

## ABSTRACT

Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) are critical to economic development, yet their internationalisation, particularly in emerging economies, is often constrained by resource limitations and competitive pressures. This study integrates Porter's Generic Strategies with Intellectual Capital Theory and draws on Institutional Theory to examine the moderating role of Export Promotion Programs (EPPs) in enhancing SME international performance. Using a quantitative survey of 280 SMEs in Ghana's Non-Traditional Export (NTE) sector, data were analysed through Covariance-Based Structural Equation Modelling (CB-SEM). The study investigates how differentiation and cost leadership strategies, alongside human, structural, and relational capital, influence international performance, and how EPPs, categorised as information-related, education and training-related, and trade mobility-related, moderate these relationships. Findings reveal that both differentiation and cost leadership significantly enhance performance, while only structural capital among the intellectual capital components has a significant positive effect. EPPs positively moderate the effects of strategic orientation and structural capital but negatively moderate the influence of human and relational capital on international performance. The study makes a novel theoretical contribution by being the first to complement Porter's Generic Strategies with Intellectual Capital Theory and Institutional Theory in the context of SME internationalisation. This integrated framework extends existing knowledge by explaining how competitive positioning and intangible resources interact under institutional influences to shape international performance. Practically, the study highlights the need for SMEs to strengthen structural capital and for policymakers, particularly the Ghana Export Promotion Authority (GEPA), to design EPPs that build SMEs' internal capabilities and strategic readiness for global markets.