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Push and Pull factors affecting firms' internationalisation choices: evidence from rural enterprises in West Africa

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Abstract: *This study examined the push and pull factors affecting firms' internationalisation choices among rural enterprises in West Africa, with the main objective of examining how these factors influence internationalisation decisions, while specifically comparing how push and pull factors shape internationalisation strategies across different West African countries. The study adopted a qualitative research design, and the target population consisted of rural entrepreneurs from four Commonwealth countries in West Africa, with a sample of 40 participants selected through snowball sampling. Primary data were collected through semi structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings revealed that push factors impaired internationalisation decisions through limited domestic markets, poor infrastructure, and unstable government policies, while pull factors encouraged internationalisation through larger markets, better profits, regional trade opportunities, and stronger business networks, with variations across countries resulting from differences in infrastructure, government support, domestic market conditions, export opportunities, networking strength, and geographical advantages. The study concluded that the internationalisation choices of rural enterprises are shaped by the interaction between domestic challenges and external opportunities, with country specific conditions influencing the strategies adopted by firms. The study recommended that governments in West African countries should improve rural infrastructure, expand domestic market access, and maintain stable business and trade policies to reduce the constraints that discourage rural enterprises from pursuing international markets.*

Keywords— Push factors, Pull factors, Internationalisation, Rural enterprises, West Africa

1. INTRODUCTION

In today's world where businesses are no longer limited to their home countries, companies of all sizes are looking beyond national borders to find new customers, grow their revenues, and stay competitive (Kamkankaew et al., 2025). This could be true even for rural enterprises in West Africa, which play a major role in local economies by creating jobs, producing goods, and supporting communities (Kegnide et al., 2024). However, expanding internationally is not easy for these firms. Igwe et al. (2025) and Sam-Sorungbe (2025) argued that many face challenges like poor road networks, unreliable electricity, limited access to finance, and low adoption of technology. At the same time, globalisation, regional trade agreements, and foreign investment opportunities create chances for these businesses to reach new markets (Fajimolu et al., 2025; Dizo-Conteh et al., 2025; Ojo & Adelakun, 2025). Rural enterprises often have to make careful choices about whether to stay local or try to sell their products abroad. Their decisions are influenced by the mix of challenges they face at home and the opportunities they see in foreign markets. Understanding the environment these firms operate in is important because it explains why some succeed internationally while others struggle (Fasanya et al., 2022). West Africa's business domain appears unique, with a combination of growing urban centers and widespread rural areas. Rural enterprises operate in this mix, balancing local needs with opportunities outside their borders (Mulibana & Tshikovhi, 2024). Unlike previous studies that did not focus on rural enterprises, studying these firms gives us a clearer picture of the forces that shape their international growth.

Researchers such as Diaz-Moriana et al. (2025) and Jiménez-Asenjo et al. (2025) strongly argued that internationalisation is an important step for any firm that wants to grow. Their reason was that for businesses, selling in foreign markets can bring higher profits, access to new customers, and opportunities to learn new ways of working (Diaz-Moriana et al., 2025; Jiménez-Asenjo et al., 2025). In a business world that changes so fast, being able to operate internationally can help firms survive and thrive. Small and medium-sized enterprises, including those in rural areas, are encouraged to explore international markets because it can make them more resilient and competitive (Moreira et al., 2024). Expanding abroad can also push firms to improve quality, adopt new technologies, and meet higher standards, which benefits the business as a whole. For rural enterprises in West Africa, going international is more than just a growth strategy; it is also a way to strengthen their position in the economy. These firms must carefully weigh the potential gains against the risks, such as unfamiliar regulations or the cost of entering a new market. Understanding why firms choose to internationalise, how they do it, and the results they achieve is important for both business leaders and policymakers.

This Thesis will borrow from the postulation by Odunukan et al. (2022) and Chishty et al. (2025) that the choices rural enterprises make about international markets are shaped by push and pull factors. Push factors are pressures that drive firms to look beyond their domestic market, like limited local demand, high competition, or shrinking profits. Pull factors, on the other hand, are the attractions of foreign markets, such as larger customer bases, better business infrastructure, and more favourable trade conditions (Chishty et al., 2025). In West Africa, these factors interact in complex ways. Many rural enterprises feel pushed to expand because of poor local infrastructure, high production costs, or small domestic markets. At the same time, opportunities like regional trade agreements, rising demand for agricultural products, and support programs for exporters act as pull factors, encouraging firms to try international markets (Fasanya et al., 2022). These combined forces influence the strategies rural firms adopt, the markets they enter, and how much effort and resources they invest. Studying push and pull factors gives a real-world look at why some rural enterprises succeed abroad while others do not.

2.0 Literature and Rationale of the Study

Firms that operate in rural areas of West Africa appear to have the potential to grow beyond their local markets and participate in international trade. When rural enterprises are able to expand into foreign markets, they can increase their revenues, reach new customers, and strengthen their long-term sustainability (Odunukan et al., 2022). Expanding internationally also allows these firms to adopt better business practices, improve the quality of their products, and compete more effectively in regional and global markets. In such a situation, rural enterprises would not only contribute to their own growth but also support the economic development of their communities by creating jobs, encouraging innovation, and stimulating local industries. A business environment where rural firms can easily explore international opportunities would encourage growth, resilience, and competitiveness across the region (Hack-Polay et al., 2021).

In reality, many rural enterprises in West Africa face significant challenges that limit their ability to expand internationally, as poor infrastructure, limited access to finance, lack of market information, and weak technological adoption often prevent these firms from taking advantage of foreign markets (Odunukan et al., 2022). Even when opportunities exist, these businesses may lack the knowledge, resources, or networks to navigate the complexities of international trade. Local competition, small domestic markets, and high operational costs add additional pressure, pushing firms to remain focused on short-term survival rather than long-term growth (Hack-Polay et al., 2021). These conditions mean that rural enterprises are often constrained to local markets, unable to fully realise their potential or benefit from the opportunities available outside their immediate environment.

The consequences of this situation are significant for both the firms and the wider economy. Firms that cannot expand internationally may struggle to grow, remain vulnerable to local economic fluctuations, and fail to develop the capacity needed to compete more broadly (Gupta et al., 2024). This limits their contribution to employment, innovation, and income generation in rural areas. On a larger scale, when rural enterprises remain confined to local markets, the region misses out on the economic benefits of trade, investment, and integration into regional supply chains. Existing literature on firm internationalisation has provided extensive evidence on the drivers, barriers, and outcomes of cross-border expansion, particularly among small and medium-sized enterprises. Several studies have examined internationalisation in African and Sub-Saharan contexts, focusing on institutional constraints, firm capabilities, entrepreneurial orientation, and market access (Fasanya et al., 2022; Igwe et al., 2025; Sam-Sorungbe, 2025). Other research has explored internationalisation from broader comparative or thematic perspectives, including diaspora networks, family firms, born-global enterprises, and sector-specific cases, often outside rural or West African contexts (Chishty et al., 2025; Diaz-Moriana et al., 2025; Dizo-Conteh et al., 2025; Moreira et al., 2024). While a limited number of studies have examined rural SMEs, these have largely focused on single-country cases or on social and organisational outcomes rather than on how push and pull factors shape internationalisation decisions (Hack-Polay et al., 2021; Odunukan et al., 2022). Moreover, much of the existing literature relies predominantly on quantitative methods, which restrict deeper understanding of entrepreneurs' lived experiences and interpretations of internationalisation pressures and opportunities (Fajimolu et al., 2025; Ojo & Adelakun, 2025). Studies conducted in non-African or urban-focused settings, such as those on Thai SMEs, European firms, or Latin American enterprises, offer useful insights but lack contextual relevance to rural West Africa (Kamkankaew et al., 2025; Jiménez-Asenjo et al., 2024). Additionally, comparative qualitative studies examining rural enterprises across multiple West African countries remain notably scarce, despite institutional, cultural, and economic differences within the region (Mulibana & Tshikovhi, 2024; Kegnide et al., 2024). As a result, there is limited empirical understanding of how push and pull factors influence the internationalisation strategies of rural enterprises in West Africa from a comparative, entrepreneur-centred perspective. This study addresses this gap by adopting a qualitative, interview-based approach across four West African Commonwealth countries, providing comparative evidence that existing research has not sufficiently explored.

2.1 Research Questions

1. How do push factors impair the internationalisation decisions of rural firms?
2. How do pull factors attract rural enterprises in West Africa to expand internationally?
3. What is the comparative difference in the way push factors influence the internationalisation strategies of rural enterprises in different West African countries?
4. What is the comparative difference in the way pull factors influence the internationalisation strategies of rural enterprises in different West African countries?

2.2 Theoretical Framework

The study was anchored on the Push and Pull Theory of Entrepreneurship, developed by Raphael Amit and Eitan Muller in 1995 (Amit & Muller, 1995). The theory was introduced to explain the different reasons why individuals and firms decide to engage in entrepreneurial activities. Amit and Muller argued that entrepreneurial decisions are influenced by conditions that either force people to seek better opportunities or attract them to more rewarding business prospects. Since its development, the theory has been widely applied in entrepreneurship and business studies to explain business formation, expansion, and decisions to enter new markets under different economic and institutional conditions.

The theory postulates that entrepreneurial behaviour is influenced by two broad categories of factors known as push and pull factors (Nworie & Chiekezie, 2026). Push factors are unfavourable conditions that encourage entrepreneurs to move away from their current situation. These include limited market opportunities, poor infrastructure, high business costs, unemployment, declining profits, and unfavourable government policies. Pull factors are attractive conditions that encourage entrepreneurs to pursue new opportunities. These include access to larger markets, better profit prospects, favourable business environments, improved infrastructure, stronger business networks, and supportive trade policies. The theory maintains that entrepreneurial decisions result from the combined influence of these pressures and attractions, with the strength of each factor differing across business environments.

The Push and Pull Theory of Entrepreneurship is relevant to this study because it provides a suitable explanation for the internationalisation choices of rural enterprises in West Africa. The study examined how domestic challenges such as limited local markets, poor infrastructure, and unstable government policies influenced firms to consider international expansion, while also examining how larger foreign markets, better profit opportunities, regional trade, and business networks attracted them to international markets. The theory also supports the comparative aspect of the study by explaining that the influence of push and pull factors may differ across countries because business environments, government support, infrastructure, and market conditions are not the same. It therefore provides a suitable foundation for explaining the different internationalisation strategies adopted by rural enterprises across the selected West African countries.

3.0 Methodology

This study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy, which emphasized understanding the experiences, perceptions, and meanings that rural entrepreneurs attached to their internationalisation decisions. The interpretivist approach was particularly suited to exploring complex social phenomena where context and personal experience played a crucial role.

An inductive approach underpinned the study, as the research aimed to generate insights and patterns from the data rather than testing predetermined hypotheses. By allowing themes and concepts to emerge from the participants' responses, the study developed a detailed understanding of the factors shaping internationalisation decisions in rural West African enterprises. This approach was particularly appropriate given the limited prior research on comparative internationalisation in rural enterprises across multiple West African countries.

The study employed qualitative research methods and collected primary data through semi structured interviews. The target population consisted of rural entrepreneurs from four Commonwealth countries in West Africa, with 10 participants from each country, resulting in a total sample size of 40. Participants were recruited using the snowball sampling technique, which was suitable for accessing a dispersed and potentially hard to reach population. Snowball sampling allowed the initial participants to refer other entrepreneurs who met the study criteria, thereby facilitating the identification of individuals with relevant experiences in internationalisation.

Semi structured interviews were conducted to provide flexibility in exploring individual experiences while ensuring that key topics related to push and pull factors were consistently addressed across participants. The collected data were analyzed using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis enabled the identification, examination, and reporting of patterns and themes within the qualitative data. By coding the data systematically, the study captured recurring ideas, perceptions, and experiences that explained how push and pull factors affected internationalisation strategies in rural enterprises.

4.0 Results

4.1 Analysis of Research Question I

How do push factors impair the internationalisation decisions of rural firms?

The thematic analysis identified three major themes explaining how push factors impaired the internationalisation decisions of rural firms: limited domestic market opportunities, inadequate infrastructure, and policy uncertainty. Most participants stated that the small size of local markets reduced their ability to increase sales, making international expansion appear necessary despite the associated risks. A Ghanaian entrepreneur explained, *"Our village market is too small to sustain the business, but exporting is expensive and difficult."* Similar views were expressed across the four countries, suggesting that domestic market limitations were a common challenge.

Another recurring theme was inadequate infrastructure. Participants frequently referred to poor road networks, unstable electricity supply, and limited access to internet services as barriers that weakened production capacity and reduced their competitiveness in foreign markets. One participant from Sierra Leone remarked, *"Sometimes goods are delayed because the roads are bad, and buyers lose* *confidence in us."* These infrastructural deficiencies discouraged many firms from pursuing international opportunities.

Policy uncertainty also emerged as an important push factor. Entrepreneurs described frequent changes in export regulations, inconsistent government support, and delays in obtaining export permits. A Nigerian participant stated, *"The rules keep changing, and we never know what new requirement will come next."* Such uncertainty increased operational costs and discouraged investment in international activities.

Although these challenges were reported across all four countries, participants from Nigeria and Sierra Leone discussed infrastructure and regulatory issues more frequently than those from Ghana and The Gambia. In all, the findings suggest that push factors did not merely encourage firms to look beyond domestic markets but also created obstacles that limited their readiness for internationalisation. The interaction between weak local business conditions and institutional constraints shaped the strategic decisions of rural enterprises regarding foreign market entry.

Finding: Push factors impaired internationalisation decisions mainly through limited domestic markets, poor infrastructure, and unstable government policies.

4.2 Analysis of Research Question II

How do pull factors attract rural enterprises in West Africa to expand internationally?

Analysis of the interview data revealed four major themes influencing international expansion: access to larger markets, higher profit opportunities, regional trade integration, and business networking. Participants consistently stated that foreign markets provided greater opportunities to increase sales than their domestic markets. Many entrepreneurs believed that expanding beyond national borders would expose them to a larger customer base and reduce dependence on seasonal local demand. As a participant from Ghana noted, *"Selling across borders gives us customers throughout the year."*

Higher profitability emerged as another dominant theme. Several respondents explained that international buyers often paid better prices for agricultural products and processed goods. One entrepreneur from Nigeria observed, *"Export buyers pay more than local traders, even after transportation costs."* Better prices encouraged firms to improve product quality and consider international expansion as a long term business strategy.

Regional trade agreements also influenced internationalisation decisions. Entrepreneurs appreciated the easier movement of goods within neighbouring West African countries and regarded regional markets as stepping stones to wider international markets. A participant from The Gambia explained, *"Trading within ECOWAS is easier than exporting to Europe, so we started with neighbouring countries."*

Business relationships and networking constituted another important attraction. Participants highlighted the role of trade fairs, cooperative societies, and referrals from existing exporters in creating confidence to enter foreign markets. Many respondents explained that connections with experienced exporters reduced uncertainty and provided useful information about market requirements.

Although the relative importance of these themes differed slightly across countries, respondents generally agreed that pull factors increased confidence and encouraged rural firms to seek growth opportunities outside their domestic economies. These attractions outweighed many of the difficulties associated with international business.

Finding: Pull factors encouraged internationalisation through larger markets, better profits, regional trade opportunities, and stronger business networks.

4.3 Analysis of Research Question III

What is the comparative difference in the way push factors influence the internationalisation strategies of rural enterprises in different West African countries?

The comparative analysis showed that while push factors existed across all four countries, their influence varied according to national economic and institutional conditions. Three themes emerged: infrastructure disparities, differences in government support, and domestic market size.

Infrastructure challenges were reported by participants from all countries but appeared more severe among respondents from Nigeria and Sierra Leone. These participants frequently described unreliable electricity, poor transportation systems, and high logistics costs. A Sierra Leonean entrepreneur explained, *"Transporting products to the port is our biggest challenge."* In contrast, several Ghanaian participants acknowledged infrastructure challenges but described them as more manageable.

Government support represented another area of variation. Entrepreneurs from Ghana generally reported better access to export information and business support services than participants from Nigeria and Sierra Leone. A Ghanaian respondent remarked, *"There are agencies that guide small exporters through the process."* Conversely, Nigerian participants often described bureaucratic delays and inconsistent policy implementation.

Differences in domestic market conditions also shaped internationalisation strategies. Respondents from The Gambia explained that the relatively small domestic market encouraged firms to pursue international markets earlier in their business development. Nigerian entrepreneurs, however, indicated that the larger domestic market sometimes delayed international expansion until local opportunities became saturated.

These differences influenced strategic decisions in different ways. Firms operating in countries with stronger institutional support adopted more proactive internationalisation strategies, while firms facing greater structural challenges tended to expand cautiously or through neighbouring countries first. Despite these differences, participants generally agreed that domestic constraints remained an important driver of internationalisation across the region.

Finding: The influence of push factors differed across countries because of variations in infrastructure, government support, and domestic market conditions.

4.4 Analysis of Research Question IV

What is the comparative difference in the way pull factors influence the internationalisation strategies of rural enterprises in different West African countries?

The findings identified three major themes explaining differences in the influence of pull factors across countries: export opportunities, access to business networks, and geographical location. Participants from all four countries recognized international markets as attractive, but the reasons for expansion varied according to their business environments.

Export opportunities were perceived differently among participants. Ghanaian entrepreneurs frequently emphasized established export channels for agricultural products, which made internationalisation appear more achievable. A participant explained, *"There is already a market for cocoa and processed foods abroad."* Nigerian respondents focused more on product diversification and reaching larger consumer markets rather than relying on established export systems.

Business networking also varied across countries. Entrepreneurs from Ghana and The Gambia reported stronger participation in trade associations and regional business forums, enabling easier access to foreign buyers. A Gambian participant stated, *"Most of our export contacts came through business associations."* Participants from Sierra Leone, however, reported fewer networking opportunities and greater dependence on personal relationships.

Geographical location influenced internationalisation strategies as well. Respondents from The Gambia highlighted the advantages of proximity to neighbouring markets, while Nigerian participants stressed the importance of serving larger regional markets before considering international destinations outside Africa. These geographical differences shaped market selection and entry strategies.

Despite these variations, all participants agreed that foreign markets offered greater opportunities for growth, improved revenue, and business sustainability. The pull factors therefore operated across countries but differed in strength depending on institutional support, networking opportunities, and geographic advantages.

Finding: The influence of pull factors varied among countries according to export opportunities, networking strength, and geographical advantages, leading to different internationalisation strategies.

4.5 Discussion of Findings

The finding that push factors impaired internationalisation decisions mainly through limited domestic markets, poor infrastructure, and unstable government policies suggests that many rural enterprises in West Africa are driven to consider foreign markets because their home business environment does not provide enough opportunities for sustainable growth. Limited domestic markets reduce sales opportunities, making it difficult for firms to increase revenue and achieve economies of scale. Poor infrastructure raises transportation, production, and communication costs, while unstable government policies create uncertainty that discourages long term business planning. These conditions weaken firms' competitiveness and force business owners to seek more favourable environments outside their home countries. This finding agrees with the studies of Odunukan et al. (2022) and Hack Polay et al. (2021), who found that poor infrastructure, financial constraints, and weak domestic conditions limit the growth of rural enterprises and influence their international expansion decisions. It is also consistent with Fasanya et al. (2022), who reported that institutional constraints and market limitations affect firms' ability to compete internationally. Similarly, Chishty et al. (2025) explained that pressures such as limited local demand, weak infrastructure, and unfavourable domestic conditions serve as important push factors that encourage firms to explore international markets.

The finding that pull factors encouraged internationalisation through larger markets, better profits, regional trade opportunities, and stronger business networks indicates that rural enterprises are attracted by the benefits available in foreign markets. Larger markets provide access to more customers, while higher profit opportunities improve business performance and encourage investment. Regional trade agreements reduce trade barriers and make it easier for firms to expand across borders. Strong business networks also provide information, partnerships, and market connections that reduce the risks associated with international expansion. These favourable conditions make internationalisation an attractive business strategy rather than merely a response to domestic challenges. This finding supports the studies of Diaz Moriana et al. (2025) and Jiménez Asenjo et al. (2025), who found that firms expand internationally to gain access to larger markets, improve profitability, and strengthen competitiveness. It also agrees with Moreira et al. (2024), who concluded that international expansion improves business resilience and encourages innovation among small and medium sized enterprises. Likewise, Dizo Conteh et al. (2025) reported that regional trade opportunities and external business support encourage firms to enter international markets.

The finding that the influence of push factors differed across countries because of variations in infrastructure, government support, and domestic market conditions shows that rural enterprises do not experience the same level of pressure in every country. Some countries provide better infrastructure, stronger government support, and more stable domestic markets, reducing the need for firms to seek opportunities abroad. In contrast, firms operating in countries with weaker institutions and poorer infrastructure face stronger pressure to internationalise as a means of survival and growth. These differences explain why firms adopt different internationalisation decisions depending on the conditions within their respective countries. This finding is supported by Mulibana and Tshikovhi (2024), who noted that differences in economic and institutional environments shape the experiences of rural enterprises across African countries. It also agrees with Kegnide et al. (2024), who observed that institutional and economic differences influence business development across West African countries. Similarly, Fasanya et al. (2022) found that institutional conditions affect firms' international competitiveness, while Igwe et al. (2025) reported that variations in national business environments influence internationalisation decisions among African enterprises.

The finding that the influence of pull factors varied among countries according to export opportunities, networking strength, and geographical advantages indicates that the attractiveness of international markets is not the same across all countries. Countries with better access to export markets, stronger business networks, and favourable geographical locations provide greater opportunities for firms to internationalise successfully. These advantages reduce the cost of entering foreign markets and improve firms' ability to establish international business relationships. In countries where these opportunities are limited, firms may find international expansion more difficult despite the existence of foreign market opportunities. This finding agrees with Fajimolu et al. (2025), who found that international opportunities are influenced by differences in market access and trade conditions. It is also consistent with Ojo and Adelakun (2025), who showed that networking and access to international business information encourage export activities. Furthermore, Dizo Conteh et al. (2025) reported that regional trade opportunities and foreign investment support international expansion, while Moreira et al. (2024) found that external market opportunities and international networks strengthen firms' competitiveness and international growth.

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings indicate that the internationalisation decisions of rural enterprises in West Africa are shaped by the combined influence of domestic constraints and external opportunities, with the balance between these forces differing across national contexts. This shows that international expansion is not determined by a single factor but by the interaction between business conditions within the home country and the attractiveness of foreign markets. The presence of limited domestic markets, weak infrastructure, and unstable government policies means that many rural firms operate under conditions that restrict growth and reduce their capacity to compete internationally. At the same time, the attraction of larger markets, higher returns, regional trade opportunities, and stronger business networks demonstrates that rural enterprises recognise internationalisation as a means of improving business performance and long term sustainability. The differences observed across countries further show that the environment in which rural firms operate plays an important role in shaping their internationalisation strategies, resulting in different responses even among enterprises facing similar business objectives. These outcomes also highlight that regional integration alone does not create uniform internationalisation patterns because variations in infrastructure, institutional support, market size, and geographical position continue to influence business decisions. Consequently, the findings contribute to a broader understanding of firm internationalisation by showing that rural enterprises respond differently to the same push and pull forces depending on their operating environment. They also strengthen the argument that studies of internationalisation should pay closer attention to local conditions and country specific characteristics rather than assuming that rural enterprises across West Africa experience identical motivations, opportunities, and constraints when making international expansion decisions. In line with the findings, the study recommended the following:

1. **Governments in West African countries** should improve rural infrastructure, expand domestic market access, and maintain stable business and trade policies to reduce the constraints that discourage rural enterprises from pursuing international markets.

2. **Regional trade organisations and export promotion agencies** should strengthen programmes that connect rural enterprises with foreign buyers, trade fairs, market information, and cross border business networks so that firms can take greater advantage of international market opportunities.

3. **National governments and business support institutions in each West African country** should develop country specific internationalisation support programmes that reflect differences in infrastructure, government capacity, and domestic market conditions rather than applying the same approach across all countries.

4. **Export promotion agencies, chambers of commerce, and regional business associations** should establish stronger cross border networking

platforms and market access initiatives that reflect the export opportunities and geographical strengths of individual countries, enabling rural enterprises to adopt internationalisation strategies that match their business environment.

5.1 Limitations of the study and Suggestion for Further Studies

This study was limited to rural entrepreneurs from four Commonwealth countries in West Africa, which means the findings may not fully represent rural enterprises in other countries within or outside the region. The study also relied on qualitative interviews, so the results were based on the experiences and opinions shared by the participants. Since only 40 entrepreneurs participated, there is a chance that other rural business owners may have different views that were not captured. In addition, some participants may have forgotten certain experiences or may not have explained them in full during the interviews. The study focused only on push and pull factors affecting internationalisation decisions and did not examine other issues such as firm size, management experience, digital technology, or financial performance, which may also influence the international expansion of rural enterprises.

Future studies should examine rural enterprises in more West African countries so that the findings can reflect a wider range of business environments and experiences. Researchers may also include a larger number of participants to capture more opinions from rural entrepreneurs. Further studies can combine interviews with questionnaire surveys to compare qualitative and quantitative evidence and provide a broader understanding of internationalisation decisions. There is also a need to examine how factors such as access to finance, digital technology, entrepreneurial skills, government support programmes, and business experience influence the international growth of rural enterprises. Future research may compare rural and urban enterprises to determine whether the factors influencing internationalisation differ between the two groups. Such studies would provide additional evidence that can improve understanding of internationalisation among small businesses in West Africa.

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