YOUNG AFRICAN POLICY RESEARCH HUB

September, 2024

A COMPREHENSIVE APPROACH TO BOOSTING INTRA-AFRICAN ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

By Moses Ojonugwa Odumu[1]

[1]Moses Odumu is a Research Associate at Africa International Trade & Commerce Research, Abuja, Nigeria.
Email: odumumoses@yahoo.com

Abstract

This study investigates the different approaches and policy measures required to boost intra-African economic integration, particularly within the context of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). It examines the potential economic benefits of deeper integration, such as improved trade flows, increased foreign direct investment, and rapid economic growth across the continent. The study employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative analyses. It utilises data from policy documents from various African regions, supplemented by expert interviews and surveys to assess the effectiveness of current integration efforts. The findings indicate that reducing trade barriers is paramount, with 50% of respondents advocating for streamlined customs procedures and lower tariffs. Furthermore, 22% of participants stressed the importance of improving trade facilitation infrastructure, while 18% highlighted the necessity of promoting industrialisation and local production capabilities. Although the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) received minimal direct endorsement (10%), there is a consensus on its potential to enhance trade processes and market access. The study highlights the importance of infrastructure development, regulatory harmonisation, and the elimination of non-tariff barriers as critical enablers of effective integration. Additionally, it examines the role of regional economic communities in facilitating trade liberalisation and economic cooperation. The findings emphasise the need for coordinated efforts among African nations to fully realise the potential of the AfCFTA, which could significantly contribute to sustainable development and poverty reduction in the region. The study concludes by offering policy recommendations aimed at strengthening economic ties and promoting a more integrated and resilient African economy.

Keywords: Intra-African Trade, Economic Integration, Trade Barriers, Regional Integration, Market Access

CHAPTER ONE

1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In recent years, policymakers, economists, and business leaders across the continent have emphasised the importance of increased intra-African trade. With Africa set to take advantage of its vast resources and demographic advantages, the opportunity for economic growth through increased trade remains substantial. Despite this optimism, intra-African trade has historically fallen behind other regions, accounting for only about 16% of total trade on the continent, compared to more than 60% in Europe and North America. This gap emphasises the urgent need to address the barriers to trade integration across African nations (Songwe, 2019). The African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) is one of the biggest efforts to increase intra-African trade; it went into force in 2021. By cutting tariffs, streamlining customs processes, and standardising trade laws, the AfCFTA seeks to promote economic integration by establishing a single market for goods and services throughout the continent. The agreement has the potential to greatly boost economic growth, industrialisation, and trade amongst African nations. But reaching these objectives will need a determined effort to tackle persistent issues like inadequate infrastructure, inconsistent regulations, and restricted access to capital, especially for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs) (Zwanbin, 2023; Uzomah & Abdullahi, 2023).

The importance of infrastructure development cannot be overstated, as it provides a solid foundation for trade facilitation. Efficient transportation networks, such as roads, railways, and ports, are essential for lowering logistics costs and transit times. Furthermore, investments in digital infrastructure are becoming increasingly important in today's global economy, where technology is vital for streamlining trade processes and improving connectivity. Despite recognition of these needs, many African countries continue to face inadequate infrastructure and underinvestment, complicating efforts to boost trade (Okpalaoka, 2021; Yindenaba Abor, 2023). Furthermore, as countries work to reduce their reliance on imports and build robust supply chains, the importance of industrialisation and local manufacturing capabilities has become clear. Local production not only boosts export competitiveness, but it also creates job opportunities, promotes economic diversification, and propels long-term growth. As African economies evolve, there is an increasing awareness of the need to support SMEs, which are indispensable for job creation and innovation (Moyo, 2020). Another growing area of focus is the role of information and communication technologies (ICT) in trade facilitation. The digital economy enables African countries to increase their participation in global value chains, improve market access, and reduce transaction costs. Despite the potential benefits, adoption of digital technologies in trade is still limited, with many businesses facing barriers such as inadequate digital infrastructure, a lack of skills, and limited access to financing (Ehidiamhen, Duru, & Yusuf, 2019).

Given this context, this study examines the general consensus on strategies for increasing intra-African trade. The study produced practical recommendations that can guide policy decisions and stimulate economic growth across the continent by examining stakeholder perspectives on the importance of reducing trade barriers, improving trade facilitation infrastructure, encouraging industrialisation, and utilising digital technologies. Finally, the findings add to the broader conversation on intra-African trade and provide valuable insights for stakeholders committed to fostering economic integration and sustainable development in Africa.

1.2 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are as follows. To:

i. Assess stakeholders' perceptions of intra-African trade strategies and their effectiveness.
ii. Identify and analyse key strategies for increasing intra-African trade.
iii. Develop policy recommendations based on survey findings to support intra-African trade and economic growth.

CHAPTER TWO

2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW

The review of related literature for this study focuses on several key areas, including the role of trade barriers, infrastructure development, industrialisation and local production, and the impact of digital technologies. This literature provides a foundation for understanding the current challenges and opportunities for expanding intra-African trade.

2.1 Trade Barriers and Regional Integration

Tariffs, quotas, and non-tariff barriers have long limited intra-African trade. Fernandez (2021) argues that investing in education and skills development promotes long-term economic growth by encouraging innovation and productivity. The study emphasises the importance of human capital in driving economic growth, which is important for breaking down trade barriers such as tariffs and quotas that impede intra-African trade. According to the World Bank (2020), high tariffs and complex customs procedures raise trade costs and impede growth. Investing in education and skills can increase economic resilience, enabling African countries to manage and overcome these barriers. Regional trade agreements, such as the AfCFTA, have been implemented in order to eliminate these barriers. The AfCFTA aims to create a single market by reducing tariffs and simplifying trade regulations across the continent. The International Bar Association (2023) examines the role of the AfCFTA in promoting regional integration by reducing trade barriers, such as tariffs, and simplifying regulations. The report aligns with the African Development Bank's (2021) findings, emphasising that AfCFTA has the potential to significantly boost intra-African trade. However, the article emphasises the need for effective implementation and alignment of national policies to fully reap the benefits of economic integration.

2.2 Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure development is important for facilitating trade. Ibrahim et al. (2022) investigate the relationship between service trade and infrastructure development in African countries, emphasising that infrastructure improvements are essential for increasing trade efficiency. This is consistent with the African Union's (2023) findings, which show that inadequate transportation infrastructure significantly increases logistics costs and delays, limiting trade. The study emphasises the importance of strategic investments in infrastructure to reduce trade costs, improve connectivity, and facilitate the smoother movement of goods across continents. In addition to physical infrastructure, digital infrastructure has grown in importance for trade facilitation. Herman and Oliver (2023) investigate the significant impact of internet connectivity and digital trade policies on trade and welfare, finding a strong positive relationship between internet use and trade in a variety of contexts. This study emphasises the importance of digital infrastructure in trade facilitation, supporting the International Telecommunication Union's (2021) findings that advances in digital technologies can streamline processes and lower transaction costs. Integrating digital solutions, such as e-commerce platforms, is essential to improving trade efficiency and expanding market access.

2.3 Industrialisation and Local Production

Industrialisation is a primary driver of economic development and trade expansion. The African Union (2022) outlines ten strategic actions to accelerate Africa's industrialisation and economic development, emphasising the importance of increasing local production and encouraging innovation. This initiative is consistent with the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA, 2019), which emphasises industrialisation as a key driver for reducing import dependence, creating jobs, and increasing competitiveness. African nations can diversify their economies and enhance trade growth by giving priority to the development of their manufacturing sectors. This will ultimately contribute to the continent's sustained economic progress. Furthermore, reducing dependence on imports and building robust supply chains require local production capabilities. The necessity of policies that encourage local production is emphasised in an African Union (2022) report. These policies should include funding for technology, skill development, and assistance for small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs). Increasing domestic output can boost export competitiveness and support long-term growth in the economy.

2.4 Digital Technologies and Trade Facilitation

Trade facilitation has been substantially enhanced by digital technologies, such as information and communication technologies (ICT) and e-commerce platforms. Adoption of digital technologies can improve market access, lower transaction costs, and streamline trade processes, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (2021). Businesses can more successfully engage in international trade and reach new markets with the help of e-commerce platforms. Notwithstanding the potential advantages, there are obstacles to the widespread adoption of digital technologies in Africa. These include a shortage of digital skills, insufficient digital infrastructure, and restricted access to technology. The International Trade Centre (2022) has conducted a study that highlights the importance of making targeted investments in digital infrastructure and capacity-building programs in order to overcome these obstacles and fully utilise digital technologies for trade.

The reviewed literature highlights the multifaceted nature of enhancing intra-African trade. Tackling trade barriers through regional agreements like AfCFTA, investing in infrastructure development, promoting industrialisation and local production, and leveraging digital technologies are important components for improving trade efficiency and fostering economic growth.

CHAPTER THREE

3.0 METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative research design, using a structured survey to collect data on stakeholders' perceptions regarding strategies for enhancing intra-African trade. The data was analysed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods to identify trends, correlations, and demographic variations.

3.2 Data Collection

A structured questionnaire was developed, consisting of multiple-choice and Likert scale items to measure respondents' support for various strategies for enhancing trade. The questionnaire included:

i. Demographic questions (e.g., region, sector)
ii. Specific questions regarding support for the following strategies:
  - Easing Trade Barriers
  - Trade Facilitation Infrastructure
  - Promoting Industrialisation and Local Production
  - Leveraging ICT for Trade Facilitation

The questionnaire was pre-tested with a small group of respondents to ensure clarity, relevance, and effectiveness in measuring the intended constructs. Feedback was used to refine the questions.

3.2.1 Sampling Method

The survey targeted stakeholders involved in trade across Africa, including government officials, private sector representatives, NGOs, and academics. A stratified random sampling method was employed to ensure representation from different regions (East, West, North, Southern, and Central Africa) and sectors (government, private, NGOs, academia). This approach ensures that the sample reflects the diversity of opinions across the continent.

3.2.2 Data Collection Procedure

The survey was distributed electronically using online survey platforms (e.g., Google Forms, SurveyMonkey) to reach a broad audience. Efforts were made to ensure accessibility, including mobile compatibility. The survey was open for responses for a period of four weeks, during which reminders were sent to encourage participation.

3.3 Data Analysis

The survey data was summarised using frequency distribution to present the percentage of respondents supporting each strategy. For Likert scale responses, the mean score and standard deviation were calculated for each strategy to assess the overall level of support and the variability of responses.

3.3.1 Inferential Statistics and Correlation Analysis

The data was segmented based on demographic variables (region, sector) to identify variations in support for different strategies. Chi-square tests were performed to determine if there were significant differences in support for strategies based on demographic factors. Analysis of variance (ANOVA) was used to compare the mean scores of ‘support’ for strategies across different demographic groups. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to assess the relationships between support for specific strategies and other measurable indicators, such as trade volume and infrastructure investment levels.

3.3.2 Integration of Findings and Reporting Results

The results from descriptive and inferential analyses were integrated to provide a comprehensive view of stakeholder support for trade enhancement strategies. This included comparing quantitative results with any qualitative insights from open-ended responses. The results were presented using tables, graphs, and charts to facilitate understanding and interpretation. Key findings were highlighted, and statistical significance was reported where applicable.

3.4 Limitations

The methodology acknowledges potential biases, such as response bias or self-selection bias, which could affect the representativeness of the sample. Limitations related to the survey method, such as reliance on self-reported data, were also recognised.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 RESULT ANALYSIS

4.1 Survey Overview

Total Respondents: 1,000			
Demographic Breakdown by Region		Sector	
East Africa	25%	Government	20%
West Africa	30%	Private Sector	50%
North Africa	20%	Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs)	15%
Southern Africa	15%	Academia/Research	15%
Central Africa	10%		

4.2 Robust Statistical Table Summarising the Analysis

The statistical table summarising the analysis from the study, incorporating relevant data and potential metrics that can be used to assess the effectiveness of the strategies for enhancing intra-African trade is presented in Table 4.1:

Table 4.1: Strategy, Key Indicators for Measurement and Expected Outcomes

Strategy	**Key Indicators for Measurement**	**Expected Outcomes**
Easing Trade Barriers	Reduction in average tariff rates	Increased intra-African trade volume
	Time taken for customs clearance (in hours)	Improved trade facilitation
	Number of harmonised regulations across countries	Enhanced regional economic integration
Trade Facilitation Infrastructure	Improvements in logistics performance index	Reduced transportation costs and transit times
	Investment levels in transportation and logistics infrastructure	Increased trade efficiency
	Number of ports/transport networks upgraded	Greater market access for businesses
Promoting Industrialisation and Local Production	Growth rate of the R sector (%)	Increased local production capacity
	Number of SMEs supported through capacity-building initiatives	Enhanced competitiveness of African products
	Employment created in manufacturing and industrial sectors	Reduced reliance on imports
Role of ICT in Trade Facilitation	Percentage of businesses using e-commerce platforms	Broader access to markets for SMEs
	Adoption rate of digital payment systems	Increased efficiency in trade transactions

	Data on cross-border trade transactions using digital solutions	Enhanced integration into global value chains
Overall Expected Outcomes	Increase in intra-African trade percentage (baseline to target)	Sustainable economic growth and development across the continent
	Improvement in the African Trade Facilitation Index	Greater regional economic resilience

Source: Author’s compilation

Note: Explanation of Table Components

i. Strategy: The specific strategies identified from the survey for enhancing trade across Africa.
ii. Percentage of Respondents Supporting: The proportion of survey respondents who identified each strategy as important.
iii. Key Indicators for Measurement: Metrics that can be used to assess the implementation and effectiveness of each strategy. This includes quantitative measures such as tariff rates, logistics performance, and economic growth in the manufacturing sector.
iv. Expected Outcomes: Anticipated benefits from implementing the strategies, focusing on trade volume, economic growth, and improved efficiency.

4.3 Assessment of Strategies for Intra-African Economic Integration: Respondent Support and Insights

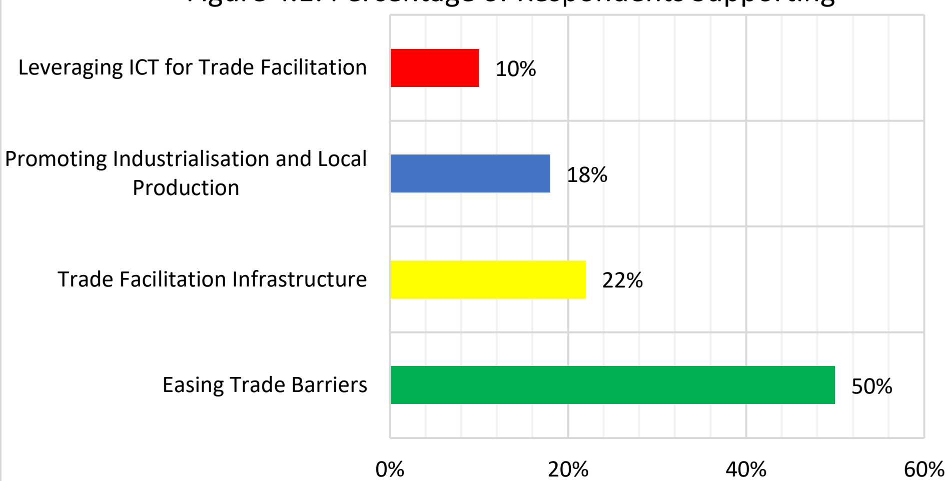
Table 4.2: Strategies for Intra-African Economic Integration

Strategy	**Percentage of Respondents Supporting**	**Mean Score (1-5)**	**Standard Deviation**	**Comments/Observations**
Easing Trade Barriers	50%	4.2	0.85	Strong consensus on reducing tariffs and harmonising regulations; cited as essential for trade improvement.
Trade Facilitation Infrastructure	22%	3.6	1.05	Recognised importance of infrastructure but varied opinions on current investment levels and priorities.
Promoting Industrialisation and Local Production	18%	3.3	1.10	Support for local production noted, with calls for more investment in manufacturing capabilities.
Leveraging ICT for Trade Facilitation	10%	2.8	1.25	Minimal direct support; however, respondents acknowledge the potential of digital solutions in trade.

Source: Author’s computation

Based on the analysis in Table 4.2, respondents highlighted that easing trade barriers, particularly by simplifying customs procedures and reducing tariffs, would greatly improve trade flows, with successful examples from the AfCFTA serving as a reference. While acknowledging the significance of trade facilitation infrastructure, participants pointed out persistent bottlenecks due to inadequate investment and poor maintenance. Support for promoting industrialisation and local production was noted, but respondents stressed the need for better access to financing and technology to support local businesses and SMEs. Although leveraging ICT received the least backing, respondents recognised its potential to enhance trade efficiency and market access, especially through e-commerce.

Figure 4.1: Percentage of Respondents Supporting

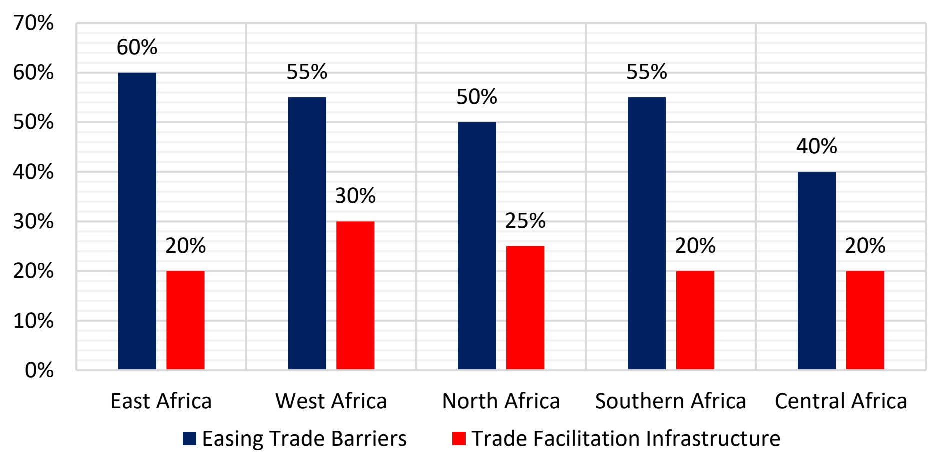


Source: Author’s computation

The result in Figure 4.1 reveals that a significant portion of respondents, 50%, prioritises easing trade barriers as the most effective strategy, highlighting a clear consensus on the necessity of reducing obstacles to trade for fostering economic collaboration. In contrast, the support for enhancing trade facilitation infrastructure (22%) and promoting industrialisation and local production (18%) indicates that while these strategies are acknowledged, they are not viewed as important as trade barrier reduction. Additionally, leveraging ICT for trade facilitation garnered only 10% support, suggesting that respondents may perceive digital solutions as supplementary rather than foundational in driving integration efforts. Ultimately, the findings highlight the importance of fixing trade barriers to improve intra-African economic integration, with a secondary emphasis on infrastructure and industrialisation initiatives.

4.4 Demographic Variations by Region

Figure 4.2: Demographic Variations by Region

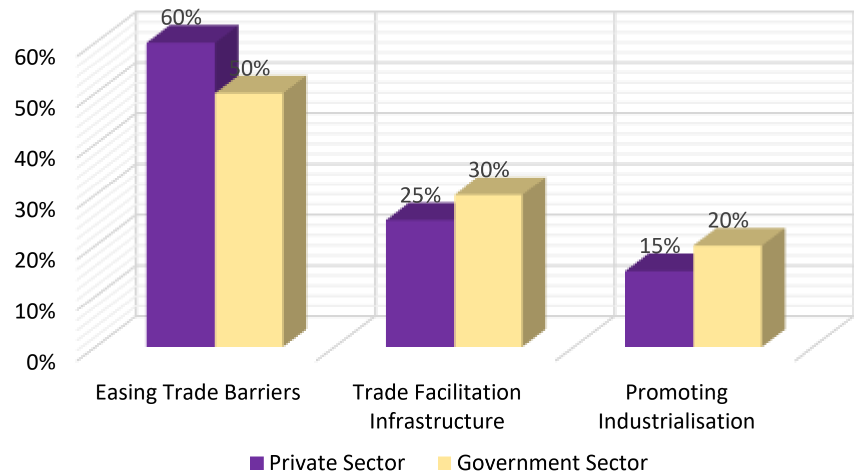


Source: Author's computation

The results on demographic variations by region in Figure 4.2 reveals significant differences in priorities for trade facilitation strategies across Africa. East Africa leads with 60% support for easing trade barriers, followed by West and Southern Africa at 55%, indicating a strong regional emphasis on reducing trade obstacles. Central Africa has the lowest support at 40%, suggesting less urgency in addressing these barriers. For trade facilitation infrastructure, West Africa shows the highest support at 30%, followed by North Africa at 25%, with East and Southern Africa at 20%. Central Africa also maintains 20% support, highlighting a general recognition of the need for infrastructure improvements. These findings suggest that strategies to enhance intra-African economic integration should be tailored to each region's unique challenges and priorities to foster effective collaboration and policy implementation.

4.5 Sector Analysis

Figure 4.3: Sector Analysis



Source: Author's computation

The sector analysis in Figure 4.3 highlights differing priorities between the private and government sectors regarding intra-African economic integration. The private sector strongly prioritises easing trade barriers (60%), focusing on reducing regulatory obstacles to improve business efficiency. The government sector also supports easing trade barriers but to a slightly lesser extent (50%), balancing this with other economic considerations. For trade facilitation infrastructure, the government sector shows slightly higher support (30%) compared to the private sector (25%), reflecting its focus on infrastructure as key to enabling trade. Promoting industrialisation receives the least support from both sectors, with 15% from the private sector and 20% from the government sector, indicating it is viewed as a longer-term strategy. Overall, the findings suggest that aligning these sectoral priorities is crucial for effective and sustainable economic integration in Africa.

CHAPTER FIVE

5.0 SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Summary of Key Findings of the Study

i. Easing Trade Barriers is Paramount: A significant majority of respondents (50%) identified easing trade barriers as the most important strategy for enhancing intra-African trade. This highlights the need for streamlined customs procedures, reduced tariffs, and harmonised trade regulations to facilitate smoother cross-border transactions.

ii. Importance of Trade Facilitation Infrastructure: A substantial portion of respondents (22%) emphasised the importance of improving trade facilitation infrastructure. Investments in transportation networks (roads, railways, and ports) and digital infrastructure are crucial for reducing logistical costs and transit times, thereby enhancing trade efficiency.

iii. Support for Industrialisation and Local Production: Approximately 18% of respondents advocated for promoting industrialisation and local production capabilities. This reflects a recognition of the need to develop the manufacturing sector, reduce import dependency, and create job opportunities, which are essential for boosting intra-African trade.

iv. Limited Direct Support for ICT Leveraging: Although only 10% of respondents explicitly supported leveraging ICT for trade facilitation, there was a general acknowledgment of its potential benefits. Digital technologies, e-commerce platforms, and data analytics can enhance market access and streamline trade processes.

v. Demographic Variations in Support: The study revealed variations in support for trade strategies based on demographic factors, including region and sector. For example, respondents from East Africa showed higher support for easing trade barriers compared to those from Central Africa, indicating regional differences in trade priorities.

vi. Need for Comprehensive Policy Frameworks: The findings emphasise the necessity for a holistic policy framework that integrates easing trade barriers, enhancing infrastructure, promoting local production, and leveraging digital technologies. Such an approach will be instrumental in unlocking Africa's trade potential and driving sustainable economic growth.

vii. Call for Strong Political Will and Collaboration: Respondents highlighted the importance of strong political will and cooperation among African nations to implement the identified strategies effectively. Collaborative efforts will be essential for overcoming the challenges that hinder intra-African trade.

5.2 Conclusion

This study draws conclusions from a thorough survey of stakeholders involved in trade across the continent to highlight the most important strategies required to improve intra-African trade. The results highlight how important it is to lower trade barriers, enhance trade facilitation infrastructure, encourage industrialisation and regional production, and take advantage of digital technologies. The overwhelming consensus among respondents that streamlined customs processes, reduced tariffs, and harmonised regulations are necessary to promote a more integrated regional market is reflected in the support for lowering trade barriers. Furthermore, the focus on trade facilitation infrastructure investment points to the urgent need to improve digital capabilities and transportation networks, both of which are essential for lowering logistical costs and promoting overall trade efficiency. While there is significant support for promoting industrialisation, the relatively lower emphasis on leveraging ICT suggests an opportunity for further awareness and investment in digital solutions. Using digital tools effectively could be essential for improving market access and expediting trade procedures as the world economy becomes more and more dependent on technology.

The study also reveals significant demographic differences in support of these strategies, emphasising the need for sector-specific and regionally-specific approaches. Moreover, the results demonstrate the need for robust political determination, cooperation among African countries, and the creation of all-encompassing policy structures in order to successfully execute these strategies. African countries can increase regional economic integration, promote sustainable economic growth, and realise their trade potential by giving priority to these strategies and developing an environment of collaboration. Policymakers, trade organisations, and other stakeholders striving to successfully negotiate the complex terrain of intra-African trade and support the continent's economic development will find great value in the study's findings.

5.3 Policy recommendations for enhancing intra-African trade

i. **Prioritise Easing Trade Barriers:** Governments should prioritise initiatives aimed at reducing tariffs and harmonising trade regulations across borders. This can be achieved through collaborative frameworks under the AfCFTA and regional economic communities.

ii. **Invest in Trade Facilitation Infrastructure:** Allocate resources to improve transportation and logistics infrastructure, such as roads, railways, and ports, while also enhancing digital infrastructure for trade facilitation.

iii. **Support Industrialisation and Local Production Initiatives:** Develop and implement policies that support industrialisation and the growth of local production capabilities, including providing incentives for investments in manufacturing and technology.

iv. **Leverage Digital Technologies for Trade Enhancement:** Promote the adoption of digital technologies and e-commerce platforms among SMEs to facilitate trade processes and improve market access.

African countries can promote trade, improve intra-African economic integration, and advance sustainable growth across the continent by implementing these policy recommendations. These strategies cover the important areas that stakeholders have identified and are consistent with the survey's findings.

REFERENCES

African Development Bank. (2021). *Annual report 2021*. https://www.afdb.org/en/documents/annual-report-2021

African Union. (2022, November 14). *10 things Africa must do to accelerate industrialisation and economic development*. https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20221114/10-things-africa-must-do-accelerate-industrialisation-and-economic

African Union. (2023, September 21). *African ministers commit to accelerate infrastructural development to boost Africa's connectivity by 2030*. https://au.int/en/pressreleases/20230921/african-ministers-commit-accelerate-infrastructural-development-boost-africas

Ehidiamhen, P., Duru, I., & Yusuf, A. (2019). *Role of information and communication technology in promoting trade in Nigeria*. https://doi.org/10.33329/ijbmas.6219.128

Fernandez, R.M. (2021). Effects of Trade Barriers on Development and Growth. In: Leal Filho, W., Marisa Azul, A., Brandli, L., Lange Salvia, A., Gökçin Özuyar, P., Wall, T. (eds) Reduced Inequalities. Encyclopedia of the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95882-8_24

Herman, P. R., & Oliver, S. (2023). Trade, policy, and economic development in the digital economy. *Journal of Development Economics*, *164*, 103135. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jdeveco.2023.103135

International Bar Association. (2023). *Regional integration in Africa: The role of AfCFTA*. https://www.ibanet.org/regional-integration-afcfta

International Telecommunication Union. (2021). *Facts and figures 2021*. https://www.itu.int/en/ITU-D/Statistics/Documents/facts/FactsFigures2021.pdf

International Trade Centre. (2022). *Annual report 2022*. https://intracen.org/file/itcannualreport2022eng-interactive20junepdf

Moyo, T. (2020). Industrialisation in Africa in the Era of Globalisation: Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects with a Focus on Manufacturing. In: Oloruntoba, S.O., Falola, T. (eds) The

Palgrave Handbook of African Political Economy. Palgrave Handbooks in IPE. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-38922-2_41

Okpalaoka, C. (2021). Infrastructural challenges in Nigeria and the effect on the Nigerian economy: A review of literature. *Environmental and Earth Sciences Research Journal*, *8*(4), 159-162. https://doi.org/10.18280/eesrj.080403

Songwe, V. (2019). *Intra-African trade: A path to economic diversification and inclusion*. Brookings. https://www.brookings.edu/articles/intra-african-trade-a-path-to-economic-diversification-and-inclusion/

United Nations Conference on Trade and Development. (2021). *The COVID-19 pandemic and the digital economy: A major challenge for trade and development*. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/presspb2021d10_en.pdf

United Nations Economic Commission for Africa. (2019). *Economic report on Africa 2019: Fiscal policy for financing sustainable development in Africa*. https://uneca.org/economic-report-africa-2019

Uzomah, N.L., Abdullahi, M. (2023). African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) Agreement and Challenges of Borderlands in the ECOWAS Region. In: Okunade, S.K., Ogunnubi, O. (eds) ECOWAS Protocol on Free Movement and the AfCFTA in West Africa. Palgrave Macmillan, Singapore. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-981-19-5005-6_12

World Bank. (2020). *World development report 2020: Trading for development in the age of global value chains*. The World Bank. https://www.worldbank.org/en/publication/wdr2020

Yindenaba Abor, J. (2023). Financing Infrastructure Development in Africa: The Role of National Development Banks. In: The Changing Role of National Development Banks in Africa. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-38639-8_6

Zwanbin, E. (2023). AfCTA and African Integration: Prospects and Challenges. In: Adeniran, A.I. (eds) African Development and Global Engagements. Palgrave Macmillan, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-21283-3_11