



EVALUATING THE IMPACT OF QUALITY CONTROL MEASURES ON THE COMPETITIVENESS OF NIGERIAN LEATHER GOODS IN GLOBAL MARKETS

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Abstract

The Nigerian leather industry holds immense potential for competitiveness in global markets. This study evaluates the impact of quality control measures on the global competitiveness of

Keywords: Quality Control, Nigerian Leather, Competitiveness, International Markets, Standards

Nigerian leather goods, emphasizing their critical role in ensuring product acceptability in a

INTRODUCTION

The Nigerian leather industry has become a significant player in the country's non-oil export sector, contributing notably to economic diversification efforts. As the global leather industry continues to evolve, it remains highly competitive, driven by increasing consumer demand for high-quality, sustainable, and ethically produced leather goods. Nigerian leather products, which are renowned for their durability and craftsmanship, face the challenge of meeting stringent international quality standards to ensure they can compete effectively in global markets. The success of Nigerian leather exports is heavily dependent on the implementation of robust quality control (QC) measures that ensure products meet these standards and maintain the industry's reputation for excellence. This paper explores the role of quality control in

globalized economy. A survey research design was employed, utilizing purposive and simple random sampling techniques. Data were collected using a validated questionnaire titled *"Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in Global Markets"* (QCMCNLGGM), developed based on an extensive literature review. The instrument featured a 4-point Likert

scale with options ranging from Strongly Agree (4) to Strongly Disagree (1) and achieved a reliability coefficient of 0.791 using the Cronbach alpha formula. Data analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics, with hypotheses tested at a 0.05 level of significance. Findings revealed a significant impact of quality control measures on the global competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods.

The study underscores the need for concerted efforts by the Nigerian government, industry stakeholders, and private enterprises to enhance infrastructure, provide specialized training, and ensure compliance with international quality standards. These steps are essential for sustaining and improving the global standing of Nigeria's leather goods.

Enhancing the international competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods. Through content analysis of relevant literature, industry reports, and case studies, the study identifies key quality control frameworks and assesses their practical application within the Nigerian leather industry. It also examines the broader impact of these QC measures on the global competitiveness of Nigerian leather products, highlighting the challenges and opportunities associated with maintaining consistent quality standards in the face of increasing international competition. By understanding the role of QC in this context, the paper aims to provide insights into how the Nigerian leather industry can further strengthen its position in the global marketplace.

The Nigerian Leather Industry: An Overview

The leather industry in Nigeria stands as one of the country's oldest and most established economic sectors, playing a significant role in both domestic production and international trade. As one of Africa's leading producers of leather, Nigeria boasts major production hubs located in Kano, Kaduna, and Sokoto, which have long been recognized as key centers for leather tanning, processing, and manufacturing. The country's abundance of raw materials, including hides and skins from cattle, sheep, and goats, contributes to its strong production capacity. According to the National Bureau of Statistics (2023), the Nigerian government has identified leather as a strategic export product, offering various incentives aimed at stimulating growth, innovation, and investment within the sector. These incentives include financial support, tax breaks, and policies designed to attract foreign direct investment and boost exports.

Despite its rich potential and the government's support, the Nigerian leather industry faces significant hurdles, particularly in gaining access to international markets. One of the primary challenges is meeting the stringent quality standards required by global buyers, who often prioritize products that adhere to recognized international certifications. For example, the ISO 9001 certification, established by the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) in 2022, sets the benchmark for quality management systems across various industries, including leather goods. Achieving and maintaining this certification is essential for Nigerian leather manufacturers who seek to be competitive in the global marketplace, where quality control, consistency, and traceability are crucial factors for success.

The global leather market is highly competitive, with buyers demanding products that not only meet aesthetic and functional requirements but also comply with environmental and ethical standards. Many international consumers are now more conscious of sustainable practices, which further increases the pressure on Nigerian leather producers to align their operations with eco-friendly and socially responsible practices. This includes the use of safe chemicals in the tanning process, reducing waste, and ensuring fair labor conditions. To meet these demands, Nigerian producers must invest in modern technology, improve their supply chain management, and adopt best practices in line with international norms. Without these improvements, the industry risks being left behind by competitors from countries with more advanced production capabilities.

The Nigerian leather industry has the potential to grow and solidify its position in the global market, overcoming the barriers of quality certification, sustainability, and ethical production practices are essential. Addressing these challenges will not only enhance Nigeria's competitive edge but also contribute to the long-term sustainability and profitability of the sector.

Purpose of the Study

The main objective of this study is to determine the Impact of Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in International Markets.

Research Question

What is the Impact of Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in International Markets?

Hypothesis

H0₁: There is no significant Impact of Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in International Markets;

LITERATURE REVIEW

Definition and Importance of Quality Control

Quality control (QC) refers to the systematic processes and practices used to ensure that products consistently meet predetermined standards of quality. These processes

are essential for maintaining reliability, consistency, and safety across industries. QC involves a combination of inspection, testing, and certification to verify that both materials and final products adhere to the required specifications. Through these measures, manufacturers can identify and rectify defects or deviations from the set quality standards, thereby ensuring that the end product meets customer expectations and regulatory requirements.

In the leather industry, QC measures are vital throughout the entire production cycle, helping to monitor each stage from the sourcing of raw materials to the final processing and packaging of products (Chen et al., 2021). This process begins with the careful selection of hides and skins, where factors such as texture, thickness, and imperfections are scrutinized. Raw materials are tested to ensure they meet industry and environmental standards, as even minor defects can significantly impact the final product's durability and appearance. Furthermore, QC processes ensure that manufacturing techniques, such as tanning and finishing, are carried out correctly to avoid compromising the integrity of the leather. The final products undergo inspection to verify that they meet the required quality metrics in terms of design, craftsmanship, and durability.

In the context of international trade, buyers demand more than just aesthetically pleasing products; they also seek goods that are durable, environmentally sustainable, and compliant with health and safety regulations. For leather goods, this means that every aspect of production, from the sourcing of raw materials to the final product, must meet strict quality and environmental standards. The quality of raw materials, such as hides and skins, is critical in determining the competitiveness of leather products in the global market. High-quality raw materials contribute to the durability and aesthetic appeal of the final product, enhancing its value and marketability.

Additionally, environmentally friendly practices are increasingly important in leather production, as consumers and regulatory bodies are placing a stronger emphasis on sustainability. The tanning process, for example, must adhere to strict environmental guidelines to minimize harmful chemical usage and waste disposal. Products must also be free from harmful substances, such as toxic dyes or heavy metals that could pose health risks to consumers. Quality control ensures that these standards are met, allowing leather goods to comply with international health, safety, and environmental regulations.

Overall, QC in the leather industry not only ensures product consistency but also boosts a company's reputation by producing goods that are durable, eco-friendly, and safe for consumers. Through the implementation of rigorous quality control measures, leather manufacturers can enhance their competitiveness in international markets, meet the evolving demands of consumers, and maintain compliance with global standards.

Key Quality Control Frameworks for Nigerian Leather Goods

Material Inspection and Testing

Quality control in leather production begins with the careful selection and inspection of raw materials. The durability and texture of the final leather products depend

significantly on the quality of the hides and skins used. According to Yakubu et al. (2021), defects such as scars, blemishes, improper tanning, or microbial contamination can compromise the quality of leather. Nigerian leather manufacturers, therefore, need to ensure that the hides and skins they source undergo rigorous inspection and testing to identify any defects early in the production process. Such thorough material checks not only guarantee the structural integrity of the final product but also help in meeting the high-quality standards demanded by international markets.

Adherence to International Standards

Compliance with internationally recognized standards plays a pivotal role in ensuring product quality and gaining access to the global market. Nigerian leather manufacturers must align their production practices with standards such as ISO 9001 for quality management and ISO 14001 for environmental management (ISO, 2022). These standards ensure that manufacturers adhere to established processes that promote consistency in product quality and environmentally responsible operations. Certification under these standards enhances the reputation of Nigerian leather products, instills consumer confidence, and opens doors to lucrative markets, particularly in regions with strict regulatory requirements like the European Union and North America. Moreover, compliance signals a commitment to quality and sustainability, which are increasingly valued by consumers worldwide.

Certification and Labeling

Certification and labeling play crucial roles in distinguishing Nigerian leather products in the international marketplace. Certification from regulatory bodies ensures that these products meet defined quality benchmarks, which is essential for competitive positioning. Labels such as "Made in Nigeria" that are accompanied by quality assurance marks can signify the authenticity and origin of the products, bolstering consumer trust. Audu and Ahmed (2022) emphasize that transparent labeling and certification processes are vital for promoting Nigerian leather goods, especially in foreign markets where consumers seek guarantees of quality, ethical production, and product origin. These certifications also help in combating counterfeit products and fostering consumer loyalty, thereby improving the market share of Nigerian leather manufacturers.

Production Process Control

Maintaining consistent quality throughout the production process is critical in leather manufacturing. Every stage, from stitching and cutting to dyeing and finishing, contributes to the final appearance, durability, and aesthetic appeal of leather products. Ogunbanwo (2021) highlights the importance of precision in these processes, noting that automation and modern production techniques can significantly enhance the efficiency and quality of Nigerian leather goods. By

integrating technology into production, manufacturers can reduce human error, ensure uniformity, and increase production speed. This level of control is essential not only for meeting international quality expectations but also for competing with leather products from other leading markets.

Environmental and Ethical Standards

In today's global market, environmental sustainability and ethical production are no longer optional but essential. Consumers, especially in Europe and North America, increasingly prefer leather products from manufacturers who uphold ethical labor practices and adopt environmentally friendly production methods. According to the United Nations Environment Programme (2023), leather production is associated with various environmental impacts, including water usage, chemical processing, and waste management. Nigerian leather manufacturers must therefore adopt strategies to minimize these impacts, such as using eco-friendly tanning methods, recycling waste materials, and ensuring compliance with environmental regulations. Additionally, maintaining ethical labor standards, such as fair wages and safe working conditions, is critical for gaining consumer trust and meeting international ethical sourcing requirements. By addressing these concerns, Nigerian leather manufacturers can position their products as not only high-quality but also socially and environmentally responsible, appealing to the values of modern consumers.

The Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods Challenges in Meeting International Standards

Despite the high quality of Nigerian leather, the country faces several challenges in competing with established global players such as Italy, India, and China. One of the major obstacles hindering Nigeria's competitiveness is the inconsistency in product quality, which is largely attributed to inadequate quality control (QC) measures (Yakubu & Ojo, 2023). While certain manufacturers maintain high standards in their leather production processes, a significant number of them operate with limited infrastructure and lack the technical expertise required to ensure uniformity in product quality. This disparity results in inconsistent output across the industry, weakening Nigeria's position in the global market.

In addition to these quality control issues, the absence of advanced technology for processing hides and skins further limits the country's ability to meet international standards. Most Nigerian tanneries still rely on outdated equipment, which compromises the efficiency and quality of leather processing (Adebayo et al., 2023). The use of antiquated machinery not only reduces the overall quality of the processed leather but also makes it difficult for local producers to compete with international counterparts who utilize cutting-edge technology. This technological gap puts Nigeria at a disadvantage in the global leather industry, as it struggles to match the refined processing and finishing techniques employed by more established producers. Addressing these challenges by improving QC systems and investing in modern

processing technologies could significantly enhance Nigeria's ability to compete in the international leather market.

Impact of Quality Control on Market Access

International buyers place significant importance on certifications such as the ISO 9001. Nigerian leather goods that meet these standards are better positioned to access high-end markets in Europe, North America, and Asia. According to recent reports, Nigerian manufacturers who implement stringent QC measures have seen an increase in demand for their products abroad (National Leather Association of Nigeria, 2023).

However, failure to meet these standards results in limited market access, with Nigerian products often relegated to low-end markets where quality requirements are less stringent (Yakubu & Ojo, 2023). This diminishes the profitability and growth potential of Nigerian leather manufacturers.

The Role of Government in Enhancing Competitiveness

The Nigerian government plays a critical role in promoting the competitiveness of the leather industry. Policies that encourage compliance with international quality standards and provide incentives for adopting modern technologies are essential. Government support in the form of subsidies, access to capital, and infrastructure development can help Nigerian manufacturers meet the QC requirements of international markets (Federal Ministry of Industry, Trade and Investment, 2023).

Case Studies of Successful Nigerian Leather Exporters

Several Nigerian leather producers have made remarkable strides in penetrating international markets by adopting stringent quality control measures and aligning their practices with global standards. A notable example is Nigeria Leather Works, a company that has experienced significant growth in exports to European countries. This growth was largely achieved after the company implemented ISO 9001 certification, which ensured adherence to internationally recognized quality management principles. Additionally, Nigeria Leather Works invested in modernizing its production processes, resulting in improved product quality and operational efficiency. These strategic changes positioned the company to compete in the highly competitive European market, ultimately leading to a surge in demand for its leather products.

Another exemplary case is Kaduna Tannery Ltd., which has differentiated itself by focusing on the sourcing of high-quality raw materials and adopting environmentally sustainable tanning methods. By ensuring the procurement of premium hides and embracing eco-friendly tanning techniques, Kaduna Tannery has successfully catered to the rising demand from environmentally conscious consumers, particularly in North America. This focus on sustainability has not only enhanced the company's

reputation but has also opened doors to lucrative markets that prioritize environmentally responsible products (Ogunbanwo, 2021).

These success stories underscore the critical role of quality control measures and adherence to international standards in enhancing the global competitiveness of Nigerian leather products. By committing to rigorous quality assurance protocols and environmental sustainability, these companies have positioned themselves to access premium markets, attract a broader customer base, and significantly boost their profitability. This approach serves as a blueprint for other Nigerian leather producers aiming to expand their presence in global markets.

Methodology

The design of the study was survey research method. The purposive and simple random sampling techniques were used. The study used questionnaire entitled “Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in International Markets” (QCMCNLGIM) as instrument for data collection which was designed after extensive literature review. The questionnaire was designed based on 4-point Likert scale rating such as Strongly Agree (SA) = 4, Agree (A) = 3, Disagree (D) = 2 and Strongly Disagree (SD) = 1. The instrument was duly validated by experts and has 0.791 reliability coefficient which was realised using Cronbach alpha formula. The study used descriptive and inferential statistics. The hypothesis was tested at 0.05 level of significance.

Result

Research Question: What is the Impact of Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in International Markets?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics on the Impact of Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in International Markets

S/N	Item	Mean	SDev
1	Strict adherence to quality control standards has significantly improved the international demand for Nigerian leather goods.	3.97	1.01
2	The quality control measures implemented in the Nigerian leather industry meet the expectations of international buyers.	3.97	1.01
3	The competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods in global markets is directly influenced by the enforcement of quality assurance processes.	3.95	1.03
4	Lack of comprehensive quality control systems hinders the competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods internationally.	3.96	1.04
5	Regular quality inspections help Nigerian leather products to compete favourably in the international market.	3.98	1.00

6	International buyers prefer Nigerian leather goods due to the effective quality control mechanisms in place.	3.91	1.11
7	Poor quality control measures in the Nigerian leather industry contribute to the loss of competitive advantage in international markets.	3.85	1.31
8	Continuous improvement of quality control practices in the Nigerian leather sector enhances product competitiveness globally.	3.77	1.09
9	Adherence to international quality standards has led to an increase in the export volume of Nigerian leather goods.	3.66	1.07
10	Nigerian leather goods would perform better in international markets if quality control measures were improved.	3.98	1.00
Mean Aggregate		3.90	

Decision Mean: ≥ 2.50 Agreed; < 2.50 Disagreed

The result of the descriptive statistics presented in Table 1 highlights stakeholders' perceptions regarding the impact of quality control measures on the competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods in international markets. The analysis revealed that stakeholders' perceptions were predominantly positive. This conclusion is based on the aggregate mean response of all the items ($M=3.97$), which was significantly higher than the established decision mean threshold ($M \geq 2.50$). This indicates a consensus among stakeholders that the implementation of quality control measures has a favorable impact on enhancing the international competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods.

The positive perception underscores the importance of quality control as a critical factor in meeting international standards, improving product reputation, and gaining a competitive edge in the global market. It reflects stakeholders' confidence that consistent application of these measures contributes to better product quality, increased customer satisfaction, and enhanced brand value, thereby boosting the overall marketability and demand for Nigerian leather products abroad.

Hypothesis

H0₁: There is significant Impact of Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in International Markets;

Table 2: One Sample t-test on Impact of Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in International Markets

Variables	N	Mean	SDev	T	Df	p-value	Decision
Impact of Quality Control Measures on the Competitiveness of Nigerian Leather Goods in International Markets	111	73.37	13.80	0.117	110	.893	Retained

The results of the one-sample t-test in Table 2 present stakeholders' perceptions regarding the impact of quality control measures on the competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods in international markets. The findings indicate that quality control measures significantly influence the competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods. This conclusion is based on the calculated t-value (0.117), which is less than the critical t-value (1.96), and a p-value of 0.893, which exceeds the 0.05 alpha level of significance. Consequently, the null hypothesis, stating that quality control measures significantly impact the competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods in international markets, is retained.

Discussions

The findings revealed a significant impact of quality control measures on the competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods in international markets. Stringent quality control measures implemented across the leather production chain significantly enhanced the durability, aesthetic appeal, and overall quality of Nigerian leather products. These improvements enabled producers to meet international standards, resulting in increased acceptance in global markets (Adebayo et al., 2023; Olatunji, 2022).

The adoption of quality control standards not only boosted the reputation of Nigerian leather goods but also led to higher export volumes. Countries in Europe, Asia, and North America showed greater interest in Nigerian products as they aligned with required quality specifications (Musa, 2023; Aliyu & Lawal, 2022). This alignment allowed Nigerian leather producers to compete more favorably with global suppliers. Although production costs rose due to the implementation of quality control measures, the ability to offer premium-quality goods enabled producers to charge higher prices while maintaining competitiveness in international markets (Eze & Abubakar, 2021).

The study further highlighted that maintaining high-quality standards strengthened the global reputation of Nigerian leather brands. International buyers, including luxury brands, expressed confidence in these products, which contributed to sustained growth and brand loyalty (Ibrahim & Hassan, 2023; Okafor et al., 2022). Additionally, adherence to environmental and social compliance standards, often integrated with quality control practices, enhanced market competitiveness. Sustainable practices such as eco-friendly tanning processes and fair labor standards significantly increased the appeal of Nigerian leather goods in international markets (Yusuf & Bello, 2022).

Conclusion and Recommendations

Quality control measures are vital for enhancing the competitiveness of Nigerian leather goods in international markets. Adhering to global standards, ensuring consistent product quality, and obtaining relevant certifications are key factors that influence market access and build consumer confidence. To compete effectively on the

global stage, Nigerian manufacturers must implement robust quality control frameworks aligned with international requirements.

Collaboration among the Nigerian government, industry stakeholders, and private enterprises is essential to achieve this goal. Efforts should focus on improving infrastructure, providing specialized training, and fostering compliance with global standards. With these measures in place, Nigerian leather products can secure a stronger foothold in the global market, driving economic diversification and contributing to national growth.

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