

BEYOND BORDERS: A SMART-LOCAL FRAMEWORK FOR FOOD PROCESSING MACHINERY MARKETING IN THE GULF AND AFRICA

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ABSTRACT

The food processing machinery industry is an important pillar of global food security, industrial modernisation, and value addition in the agricultural industry. Owing to rapid urbanisation, changing consumption patterns, and the growing demand for processed food products, there are huge opportunities for machinery manufacturing companies to expand into international markets. The Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries and African economies have shown great potential as emerging regions owing to rising investments in the food processing industry, government initiatives to promote industrial diversification, and growing awareness of food safety and quality standards. Even with such possibilities, companies entering these markets will face regulatory issues, differences in infrastructure, cultural differences, financial hurdles, and technological adaptation challenges.

This conceptual study deals with foreign marketing strategies appropriate for food-processing machinery manufacturing firms in the Gulf and African countries. This study builds on existing theories of international, relationship, industrial, sustainability, and digital transformation marketing, integrating the ensuing concepts to create a novel strategic framework known as the SMART-LOCAL Framework. It is a framework that combines sustainable value propositions, marketing information integration, tailored product innovation, regional partnership networks, technology demonstration hubs, localisation of services, omni-channel marketing, capacity building, low-cost financing products, and relationship management. In addition to product quality and technological superiority, this study suggests that firms need to establish localised value chains via strategic alliances, educate consumers, and innovate with a sustainability focus if they wish to be successful in their future competitiveness in these markets. This work is part of the body of research, building on the existing literature on international industrial marketing, to guide manufacturers in growing more sustainably in emerging markets.

Keywords: International marketing, Food processing machinery, Gulf countries, African markets, Industrial marketing, Sustainability, Market localisation, Digital transformation.

1. INTRODUCTION

The global food industry has undergone drastic changes owing to demographic growth, advances in technology, urbanisation, and evolving consumer habits (Herrero et al., 2023). With population growth and changing food consumption patterns towards processed, convenient, and easy-to-eat food products, there has been a significant demand for good and fast-food production and processing systems (Mamat & Bhandari, 2023). Food processing machinery has played a critical role in accelerating this change, including increases in

productivity, product consistency, waste minimisation, and food safety improvement (Lin et al., 2023). Consequently, the food processing machinery sector has emerged as one of the most dynamic sectors of industrial production and has been the subject of significant foreign investments and international trade (Henderson et al., 1997).

Investments in food-processing infrastructure have increased in the past few years, particularly because the significance of food security has come to acquire in the world today (Rangavajla, 2025). Governments are becoming increasingly aware that their food processing capacity is an important factor in reducing import dependency, stabilising food chains, creating job opportunities, and developing industries within the country (Mukhametgaliev et al., 2022). As a result, developed and developing economies are investing in the modernisation of food processing plants and the application of new production technologies. Therefore, both developed and developing economies are devoting resources towards upgrading their food processing plants and implementing advanced manufacturing technologies.

The markets of emerging regions, especially the Gulf countries and Africa, have become important for food-processing machinery manufacturers. Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, Kuwait, Bahrain, and Oman, the Gulf Cooperation Council countries, have launched bold economic diversification efforts to lessen their reliance on oil-based income. Food security is a national concern that has led to significant investments in agricultural technologies, food processing, and food chain development (Musa, 2024). These advances have resulted in a great demand for sophisticated food processing equipment to meet international standards and large production.

Africa has also turned out to be a helpful region for investment in industry due to its growing population, abundant agricultural resources, as well as having and growing interest in the development of agro-industry. While many African countries have much of their potential in agriculture, there are still large agricultural post-harvest losses and little value addition (Orina et al., 2024). Thus, governments and development agencies have encouraged economic development through food processing industries, employment generation, and export capability development. This has created business opportunities for foreign machinery manufacturers in the processing equipment sector.

Traditional export strategies cannot target these markets; however, a degree of success can be achieved. Industrial purchasing is distinct from consumer buying. Technical competency and the ability to provide top-quality service, financing options, reliability, and the potential for a lasting relationship are often important considerations for food processing machinery purchases. In addition, there are major differences in infrastructure, technological preparedness, regulations, purchasing power, and cultural attitudes between the markets in the Gulf and Africa (Al-Aali, 1995). This means that companies need to have a market strategy that considers a balance between standardisation and localisation.

This is due to the emergence of digital technologies, which have increased the complexity and opportunities in the field. Industrial companies are changing the way they interact with their customers through the increase of artificial intelligence, predictive analytics, customer relationship management systems, virtual demonstrations, and Industry 4.0 technology. Marketing is increasingly a process of value co-creation rather than mere product promotion (Guendouz, 2024). To do so, manufacturers must explain the need for holistic and multifaceted approaches, which involve technological innovation, sustainability, relationship building, and digital participation.

This study attempts to address these challenges by formulating a complete conceptual picture of the international marketing of food processing machinery in the markets of the Gulf and African countries. This research proposes the integration of environmental responsibility, the focus on the customer within the innovation process, local partnerships, and digitalisation as the key to sustainable market success and their unification in a coherent strategic model. This study was based on a synthesis of the existing literature and developing industry practices, which are known as qualitative/integrative reviews. Summary of the project in which the SMART-LOCAL Framework was developed as a roadmap to sustainable competitive advantage in these regions.

2. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

The primary objective of this study was as follows:

To analyse the potential of the Gulf and African markets and determine factors that affect international market entry for food-processing machine producers.

To investigate how sustainability and digitalisation affect the marketing strategies of industrial products and companies, and to build a theoretical concept for maintaining a long-term competitive advantage in these markets.

To offer useful and usable information on the operations level for managers and policymakers. To develop strategies and action plans for the industrial development and food security using technological innovations.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The present study is conceptual in nature and was developed after a comprehensive review and synthesis of the literature on international marketing, industrial marketing, food processing technology, sustainability, and emerging market development. Conceptual research is well-suited to the development of conceptual models, the formulation of relationships between important variables, and strategic conceptual models, suggesting models and procedures for future empirical testing.

Secondary data were gathered from academic journals, industry reports, government documents, international trade articles or analyses, and business strategy documents. The data gathered were analysed through qualitative content analysis of the themes, trends, and critical success factors of an international market in emerging markets. Building on this knowledge, a new conceptual approach was created that has the potential to aid food-processing machinery manufacturers in improving market penetration and gaining sustainable growth in Gulf/African markets.

This study was not empirical research that took the time to test the hypotheses. Instead, it helps build theories, elaborating them in a broader context from various angles. The proposed framework can be used as the foundation for future quantitative and/or mixed-methods studies.

4. RESEARCH GAP

A literature search found that other products have received considerable focus in the areas of international marketing strategies, industrial marketing practices, and the adoption of food-processing technologies. Many studies have explored customer relationship management, technological innovation in manufacturing, modes of entry into markets, and export performance within the manufacturing sector. Likewise, research has been conducted on the

rise of sustainability and digitalisation and how these components influence competitive advantages.

These have been significant beneficial contributions, but there are a number of areas that still have gaps. First, past research has focused on the Gulf and/or African markets individually; thus, little knowledge exists on how they might come closer together in terms of industrial marketing (Ilin & Littrell, 2025). Second, much of the research available has been conducted in consumer goods and is therefore missing from the realm of business-to-business marketing situations. Third, past research often focuses on the transactional aspects of internationalisation and neglects ecosystem-based strategies, which make use of partnerships, customer learning, and knowledge transfer.

Another significant difference relates to the localisation and sustainability aspects of industrial marketing. Despite the crucial role sustainability plays in business success, only a few studies have discussed how environmental value propositions can be used in marketing machines in emerging economies. Similarly, much of the 'digital transformation' literature tends to be internally focused on operational efficiency rather than customer engagement and market development.

This study aims to address these shortcomings by proposing an integrated framework that combines sustainability, digital transformation, localisation, relationship management, and capacity building. It is an extension of the conceptual elements of the industrial marketing concept, which proposes a more comprehensive approach uniquely developed for food processors' machinery manufacturers in the Gulf and African industries.

5. LITERATURE REVIEW

International Marketing has undergone major changes in the last few decades due to changes in the competitive landscape since the time of globalisation, technological development, and economic internationalisation (Manrai, 2020). The traditional approach to international marketing involves exporting products to international markets via distributors and intermediaries (Meldrum & McDonald, 1995). However, today's international marketing involves long-term value creation through relationship marketing, engaging customers, adapting to locals, and innovating. Such a change is especially crucial in the industrial sector, where transactional investments are large in both monetary and technical terms, coupled with long-term commitments.

Scholars interested in the effects of local market conditions on international marketing have formed the theoretical background for international marketing. Over the years, the themes of standardisation and adaptation have been central to the international marketing literature. Those who favour standardisation believe that the uniformity of products and marketing programs will lead to economies of scale, while those who favour adaptation believe that adaptation to local differences in cultural, economic, and regulatory norms is essential (Song, 2021).

It is especially strong in the food processing machinery sector. Standardisation is possible in consumer goods with very little modification in the local countries; however, there are considerable variations in the properties of raw materials, the size of plants and production capacity, food safety regulations and the skills of operators for machines in various countries. For example, a dairy processing plant, which is highly automated and designed for the large-scale facilities in the Gulf Region may not fit the requirements of a smaller dairy processor in Africa, where the staff may be less technically competent and may have sporadic electricity and running water. Consequently, the manufacturers who are successful are not just exporting

a standardized product; they are acting sensibly to decide which technological aspects they wish to standardise for reduction of manufacturing costs, and which they would need to adapt to suit the local operational reality, processing needs and maintenance skills.

The food processing machinery industry provides a good example of the pressure of complete standardisation, which can be impractical because different processing demands, plant configurations, and expectations can vary widely from country to country (Caldwell, 2023). As a result, successful companies often start using a combination of global technological advancements with local service and support systems.

Owing to the complexity of the buying process and the multiple parties involved in the buying decision, the industrial marketing process differs from consumer marketing in many ways. Organisational buyers consider suppliers based on their ability to provide the needed technical capabilities, rely on suppliers' products, quality of their services, and potential for future business with the supplier. The decision-making process is long and requires the involvement of engineers, financial managers, production specialists, and senior executives. Thus, industrial marketing is about building and maintaining relationships that involve trust, credibility, and knowledge sharing.

The theory of relationship marketing can be a helpful concept when discussing long-term customer relationships. Through this lens, there is a focus on creating value consistently more often, instead of a singular time-to-tale transaction. Positive relationships can help minimise uncertainty, ensure a smooth exchange of information, and promote cooperation between buyers and suppliers in industrial applications (Mora Cortez et al., 2023). Manufacturers of food processing machines have realised that to achieve success, they must not only build good machines but also be able to train, maintain, and assist their customers technically and offer operational guidance.

The concept of value co-creation has broadened the scope of industrial marketing. Value co-creation theory departs from the "passive customer" image and focuses on the collaborative interaction between firms and customers (Chatterjee et al., 2021). Organisations can forge a way to solve problems together, tailor solutions, and share information, leading to solutions that meet customers' needs more effectively. This method is particularly significant in the food processing sector, where production demands differ depending on the country's raw materials, market needs, and laws.

The use of digital transformation has grown into a signpost topic in marketing (Fernandes & Gabriel, 2023). Digital technology has revolutionised corporate interactions with consumers, the management of relationships with them, and the delivery of services to them. Artificial intelligence, cloud computing, the Internet of Things (IoT), predictive analytics, and virtual reality have paved the way for new opportunities in industrial marketing (Reddy et al., 2024). Machinery manufacturers are now offering support to their customers, including remote monitoring, virtual product demonstrations, predictive maintenance solutions, and real-time customer help. These advancements not only increase operational efficiency but also impact customer satisfaction and loyalty.

Sustainability has become a key aspect of contemporary business strategies. Concerns about climate change, resource shortages, and environmental degradation have led organisations to adopt sustainable practices throughout their value chains (Frank & Lucky, 2025). Across industrial markets, companies are also making sustainability one of their buying factors, looking for increasingly energy-saving and eco-friendly technologies that can become a platform for achieving a new level of resource efficiency and waste reduction (Kadirova,

2024). Therefore, food processing machinery manufacturers can derive their competitive advantage by incorporating environmental performance into their value proposition.

In reading the literature on emerging markets, one can find a significant mention of the importance of grasping the institutional environment, infrastructure conditions, and socioeconomic factors. Emerging economies have high Growth potential, but there is a lot of uncertainty. International companies may face difficulties due to regulatory complexity, market segmentation, inadequate financing access, and infrastructure issues. Therefore, there is a need to develop a specific market entry strategy that relates to the local context (Mbabu & Gulali, 2024).

According to Gulf research, programs for economic diversification have created significant opportunities for suppliers of industrial equipment. The governments of the region have been putting substantial resources into food production, logistics, and food manufacturing facilities (Hallam, 2025). The programs are based on food security and economic sustainability. This has led to a considerable demand for cutting-edge technologies for the advanced processing of these materials.

Likewise, research on Africa upends the notion that Africa is a deficient region for food production and a widening domestic market, and research that targets Africa stresses Africa's immense agricultural potential, as well as its burgeoning consumer base. The increased demand for processed food products leads to rapid urbanisation and population growth opportunities for machinery manufacturers. Despite this, African markets are extremely varied, with marked differences in infrastructure, levels of economic development, and regulations (Balineau et al., 2021). Hence, there is a need for flexibility in strategies and to cater to local conditions that can facilitate longer-term industrial development.

Research on various facets of international and industrial marketing processes has been conducted in the past; however, there has been limited research on how sustainability, digital transformation, localisation, and relationship management are integrated into a single strategy (Graf, 2023). This vacuum calls for a more detailed model that can help food-processing machine manufacturers in complicated markets.

Table 1: Literature Review Matrix

Author Focus	Major Findings	Research Gap
International Marketing Studies	Importance of adaptation and localization	Limited focus on industrial machinery
Industrial Marketing Research	Relationship building enhances customer retention	Limited integration with sustainability
Digital Transformation Literature	Technology improves customer engagement	Limited emerging-market applications
Sustainability Studies	Green technologies influence purchasing decisions	Limited industrial marketing perspective
Emerging Market Research	Infrastructure and institutions affect performance	Limited comparative analysis of the Gulf and Africa

6. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF GULF MARKETS

Food security and economic diversification are important priorities in the Gulf region, making it one of the most promising markets for food-processing machinery manufacturers (Hallam, 2025). Historically, Gulf countries have relied on food imports to meet their needs; however, in recent years, they have come to appreciate the need for self-reliance in food

security by building their own food production and processing capacities (Amhamed et al., 2023). Government support to increase food resilience has encouraged investment in agricultural technology, food processing plants, and inputs and infrastructure into and out of the food system.

Saudi Arabia has proven to be a dominant market given its population, well-established industrial sector, and fast-paced developments within the country. The Government's economic diversification vision has opened opportunities for high-value processing technologies for the utilisation of local food resources (Alnasser & Musallat, 2022). Likewise, the United Arab Emirates is establishing itself as a regional food hub that has recently overcome the crises faced by food processing investors.

One of the most important features of products in the Gulf is their high level of infrastructure. The presence of reliable transportation networks, technologically advanced and modern industrial clusters, and sophisticated logistics systems facilitates machine adoption (Dovletmurzaeva, 2023). Additionally, companies operating in the area tend to have good financial resources to spend on automation and digital technologies.

Despite this, there is intense competition among markets in the Gulf countries. Import companies from Europe, N. America and Asia are actively bidding to increase their market share. The high-tech aspect and longstanding reputation for quality and reliability have historically made it easy for European manufacturers like GEA Group (Germany), Bühler Group (Switzerland) and Tetra Pak (Sweden) to grab the bulk of the high end food processing equipment market in the Gulf. Competitors are starting to make a move in Asia, however, with a line of partly competitively-priced offerings, especially among the mid-tier processing applications, such as Jimei Group from China and Tech-long, India. The emergence of these ever more competitive markets requires new companies adopting this model to not only keep up with the latest in technology but implement value-added, digital solutions and build local infrastructure alongside this support. Thus, it is imperative for manufacturers to become innovative and provide quality service and customer support (Koudal & Engel, 2007).

In the Gulf, doing business by culture makes a difference, too. Trust, recognition and dedication are crucial attributes for a business relationship, and the issue of sustainability is gaining ground. Successful, sustainable companies have a greater chance of success by creating good relationships and partnerships in the local area. Companies that build strong local partnerships and relationships have an increased possibility of sustainable success. Additional regional service centres and training opportunities can further boost market presence and customer confidence (Rice et al., 2023). There are also opportunities for improvement with the increasing use of Industry 4.0 technologies. Machinery with automation, real-time monitoring, and predictive maintenance features is a current trend that food manufacturers are looking to buy. This means that a supplier with the ability to embed digital solutions in its footprint at a higher level is suited to benefit from future growth opportunities.

Table 2: Key Characteristics of Gulf Markets

Factor	Market Implication
High Purchasing Power	Demand for advanced technologies
Strong Infrastructure	Faster adoption of automation
Food Security Investments	Growing machinery demand

Intense Competition	Need for differentiation
Regulatory Standards	Importance of compliance
Digital Readiness	Opportunities for smart technologies

7. COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF AFRICAN MARKETS

Africa is facing one of the biggest areas of population growth and urbanisation. Agriculture is also significant in the continent's economic activities, but there is considerable scope for value addition through food processing (Orina et al., 2024). The adoption of agro-processing industries is increasing, and governments and development organisations are realising that agro-processing industries can mitigate post-harvest losses, generate employment opportunities, and improve export competitiveness in developing countries. There has been a trend of interest in food processing investments, with countries such as South Africa, Nigeria, Kenya, Ghana, Ethiopia, and Tanzania investing in it (Kwaku et al., 2024). The markets are quite different in terms of their technological readiness and the maturity of industry and infrastructure. Nevertheless, both are working towards boosting their domestic food sector industries and food security.

Many African buyers are price-sensitive, which is less common in the Gulf. Therefore, cost is a key factor when making a buying decision. Manufacturers that have some flexibility to finance their equipment, or allow leases or modules, may have a lot to gain. Many countries still face infrastructure constraints that hinder industrial activity (Development, 2023). Machinery performance is sensitive to variations in electricity, transport layouts, and technical services, which may affect the uptake of machines. Therefore, equipment developed for the African market must be reliable, durable, and adaptable (Belozyorov et al., 2025). The lack of expertise in certain locations is a significant issue. Training and capacity-building assistance are often needed to harness the full benefits of modern processing technology and equipment in many organisations. Manufacturers who invest in educational programs and technical assistance have the opportunity to develop a more meaningful customer relationship while ensuring technology implementation (Yousef & Eaglin, 2020).

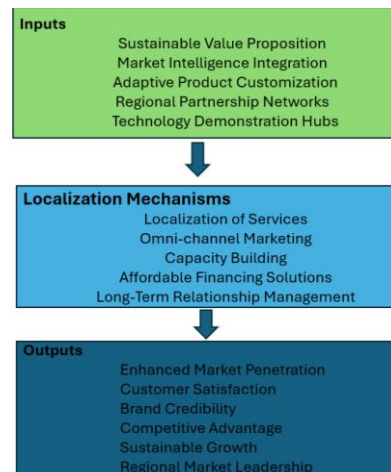
Nevertheless, Africa's long-term growth outlook is bright. The growth of income, urbanisation, and the need for processed foods is projected to continue to spur investment in the food processing sector. Those who connect with local partners and get their products and services to market early should gain from market expansion.

8. DEVELOPMENT OF THE SMART-LOCAL FRAMEWORK

Exporting food processing machinery internationally demands a multi-dimensional approach that goes beyond the traditional one related to exporting. Diverse markets in the Gulf and Africa are not only diverse in terms of the level of industrialisation, but also in terms of the preparedness of infrastructure, technological capabilities, and customer expectations. This will necessitate a paradigm shift, a holistic approach to market entry that is woven together with sustainability, digitalisation, localisation, and relationship management (Quiroz-Flores et al., 2023). Meeting these needs can only be achieved through a strategic model. Therefore, this study introduces the SMART-LOCAL Framework as a strategic model to gain a sustainable competitive advantage in the Gulf and African markets. The framework comprises ten interconnected dimensions (Lytras et al., 2024). The first five dimensions are the SMART component, and the last five are the LOCAL component. The dimensions that make up a comprehensive international market development ecosystem are as follows:

SMART-LOCAL Framework: A model that connects marketable sustainable inputs with the local application of powerful mechanisms to promote market penetration, satisfy quality requirements, and achieve regional leadership.

Figure 1: SMART-LOCAL Framework Diagram



Source: Author's conceptual framework (SMART-LOCAL)

SUSTAINABLE VALUE PROPOSITION

First, paving blocks for the strategic roadmap are sustainability as a competitive advantage. Environmental concerns are at an all-time high across industrial markets. (Tarnovskaya, 2023). Governments, investors, and customers are seeking technologies that yield greater resource-use efficiency and lower environmental impacts. Food processing machinery manufacturers can achieve this by providing solutions that reduce energy and water usage, improve operational efficiency, and minimise food waste (Subaitha et al., 2024).

Compliance with sustainability standards should not only be considered a condition of doing business but also a market differentiation strategy (Ambili & Vijayappan, 2024). Communicating the advantages of using their machinery in terms of environmental and economic outcomes is likely to generate more interest from organisations in attracting customers looking for improved long-term operational results. In Gulf markets, sustainability is closely linked to national development programs geared towards the sustainable management of the environment (Riesener et al., 2024). In Africa, the adoption of sustainable technologies could be useful for conserving resources and increasing agricultural productivity.

MARKET INTELLIGENCE INTEGRATION

The second dimension is the use of market intelligence systems for strategic decision-making. Today's international marketing demands constant attention to market conditions, customer tastes, competitor activities, and technological advances. The incorporation of AI and data analytics has helped companies collect and analyse market data effectively. By leveraging market intelligence, businesses can proactively address shifting market dynamics, predict customer requirements, and uncover new opportunities (Desta & Amantie, 2024). In food processing machinery, data-derived information can assist in producing products, pricing policies, promotional plans, and customer management. Market intelligence also helps provide timely forecasting and resource allocation.

ADAPTIVE PRODUCT CUSTOMISATION

The variety of operating conditions of machines in international markets is one of the biggest problems for machinery manufacturers. Advanced machinery used for automated factories in the Gulf might not adapt to the requirements of smaller-sized businesses in areas of Africa with limited infrastructure (Stoidner et al., 2024). Thus, the need for adaptive product customisation is vital. Customisation describes the process of adjusting machine parameters, working facilities, and services to fit the local needs of the target market. While enhancing market acceptance, flexible equipment configurations also enable manufacturers to offer a wider range of customer services (Narain et al., 2000). Adjustments of power use, processing speed, degree of automation, and maintenance activity are examples of adaptations, as may be maintenance methods. Adaptations can include differences in power consumption, processing power, automation level, and maintenance methods.

REGIONAL PARTNERSHIP NETWORKS

The fourth dimension is about the strategic partnerships that are required. Going global can be a highly unpredictable experience due to the uncertainty of regulations, customer habits, and competitiveness. However, potential uncertainties can be mitigated by accessing local knowledge, distribution networks, and institutional support through regional partnerships (Solberg & Huse, 2024). Partners can be distributors, government institutions, financial institutions, research institutions, universities, and industrial associations. These partnerships enable market entry, improve product credibility, and help in customer acquisition. Furthermore, partnerships help transfer knowledge and innovation, thereby generating value for stakeholders.

TECHNOLOGY DEMONSTRATION HUBS

In particular, the proposed framework includes ‘technology demonstration hubs.’ Industrial buyers are reluctant to invest in unfamiliar technology and do not want to commit to new technology because they are unsure of its performance, reliability, or ROI. Demonstration centres allow customers to experience machinery work, learn to operate it, and test technologies before deciding to purchase.

These centres serve as learning and distribution platforms that mitigate the risk of the consumer and thus boost trust in the product. They also help manufacturers to help their clients hone in on their innovations, find out what they are thinking, and deepen the relationship between the two.

Table 3: SMART Components and Strategic Contributions

Component	Strategic Contribution
Sustainable Value Proposition	Competitive differentiation
Market Intelligence Integration	Data-driven decisions
Adaptive Product Customisation	Market acceptance
Regional Partnership Networks	Market access
Technology Demonstration Hubs	Customer confidence

9. LOCAL COMPONENTS OF THE FRAMEWORK

LOCAL dimensions are based on developing robust market linkages, with particular emphasis on engaging customers and providing support measures.

Localisation of Services

The adaptation process of changing service delivery systems for local conditions and customer expectations is called localisation. Establishing regional service centres, providing a stock of spare parts by the self-distributed company in each region, and adopting local technical personnel can greatly satisfy customers (Pandey et al., 2025). Some industrial buyers require quick response services; otherwise, machinery downtime could cost a lot of money.

Omni-channel Marketing

Digital technology has an ever-growing impact on industrial marketing. Consumers visit various sources for information, such as websites, trade exhibitions, webinars, social media, and networking sites. Omnichannel marketing combines these channels to provide a seamless customer journey (Bakulich & Bokyi, 2022). Digital engagement can help cultivate relationships at scale while complementing traditional relationship-building efforts. However, in exporting to overseas markets, where geographical barriers can make the sales barrier seem insurmountable even with virtual demonstrations, online consultations, and digital content marketing are especially vital.

Capacity Building

Advanced machinery is not being fully utilised by many customers in emerging markets because they need technical support and training to utilise the machinery to their maximum benefit. Capacity-building activities are thus an important part of market development. Training programs can enhance operational efficiency, prevent equipment misuse, and boost customer confidence in the business. Capacity building also plays an important role in general economic development, creating a more skilled workforce and adopting technology. Thus, it provides mutual value to both manufacturers and customers.

Affordable Financing Solutions

Limited financing is a significant problem in machinery adoption in many emerging markets. However, a lack of cash flow may prevent companies from financing state-of-the-art equipment. Faced with this difficulty, manufacturers should work with financial organisations to implement equipment financing programs, instalment payment plans, and leasing programs. Innovative financing models make it more accessible to more markets and to acquire customers, especially SMEs. For instance, manufacturers might coordinate with local financial institutions to provide equipment leasing, usage-based fees, or deferred payment plans. Several of these forms of financing allow African small and medium enterprises to reach a much larger customer base, and can lower the risk for customers in these markets where capital availability is a big problem for SMEs.

Long-Term Relationship Management

The last dimension focuses on relationship management as a means of achieving sustainable and competitive advantages. Industrial purchases are typically those where there is a long relationship involved, not only for the purchase but extending beyond. Therefore, businesses are forced to focus on retaining customers, cultivating their loyalty, and building value for customers. Regular communication, preventive maintenance services, customer feedback, and performance monitoring are part of relationship management. Any organisation that provides activities for relationship building has a higher likelihood of getting repeat business and a positive word-of-mouth recommendation.

Table 4: LOCAL Components and Strategic Contributions

Component	Strategic Contribution
Localisation of Services	Customer satisfaction
Omni-channel Marketing	Market reach
Capacity Building	Technology adoption
Affordable Financing Solutions	Market accessibility
Long-Term Relationship Management	Customer loyalty

10. DISCUSSION

The SMART-LOCAL Framework consists of existing international marketing theory complemented by sustainability, localisation, digital transformation, and relationship management, all within a single marketing framework. In the past, industrial marketing was largely concerned with product quality and distribution efficiency problems. These are all critical, but today's markets demand a more comprehensive lens to view the holistic end-to-end customer experience, broader environmental impact, and knowledge sharing. They argue that the arguments for sustainable competitive advantage come from interacting strategic dimensions; it is not just one that is so important. For instance, although technological advantages can create success in the market, if the customers are not technically skilled enough to use the technology. The benefits of effective promotion can be short-lived if poor follow-up services are available.

The SMART-LOCAL Framework is designed to overcome these challenges by embedding the SMART dimensions (Sustainable Value Proposition; Market Intelligence Integration; Adaptive Product Customisation; Regional Partnership Networks and Technology Demonstration Hubs) within the LOCAL dimensions (Localisation of Services; Omni-channel Marketing; Capacity Building; Affordable Financing Solutions; Long-Term Relationship Management). The example of a technologically better machine (Sustainable Value Proposition) that would not find its way to the market without the customer being able to use it appropriately exemplifies how the Capacity Building dimension can be crucial. Likewise, A strong Regional Partnership Network can help gather Localised Services and Affordable Financing Solutions, establishing a virtuous circle of market development.

The incorporation of sustainability within the framework stemmed from changing market expectations. Governments and organisations have increasingly used environmental performance in investment decision-making processes. By attending to sustainability goals, machinery manufacturers can enhance their market advantages and promote overall development goals.

Digital transformation also plays an important role in increasing the effectiveness of the framework by facilitating communication, customer engagement, and service delivery. The manufacturing sector is currently undergoing a transformation driven by technologies that make it possible to generate new sources of value. These innovations help manufacturers escape their suppliers' footprint and become strategic partners in their customers' success.

Contextual adaptation is emphasised by comparing the Gulf and African markets. Technical sophistication and automation are key features in markets in the Gulf region, as opposed to India and Africa, where affordability and flexibility of operation are crucial. The SMART-LOCAL Framework allows for these differences and offers scope for customisation and localisation.

11. MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

This study has several implications for managers engaged in international business development. First, organisations should have a mindset and think in a market-like manner and focus on the needs of a customer and the local environment, rather than on their own needs. Firms should not solely rely on standard product solutions but should implement flexible solutions that can cater to various operational environments.

Second, funding customer education and technical support costs must be considered an investment, not an operating cost. Market acceptance and opportunities for customer loyalty can be greatly improved through training programs, demonstration centres, and capacity-building programs.

Third, managers should address digital transformation to increase customer relationships and enhance the quality of customer service. The digital space offers possibilities for ongoing participation and value addition. Finally, sustainability must be integrated into marketing communication, product development, and corporate strategies. Organisations with measurable environmental and economic benefits will gain a competitive advantage.

12. CONCLUSION

The Gulf and African markets are high-potential markets for food-processing machine factories due to the trend of food security investment, industrial development, and agricultural modernisation in the region. However, these opportunities are subject to challenges in terms of infrastructure, financing, technological readiness, and market stratification. This conceptual study suggests the SMART-LOCAL Framework, an innovative international marketing approach. The framework encompasses sustainability, market intelligence, customisation, partnerships, technology demonstration, localisation, omni-channel marketing, capacity building, financing innovation, and relationship management, and therefore offers a holistic approach for a sustainable competitive advantage.

If the SMART-LOCAL Framework is deployed by a manufacturer, strategic prioritization should be in accordance with regional market properties. Grasp the Sustainable Value Proposition, Technology Demonstration Hubs and Digital Transformation elements as the main dimensions that unite and deliver a strong differential in the markets in the Gulf, where technology sophistication and purchasing power are high, for firms competing in this environment to fit in with national visions for smart and sustainable industrial development. However, the Localisation of Services and Affordable Financing Solutions dimensions have a higher importance in African markets for market penetration, since they tackle primary market entry obstacles such as infrastructure, skills, and financing. According to the particular context of markets, manufacturers can adjust the weight of these factors and optimise the distribution of their resources to help them move quickly towards sustainable competitive advantage. The framework needs to be tested and validated with empirical studies based on quantitative data, case analysis, and comparative studies in specific countries in future studies. This study also deepens the knowledge of international industrial marketing in emerging economies and contributes to the formulation of strategies for the long-term sustainable development of businesses.

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