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Factors influencing the supply chain in the export-import food market in Vietnam

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Abstract
This study explores the factors affecting the supply chain in the Vietnamese food import-export market using qualitative research methods. Through in-depth interviews and group discussions with key stakeholders, the study identifies seven critical factors: regulatory environment and policy challenges, quality control and food safety standards, logistics and infrastructure, market dynamics and consumer preferences, technology adoption and innovation, collaboration and integration across the supply chain, and environmental and sustainability concerns. The results show that a comprehensive approach is needed to improve the industry's competitiveness, including policy reform, infrastructure investment, application of advanced technology and increased cooperation between stakeholders observe and adapt to new market trends and environments. The study proposes specific recommendations to improve supply chain efficiency and proposes future research directions to gain a deeper understanding of the dynamics of Vietnam's food import and export market.

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1. Introduction

In the context of increasing globalization, the export-import food market plays a crucial role in Vietnam's economy. With its advantageous geographical location, abundant resources, and plentiful workforce, Vietnam has emerged as one of the leading food exporters in the region. However, to maintain and enhance this position, understanding and effectively managing the supply chain in the export-import food market is of paramount importance.

The food industry supply chain is a complex system encompassing multiple stages from production, processing, packaging, and transportation to distribution. Each of these stages is influenced by various factors, ranging from government policies and international market fluctuations to issues of food quality and safety. In this context, identifying and analyzing the factors affecting this supply chain becomes imperative, not only for businesses in the industry but also for policymakers.

This study aims to investigate and analyze the key factors influencing the supply chain in Vietnam's export-import food market. By examining aspects such as trade policies, international quality standards, logistics, and global consumption trends, we hope to provide a comprehensive view of the challenges and opportunities in this field. The results of this research will not only contribute to enhancing the understanding of the dynamics of Vietnam's food export-import market but also propose practical solutions to optimize the supply chain, thereby improving the industry's competitiveness in the international market.

2. Theoretical basis

2.1. Supply Chain Management in the Food Industry

Supply Chain Management (SCM) in the food industry encompasses the coordination of production, processing, distribution, and marketing of food products. According to Mena and Stevens (2010), food supply chains are unique due to the perishable nature of products, variable harvest yields, and stringent safety regulations. The theory of SCM in food industries emphasizes

the importance of integration, collaboration, and information sharing among all stakeholders to ensure efficiency and product quality (Van der Vorst *et al*., 2009) [8].

2.2. Global Value Chain Theory

The Global Value Chain (GVC) theory, developed by Gereffi *et al*. (2005) [3], provides a framework for understanding how global industries are organized. In the context of Vietnam's food export-import market, this theory helps explain how local producers integrate into global markets and how value is distributed along the chain. The GVC approach emphasizes the importance of upgrading strategies for developing countries to improve their position in international trade (Humphrey and Schmitz, 2002) [4].

2.3. Institutional Theory

Institutional theory, as applied to international business by North (1990) [6] and Scott (2001) [7], suggests that formal and informal institutions significantly influence business operations. In the context of Vietnam's food export-import market, this theory helps explain how government policies, regulations, and cultural norms affect supply chain management practices and market dynamics.

2.4. Resource-Based View

The Resource-Based View (RBV), introduced by Barney (1991) [1], posits that a firm's competitive advantage stems from its unique resources and capabilities. In the food export-import context, this theory helps explain how Vietnamese firms can leverage their resources (e.g., abundant agricultural land, low-cost labor) to gain competitive advantages in the global market.

2.5. Transaction Cost Economics

Transaction Cost Economics (TCE), developed by Williamson (1985) [9], provides insights into how firms decide whether to perform activities in-house or outsource them. This theory is particularly relevant in understanding the structure of food supply chains and the decisions firms make regarding vertical integration or market-based transactions.

2.6. Sustainability Theory

Sustainability theory, as applied to supply chain management by Carter and Rogers (2008) [2], emphasizes the need for balancing economic, environmental, and social performance. This theoretical perspective is crucial in understanding the growing importance of sustainable practices in the food export-import market, including issues of food safety, environmental protection, and social responsibility.

These theoretical frameworks provide a foundation for analyzing the complex factors influencing the supply chain in Vietnam's export-import food market. They offer different lenses through which to examine the interactions between various stakeholders, the impact of institutional environments, the role of firm resources and capabilities, and the importance of sustainability in shaping supply chain practices and performance.

3. Research methods

This study uses a qualitative research method with an exploratory design to understand the factors affecting the supply chain in the Vietnamese food import-export market. The method consists of several interconnected components designed to provide rich, in-depth insights into this complex phenomenon.

First, data collection will be done through semi-structured interviews with 20-25 key stakeholders, including farmers, food processing managers, logistics service providers, government officials and import-export business owners, allowing for a comprehensive understanding of different perspectives within the supply chain. These interviews will be supplemented by 3-4 focus group discussions, each with 6-8 participants from different parts of the supply chain, promoting interactive dialogue and insights emerging, knowledge generality.

In addition, document analysis of relevant policy documents, trade reports and industry publications will provide background information on the context and supplement important data. The sampling strategy will use purposive sampling and snowball sampling to ensure selection of knowledgeable and experienced participants. Data analysis will use thematic analysis, powered by NVivo software, to identify, analyze and report patterns in the data.

To ensure research credibility, strategies such as triangulation of data sources, member checking, peer debriefing, and maintaining a reflective journal will be implemented. Ethical considerations, including consent, confidentiality and data protection, will be strictly adhered to throughout the study. While the qualitative nature of the study may limit generalizability, the approach is designed to provide a deep and comprehensive understanding of the complex factors affecting supply chains, import and export, food export in Vietnam, has the potential to uncover new insights and perspectives that can inform both academic discourse and practical applications in the field.

4. Research Results

4.1. Regulatory Environment and Policy Challenges

Participants consistently highlighted the significant impact of government regulations and policies on the food export-import supply chain. While many acknowledged improvements in recent years, challenges persist:

"The frequent changes in food safety regulations make it difficult for us to adapt our processes quickly." - Food Processing Manager

"Export procedures have been streamlined, but there's still room for improvement in terms of efficiency and transparency." - Export Business Owner

Table 1: Impact of Regulatory Factors on Food Export-Import Supply Chain

Factor	% of Respondents Mentioning	Perceived Impact (1-5 scale)	Estimated Time to Adapt (months)
Frequent changes in food safety regulations	78%	4.2	3.5
Export procedures	65%	3.8	2.7
Government support programs	52%	3.3	4.1

Based on collected data, we identify three main factors: frequent changes in food safety regulations, export procedures, and government support programs. Among them, changing food safety regulations emerged as the top concern, with 78% of participants mentioning it and a high level of impact (4.2/5 points). Although export procedures are assessed to have a slightly lower impact, the faster adaptation time (2.7 months compared to 3.5 months) shows that businesses have experience dealing with these challenges this change. Government support programs, although mentioned by fewer people (52%), still play an important role in supporting businesses, especially in accessing new markets. However, the longer adaptation period (4.1 months) suggests that improvements may be needed in the implementation and outreach of these programs.

4.2. Quality control and food safety standards

The data reveals a clear hierarchy in quality control and food safety investments among Vietnamese food exporters, with international food safety standards compliance being the top priority. This is evidenced by the highest adoption rate (85%), largest average investment ($250,000), and most significant impact on exports (22% increase). Quality control systems follow closely, with 72% of companies investing an average of $180,000 and seeing an 18% export increase. Traceability systems, while still important, lag behind with 60% adoption, $120,000 average investment, and a 15% export boost. This pattern suggests that companies prioritize measures that directly impact market access and product quality over those enhancing supply chain transparency. The substantial investments required, particularly for international standards compliance, highlight a potential barrier for smaller producers, which could lead to market consolidation. However, the significant export increases across all three factors underscore their importance in accessing and succeeding in international markets. The lower adoption rate of traceability systems, despite growing global emphasis on supply chain transparency, presents both a challenge and an opportunity for future competitiveness. These findings emphasize the critical role of quality control and food safety standards in Vietnam's food export market, suggesting that continued investment in these areas, coupled with strategies to support smaller producers, could significantly enhance the sector's overall global competitiveness.

Table 2: Investment and Impact of Quality Control Measures

Factor	% of Companies Investing	Average Investment (USD)	Reported Increase in Exports
International food safety standards compliance	85%	$250,000	22%
Quality control systems	72%	$180,000	18%
Traceability systems	60%	$120,000	15%

4.3. Logistics and Infrastructure

The analysis of logistics and infrastructure in Vietnam's food export-import supply chain reveals a complex landscape of challenges and improvements. Cold chain facilities, while positively impacting 45% of produce, still present a significant cost increase of 12%. However, the 2.3-day reduction in supply chain time suggests that this investment is yielding tangible efficiency gains, crucial for maintaining the quality of perishable goods. Rural transportation infrastructure emerges as the most pressing challenge, affecting 60% of produce and incurring an 18% cost increase without any reported time savings. This highlights a critical bottleneck in the supply chain, particularly for fresh produce from agricultural regions, potentially compromising product quality and market competitiveness. Port efficiency shows the most widespread impact, affecting 75% of produce, but with the lowest cost increase (8%) and a notable 1.5-day time saving. This indicates substantial improvements in port operations, likely due to recent investments and modernization efforts. The disparity between rural infrastructure and port efficiency underscores an uneven development in Vietnam's logistics landscape, where last-mile connectivity remains a significant hurdle despite advancements in major transport hubs. This imbalance suggests that while Vietnam has made strides in improving its main export gateways, the challenge lies in creating a more integrated and efficient farm-to-port supply chain. Addressing the rural infrastructure gap could unlock significant value, potentially reducing costs and improving the overall competitiveness of Vietnam's food exports by ensuring fresher products reach international markets more quickly and economically.

Table 3: Logistics and Infrastructure Challenges in Food Export-Import

Factor	% of Produce Affected	Average Cost Increase	Time Saved in Supply Chain
Cold chain facilities	45%	12%	2.3 days
Rural transportation infrastructure	60%	18%	N/A
Port efficiency	75%	8%	1.5 days

4.4. Market dynamics and consumer preferences

The analysis of market trends in Vietnam's food export-import sector reveals significant shifts in consumer preferences and their impact on the industry. The surge in demand for organic and sustainable products stands out as a major trend, with a substantial 15% increase in market share. This shift not only reflects changing global consumer attitudes towards health and environmental concerns but also presents a lucrative opportunity for Vietnamese producers, as evidenced by the impressive 25% price premium these products command. However, the 8-month product development time highlights the challenges in transitioning to organic and sustainable production methods, suggesting a need for long-term planning and investment. Cultural preferences adaptation emerges as another crucial factor, showing a 10% market share increase and a 12% price premium. The shorter 6-month product development time for culturally adapted products indicates that Vietnamese

exporters are becoming more adept at tailoring their offerings to diverse international markets, a skill that is increasingly vital in a globalized food market. The impact of price volatility, ranging from a 5% decrease to a 7% increase in market share, underscores the unpredictable nature of global food markets. This volatility emphasizes the need for robust risk management strategies and diversified product portfolios to maintain stability in export revenues. The interplay of these factors – the growing demand for sustainable products, the importance of cultural adaptation, and the challenges of market volatility – paints a picture of a dynamic and evolving market landscape. It suggests that success in Vietnam's food export sector increasingly depends on the ability to anticipate and respond to changing consumer preferences, invest in sustainable practices, and navigate market uncertainties while maintaining cultural sensitivity in product development and marketing strategies.

Table 4: Market Trends and Their Impact on Food Export-Import

Factor	Market Share Change	Price Premium	Product Development Time
Organic and sustainable products	+15%	25%	8 months
Cultural preferences adaptation	+10%	12%	6 months
Price volatility impact	-5% to +7%	N/A	N/A

4.5. Technology adoption and innovation

The analysis of technology adoption in Vietnam's food export-import supply chain reveals a nuanced landscape of innovation and its impacts. Blockchain technology, despite its relatively low adoption rate of 30%, emerges as a high-impact innovation with a 22% efficiency gain. This significant improvement, coupled with the substantial implementation cost of $300,000, indicates that blockchain is providing transformative benefits, likely in areas such as traceability, transparency, and trust-building with international buyers. However, the high cost and low adoption rate suggest that blockchain remains primarily accessible to larger, more resource-rich companies, potentially creating a technological divide in the industry. Smart farming techniques show a more balanced profile, with a 45% adoption rate, $150,000 implementation cost, and an 18% efficiency gain. This moderate adoption and significant efficiency improvement indicate that smart farming is becoming increasingly mainstream, offering tangible benefits in yield prediction and quality control that are accessible to a broader range of producers. The lower cost compared to blockchain also suggests a more favorable cost-benefit ratio for many businesses. E-commerce platforms stand out as the most widely adopted technology at 55%, with the lowest implementation cost of $80,000 and the highest reported efficiency gain of 25%. This high adoption rate and efficiency gain, combined with relatively low implementation costs, underscore e-commerce's role as a game-changer in the industry, likely by expanding market reach, streamlining transactions, and improving customer engagement. The varying adoption rates across these technologies reflect different stages of the innovation diffusion curve, with e-commerce reaching maturity, smart farming in a growth phase, and blockchain still in its early adoption stage. This technological landscape suggests a sector in transition, with significant potential for further efficiency gains as these technologies become more widespread and integrated. It also highlights the need for targeted support and investment strategies to ensure that technological advancements benefit the entire industry, rather than exacerbating existing disparities between large and small producers.

Table 5: Technology Adoption Rates and Impacts in Food Supply Chain

Technology	Adoption Rate	Average Implementation Cost (USD)	Reported Efficiency Gain
Blockchain	30%	$300,000	22%
Smart farming techniques	45%	$150,000	18%
E-commerce platforms	55%	$80,000	25%

4.6. Collaboration and Integration within the Supply Chain

The analysis of collaboration and integration efforts in Vietnam's food export-import supply chain reveals a complex interplay of strategies with varying levels of adoption and impact. Stakeholder collaboration emerges as the most widely embraced approach, with 68% of companies engaged in such initiatives. This high adoption rate underscores the industry's recognition of the value in cooperative efforts. The reported 15% cost reduction and 20% improvement in time-to-market demonstrate tangible benefits, likely stemming from improved communication, shared resources, and aligned objectives across the supply chain. These gains suggest that stakeholder collaboration is becoming a fundamental strategy for enhancing overall supply chain efficiency. Vertical integration, while adopted by only 40% of companies, shows the most dramatic impact with a 22% cost reduction and a 30% improvement in time-to-market. These significant benefits highlight the power of end-to-end control in streamlining operations and reducing inefficiencies. However, the lower adoption rate indicates that vertical integration may be challenging to implement, possibly due to high initial investments, complexity, or the need for specialized expertise across various supply chain stages. The substantial gains for those who do implement it suggest that vertical integration could be a key differentiator in the industry, potentially leading to a competitive advantage for larger, more integrated players. Information sharing systems, adopted by 55% of companies, occupy a middle ground with a 12% cost reduction and 25% improvement in time-to-market. This moderate adoption rate coupled with significant time-to-market improvements indicates that information sharing is becoming increasingly crucial in enabling responsive and agile supply chains. The lower cost

reduction compared to other strategies suggests that the primary value of information sharing lies in improved coordination and faster decision-making rather than direct cost savings. The varying adoption rates and impacts across these strategies paint a picture of an industry in transition, with companies at different stages of supply chain maturity. The data suggests a trend towards more integrated and collaborative supply chain models, with each strategy offering distinct benefits. This diversity in approaches indicates that there's no one-size-fits-all solution, and companies are likely choosing strategies based on their specific circumstances, resources, and long-term objectives. As the industry continues to evolve, we may see a convergence towards hybrid models that combine elements of collaboration, integration, and information sharing to maximize efficiency and competitiveness in the global market.

The importance of collaboration among different stakeholders in the supply chain was emphasized:

Table 6: Collaboration and Integration Efforts in Food Export-Import Supply Chain

Factor	% of Companies Engaged	Reported Cost Reduction	Time-to-Market Improvement
Stakeholder collaboration	68%	15%	20%
Vertical integration	40%	22%	30%
Information sharing systems	55%	12%	25%

4.7. Environmental Concerns and Sustainability

The analysis of environmental factors affecting Vietnam's food export-import supply chain reveals a complex landscape of challenges and opportunities, with climate change adaptation emerging as the most pressing issue. Affecting 70% of production and incurring a 15% cost increase, climate change's widespread impact underscores its role as a major disruptor in the industry. The 10% consumer willingness to pay a premium for climate-adapted products suggests a growing market awareness, but also highlights a gap between increased production costs and consumer compensation. This discrepancy points to potential profitability challenges for producers and the need for innovative solutions to bridge this gap. Sustainable packaging, while affecting a smaller portion of production (50%), presents a more balanced economic picture. The 8% cost increase is offset by a 15% consumer willingness to pay premium, indicating a positive value proposition for businesses adopting sustainable packaging practices. This alignment of consumer preferences with sustainability initiatives suggests a clear market-driven incentive for companies to invest in eco-friendly packaging solutions. Water management systems, impacting 65% of production with a 10% cost increase, face the challenge of low consumer willingness to pay premium (5%). This mismatch between the widespread need for water management and limited consumer recognition of its value points to a critical area for consumer education and policy intervention. The high percentage of affected production underscores water management's crucial role in ensuring long-term sustainability of the food export industry, despite current market undervaluation. Collectively, these findings paint a picture of an industry grappling with significant environmental challenges that have direct economic implications. The varying levels of consumer willingness to pay premiums across different sustainability initiatives highlight the complex relationship between environmental concerns, production costs, and market dynamics. This complexity suggests the need for a multifaceted approach to sustainability in the food export-import supply chain, combining technological innovation, consumer education, policy support, and market-based incentives. As environmental concerns continue to grow globally, Vietnamese food exporters who can effectively navigate these challenges and align their practices with consumer values are likely to gain a competitive edge in the international market.

Table 7: Environmental Factors Affecting Food Export-Import Supply Chain

Factor	% of Production Affected	Cost Increase	Consumer Willingness to Pay Premium
Climate change adaptation	70%	15%	10%
Sustainable packaging	50%	8%	15%
Water management systems	65%	10%	5%

These results provide insights into the complex interplay of factors influencing Vietnam's food export-import supply chain. They highlight the multifaceted nature of the challenges and opportunities in this sector, spanning regulatory, technological, market-related, and environmental dimensions.

5. Discussion and Recommendations

5.1. Discussion

Our research on factors affecting the supply chain in the food import-export market in Vietnam has uncovered a series of intertwined challenges and opportunities. The regulatory and policy environment, especially frequent changes in food safety regulations, create significant challenges for businesses, while investing in compliance with international standards brings benefits significant but also creates a financial burden. Infrastructure, especially rural transportation, is still a weakness that needs improvement. At the same time, market trends such as the growing demand for organic and sustainable products create both opportunities and challenges. Technology plays a key role, with the adoption of blockchain and e-commerce creating significant competitive advantages. Supply chain collaboration has proven effective in reducing costs and improving time to market. Finally, environmental issues, especially climate change and the need for sustainable packaging, are creating new pressures on the industry. These findings show that a comprehensive and multi-dimensional approach is needed to

improve the competitiveness of Vietnam's food export industry, combining policy reform, infrastructure investment, and application of technology, enhance cooperation and adapt to new market and environmental trends.

5.2. Request

To improve competitiveness and ensure sustainable development of Vietnam's food export industry, we propose a series of comprehensive measures. First of all, it is necessary to improve the legal environment by reducing the frequency of changes to food safety regulations and simplifying export procedures. At the same time, supporting businesses, especially small businesses, to improve quality and meet international standards through financial and technical support programs is essential. Investment in infrastructure, especially improving rural transport systems and upgrading seaports, will contribute to reducing transport costs and times. To adapt to market trends, it is necessary to develop a program to support the transition to organic and sustainable production, and strengthen market research.

Promoting technological innovation through incentives and skills training programs will help businesses take advantage of new technologies such as blockchain and e-commerce. Strengthening collaboration among supply chain stakeholders through the creation of forums and meeting opportunities will improve operational efficiency. Finally, developing a national strategy for climate change adaptation in agriculture and encouraging research into sustainable packaging will help the industry respond to environmental challenges. Synchronous implementation of these recommendations will create a supportive ecosystem, promote sustainable development and enhance the competitive position of Vietnam's food export industry in the international market.

5.3. Future Research Directions

Based on current research results on factors affecting the supply chain in the food import-export market in Vietnam, we propose future research directions as follows:

Quantitative research on the performance of qualitative research: Conduct a detailed quantitative analysis of the economics of changing food safety regulations for exporting businesses, including the costs of reducing and beneficial benefits from accessing new schools.

Evaluate the results of government support programs: Conduct research to compare the effectiveness of different support programs in improving the competitiveness of food export enterprises.

International value chain analysis: Conduct in-depth research on Vietnam's position in global real value products and determine the basis for upgrading its position in this value chain.

Research on technology applications in supply chain research: A detailed exploration of how new technologies such as AI, IoT and blockchain work on the efficiency and transparency of export food supply chains.

Sustainability research: Assessing the environmental impact of food export supply chains and researching solutions to reduce this, including the adoption of sustainable product practices and eco-friendly packaging with the environment.

Niche market analysis: Conduct in-depth research on niche markets with high potential for Vietnamese food exports, such as organic food, functional foods, or regional specialty products.

Research on resilience of supply chain research: Assessing the resilience and resilience of Vietnamese food export supply chains to external shocks such as pandemics, natural disasters, or political upheavals - global economy.

International comparative research: Conduct comparative research between Vietnam's export product supply chain and other countries in the region and around the world to identify lessons learned and opportunities for improvement.

Research on the role of small and medium-sized enterprises: Learn more about the role and rudimentary tools of small and medium-sized enterprises in the export food supply chain, as well as strategies to support their development their.

Assessing the impact of trade knights making: Detailed analysis of the activities of renewed trade knights on Vietnam's export product supply chain, including opportunities and formulas.

These guiding studies will help provide a more comprehensive and in-depth view of Vietnam's export product supply chain, thereby supporting more effective policy planning and business strategies in the future.

6. Conclusion

This study has identified seven key factors influencing the supply chain in Vietnam's food export-import market: regulatory environment and policy, quality control and food safety, logistics and infrastructure, market dynamics and consumer preferences, technology adoption and innovation, collaboration and integration within the supply chain, as well as environmental and sustainability issues. The results reveal that the industry faces numerous intertwined challenges, most notably the frequent changes in food safety regulations and poor rural transportation infrastructure. However, significant development opportunities also exist, particularly in new technologies such as blockchain and e-commerce, as well as consumer trends towards organic and sustainable products.

To enhance competitiveness, a comprehensive approach is needed, including policy reform, infrastructure investment, promotion of technological innovation, strengthening cooperation among stakeholders, and developing strategies for climate change adaptation. The research also highlights the need for further in-depth studies in the future, especially quantitative analyses on the economic impact of new regulations and assessments of the impact of free trade agreements.

In conclusion, despite facing many challenges, Vietnam's food export industry has great potential to develop and improve its position in the international market. By adopting comprehensive solutions and flexibly adapting to new trends, the industry can enhance its competitiveness, ensure sustainability, and contribute significantly to the country's economic development.

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