty but also enhances the reputation of the exporting company, leading to increased competitiveness and sustained market presence (Ngoma, 2023). Thus, ensuring product reliability is crucial for maintaining a positive brand image for export companies, minimizing costly warranty claims, and ultimately, achieving success in global trade (Lee & Ming, 2023).

Features

Product features in the context of export trade refer to the distinctive characteristics, functionalities, and attributes of goods that differentiate them from competitors and meet the specific needs and preferences of foreign consumers (Misra, 2019). These features encompass aspects such as design, performance, versatility, and customization options, which collectively enhance the value proposition of the product (Ali & Hassan, 2021). In foreign markets, where consumers have diverse cultural backgrounds, preferences, and usage scenarios, offering tailored product features is essential for capturing market share and staying ahead of competitors (Hasan & Rahman, 2022). By providing unique and desirable features, exporters can address the varied requirements of international customers, increase perceived value, and foster brand loyalty. Consequently, product features play a pivotal role in ensuring the competitiveness, appeal, and overall quality of tangible goods exported to foreign markets, driving sustained success in global trade (Tang & Lim, 2024; Villamizar & Perez-Castro, 2024).

Aesthetics

Product aesthetics in the context of export trade refers to the visual appearance, design elements, and overall attractiveness of goods, which contribute to their perceived value and appeal to foreign consumers (Abebe & Wossen, 2021). It encompasses aspects such as color, shape, texture, packaging, and branding, all of which evoke emotional responses and influence purchasing decisions (Yildiz & Berkem, 2020). In foreign markets, where consumers have diverse cultural backgrounds and aesthetic preferences, the visual appeal of a good plays a crucial role in capturing attention, generating interest, and establishing a positive impression (Wahba & Elheneidy, 2020). Aesthetically pleasing goods not only differentiate themselves from competitors but also convey a sense of quality, sophistication, and prestige, thereby enhancing the brand image and consumer trust (Kibet & Seif, 2019). Consequently, prioritizing product aesthetics as a dimension of quality is essential for exporters to effectively engage with foreign markets, stimulate demand, and achieve long-term success in international trade (Washington & Freeman, 2021).

Usability

Product usability in the context of export trade refers to the ease of use, convenience, and overall user experience of goods, ensuring that consumers can effectively and efficiently utilize the product to fulfill their needs and preferences (Kiiru & Gitobu, 2022). It encompasses factors such as intuitive design, clear instructions, ergonomic features, and accessibility, all of which enhance the usability and functionality of the goods (Woon & Chen, 2024; Barajas & Márquez, 2022). In foreign markets, where consumers may have diverse backgrounds, languages, and levels of technological literacy, prioritizing usability for tangible products becomes paramount (Misra, 2019). This is because a good that is easy to understand and operate not only reduces the risk of user errors and frustrations but also enhances customer satisfaction, fosters positive word-of-mouth, and builds brand loyalty (Kopp & Kirner, 2020). Therefore, ensuring high levels of product usability is a major dimension of quality for exporters, as it directly influences the market acceptance, adoption rate, and long-term success of goods in foreign markets (Malau-Aduli & Smidt, 2019; Hasan & Rahman, 2022).

Serviceability

Product serviceability refers to the ease and efficiency with which goods can be maintained, repaired, and supported throughout their lifecycle in foreign markets (Perez-Gonzalez & Crespo-Muro, 2021). It encompasses factors such as availability of spare parts, accessibility to repair services, technical support, and warranty coverage, all of which contribute to the overall reliability and longevity of the good (Barajas & Márquez, 2022). In foreign markets, where consumers may face language barriers, logistical challenges, and varying levels of technical expertise, prioritizing product serviceability becomes crucial (Robles & Nava, 2019). This is because a good that is well-supported with comprehensive after-sales services not only instills confidence in consumers but also minimizes downtime, reduces ownership costs, and prolongs the lifespan of the good (Gaetano & Caridi, 2018). Therefore, ensuring high levels of product serviceability is a major dimension of quality for exporters, as it enhances customer satisfaction, fosters brand loyalty, and ultimately, drives sustained success in global markets (Okello & Kuteesa, 2023; Bollen, 2020).

Environmental impact

Environmental impact in the context of export trade refers to the ecological footprint and sustainability considerations associated with the production, use, and disposal of goods, encompassing factors such as resource consumption, emissions, waste generation, and end-of-life disposal practices (Robles & Nava, 2019). In an increasingly environmentally conscious global market, the environmental impact of goods has emerged as a significant dimension of quality (Hatibu & Mwegelo, 2021; Barajas & Márquez, 2022; Woon & Chen, 2024). This is because foreign consumers, governments, and regulatory bodies are increasingly scrutinizing the environmental credentials of goods, demanding eco-friendly alternatives that minimize harm to the planet (Gaetano & Caridi, 2018). As such, exporters must prioritize sustainable production methods, materials sourcing, and product design to mitigate environmental harm and meet evolving regulatory standards and consumer expectations. Moreover, goods with lower environmental impact often enjoy favorable market positioning, enhanced brand reputation, and increased market share, making environmental sustainability a critical aspect of quality for tangible goods exported to foreign markets (Chung, 2019).

Innovation

Product innovation in the context of export trade refers to the introduction of novel ideas, technologies, features, or processes that revolutionize the design, functionality, and performance of goods, catering to the evolving needs and preferences of foreign consumers (Tang & Lim, 2024). It encompasses advancements in product design, materials, manufacturing techniques, and functionalities, aimed at delivering superior value and differentiation in the global marketplace (Kibet & Seif, 2019). In today's competitive landscape, characterized by rapid technological advancements and shifting consumer trends, product innovation has become a cornerstone of quality for tangible goods exported to foreign markets (Yildiz & Berkem, 2020). This is because innovative products not only capture attention and generate excitement but also address unmet needs, solve existing challenges, and create new opportunities for consumers (Kopp & Kirner, 2020). Hence by continuously innovating, exporters can stay ahead of competitors, penetrate new markets, and establish themselves as leaders in their respective industries, thus making product innovation a crucial dimension of quality in the context of export trade (Villamizar & Perez-Castro, 2024; Abebe & Wossen, 2021).

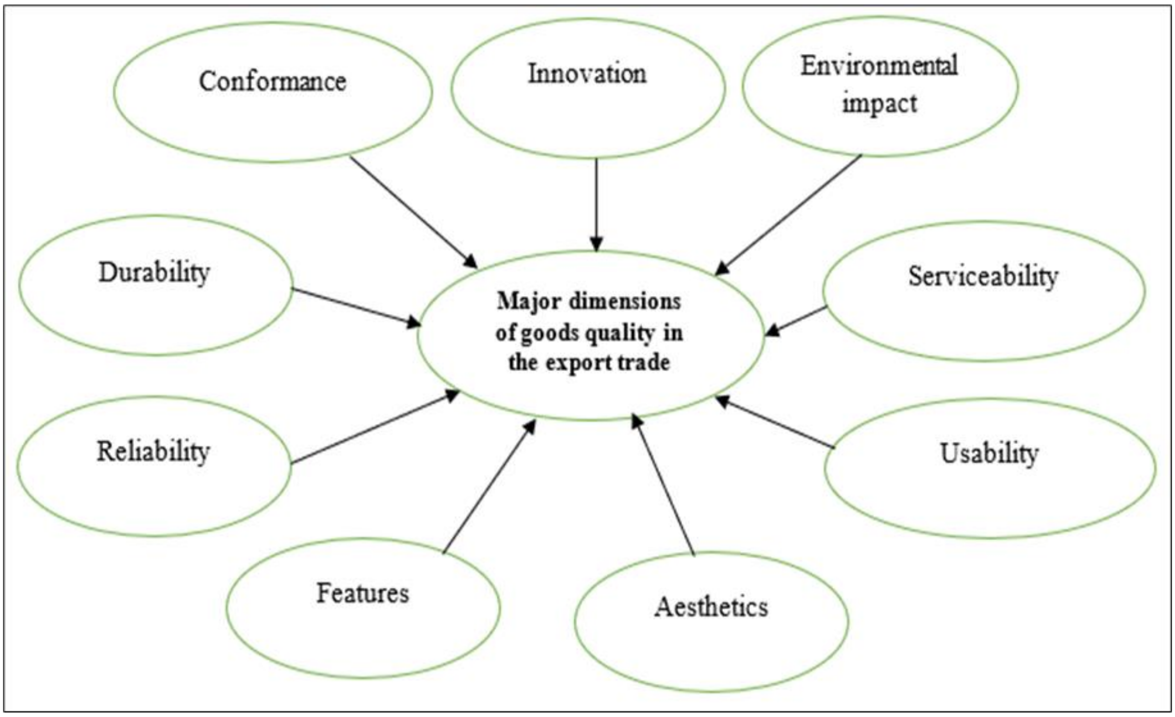

Figure 1 Major dimensions of goods quality in the export trade

3.1.2. Research objective two: The major dimensions of service quality in export trade available in contemporary literature

This unit discusses the major dimensions of service quality in export trade available in extant literature. The analysis of relevant articles revealed that thirteen (13) factors emerged as the major dimensions of service quality in the export trade context. These factors include: cultural sensitivity, service compliance, reliability, responsiveness, tangibility, competence, courtesy, credibility, transparency, security, consistent availability, service customization and service innovation. A comprehensive review of these relevant factors is presented on the account of relevant scholars.

Cultural sensitivity

Cultural sensitivity in the context of export trade involves acknowledging and respecting the diverse cultural backgrounds, values, and behaviours of the target market when offering services to customers abroad (Abduh & Omar, 2021). It encompasses understanding the nuances of language, communication styles, social norms, and customs to tailor services effectively (Acharya & Hudaykulov, 2019; Aljazzaf & Radicic, 2021; Alzoabi & Alenazi, 2023). In the context of export trade, cultural sensitivity is paramount for service quality as it directly influences customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (Affum-Osei & Owusu-Ansah, 2022). This is because services inherently involve interactions between providers and consumers, often requiring a high degree of interpersonal understanding and customization. Failure to recognize and adapt to cultural differences can result in misinterpretations, dissatisfaction, and ultimately, the erosion of customer relationships and market share (Ahn & Lee, 2018). Thus, embedding cultural sensitivity into service provision enhances the overall quality, ensuring services meet the unique needs and expectations of diverse international consumers, thereby bolstering competitiveness and long-term success in foreign markets (Akhtar et al., 2022).

Service compliance

Service compliance in export trade refers to the adherence of a service to the regulatory, legal, and contractual requirements of both the exporting and importing countries (Andrade & Gomes, 2019). This includes compliance with international standards, customs regulations, licensing, and sector-specific guidelines (Badii & Samadi, 2024). Ensuring service compliance is a major dimension of quality because it directly impacts the reliability, legality, and marketability of the service in foreign markets (Bahrami & Banafsheh, 2021; Bouhamed & Ben Youssef, 2019). This is because non-compliance can lead to legal penalties, service interruptions, and damage to the service provider's reputation, ultimately undermining customer trust and satisfaction (Oosterveld, 2022). Hence, consistent service compliance assures foreign customers of the legitimacy and reliability of the service as well as its alignment with their regulatory environment. This is critical for maintaining competitive advantage and fostering long-term business relationships in international markets (Bignotti, 2020).

Reliability

Service reliability in the context of export trade refers to the consistent and dependable delivery of services that meet predetermined standards and expectations of foreign markets, ensuring that transactions are completed accurately and timely, and that any issues are resolved effectively (Corral et al., 2024). It is a major dimension of quality for services exported to foreign markets because it builds trust and credibility with international consumers, who often face higher risks and uncertainties compared to domestic transactions (Chen & Lee, 2018; Duan et al., 2021; Fakharaei & Zarei, 2020). As such, reliable services enhance customer satisfaction, foster long-term relationships, and provide a competitive edge in the global market, where expectations for service standards are typically high and any failure can result in significant financial and reputational damage (Calvo-Mora et al., 2020). Hence, ensuring reliability in service export is crucial as it directly impacts the perceived value and dependability of the service provider, influencing customer retention and market success (Zhang, 2023).

Responsiveness

Service responsiveness in the context of export trade refers to the ability of a service provider to promptly and effectively address the needs, inquiries, and issues of customers in foreign markets (Figueira & Arezes, 2018). It encompasses timely communication, quick resolution of problems, and proactive engagement to meet the specific demands of international markets (Gümüşay et al., 2023). This dimension is crucial because it directly influences customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty, which are vital for sustaining competitive advantage in the global market (Hammad & Al-Abdali, 2021; Kassara & Fotiadis, 2020). Moreover, high responsiveness demonstrates a commitment to customer care, helps mitigate the uncertainties and complexities inherent in cross-border transactions, and fosters strong relationships, ultimately leading to repeat business and positive word-of-mouth in diverse cultural and regulatory environments (Jaiswal & Sandhu, 2022).

Tangibility

Service tangibility in the context of export trade refers to the physical evidence or tangible aspects associated with a service that can be observed, measured, or experienced by foreign customers (Kim & Kang, 2021). This includes elements such as physical facilities, equipment, personnel appearance, and informational materials that accompany the service (Lasa & García-Sánchez, 2019). It is a major dimension of quality for services exported to foreign markets because tangible aspects help to build trust and credibility with international customers who may be unfamiliar with the exporting firm (Msosa & Skaates, 2022; Seo, 2020). Also, high tangibility reduces perceived risk and uncertainty, enhances customer confidence, and provides a visual and experiential assurance of the service quality, which is crucial in competitive global markets where physical presence and direct interactions are limited (Nkitun & Grantt, 2023).

Competence

Service competence in the context of export trade refers to the ability of a company to effectively and efficiently deliver high-quality services that meet or exceed the expectations of foreign customers (Kassara & Fotiadis, 2020). This includes having knowledgeable and skilled personnel, reliable processes, and robust systems in place to manage and execute international transactions (Msosa & Skaates, 2022). It is a major dimension of quality for services exported to foreign markets because it directly affects customer satisfaction, trust, and loyalty (Jaiswal & Sandhu, 2022; Chen & Lee, 2018; Aljazzaf & Radicic, 2021). This is because competent service ensures that international customers receive consistent, timely, and culturally appropriate support. This is crucial for overcoming the complexities of cross-border transactions, adhering to diverse regulatory requirements, and addressing potential language and communication barriers (Corral et al., 2024). High service competence thus enhances a company's reputation, fosters repeat business, and provides a competitive edge in the global marketplace (Bouhamed & Ben Youssef, 2019).

Courtesy

Service courtesy in the context of export trade refers to the respectful, professional, and culturally sensitive manner in which service providers interact with their international customers (Badii & Samadi, 2024). It is a critical dimension of quality for services exported to foreign markets because it directly influences customer satisfaction and trust (Andrade & Gomes, 2019; Bignotti, 2020; Chen & Lee, 2018). This is because when service providers exhibit courtesy, they demonstrate an understanding and appreciation of cultural nuances, fostering positive relationships and reducing the potential for misunderstandings (Akhtar et al., 2022). This enhances the overall customer experience, making them more likely to continue business relationships and recommend the service to others (Ahn & Lee, 2018). Moreover, in foreign markets, where cultural and communication barriers can pose significant challenges, courteous service acts as a bridge, ensuring smooth transactions and reinforcing the provider's commitment to quality and customer-centric values (Acharya & Hudaykulov, 2019).

Credibility

Service credibility in the context of export trade refers to the trustworthiness and reliability that a service provider demonstrates to foreign customers, ensuring that the services delivered meet or exceed expectations consistently (Lasa & García-Sánchez, 2019). This credibility is a critical dimension of service quality because it directly impacts the perception of reliability and professionalism in international markets, where trust and reputation are paramount (Kim & Kang, 2021; Seo, 2020). This is critical because exported services, unlike tangible goods, often lack physical evidence of quality before consumption, making credibility a key determinant of customer satisfaction and loyalty (Msosa & Skaates, 2022). As such, establishing strong service credibility helps mitigate concerns about cultural/regulatory differences and assures foreign customers of adherence to promised standards (Duan et al., 2021). This, in turn, fosters long-term business relationships, ultimately facilitating smoother market entry and sustained competitive advantage in global markets.

Transparency

Service transparency in the context of export trade refers to the clear, open, and accessible communication of all aspects related to the service being exported to foreign markets, including pricing, processes, terms and conditions, delivery timelines, and any potential risks or issues (Jaiswal & Sandhu, 2022). This is a major dimension of quality for exported services because it builds trust and reliability between the service provider and foreign customers (Chen & Lee, 2018; Zhang, 2023; Fakharaei & Zarei, 2020). This is so because when customers in different countries have a clear understanding of what to expect, it reduces uncertainty and perceived risk, which is particularly important in international transactions where differences in regulations, cultures, and business practices can otherwise lead to misunderstandings and disputes (Andrade & Gomes, 2019). Hence, transparent services enable foreign customers to make informed decisions, ensuring that the service meets their specific needs and expectations, ultimately leading to higher customer satisfaction and sustained business relationships (Oosterveld, 2022).

Security

Service security in the context of export trade refers to the measures and protocols implemented to protect the integrity, confidentiality, and availability of services being exported across international borders (Lasa & García-Sánchez, 2019). It encompasses safeguarding sensitive data, ensuring compliance with international regulations, and maintaining reliable and uninterrupted service delivery (Corral et al., 2024). As such, service security is a major dimension of quality for services exported to foreign markets because it builds trust and reliability, which are crucial for fostering long-term international business relationships (Kim & Kang, 2021; Msosa & Skaates, 2022; Hammad & Al-Abdali, 2021). Also, high service security mitigates risks of data breaches, fraud, and service disruptions, thereby enhancing the perceived value and dependability of the service (Kassara & Fotiadis, 2020). This, in turn, can lead to greater customer satisfaction, repeat business, and a strong competitive edge in the global market (Fakharaei & Zarei, 2020).

Consistent availability

Consistent service availability in export trade refers to the reliable and uninterrupted provision of services, such as logistics, communication, and customer support, throughout the international supply chain (Calvo-Mora et al., 2020). This consistency is crucial as it ensures that services meet the expected standards without delays or disruptions, which can significantly impact the satisfaction of foreign consumers (Chen & Lee, 2018). It is a major dimension of quality for services exported to foreign markets because it builds trust and dependability, which are essential for maintaining long-term relationships and competitiveness in global markets (Jaiswal & Sandhu, 2022; Zhang, 2023; Bignotti, 2020). Moreover, inconsistent service can lead to operational inefficiencies, increased costs, and damage to reputation, all of which can deter foreign customers and hinder market expansion (Nkitun & Grantt, 2023). Thus, ensuring consistent service availability is vital for meeting the high expectations of international customers and sustaining growth in export trade (Kassara & Fotiadis, 2020).

Service customization

Service customization in the context of export trade refers to tailoring services to meet the specific needs, preferences, and cultural expectations of foreign customers and markets (Calvo-Mora et al., 2020). This personalization is crucial for maintaining high service quality in export trade as it ensures that the services provided align with the diverse regulatory, cultural, and operational nuances of different international markets (Bouhamed & Ben Youssef, 2019; Fakharaei & Zarei, 2020). Customized services enhance customer satisfaction and loyalty by demonstrating a deep understanding of local market conditions and customer requirements. Additionally, they help differentiate a company's offerings from global competitors, fostering stronger market presence and competitive advantage (Oosterveld, 2022). Therefore, customization is a major dimension of quality for services exported to foreign markets because it directly impacts the perceived value and effectiveness of the service, ultimately influencing the success and sustainability of international trade relationships (Bahrami & Banafsheh, 2021).

Service innovation

Service innovation in the context of export trade refers to the introduction of new or significantly improved service offerings, delivery processes, or business models that enhance the value provided to international customers (Gümüşay et al., 2023). This is a major dimension of quality for services exported to foreign markets because it directly impacts a company's competitive edge and customer satisfaction in diverse and often highly competitive global environments (Hammad & Al-Abdali, 2021). This is because innovative services cater to specific needs and preferences of international customers, comply with different regulatory standards, and adapt to cultural nuances, thereby improving reliability, efficiency, and overall customer experience (Jaiswal & Sandhu, 2022). Such enhancements not only differentiate the service provider from competitors but also build trust and long-term relationships, essential for sustained success in export trade (Kassara & Fotiadis, 2020).

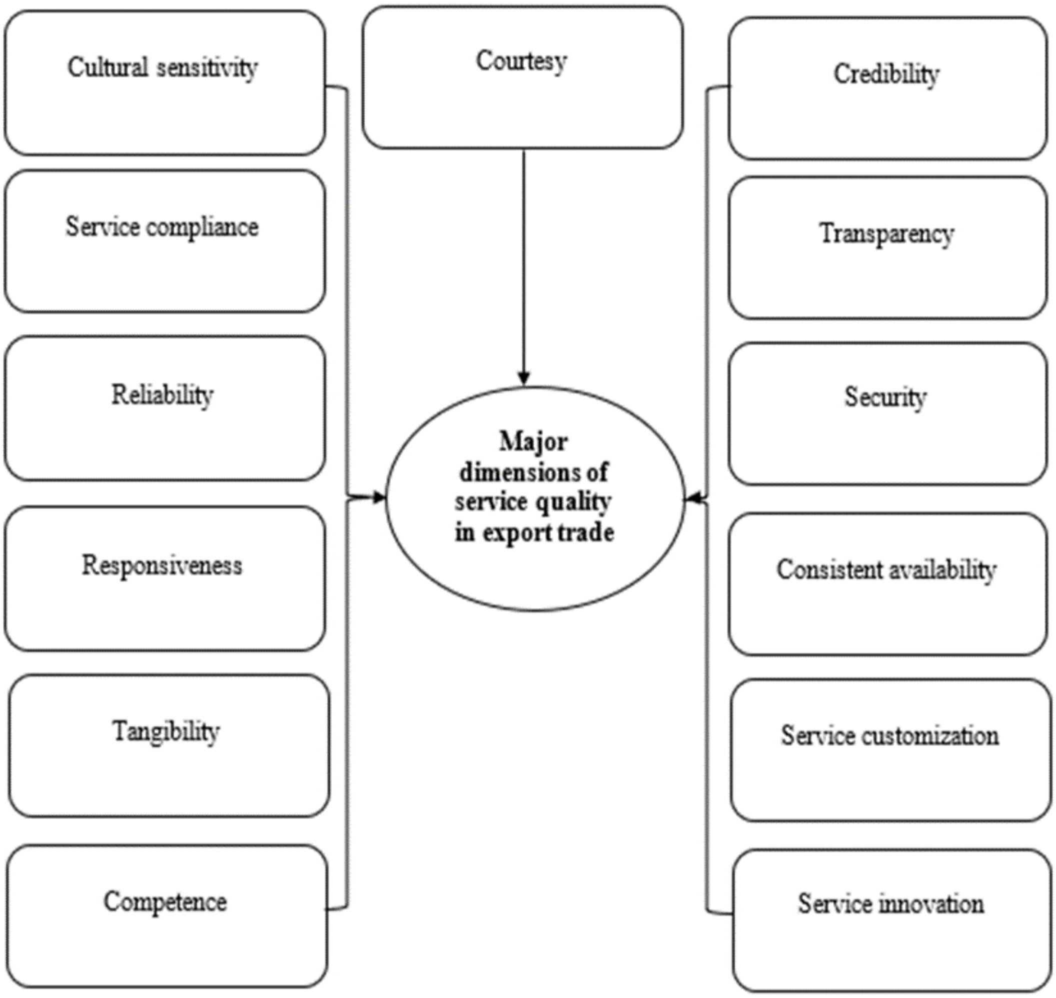

Figure 2 Major dimensions in service quality in export trade

3.1.3. Research objective three: The key dimensions of goods failure in export trade available in contemporary literature

This unit discusses the key dimensions of goods failure in export trade available in extant literature. The analysis of relevant articles revealed that twelve (12) factors emerged as the key dimensions of goods failure in the export trade context. These factors include: manufacturing defect, maintenance complexity, component failure, assembly failure, durability issues, performance flaw, user interface failure, inferior quality, packaging/design failure, product adaptation failure, logistics failure and technical incompatibility. A comprehensive review of these relevant factors is presented on the account of relevant scholars.

Manufacturing defect

A manufacturing defect is a flaw that occurs during the production process, rendering a good unsafe or unusable as intended in the targeted foreign market (Al-Tit & Al-Khasawneh, 2023). Such defects can include faulty materials, poor workmanship, or deviations from specified manufacturing protocols (Arora & Kaur, 2021). In the context of exporting goods to foreign markets, manufacturing defects are a critical dimension of failure due to their potential to undermine product reliability, damage brand reputation, and lead to costly recalls or legal liabilities (Awas & Chakraborty, 2021; Castro & Pinho, 2018). This is because international customers often expect high quality standards, and any defect can result in dissatisfaction, loss of trust, and a tarnished image in the competitive global market. Furthermore, different countries have varying regulatory standards, and non-compliance due to defects can lead to goods being rejected or banned, thereby causing financial losses and hindering market access for export companies (Boutros & Moussa, 2020).

Maintenance complexity

Maintenance complexity refers to the challenges and intricacies involved in the upkeep, repair, and servicing of a good to ensure its proper functioning over its lifespan (Chia & Zerbini, 2022). In the context of exporting goods, high maintenance complexity can be a key dimension of failure because foreign markets may lack the necessary technical expertise, tools, or spare parts required for maintenance (D'Aloia & Perri, 2019). Also, local technicians might be unfamiliar with the product's technology; and logistical issues can cause delays in getting support or parts, leading to prolonged downtime and customer dissatisfaction (Daoud & Al-Fatlawi, 2023). Additionally, cultural differences and language barriers can exacerbate these issues, resulting in poor communication and service (Duan & Zhang, 2021). This can ultimately damage the good’s reputation, reduce customer trust, and lead to a decline in sales and market presence in the foreign market (Ekboir & Tebbe, 2019).

Component failure

Product component failure refers to the malfunction or breakdown of a specific part within a good, rendering it partially or entirely inoperative for consumers in foreign markets (Haque, 2019). This is a critical dimension of failure for goods exported to foreign markets because it directly impacts the product's reliability and customer satisfaction, which are vital for maintaining a competitive edge in international trade (Hajar & Belhadi, 2021). This is so because when a component fails, it can lead to increased warranty claims, costly repairs or replacements, and damage to the manufacturer's reputation (Habib & Khan, 2021). Additionally, logistical challenges and extended supply chains in export trade exacerbate the difficulties of addressing component failures promptly, potentially leading to longer downtime and higher costs (Gohari & Beatty, 2020). Therefore, ensuring the durability and reliability of each component is essential to avoid disruptions in the supply chain, protect brand reputation, and meet the expectations of international customers (Elbaz & El-Said, 2022).

Assembly failure

Product assembly failure refers to the malfunction or breakdown of a good due to improper or substandard assembly processes, which can include incorrect fitting of parts, use of defective components, or inadequate quality control during the assembly line (Hwang & Kim, 2022). This type of failure is a critical dimension of failure for goods exported to foreign markets because it directly impacts the reliability and reputation of goods and the exporting company (Kawsaruzzaman & Rahman, 2018; Lee & Park, 2019). In export trade, where physical distance complicates the logistics of returns and repairs, assembly failures can lead to significant costs, customer dissatisfaction, and loss of market trust (Kaynak & Karaosman, 2020). Moreover, different countries might have stringent regulations and high consumer expectations, making any assembly flaws potentially more damaging to the exporter’s brand and market share (Kim & Yoo, 2021). Hence, ensuring robust assembly processes is thus vital to maintaining goods quality, customer satisfaction, and compliance with international standards (Koehler, 2019).

Durability issues

Product durability issues refer to the problems related to the ability of a good to withstand wear, pressure, or damage over time (Lu & Wu, 2023). In the context of exporting goods to foreign markets, durability is a critical dimension of failure because gooda that fail prematurely can lead to significant costs for exporters, including returns, refunds, and damage to brand reputation (Musa & Rumbidzai, 2019; Rizova, 2018). Moreover, exported goods often face harsher conditions during transportation and use in diverse environments, amplifying the need for durability (Navarro-García et al., 2021). Additionally, differences in consumer expectations and regulatory standards between domestic and foreign markets can further complicate durability issues, leading to customer dissatisfaction, loss of market share, and potential legal repercussions (Ozturk & Aslan, 2022). Hence, ensuring durability is essential for maintaining competitive advantage and building long-term customer trust in international trade (Pillay & Naude, 2020).

Performance flaw

A product performance flaw refers to any deficiency or shortcoming in a good's ability to function as intended or meet the expected standards of quality in foreign markets (Sitnikov et al., 2023). This type of flaw is crucial in the context of exporting goods because foreign markets often have different environmental conditions, regulatory standards, and consumer expectations that the good must satisfy (Wang & Jiang, 2021; Koehler, 2019). As such, failure to meet these can lead to customer dissatisfaction, loss of reputation, increased returns, and additional costs for repairs or replacements (Yigitcanlar & Velibeyoglu, 2020). Moreover, considering the competitive landscape of international trade, a performance flaw can severely undermine a good's success, resulting in reduced market share and financial losses for exporting companies (Pillay & Naude, 2020).

User interface failure

User interface failure refers to the inadequacy or malfunctioning of the part of a good that the user interacts with, resulting in an inability to use the good effectively or efficiently (Hajar & Belhadi, 2021). In the context of goods exported to foreign markets, this failure is crucial as it can lead to significant user dissatisfaction and operational issues (Koehler, 2019; Hwang & Kim, 2022). In addition, cultural differences, language barriers, and varying user expectations can exacerbate these problems, making the good difficult or impossible for customers to use correctly (Yigitcanlar & Velibeyoglu, 2020). This can tarnish the brand's reputation, reduce repeat business, and result in costly returns or replacements. Consequently, understanding and addressing user interface failure is essential for ensuring the success and acceptance of goods in diverse international markets (Lu & Wu, 2023).

Inferior quality

Inferior goods quality refers to goods that are perceived as lower in quality, durability, and performance compared to standard or superior alternatives (Musa & Rumbidzai, 2019). This concept is crucial in the context of exporting goods to foreign markets because inferior quality can lead to significant failure for exporters (Ozturk & Aslan, 2022). This is because when goods do not meet the quality expectations of international consumers or fall short of local standards, it can result in poor customer satisfaction, negative brand reputation, and ultimately a loss of market share (Rizova, 2018). Similarly, inconsistent quality control, failure to adapt goods to meet local regulatory requirements, and inadequate after-sales support exacerbate these issues, causing exporters to face high return rates, legal challenges, and diminished competitiveness (Sitnikov et al., 2023). Therefore, maintaining high-quality standards is essential to succeed in global trade and to ensure sustainable market presence (Kaynak & Karaosman, 2020).

Packaging/design failure

Packaging/design failure refers to shortcomings in the way a good is packaged or designed, which can lead to various issues such as damage during transportation, difficulty in handling or storage, or a lack of appeal to the target foreign market (Lee & Park, 2019). In the context of exporting goods to foreign markets, it becomes a critical dimension of failure due to several reasons. Firstly, inadequate packaging may not withstand the rigors of international shipping, leading to damage or loss of the good, resulting in financial losses and tarnishing the brand's reputation (Koehler, 2019; Wang & Jiang, 2021). Secondly, cultural differences in design preferences and regulatory requirements demand careful consideration to ensure the good's acceptance and compliance in foreign markets (Pillay & Naude, 2020). Thirdly, inefficient packaging can lead to increased shipping costs, hampering the good's competitiveness in global markets (Kim & Yoo, 2021). Hence, addressing packaging/design failures is paramount for successful export trade, ensuring product integrity, market acceptance, and cost-effectiveness in international commerce (Musa & Rumbidzai, 2019).

Product adaptation failure

Product adaptation failure refers to the inability of a good to effectively meet the needs, preferences, or requirements of a foreign market due to inadequate adjustments or modifications to local conditions (Rizova, 2018). In the context of exporting goods, it becomes a critical dimension of failure because foreign markets often have unique cultural, economic, regulatory, and infrastructural differences that necessitate tailored adaptations for successful market penetration (Pillay & Naude, 2020). As such, the failure to adequately adapt a good can result in low demand, customer dissatisfaction, loss of market share, or even rejection of the good altogether (Kaynak & Karaosman, 2020). Thus, understanding and addressing the specific needs of foreign markets through effective product adaptation is crucial for the success of tangible goods in export trade, as it directly impacts market acceptance, profitability, and long-term viability (Wang & Jiang, 2021).

Logistics failure

Logistics failure refers to the breakdown or inefficiency in the management of the flow of goods, information, and resources between the point of origin and the point of consumption (Duan & Zhang, 2021). In the context of exporting goods to foreign markets, logistics failure is a critical dimension of failure due to its direct impact on the timely and intact delivery of goods to customers (Ekboir & Tebbe, 2019). It encompasses various aspects such as transportation delays, inadequate packaging leading to damage, customs clearance issues, and inaccurate documentation (Kaynak & Karaosman, 2020). These failures not only result in financial losses but also damage to reputation and loss of customer trust, ultimately hindering market penetration and long-term success in foreign markets (Koehler, 2019). As such, efficient logistics management is imperative in ensuring that exported goods reach their destination reliably, maintaining product quality and customer satisfaction while also reducing costs and enhancing competitiveness in global trade (Lu & Wu, 2023).

Technical incompatibility

Technical incompatibility refers to the inability of a good to function properly due to differences in technical standards, specifications, or requirements between the exporting and importing markets (Pillay & Naude, 2020). In the context of exporting goods to foreign markets, this dimension of failure is critical because it directly impacts the usability and effectiveness of the good in the target market (Musa & Rumbidzai, 2019). As such, when goods do not meet the technical standards or requirements of the importing country, they may fail to function as intended or may not be compatible with local infrastructure, resulting in dissatisfaction among customers, increased costs for adaptations or modifications, and ultimately, loss of market share and revenue for the exporting company (Hajar & Belhadi, 2021). Also, technical incompatibility can encompass various aspects such as voltage requirements, plug types, safety standards, language support, and regulatory compliance, all of which are essential for ensuring seamless integration and successful adoption of the good in the target market (Hwang & Kim, 2022). Thus, addressing technical incompatibility for goods is crucial for mitigating risks and achieving success in international trade (Habib & Khan, 2021).

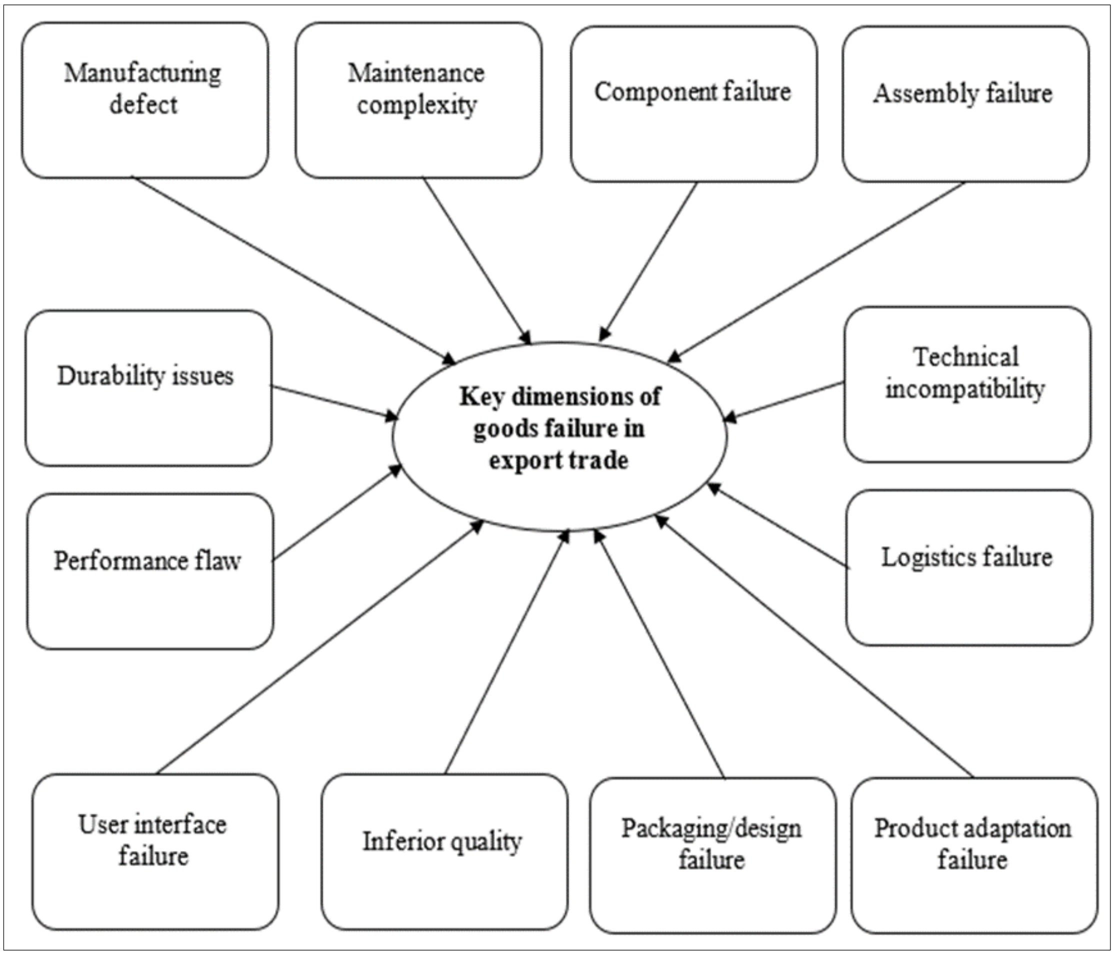

Figure 3 Key dimensions of good failure in export trade

3.1.4. Research objective four: The key dimensions of service failure in export trade available in contemporary literature

This unit discusses the key dimensions of service failure in export trade available in extant literature. The analysis of relevant articles revealed that twelve (12) factors emerged as the key dimensions of service failure in the export trade context. These factors include: regulatory compliance failure, cultural sensitivity failure, functional failure, perceived value failure, responsiveness failure, service unavailability, customer service failure, technical failure, subscription/payment failure, privacy and security failure, accessibility failure and transparency failure. A comprehensive review of these relevant factors is presented on the account of relevant scholars.

Regulatory compliance failure

Regulatory compliance failure in the context of exported services refers to the inability of a service provider to adhere to the legal, regulatory, and policy requirements of the foreign market in which the service is being delivered (Amose & Ngowi, 2019). This encompasses failing to meet standards related to data protection, labor laws, financial reporting, and other sector-specific regulations (Asante & Antwi, 2023). Such failures can lead to severe consequences, including legal penalties, financial losses, and damage to the company's reputation (Bahloul & Ben Jemaa, 2022). Regulatory compliance is a critical dimension of failure in exported services because international markets often have complex and stringent regulatory environments that can differ significantly from the service provider's domestic market (Bortoluzzi & Boscari, 2018). Hence, non-compliance can disrupt service delivery, result in bans or restrictions, and erode trust with international clients, thereby severely hindering the success and sustainability of service exports (Chaturvedi & Vaish, 2021).

Cultural sensitivity failure

Cultural sensitivity failure in the context of service refers to the inability of a service provider to recognize, understand, and appropriately respond to the cultural norms, values, and expectations of customers in a different country (Chebil & Slimane, 2020). This failure is particularly critical in exported services because it can lead to misunderstandings, offense, and dissatisfaction among international customers, ultimately damaging the provider’s reputation and foreign market share (Dan & Tan, 2019). This is because services are inherently people-centered and relational, so failing to adapt to cultural nuances can result in poor service delivery, eroded trust, and a perception of disrespect or incompetence (Diaz-Pichardo & Gutierrez, 2023; Eroshina & Knyazeva, 2018). As such, this dimension of failure underscores the importance of cultural competence in global business, where meeting diverse customers’ needs is essential for maintaining competitive advantage and ensuring successful market penetration (Djankov & Ramalho, 2021).

Functional failure

Functional failure in the context of service refers to the inability of a service to meet the intended performance standards or expectations, leading to dissatisfaction or a negative experience for the customer (Islam & Ali, 2019). In the context of exported services, this is a critical dimension of failure because it directly impacts the reputation and reliability of the service provider in international markets (Hamid & Harun, 2023; Hsiao et al., 2021). This is because when services fail to function as promised, it can lead to a loss of trust, adverse word-of-mouth, and potential legal or financial repercussions (Haung, 2021). Also, given the competitive nature of global trade, where customers have access to numerous alternatives, maintaining functional integrity is essential for sustaining market presence and ensuring customer loyalty (Guizzardi & Simoni, 2022). As such, functional failure in exported services can thus jeopardize long-term relationships, affect market share, and hinder growth opportunities in foreign markets (Ghazali & Ishak, 2019).

Perceived value failure

Perceived value failure in the context of service refers to the situation where the customers' expectations regarding the value of a service are not met, leading to dissatisfaction and post-consumption regrets (Jabeen & Ismail, 2020). This failure is critical in the export trade context because international customers often have different cultural backgrounds, expectations, and standards compared to domestic customers (Jiang & Wang, 2022; Nguyen, 2021). As such, misunderstanding or mismanaging these differences can result in services being perceived as inadequate or inferior (Joo, 2018). This is particularly detrimental in the competitive global market, where maintaining a positive reputation and customer loyalty is crucial (Kim & Park, 2023). Thus, perceived value failure can significantly hinder the success of exported services by reducing repeat business and damaging brand image internationally (Kocak & Ozsoy, 2019).

Responsiveness failure

Responsiveness failure in the context of service refers to the inability of a service provider to promptly and adequately respond to customers’ inquiries, requests, or issues (Rambaccussing et al., 2018). This failure is critical in the context of exported services due to the inherent challenges of international trade, including time zone differences, cultural and language barriers, and heightened customer expectations for timely and efficient communication (Nguana & Mkhize, 2021; Sebaaly & Karam, 2019). As such, in export trade, a lack of responsiveness can erode trust, damage the service provider's reputation, and lead to lost business opportunities, as foreign customers often rely heavily on clear and rapid communication to address their concerns and ensure the smooth operation of cross-border transactions (Mazzucchelli & Londero, 2022). Therefore, ensuring high responsiveness is essential to maintaining customer satisfaction and competitiveness of service-exporting companies in the global market (Magueye & Sarr, 2020).

Service unavailability

Service unavailability in the context of export trade refers to the inability to deliver a service to foreign clients as promised, which can result from various factors such as logistical issues, technological failures, or regulatory barriers (Sebaaly & Karam, 2019). This is a critical dimension of failure for exported services because it directly impacts customer satisfaction, trust, and the overall reputation of the service provider in the global market (Tian & Zhang, 2021; Tung & Lin, 2022). This is because unavailability can lead to lost business opportunities, financial losses, and a competitive disadvantage as international clients may seek more reliable alternatives (Stella et al., 2020). Similarly, the complexities and dependencies inherent in cross-border transactions exacerbate these risks, making consistent and reliable service delivery essential for maintaining a strong presence in the export market (Sohaib & Zameer, 2023).

Customer service failure

Customer service failure in the context of service refers to instances where a service provider fails to meet the expectations or needs of the customer, resulting in dissatisfaction (Tian & Zhang, 2021). In the context of exported services, this failure is a critical dimension due to the complexities of cross-border transactions, which include differences in cultural expectations, communication barriers, and logistical challenges (Kocak & Ozsoy, 2019; Kim & Park, 2023). This is because exported services often require high levels of customization and responsiveness, and any failure can lead to a significant impact on business operations, reputation, and customers' trust (Mazzucchelli & Londero, 2022). This can result in loss of repeat business and negative word-of-mouth, which are detrimental in the competitive global market where maintaining strong customer relationships is crucial for long-term success (Stella et al., 2020).

Technical failure

Technical failure in the context of service refers to the malfunction or inadequacy of the technology, systems, or processes that support the delivery of a service, resulting in an inability to meet the expected performance standards or customer requirements (Nguyen, 2021). In the context of exported services, technical failure is a critical dimension of failure because these services often rely heavily on advanced technology and complex logistics to cross borders efficiently (Nguana & Mkhize, 2021). As such, when technology or systems fail, it can lead to significant disruptions, delays, and additional costs, undermining the reliability and competitiveness of the service in international markets (Tung & Lin, 2022). Additionally, technical failures can damage the reputation of the service provider, erode customer trust, and lead to a loss of business, making it imperative to ensure robust and resilient technical infrastructure in the export trade context (Mazzucchelli & Londero, 2022).

Subscription/payment failure

Subscription/payment failure in the context of services refers to the inability of a customer to complete a payment transaction for a service, which could be due to issues like expired credit cards, insufficient funds, or technical problems with the payment gateway (Kim & Park, 2023; Kocak & Ozsoy, 2019). This is a key dimension of failure for exported services because it disrupts the revenue flow, complicates financial forecasting, and undermines the service provider's ability to deliver consistent and reliable service to international customers (Stella et al., 2020). This is particularly important in export trade, where transactions span different countries with varying regulations, payment systems, and currencies. Under this circumstance, such failures can lead to service interruptions, customer dissatisfaction, and a tarnished reputation, making it critical to manage and mitigate these risks to maintain market competitiveness and customer trust globally (Sohaib & Zameer, 2023).

Privacy and security failure

Privacy and security failure in the context of exported services refers to the breach or inadequate protection of sensitive data and information during the delivery of services across borders (Sebaaly & Karam, 2019). This includes unauthorized access, data leaks, cyber-attacks, and failure to comply with international data protection regulations (Rambaccussing et al., 2018). It is a key dimension of failure for exported services because it can severely damage trust and reputability, lead to legal and financial repercussions, and disrupt service continuity (Sohaib & Zameer, 2023; Tung & Lin, 2022). This is particularly crucial because in the context of export trade, where services are often delivered digitally, safeguarding data privacy and security is critical to maintaining competitive advantage, complying with diverse regulatory environments, and ensuring smooth, reliable service delivery to international customers (Nguana & Mkhize, 2021).

Accessibility failure

Accessibility failure in the context of service refers to the inability of a service provider to adequately deliver its offerings to a target market due to barriers such as logistical constraints, regulatory hurdles, cultural differences, or inadequate infrastructure (Sebaaly & Karam, 2019). In the context of exported services, accessibility failure becomes a critical dimension of failure due to its direct impact on market penetration and competitiveness (Jabeen & Ismail, 2020). This is because exported services rely heavily on seamless access to foreign markets; any hindrance in accessibility can lead to missed opportunities, loss of market share, and diminished revenue streams (Kim & Park, 2023). Moreover, in the global trade landscape, where competition is fierce and customer expectations are high, accessibility failure can erode the reputation and trustworthiness of the service provider, making it harder to regain market foothold and sustain long-term success (Sohaib & Zameer, 2023). Thus, ensuring accessibility is not only crucial for meeting customer demands but also for maintaining a competitive edge for service-exporting companies in the international market (Magueye & Sarr, 2020).

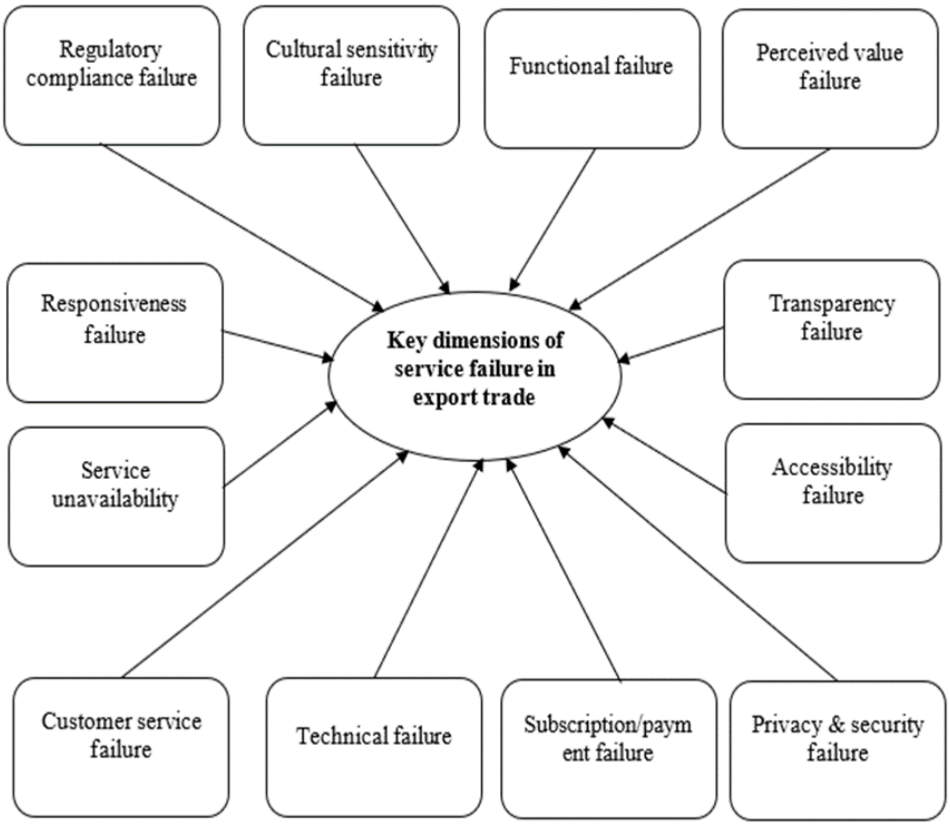

Figure 3 Key dimensions of Service failure in export trade

Transparency failure

Transparency failure in the context of services refers to a lack of clear, open, and honest communication between service providers and consumers regarding various aspects of the service, such as pricing, terms, conditions, and quality standards (Kocak & Ozsoy, 2019). In the context of exported services, transparency failure becomes a pivotal dimension of failure due to the inherent complexities of cross-border transactions (Sebaaly & Karam, 2019; Guizzardi & Simoni, 2022; Hamid & Harun, 2023). This is because when services are exported, they often involve diverse cultural, legal, and regulatory environments, magnifying the importance of transparency. As such, the failure to maintain transparency can lead to misunderstandings, disputes, and loss of trust between the service provider and the customer, jeopardizing the success of the exported service and potentially damaging the reputation of the provider in international markets

(Mazzucchelli & Londero, 2022). Thus, ensuring transparency becomes not only a moral imperative but also a strategic necessity for sustaining competitive advantage for service exporters and fostering long-term relationships with customers in export trade (Nguyen 2021).

3.1.5. Research objective five: The major factors driving goods failures in export trade in contemporary literature

This unit discusses the major factors driving goods failures in export trade in extant scholarly literature. The analysis of relevant articles revealed that sixteen (16) factors emerged as the major factors driving goods failures in the export trade context. These factors include: inadequate market research, poor product quality, intense foreign competition, regulatory non-compliance, cultural insensitivity, inappropriate marketing strategies, supply chain disruption, unfavourable economic condition, political/legal barriers, technological barriers, lack of local partnership, intellectual property issues, insufficient digital presence, over-reliance on a single market, negative brand image, and health/safety concerns. A comprehensive review of these relevant factors is presented on the account of relevant scholars.

Inadequate market research

Inadequate market research refers to the insufficient or improper analysis and understanding of a foreign market's dynamics, consumer preferences, competitive landscape, regulatory environment, and cultural nuances (Abdulmutallab & Farouk, 2020). This lack of thorough research is a critical factor driving the failure of goods in export trade because it leads to misaligned goods that fail to meet the specific needs and preferences of the target market (Al-Mamun & Azim, 2023; Casanova & Alvarez-Dardet, 2024). For instance, without proper market research, exporters may overlook crucial details such as local consumer behaviour, pricing sensitivities, and compliance with regulatory standards, resulting in goods that are either unappealing, overpriced, or non-compliant with local laws (Arslan & Yaprak, 2019). Consequently, these missteps can cause poor market reception, low sales, and ultimately, financial losses for businesses attempting to penetrate new international markets (Ballouli, 2021).

Poor product quality

Poor product quality refers to goods that fail to meet the expected standards of performance, durability, safety, and reliability thereby proving to be undesirable by target customers (Chen & Ha, 2018). In the context of export trade, poor quality can significantly hinder market success due to various factors. First, international consumers often have higher expectations and stringent standards, and subpar goods can lead to dissatisfaction, negative reviews, and a damaged reputation (D'Alessio & Pierro, 2023). Moreover, poor quality can result in higher return rates, increased warranty claims, and additional logistical costs, eroding profit margins for exporting companies (Elnawasra & Abou-Ghaly, 2022). In addition, regulatory non-compliance due to inadequate quality can also lead to legal penalties and import restrictions (Grekova & Serga, 2019). Consequently, the inability to consistently deliver high-quality goods undermines consumer trust and market competitiveness, making it a critical factor driving the failure of goods in foreign markets (Hassan & Khan, 2019).

Intense foreign competition

Intense foreign competition refers to the high level of rivalry that businesses face from international firms when exporting goods to foreign markets (Cheung, 2023). This competition can stem from factors such as superior product quality, lower production costs, advanced technology, better marketing strategies, or favourable trade policies in the competing countries (Hanoi, 2018). It is a key factor driving the failure of goods in export trade because it pressures domestic exporters to continuously innovate and reduce costs to maintain market share (Kiondo & Nyamwange, 2020). Also, when domestic firms cannot compete effectively, their goods become less attractive to foreign consumers, leading to reduced sales and potential market exit (Kang & Gu, 2021). Additionally, intense competition can erode profit margins, making it financially unsustainable for exporters to maintain operations in those markets, ultimately causing their failure (Jazayeri & Sadler-Smith, 2021).

Regulatory non-compliance

Regulatory non-compliance refers to the failure of companies to adhere to the laws, regulations, and standards set by regulatory bodies governing specific markets (Asamoah & Asante, 2019). In the context of exporting tangible goods to foreign markets, this non-compliance is a critical factor driving failure because it can lead to severe consequences such as the rejection of shipments, legal penalties, increased scrutiny, and damaged reputation (Miftari & Latifi, 2022). This is because when exported goods do not meet the regulatory requirements of the destination country—be it in terms of safety standards, labeling, environmental regulations, or quality controls—they are often barred from entry, leading to financial losses, wasted resources, and potential market exclusion (Makhubela & Pretorius, 2021). In essence, compliance ensures that goods are acceptable and competitive in the foreign market, while non-compliance disrupts business operations and market access, ultimately undermining the success of export ventures (Mahmoud & Sabbagh, 2022).

Cultural insensitivity

Cultural insensitivity refers to the lack of awareness, understanding, and respect for the cultural differences and norms of another country or community (Sahu & Rathore, 2020). In the context of export trade, it is a key factor driving the failure of goods because products that do not align with the cultural values, preferences, and consumer behaviour of the target market often face rejection or poor sales (Rahman & Islam, 2020). For instance, packaging, branding, and product features that are deemed inappropriate, offensive, or irrelevant can lead to a negative perception and reluctance to purchase by foreign consumers (Panagiotopoulou, 2024). Moreover, failure to adapt to local customs, tastes, and language can result in miscommunication and a disconnect with potential buyers, ultimately leading to the unsuccessful introduction and acceptance of the exported goods by foreign consumers (Owusu-Frimpong & Osei-Tutu, 2023).

Inappropriate marketing strategies

Inappropriate marketing strategies refer to marketing programmes and campaigns that fail to resonate with the target audience due to cultural misunderstandings, misaligned messaging, ineffective channels, or ignoring local consumer preferences (Tantaway & Al-Mekhlafi, 2021). In the context of exporting tangible goods to foreign markets, these strategies can lead to product rejection, brand mistrust, and ultimately, financial losses (Sotiriadis, 2019). For instance, a good may fail if its branding or advertising is offensive or irrelevant to local customs and values, or if it overlooks established local competitors and market dynamics (Sharma & Poucin, 2018). Also, inadequate market research and poor adaptation to local languages, preferences, and legal requirements often exacerbate these issues, making inappropriate marketing a critical factor in the failure of exported goods. (Sasi & Raman, 2021)

Supply chain disruption

Supply chain disruption refers to the breakdown or significant interruption in the flow of goods, services, and information from the raw material stage to the delivery of the final product to the end consumer (Owusu-Frimpong & Osei-Tutu, 2023). This disruption can be caused by various factors such as natural disasters, geopolitical tensions, pandemics, labor strikes, or logistical failures (Sotiriadis, 2019). In the context of export trade, supply chain disruptions are a key factor driving the failure of goods because they hinder the timely and efficient movement of goods across international borders (Sharma & Poucin, 2018). These disruptions can lead to delays, increased costs, and reduced product availability, making it difficult for exporters to meet customer demands and maintain competitive pricing (Zorzini & Caputo, 2023). Consequently, the reliability and reputation of exporters are compromised, resulting in lost sales, strained business relationships, and ultimately, the failure to establish or sustain a presence in foreign markets (Wang & Su, 2022).

Unfavourable economic condition

Unfavourable economic conditions refer to a combination of economic factors such as recession, high inflation, currency instability, and low consumer confidence that negatively impact a market (Makhubela & Pretorius, 2021). These conditions are a key factor driving the failure of goods exported to foreign markets because they reduce consumers' purchasing power and demand for imported goods (Sasi & Raman, 2021). This is because when a country's economy is struggling, consumers prioritize essential goods and local goods, reducing the market for foreign goods (Sotiriadis, 2019). Additionally, currency instability can make pricing unpredictable, complicating financial planning and making exports less competitive. Similarly, high inflation can erode the value of revenue from exports, and recession can lead to lower business investment in inventory and marketing (Miftari & Latifi, 2022). Collectively, these factors make it difficult for exporters to maintain profitability and market share, often resulting in the failure of goods in the export trade (Rahman & Islam, 2020).

Political/legal barriers

Political/legal barriers refer to the regulations, policies, and laws imposed by a government that can hinder or restrict the free flow of goods across borders (Makhubela & Pretorius, 2021). These barriers include tariffs, import quotas, export restrictions, stringent regulatory standards, and complex customs procedures (Asamoah & Asante, 2019). They are a key factor driving the failure of goods exported to foreign markets because they increase costs, create delays, and necessitate compliance with unfamiliar or onerous regulations, thereby reducing competitiveness (Sharma & Poucin, 2018). For exporters, navigating these barriers often requires significant resources and expertise, and failure to comply can lead to penalties, confiscation of goods, or outright bans, ultimately leading to the failure of goods to successfully enter or sustain a presence in the foreign market (Wang & Su, 2022).

Technological barriers

Technological barriers refer to obstacles that arise due to differences in technology standards, infrastructure, and innovation levels between or among countries (Sharma & Poucin, 2018). These barriers can include variations in product standards, certification requirements, and the technological sophistication of both the products and the production processes (Mahmoud & Sabbagh, 2022). In the context of export trade, technological barriers are a key factor driving the failure of goods because they can prevent goods from meeting the regulatory standards or consumer expectations in the target market (Miftari & Latifi, 2022). For instance, if exported goods do not comply with the local technological standards or lack compatibility with the existing infrastructure, they may face rejection, recalls, or diminished market acceptance, leading to significant financial losses and market failure for the exporting company (Panagiotopoulou, 2024).

Lack of local partnership

Lack of local partnership refers to the absence of collaboration with local businesses, distributors, or agents in the target foreign market (Tantaway & Al-Mekhlafi, 2021). This deficiency is a key factor driving the failure of goods exported to foreign markets because local partners possess crucial insights into the market's consumer preferences, regulatory environment, cultural nuances, and logistical challenges (Zorzini & Caputo, 2023). Without these partnerships, exporters may misjudge demand, mismanage supply chains, and fail to navigate complex regulatory requirements, leading to poor market penetration, higher costs, and ultimately, the failure of the goods to gain traction (Miftari & Latifi, 2022). However, effective local partnerships provide the necessary support and knowledge to adapt goods and marketing strategies to fit the local context, ensuring better acceptance and success in the foreign market (Sotiriadis, 2019).

Intellectual property issues

Intellectual property (IP) issues pertain to the legal rights and protections granted to creators and owners of inventions, designs, and artistic works (Rahman & Islam, 2020). These issues arise when there is unauthorized use, infringement, or lack of protection of these IP rights (Wang & Su, 2022). In the context of exporting goods, IP issues are a key factor driving failure due to risks such as counterfeit goods, patent infringements, and lack of adequate IP enforcement in foreign markets (Sahu & Rathore, 2020). This is critical because when exporters face IP theft or inadequate protection, their goods can be illegally replicated and sold at lower prices, eroding their market share and profitability (Sharma & Poucin, 2018). Additionally, legal disputes over IP rights can result in costly litigation and trade restrictions, further hindering the success of goods in international markets (Tantaway & Al-Mekhlafi, 2021).

Insufficient digital presence

An insufficient digital presence refers to a company's inadequate or ineffective online visibility and engagement, including poor website functionality, limited social media activity, and lack of digital marketing strategies (Sotiriadis, 2019; Mahmoud & Sabbagh, 2022). In the context of exporting goods, this deficiency is crucial as it hampers a company's ability to reach and attract international customers, provide necessary product information, and build brand recognition and trust (Miftari & Latifi, 2022; Panagiotopoulou, 2024). Consequently, potential buyers might turn to competitors with stronger digital footprints, leading to decreased sales and market penetration. Additionally, a weak digital presence can limit market research capabilities and hinder responsiveness to market trends and consumer preferences, further diminishing the company's competitive edge and contributing to the failure of its goods in foreign markets (Owusu-Frimpong & Osei-Tutu, 2023).

Over-reliance on a single market

Over-reliance on a single market refers to a situation where a company depends heavily on one foreign market for its export sales (Rahman & Islam, 2020). This concentration of trade can become a critical vulnerability because it exposes the exporter to the risks associated with that market's economic fluctuations, regulatory changes, and political instability (Asamoah & Asante, 2019). In the context of export trade for goods, such dependence can lead to failure when the target market experiences a downturn, imposes restrictive trade policies, or faces geopolitical issues, thereby sharply reducing demand for the exported goods (Makhubela & Pretorius, 2021; Jazayeri & Sadler-Smith, 2021). Without diversification into multiple markets, the exporter may struggle to find alternative buyers quickly enough to offset the loss, leading to unsold inventory, reduced revenue, and potential business insolvency (Owusu-Frimpong & Osei-Tutu, 2023).

Negative brand image

Negative brand image refers to the unfavorable perception and reputation of a brand in the minds of consumers, characterized by associations with poor quality, unreliability, unethical practices, or unsatisfactory customer service (Makhubela & Pretorius, 2021). In the context of export trade, a negative brand image is a key factor driving the failure of goods because it undermines consumer trust and demand in foreign markets (Casanova & Alvarez-Dardet, 2024). This is critical because potential buyers are less likely to purchase goods from a brand perceived negatively, regardless of the actual quality or benefits of the goods (Mahmoud & Sabbagh, 2022). This eroded trust can lead to diminished sales, hindered market entry, and increased difficulty in establishing distribution channels, ultimately causing the failure of exported tangible goods. Effective branding is crucial in building credibility and acceptance in international markets, where local consumer biases and competitive pressures are significant.

Health and safety concerns

Health and safety concerns refer to the potential risks and hazards that goods may pose to the well-being of consumers and the environment (Elnawasra & Abou-Ghaly, 2022). These concerns encompass a range of issues, including the presence of harmful chemicals, physical hazards, and non-compliance with safety standards (D'Alessio & Pierro, 2023). In the context of export trade, such concerns are a key factor driving the failure of goods because different countries have stringent regulations and standards to protect their citizens (Abdulmutallab & Farouk, 2020; Al-Mamun & Azim, 2023). As such, if exported goods fail to meet these health and safety requirements, they can be subject to recalls, bans, and legal penalties, leading to significant financial losses, damage to reputation, and loss of market access for exporters (Hassan & Khan, 2019). Consequently, failure to adhere to these standards results in goods being rejected or removed from the market, thus severely impacting the success of export ventures (Grekova & Serga, 2019).

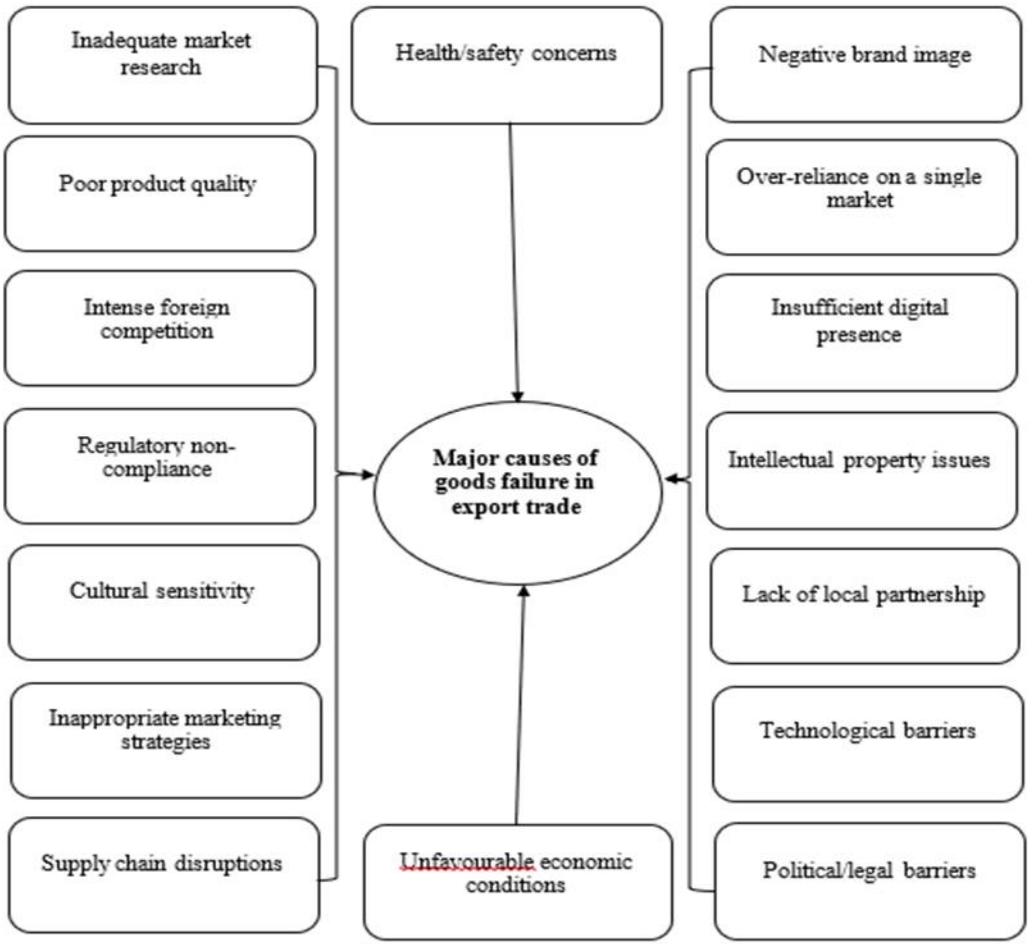

Figure 5 Major courses of goods failure in export trade

3.1.6. Research objective six: The major factors driving service failures in export trade in contemporary literature

This unit discusses the major factors driving service failures in export trade in extant scholarly literature. The analysis of relevant articles revealed that fifteen (15) factors emerged as the major factors driving service failures in the export trade context. These factors include: inferior service quality, supply chain disruption, technology gap, negative brand perception, intellectual property issues, economic fluctuations, payment/subscription issues, privacy and security concerns, lack of local expertise, lack of service customization, geopolitical tensions, cultural insensitivity, regulatory/legal constraints, market misunderstanding and foreign market competition. A comprehensive review of these relevant factors is presented on the account of relevant scholars.

Cultural insensitivity

Cultural insensitivity refers to a lack of awareness, understanding, or respect for the customs, beliefs, and practices of different cultural groups (Belkhouja & Yousfi, 2019). In the context of exporting services, cultural insensitivity can lead to misunderstandings, miscommunications, and a failure to meet the expectations and needs of the target market (Ankrah & Akamavi, 2021). As such, when service providers do not adapt their offerings to align with local cultural norms, values, and preferences, they risk alienating customers and damaging their brand reputation (Amiri & Ahmadi, 2023). This can result in poor customer satisfaction, reduced market penetration, and ultimately, the failure of the service in the foreign market (Al-Anazi & Jigba, 2020). For instance, a marketing strategy that works well in one country may be perceived as offensive or irrelevant in another due to differing cultural attitudes, leading to a disconnect between the service provider and the potential consumers. Thus, cultural insensitivity undermines the effectiveness of service exportation by failing to build the necessary cultural rapport and trust with foreign customers (Akman & Ozdemir, 2019).

Regulatory/legal constraints

Regulatory/legal constraints refer to the rules, laws, and regulations imposed by governments or regulatory bodies that businesses must comply with to operate legally (Chen & Chen, 2022). In the context of exporting services to foreign markets, these constraints are a key factor for failure because they can vary significantly between countries, creating complex barriers for service providers (Corbo & Pallotta, 2020). For instance, differing licensing requirements, data protection laws, and compliance standards can impose substantial costs and operational difficulties, making it challenging for businesses to adapt their services to meet local regulations (Bonilla, 2024; Egeland & Mervik, 2019). This complexity can lead to delays, increased expenses, or outright prohibition of services, ultimately hindering market entry and leading to the failure of exported services in international markets (De Silva & Jayawardena, 2021).

Market misunderstanding

Market misunderstanding refers to the lack of accurate knowledge and insight into the preferences, cultural nuances, legal requirements, and competitive landscape of a foreign market (Fawzi & ElBaradei, 2019). This misunderstanding is a key factor responsible for the failure of services exported to foreign markets because it leads to misaligned service offerings that do not meet local customer needs or expectations (El-Kassar & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2018). Without proper market research and adaptation, businesses may offer services that are culturally inappropriate, priced incorrectly, or non-compliant with local regulations (Kalkan, 2022). Consequently, these services fail to attract customers, resulting in poor market penetration and financial losses. Therefore, a deep understanding of the target market is crucial to successfully exporting and establishing services internationally (Gereffi & Diaz, 2021).

Foreign market competition

Foreign market competition refers to the rivalry between businesses from different countries, all vying for market share within the same international market. (Kim & Jang, 2023) This competition is a key factor responsible for the failure of services exported to foreign markets because it often involves competing against well-established local and international players who have a deeper understanding of the market dynamics, consumer preferences, and regulatory environment (Juma & Mwaura, 2019). These competitors may offer superior service quality, lower prices, or more effective marketing strategies, making it difficult for new entrants to gain traction (Ilouga & Gauzente, 2020). Additionally, foreign firms may face barriers such as cultural differences, logistical challenges, and compliance with local regulations, all of which can hinder their ability to compete effectively (Hu & Wang, 2024). As a result, many services fail to attract and retain customers in foreign markets, leading to the overall failure of the export venture (Hong & Lee, 2020).

Inferior service quality

Inferior service quality refers to the delivery of services that fail to meet customer expectations due to factors like poor performance, lack of reliability, insufficient customer support, and inadequate responsiveness (Lee & Fong, 2021). When services are exported to foreign markets, inferior service quality becomes a key factor for failure because it undermines trust and satisfaction among international customers who often have higher expectations and diverse standards (Masse-Ruiz & Rico, 2018). This discrepancy can lead to negative word-of-mouth, loss of competitive edge, and diminished brand reputation in the foreign market (Long & Wu, 2022). Moreover, cultural differences and miscommunication further exacerbate these issues, making it challenging to rectify and adapt services to meet local needs and preferences, ultimately resulting in the failure of the export trade endeavor (Mukherjee & Kang, 2020).

Supply chain disruption

Supply chain disruption refers to unexpected events that interrupt the normal flow of goods and materials within a supply chain, leading to delays, increased costs, and reduced efficiency (Mwita & Mwando, 2023). In the context of export trade, supply chain disruptions are a key factor responsible for the failure of services because they can significantly impact the timely delivery and quality of services provided to foreign markets (Neves & Alves, 2021). For instance, logistical delays, transportation strikes, natural disasters, or geopolitical tensions can hinder the movement of essential materials and personnel required for service delivery (Nkiti, 2019). This unreliability undermines the trust and satisfaction of international customers, leading to canceled contracts, financial losses, and reputational damage, ultimately causing service failures in export markets (Imran & Zakhaev, 2022).

Technology gap

The technology gap refers to the disparity in technological capabilities and infrastructure between countries or regions (Santos & Lança, 2018). This gap can lead to the failure of services exported to foreign markets because the technological environment in the target market may not support the advanced features or requirements of the exported services (Soares & Gomes, 2023). For instance, an exported digital service that relies on high-speed internet and modern devices may fail in a market where such infrastructure is lacking or where consumers are not familiar with the technology (Zeballos, 2020). This mismatch can result in poor user experience, decreased adoption rates, and ultimately the failure of the service to penetrate the market effectively (Neves & Alves, 2021). Thus, the technology gap is a critical factor in the export trade context, as it can undermine the compatibility and usability of services in foreign markets (Imran & Zakhaev, 2022).

Negative brand perception

Negative brand perception refers to the unfavorable view or opinion held by consumers about a brand, often due to poor past experiences, negative publicity, or perceived inferiority (Nkiti, 2019). In the context of export trade, negative brand perception is a key factor in the failure of services in foreign markets because it undermines trust and credibility, which are crucial for attracting and retaining customers in new territories (Mwita & Mwando, 2023). This is because when a service provider enters a foreign market with a tainted brand image, potential customers are likely to be skeptical of the service quality and reliability, leading to reduced uptake and market penetration (Mukherjee & Kang, 2020). This skepticism can be further amplified by cultural differences and local biases, making it challenging for the service to compete against established local providers or international competitors with stronger, more positive brand reputations (Ilouga & Gauzente, 2020). Consequently, the service struggles to gain a foothold, leading to poor performance and eventual withdrawal from the foreign market (Long & Wu, 2022).

Intellectual property issues

Intellectual property (IP) issues refer to the challenges and disputes arising from the creation, ownership, and use of intellectual assets such as patents, trademarks, copyrights, and trade secrets (Masse-Ruiz & Rico, 2018). These issues are critical in the context of exporting services to foreign markets due to the varying degrees of IP protection and enforcement across countries (Hong & Lee, 2020). This is because when IP laws are weak or poorly enforced, foreign businesses may face significant risks, including unauthorized use, replication, or theft of their proprietary technologies, processes, or brand identities (El-Kassar & Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, 2018). This undermines their competitive advantage and can lead to financial losses, reduced market share, and ultimately the failure of their service offerings in those markets (Fawzi & ElBaradei, 2019). The inability to secure and defend IP rights effectively deters investment and innovation, making it a key factor in the unsuccessful export of services (Kalkan, 2022).

Economic fluctuations

Economic fluctuations, also known as business cycles, refer to the periodic changes in economic activity, characterized by phases of expansion and contraction (Kalkan, 2022). These fluctuations can significantly impact the export of services due to their influence on demand, exchange rates, and investment climates in foreign markets. As such, during economic downturns, foreign consumers and businesses reduce spending, leading to decreased demand for imported services (Egeland & Mervik, 2019). Moreover, unfavorable exchange rates during periods of economic instability can make services more expensive for foreign buyers (Ilouga & Gauzente, 2020). Additionally, economic uncertainty can deter investment and disrupt financial systems, making it challenging for service providers to maintain operations abroad (Masse-Ruiz & Rico, 2018). Consequently, these factors collectively undermine the stability and profitability of exporting services, contributing to their failure in foreign markets (Gereffi & Diaz, 2021).

Payment/subscription issues

Payment and subscription issues in the context of export trade refer to the challenges and complications associated with ensuring that international customers can efficiently and securely pay for services and maintain their subscriptions (Neves & Alves, 2021). These issues often arise due to differences in payment systems, currency exchange complexities, regulatory barriers, and the lack of localized payment options that cater to the preferences and legal requirements of foreign markets (Masse-Ruiz & Rico, 2018). This is a key factor in the failure of services exported to foreign markets because it directly impacts the ease and reliability with which customers can access and continue using the service (Juma & Mwaura, 2019). As such, if customers face hurdles in making payments or managing their subscriptions, such as limited payment method options, high transaction fees, or complex procedures, they are less likely to engage with and sustain the service, leading to reduced adoption and retention rates (Lee & Fong, 2021). Consequently, this undermines the revenue potential and overall success of the service in international markets.

Privacy and security concerns

Privacy and security concerns refer to the apprehensions and risks associated with protecting sensitive personal and corporate data from unauthorized access, breaches, and misuse (Imran & Zakhaev, 2022). In the context of exporting services to foreign markets, these concerns are pivotal because different countries have varying regulations and standards regarding data protection (Santos & Lança, 2018). This is because when service providers fail to meet the stringent privacy and security requirements of the target market, they face legal challenges, loss of consumer trust, and potential financial penalties (Soares & Gomes, 2023). This failure to comply can lead to a rejection of their services, eroding market confidence and ultimately causing the venture to fail (Masse-Ruiz & Rico, 2018). Hence, ensuring robust privacy and security measures is essential to overcoming these barriers and succeeding in international service trade (Zeballos, 2020).

Lack of local expertise

Lack of local expertise refers to the insufficient understanding and knowledge about the local market conditions, cultural nuances, regulatory environment, and consumer preferences in a foreign market (Gereffi & Diaz, 2021). This deficiency is a key factor responsible for the failure of services exported to foreign markets because without local expertise, service providers often misjudge market demands, fail to comply with local regulations, and inadequately adapt their offerings to meet the cultural expectations and needs of local consumers (Mwita & Mwando, 2023; Kalkan, 2022). Consequently, this leads to poor market penetration, reduced customer satisfaction, and ultimately, the inability to compete effectively with local service providers who possess inherent insights and established relationships within the market (Mukherjee & Kang, 2020; Egeland & Mervik, 2019).

Lack of service customization

Lack of service customization refers to the failure to adapt services to meet the unique preferences, cultural nuances, regulatory requirements, and market conditions of foreign markets (Bonilla, 2024). This oversight often results in services that do not resonate with local consumers or comply with local standards, leading to poor customer satisfaction and legal issues (Chen & Chen, 2022). In the context of export trade, this is a critical factor for failure because what works in the domestic market may not translate effectively overseas (Corbo & Pallotta, 2020). Without tailoring services to align with the specific needs and expectations of the target market, companies face barriers to acceptance, reduced competitiveness, and ultimately, the inability to establish a sustainable presence in foreign markets (De Silva & Jayawardena, 2021).

Geopolitical tensions

Geopolitical tensions refer to the strained political relationships and conflicts between countries or regions, often involving issues like territorial disputes, trade disagreements, or ideological clashes (Ankrah & Akamavi, 2021). These tensions can significantly impact the export of services by creating an environment of uncertainty and instability, leading to the imposition of trade barriers, sanctions, and tariffs (Akman & Ozdemir, 2019; De Silva & Jayawardena, 2021). Additionally, such tensions can cause a lack of trust and cooperation between countries, disrupt communication channels, and hinder the smooth functioning of international contracts and agreements (Al-Anazi & Jigba, 2020). Consequently, service providers may face difficulties in entering or sustaining their presence in foreign markets, ultimately resulting in the failure of services exported to these regions due to increased operational risks and reduced market access (Corbo & Pallotta, 2020).

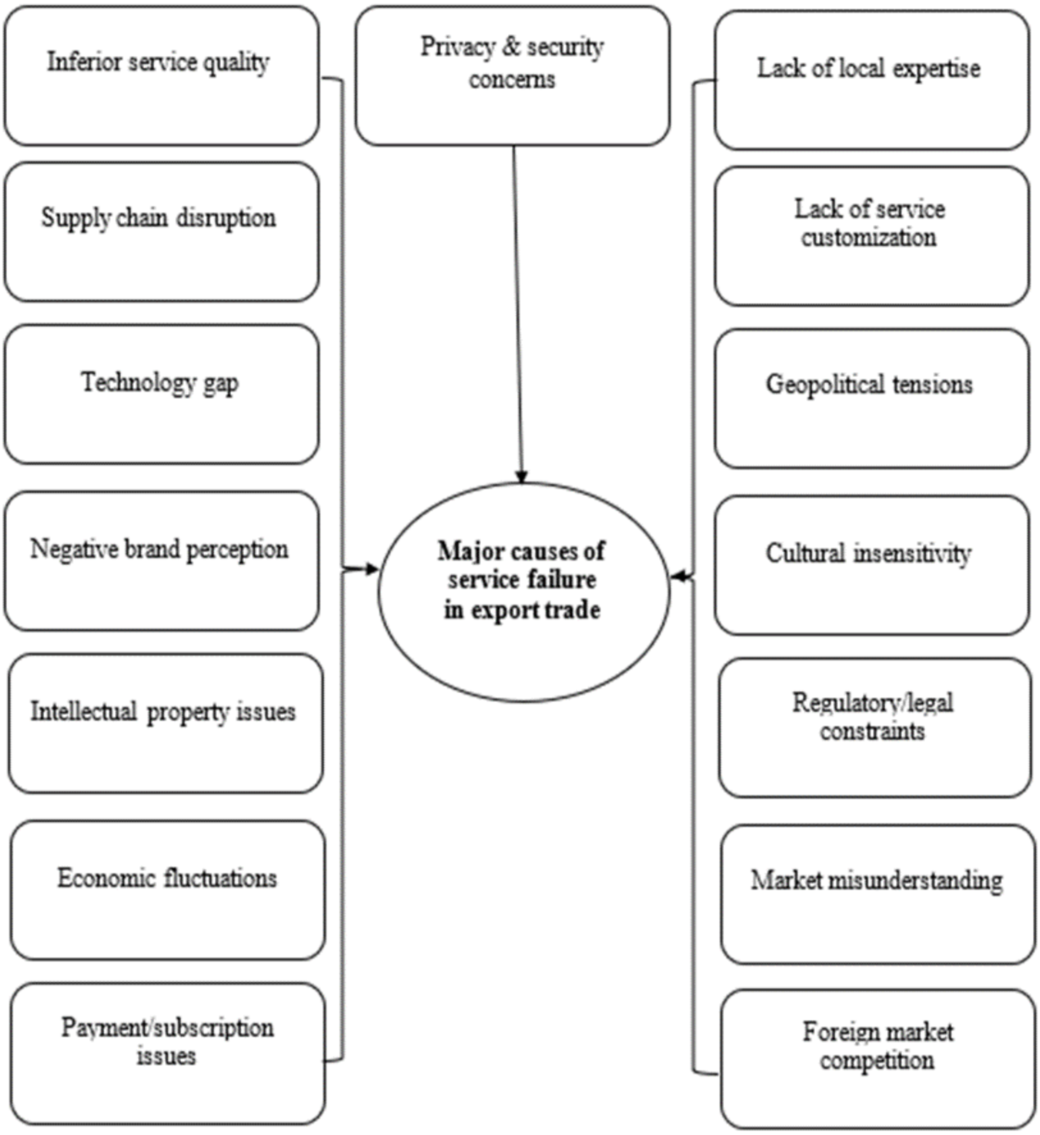

Figure 6 Major causes of service failure in export trade

4. Discussion of research findings

This study's thorough scholarly literature analysis yielded significant findings. Initially, nine key factors emerged for goods quality in export trade: conformance, durability, reliability, features, aesthetics, usability, serviceability, environmental impact, and innovation. Focusing on these ensures international standards are met, customer expectations are satisfied, and competitiveness is maintained. For service quality, thirteen critical dimensions were identified, such as responsiveness and transparency, essential for operational efficiency and client trust. Goods failure analysis revealed twelve dimensions, including manufacturing defects and logistics failures, stressing the need for robust product adaptation and logistics for market integrity. Similarly, service failures, encompassing factors like regulatory compliance and cultural sensitivity failures, underscored the importance of comprehensive service delivery strategies for customer satisfaction and market competitiveness. Lastly, drivers of goods and service failures in export markets highlighted sixteen and fifteen factors respectively, emphasizing the multifaceted challenges companies face, from market research and product quality to geopolitical tensions and regulatory compliance.

5. Conclusion and recommendations

This study investigated product quality and failure in export trade with special emphasis on the causes of failure for both goods and services in this context. It was carried out in recognition of the enormous adverse impacts of poor-quality exports to the performance and sustainability of export-based companies. From the findings of this literature-based study, it is concluded that product quality and failures in the context of export trade is a multi-faceted phenomenon, with a torrent of factors potentially affecting export companies in foreign markets. Whether the merchandise be goods or services, this study underscores that maintaining high levels of quality on a consistent basis is essential for foreign market penetration and product failure mitigation. To that end, the following recommendations are suggested to enable export companies to maximize success in foreign markets:

1. It is essential for export companies to conduct comprehensive market research before foreign-market entry in order to understand the specific needs and preferences of the target market so as to tailor goods and services accordingly. Market research will help companies in identifying potential risks and barriers to entry, such as cultural differences, competitive landscape, and regulatory requirements. By being well-informed, these companies can avoid costly mistakes and ensure their products are well-received by the foreign market.
2. Export companies planning to enter foreign markets should prioritize the notion of cultural sensitivity by ensuring that goods and services exported align closely with the cultural norms and values of foreign markets in order to accelerate product acceptance and mitigate failure incidents. By delivering goods and services that are in compliance with the cultural standards of foreign markets, export companies will be perceived positively by target customers, which increases the odds of foreign market success.
3. Export companies should implement a robust quality management system (QMS) which provides a structured framework for consistently producing high-quality products, minimizing defects and ensuring that the final product meets international standards. By adhering to QMS principles, export companies can identify potential issues early in the production process and implement corrective actions. This reduces the likelihood of product recalls or rejections in foreign markets, thereby maintaining a strong reputation and customer trust.
4. It is imperative for export companies to embrace manufacturing automation by utilizing advanced technologies such as artificial intelligence (AI) and internet of things (IoT) to significantly improve the precision and efficiency of manufacturing processes. These technologies can detect and correct errors in real-time, ensuring a consistently high level of product quality. By implementing predictive maintenance and real-time monitoring, companies can prevent equipment failures and production downtime, ensuring timely delivery of quality products to foreign markets.
5. Export companies need to develop strong supplier relationships and conduct regular audits in order to ensure a consistent supply of high-quality raw materials, while ensuring that suppliers abide by the companies' quality standards. By conducting thorough and frequent supplier audits, companies can ensure that their suppliers adhere to stringent quality standards. This proactive approach helps in preventing supply chain disruptions and quality lapses, reducing the risk of product failures in the market.

Suggestions for further studies

This study reviewed existing literature qualitatively, so it does not provide concrete empirical evidence on how quality aspects of goods and services reduce product failures in export trade. Instead, it identified key quality dimensions and reasons for product or service failures in this context. Future research should use quantitative or mixed methods to evaluate the effectiveness of these quality dimensions in preventing failures, particularly for developed nations relying on export revenues. Such research will go beyond identifying key quality dimensions and causes of failure, enabling a statistical examination of these factors in real-world scenarios. By employing stringent quantitative methods, researchers can offer concrete recommendations to enhance product quality standards and reduce failure rates, promoting more reliable and resilient export trade practices.

Compliance with ethical standards

Disclosure of conflict of interest

No conflict of interest to be disclosed.

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