Management Commitment and Sustainable Coffee Export Performance, Evidence from Ethiopian Companies: The Mediating Role of Corporate Social Responsibility

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Abstract: Corporate social responsibility and managerial commitment are both essential to long-term commercial success. In this study, corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices in Ethiopia’s coffee exporting enterprises are used as a mediating factor to assess the impact of management commitment on sustainable coffee export performance. This study used both quantitative and qualitative research methods and primary and secondary data sources obtained from the 236 sampled coffee exporting enterprises in Ethiopia. In addition, this study used a standardized questionnaire to collect data. To determine the causal link between management commitment, corporate social responsibility, and sustainable export performance, the obtained data were analyzed using PLS structural equation modeling version 3.2.8 and SPSS version 25. The outcome demonstrates that management commitment and corporate social responsibility have a favorable and considerable impact on companies’ performance in exporting sustainably grown coffee. Results also showed that the effect of management commitment on sustainable export performance was partially mediated by CSR. The survey also revealed that while most private enterprises have not yet begun CSR, certain coffee exporting companies, notably cooperative unions in Ethiopia, have integrated CSR practices into their operations to increase export performance. In order to help practitioners and decision-makers comprehend the advantages of management commitment and CSR in creating sustainable coffee export performance, this study offers strategic recommendations. In addition, the study has contributed to the existing literature.

Keywords: coffee; corporate social responsibility; Ethiopia; management commitment; sustainable export performance

1. Introduction

Export performance is seen as one of the most important indicators of a company’s success in our increasingly globalized world. Exporting is becoming increasingly important for business survival, development, capacities, and developing extra resources that improve company performance as a result of the fast expansion of international commerce [1–3]. Additionally, a company’s reputation and capacity to provide ongoing profit are enhanced by the variety of markets and worldwide activities. The global market ultimately draws a firm into it, giving it a tremendous opportunity to expand its client base and, consequently, aids in improving export performance. The government benefits from exporting as well since it boosts the national economy and generates job possibilities [4,5]. Since coffee export is Ethiopia’s main source of foreign currency and employs more than 20 million people in its production, processing, and marketing, it is crucial to the country’s economy and plays a vital role [6,7]. Despite being the most exported agricultural product in the nation, the export volume of coffee is still rather minor in comparison to the production volume [8]. For instance, only 56%, 53%, and 53% of the total coffee produced in 2018, 2019, and 2020 were exported, respectively [9].
The effectiveness of coffee exporting enterprises has previously been researched both locally and internationally. For instance, Nsabimana and Tirkaso [10] discovered that the key factors of exporters from Southern and Eastern African nations were geographic distance, wealth, and population size. Similar investigations on Vietnam’s coffee export performance were done by other scholars [11]. This research concluded that the export of coffee was constrained by company capacity, home market features, and foreign market factors. Lack of standards, supply chain restrictions, a lack of integration between businesses, and coffee quality were identified to be the primary factors in studies that examined the performance of the coffee industry in the context of certain developing nations [12–14].

The study by Boansi and Crentsil [15] likewise concluded that the weak performance of the exporting industry was influenced by climate variations, price swings, and low competitiveness. This indicated that no studies have been conducted so far to investigate how management commitment and CSR activities impact the sustainability of export performance in Ethiopian coffee exporting firms [16–18]. Although several studies have examined the relationship between managerial commitment, CSR, and business success in various nations, these empirical findings produced mixed outcomes. For instance, some studies have discovered a favorable correlation between CSR and corporate performance [19,20], whereas other studies have discovered adverse correlations [21–23]. Similarly, a study on the relationship between management commitment and firm performance showed inconsistent results. Some findings revealed positive [24–27], and others showed negative associations [28,29]. Additionally, most of these studies on export success have been carried out in industrialized nations, with less studies having been done in developing nations such as Ethiopia [30]. Furthermore, most of the Ethiopian research on coffee export has put more emphasis on the production rather than the marketing [6]. Moreover, because they focus more on trend analysis and descriptive statistics, earlier research on Ethiopian coffee export contains methodological flaws. The links between the variables, hypotheses, and mediation effects cannot be tested using trend analysis or descriptive statistics. Given the prevalence of common management problems and CSR practices in Ethiopia, these knowledge gaps in the literature are crucial for the country’s coffee exporting businesses.

Therefore, the goal of this study is to fill in the gaps from previous research. Analyzing the impact of managerial commitment and corporate social responsibility on sustainable export performance is the main objective of the current study. It also seeks to evaluate the mediating function of CSR between MC and SEP and their linkages. The current study raises the following research questions in order to achieve this. (1) How much does management commitment impact the success of sustainable export performance? (2) How does CSR impact the success of sustainable exports? (3) How does CSR affect the link between management commitment and successful sustainable coffee export performance? (4) Are management commitment, CSR, and the performance of sustainable coffee exports related? The study also contributes the following findings. First, by analyzing the connections between latent variables, it adds to the corpus of knowledge on how management commitment and corporate social responsibility impact sustainable export performance. Second, to the best of the researchers’ knowledge, our study is the first of its kind in this study region to use PLS Structural Equation Modeling to analyze data on coffee export performance. This study fills methodological gaps and offers contextual additions as a result. Third, this study evaluates how corporate social responsibility functions as a mediator between management commitment and ethical coffee exporters in Ethiopia. Fourth, by identifying the significance of management commitment and corporate social responsibility in enhancing Ethiopia’s sustainable export performance, this study will advance stakeholder theory and RBV. Finally, it is predicted that the study results will provide practitioners and policymakers with helpful information for strengthening their competitive edge, especially when engaging with sustainable export practices.

The present study’s theoretical foundations are the resource-based view (RBV) and stakeholder theory. According to the RBV, businesses are comprised of a variety of special assets and skills that form the cornerstone of their strategies, which are the main drivers of
Similar to any other limited resource under RBV, CSR practices are unique, non-imitable, and non-substitutable. The distinctive aspect of the stakeholder theory’s approach to business strategy is its emphasis on creating and maintaining long-lasting stakeholder relationships as the foundation of successful business operations. This study contributes to the literature on RBV and stakeholder theory by demonstrating the relation between MC, CSR, and SEP.

The rest of the paper is structured as follows. After this introduction, Section 2 reviews the relevant literature on the relationship between management commitment, CSR, and sustainable export performance and develops a hypothesis. Section 3 presents a description of the data and research methods used. Section 4 offers the findings of the analysis. Following that, Section 5 demonstrates the discussion of the study results. Section 6 provides the research implications for the theory and practice. Finally, Section 7 presents the study limitations and future research directions.

2. Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Exporting is the most prominent and fastest business form to enter the global market, particularly for small and medium-sized firms, because it requires a limited amount of resources and entails the least risk compared to other international market entry methods. In addition, it is one of the earliest forms of economic activity. Export is also an important business operation for a country’s economic well-being because it directly contributes to creating job opportunities, trade balance, income development, and better life existence. On top of that, exports can boost revenue and profits by opening new markets or expanding existing ones, and they can even help a company gain a significant share of the global market. These explanations provide valuable insights into global trade operations and a foundation for foreign trade concepts.

2.1. Export Performance

Export performance is how a company’s financial and operational objectives are met through its export marketing strategy and measured by the volume of sales, market share, sales growth, customer satisfaction, and profitability. It is also referred to as an effect of a company’s export operation, which includes marketing and other business activities in international markets, or the degree to which a company achieves its objectives in terms of exporting goods and services to a foreign market. Export performance is a key indicator for managers when making decisions in international operations because it fosters growth and ensures the company’s long-term existence. The export performance is critical for developing-country firms that see the global market as a source of economic growth, continued existence, or competitive nature.

2.2. Management Commitment

Management commitment is also called export commitment, which is described as an overall readiness to explore and outsource new markets vigorously and avoid worldwide threats to implement effective marketing strategies that will increase export attainment. When a manager is dedicated to export, they are more likely to work on challenging tasks and special commitment for the allocation of productive resources. These resources might include technical, financial, and human capital for overseas markets, which can be implemented in an orderly and systematic manner to allow access to foreign markets, protect against risks, and develop a marketing strategy to meet the exporting goals. Additionally, managers were more focused on attaining prolonged economic advantages. The larger the available resources, the better the leader’s plan and strategy. Without the appropriate allocation of resources, a company may spend a long time in the early stages of exporting and fail to make significant progress in accessing global markets. As several scholars have demonstrated, for this study purpose, management commitment is an independent variable expected to influence the success or failure of export activities.
2.3. Corporate Social Responsibility

Corporate social responsibility (CSR) is defined as business practices and policies that positively influence the well-being of society. The concept has gained much attention over the last decade, and its importance in the business world is growing [46]. Carroll [47] suggested the first definition from the traditional views as a concept representing business firms’ ethics, economic, voluntariness, and legal expectations from the viewpoint of CSR as contributing to business purposes and the overall social welfare perspective. According to Wood [48], CSR is defined as companies dedicated to particular values, processes, regulations, and contributions toward societal responsibility. Thus, CSR is a series of procedures, traditions, guidelines, regulations, and entities that influence how a company is guiding, managing, and controlling their practices. CSR also has the potential to contribute positively to societal and business development. As a result, many companies have altered their policies and programs to include corporate social responsibility. According to the interpretations, the term social refers to a company’s obligation towards the public. For the success of business institutions, being socially responsible can maximize the positive effects and reduce the adverse impact on society (customers, owners, employees, suppliers, community, and government) [49]. For this study, CSR practice is defined as working on community development such as infrastructure expansion like health center buildings, road construction, school building, and pure water supply. Besides, it also considers working on environmental protection and forest development to produce quality coffee, which, as a result, increases customer satisfaction and directly and indirectly contributes to sustainable coffee export performance.

2.4. The Theoretical Relationship between Management Commitment, CSR, and Sustainable Export Performance

2.4.1. Management Commitment and Sustainable Export Performance

The role of management in starting, growing, and maintaining an export business is crucial [24]. Thus, several scholars have identified the relationship between management commitment and sustainable export performance. For instance, Navarro et al. [50] recognized that export commitment has become one of the most significant factors influencing export performance. Another scholar also acknowledged management commitment as an essential factor in the success of companies in international markets, especially in the initial stages of globalization [51]. However, Mac and Evangelista [52] found no association between export commitment and export performance. This reveals a lack of consensus among academics. Higher commitment enables a company to go after international market opportunities more actively and undertake appropriate export strategies to enhance export performance [2]. Management commitment also enables raising the number of activities connected to human and financial resources assigned to exporting operations and keeping employees motivated to support the company’s international market ventures [53]. This is because committed managers are willing to carry out complex tasks in exporting, such as market data analyses, gathering export information, and policy development, among other things, thereby improving a company’s performance in international markets [53]. As a result, a company should strive to enhance its management’s commitment to achieving better international market results. On top of that, businesses led by managers that are more committed to exporting can improve organizational abilities and foster an environment that will support sustained increases in export performance [27]. Following the explanations above, export commitment can be associated with a firm’s resource-based view (RBV) as a source of internal resources for gaining a competitive advantage in international markets. Within the RBV perspective, management commitment can assist a leader or manager in improving the effectiveness and efficiency of future resource allocations and provide specific directions that guide their decision-making [54]. Therefore, the following hypothesis is developed.

H1. Management commitment is positively related to sustainable export performance.
2.4.2. Management Commitment and Corporate Social Responsibility Practice

Management commitment is crucial in ensuring the company’s objective and improving firm performance. Thus, an adequate understanding of any objective of a business relies on the commitment of its management [55]. Commitment to CSR practice is associated with emotional connection and a sense of responsibility toward activities that benefit both the environment and society for future generations [56]. A committed leader is substantially involved in implementing CSR-related activities [57]. According to Lenox and Toffel [58], making managers aware of the financial benefits of sustainable practices enables them to implement CSR practices more. In addition, management commitment to CSR implementation increases satisfaction and pleasure from participating in activities that promote environmental and societal safety [59]. Therefore, from the above discussion, we can assert that a higher level of commitment increases the application of CSR practices. Thus, for this study, it is hypothesized that:

H2. Management commitment positively affects the implementation of CSR practices.

2.4.3. CSR and Sustainable Export Performance

Numerous scholars have identified the theoretical relationship between CSR and sustainable business performance. According to the findings of Sroka and Szántó [60], the effectiveness of business organizations depends not only on their operations and availability of resources but also on how well they incorporate sustainable development into their activity, which, as a result, leads to improvement of their performance. Kannan [61] advised in his study that corporate leaders should focus not only on the economic factors but also on the protracted performance of their organizations to survive in today’s highly competitive global market. Shahzad et al. [62] also studied the relationships between CSR and sustainable financial performance in Asian countries, concluding that socially responsible businesses perform better than others. Malik and Kanwal [63] investigated the effect of CSR on the financial performance of pharmaceutical companies in Pakistan and discovered a positive correlation. Furthermore, Ullah et al. [19] identified the positive relationship between corporate social responsibility and export performance. On the other hand, Martinez-Conesa et al. [64] found a negative correlation among CSR activities and a company’s financial performance.

The stakeholder theory claims that the most profitable firms are those with the highest levels of social responsibility [65]. It argues that an organization’s success is determined by its ability to manage its relationships with stakeholders. This implies that businesses should be engaged in forming and sustaining proper relationships with interest groups to improve export performance with CSR [66]. Tang et al. [67] also confirmed that CSR practices sustainably increase the profitability of firms by focusing on external stakeholders. According to Perrini et al. [68], the stakeholder theory is critical in understanding any prospective association between CSR and firm performance. Thus, firm participation in CSR can improve their status and performance over time [46]. Based on the justifications above, the authors of this study made the following hypotheses:

H3. CSR positively contributes to sustainable export performance.

2.5. The Mediating Role of CSR between Management Commitment and Sustainable Export Performance

CSR is used as a mediating variable by strengthening MC and ultimately increases sustainable export performance. When there is management commitment, companies effectively implement their CSR practice to achieve sustainable business performance [69]. The possible explanation for this is that a company’s executives can enforce the implementation of internal practices and policies to achieve the company’s goals and objectives. For this enforcement, professionals are more aware of and oriented to adopt these practices in their daily operations to achieve sustainable performance [46]. A different perspective on CSR begins with the premise that it is driven by the need to adapt environmental changes and
achieve political and economic goals and social inclusion while ensuring business sustainability. As the public awareness of social and environmental issues grows, it has become critical for businesses to ensure long-term business performance to gain a competitive advantage in local and global markets and communities [70,71]. Hence, incorporating CSR practices into organizational strategy helps to improve a firm’s export performance [19]. Hence, this study argues that CSR is a mechanism that describes the association between management commitment and sustainable export performance [72]. Thus, hypothesis number four is as follows:

**H4.** CSR mediates the relationship between management commitment and sustainable export performance.

2.6. Conceptual Framework

This study proposes the following conceptual framework to examine the empirical relationship between management commitment and sustainable export performance. Accordingly, the response variable is management commitment. The outcome variable is sustainable export performance. The mediating variable is corporate social responsibility. Hence, the derived conceptual model tries to estimate and test the hypothesis considering the direct and indirect effects of the variables. Thus, to support the findings of the results, the proposed conceptual model is constructed using the assumption of the SMART PLS structural equation model and path modeling analysis, as seen in Figure 1.

![Figure 1. The author’s conceptual research model.](image)

3. Research Methodology

3.1. Design of the Study

This study examined the relationship between management commitment and sustainable export performance while considering the mediation function of corporate social responsibility (CSR) practices of Ethiopian coffee exporting enterprises. To analyze the link between the factors, researchers have employed a deductive reasoning method in conjunction with a quantitative and qualitative research design [73]. Management commitment served as our study’s independent variable. Additionally, the model considered corporate social responsibility as a mediator variable and sustainable export performance as an endogenous variable. We used information from both primary and secondary sources. The main data sources were the responders, which included the general managers, vice managers, and marketing managers of the coffee exporting companies. Accordingly, from each company, only one respondent was taken. The secondary data were acquired from corporate reports, annual government reports, policy documents, and literary works. In general, 19 standardized structured questionnaires were employed in the study, and the questionnaire items were evaluated using a Likert five-point scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree).

3.2. Sample and Sampling Techniques

Using the purposive sampling technique, a sample size of 400 firms was determined for this investigation [74]. As a result, 260 enterprises were purposefully chosen from among the 400 coffee exporting businesses in the nation based on export volume, export
experience, and availability of the required data. Then, individual respondents were selected using a judgmental sampling technique because it is anticipated that management teams have a better awareness of the overall performance of the company than the regular personnel [75,76]. All participants were made aware of the study’s goal prior to data collection. After that, each organization’s representative (general manager, vice manager, or marketing manager) was given a self-administrated questionnaire to gather the necessary information. Seven questionnaires were eliminated because they contained missing data or had the data marked incorrectly, out of the 243 replies that were sent out to respondents. Finally, 236 surveys were used for additional analysis. An accurate sample size of more than 10% of the total population is considered to be representative, according to Memon et al. [77]. In our specific case, we include 60% of the study area’s coffee exporting enterprises, which is larger than the recommended 10%. The researchers spoke with 20 different administrative levels to gather further information. This interview was done to support the study’s use of a qualitative research methodology. The data were gathered between 5 January and 30 February 2022. Since the collected data is publicly available, it is not subjected to institutional review board (IRB) approval. Because coffee is the foundation of the Ethiopian economy and the primary source of foreign currency, the exporting coffee sector was chosen for this study [78]. Coffee contributes significantly more to the country’s export share and overall increase in Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and Growth National Product (GNP) than other products and produces [6].

3.3. Methods of Data Analysis

In this study, demographic information was examined using SPSS version 25. Therefore, prior to the research, the data was coded, corrected, and processed using SPSS statistical software. Additionally, PLS-SEM analysis was performed using Smart PLS version 3.2.8 of the statistical program to examine the connections between the constructs. PLS-SEM is a multi-tasking, second-generation regression model that consists of two distinct components [79]. A measurement model is employed in the first section of the analysis to evaluate the accuracy and dependability of various indicators. In the current investigation, the structural model was utilized to verify the hypothesis and discover the structural links between the variables as the second phase of the analysis [80,81]. Additionally, PLS-SEM was employed in the study’s mediation analysis to ascertain the construct’s direct and indirect effects [82].

3.4. Measurement Items

Scales that have been published in both local and foreign publications were used to measure the variables in this investigation. We utilize a Likert 5-point scale to develop the questionnaire (1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = neutral, 4 = agree, and 5 = highly agree). For all independent, dependent, and mediator variables, the study used 3 constructs with a total of 15 measuring items.

3.4.1. Dependent Variable

In this study, the dependent variable was sustainable export performance. The measurement criteria for this variable were modified from results that had already been verified [83–85]. The sustainable export performance was assessed using a five-point Likert-scale question based on five contextualized elements. These include revenue growth, sales volume, market share, profitability, and customer satisfaction. The contextualized questionnaires are found in Appendix A (Table A1).

3.4.2. Independent Variable

The researchers used management commitment as an independent variable measured by management commitment indicators developed by Shamsuddoha and Yunus Ali [86], Chuang, P.K. [53], and Monteiro [87]. The measurement consists of five items with a five-point Likert scale, conceptualizing management commitment. The measurement items
comprise the level of applying the CSR practice toward export activity, the amount of human and financial resources devoted to the export activity, the extent of management engagement in export practice, the availability of appropriate organizational structure to deal with all export activities, and the level of commitment in participating community development programs.

3.4.3. Measures of the Mediator Variable

This study used corporate social responsibility (CSR) as a mediator variable to achieve its goals. The observed variables have been used to measure CSR’s mediating role in management commitment and sustainable export performance relationships. In this case, the mediating variable items have been adopted and used to assess the impact of corporate social responsibility practice on management commitment and sustainable export performance [88,89]. In conclusion, all determined variables were measured based on the gathered primary and secondary data after all the estimated results were analyzed, validated, cross-checked, and confirmed with their expected requirements.

4. Results and Analysis

4.1. Demographic Data Analysis

In the present study, the demographic data of 236 sample respondents revealed that 89% (210) and 11% (26) of respondents were male and female, respectively. The statistical evidence suggests that female involvement is insignificant; this could be due to export companies’ reluctance to give female employees more recognition. Regarding the age category, most of the respondents age range was 36–50 (76%), 25–35 (18%), and >50 (6%), respectively. It implies that most of the respondents were mature and productive and could comprehend the researcher’s questions and provide an appropriate response. As to the educational level of the respondents, the study result shows that 51% had a bachelor’s degree, 46% had a master’s degree, and 3% were PhD holders, respectively. This indicates that most of the respondents could understand and were able to provide valuable data for the research, as shown in Table 1.

| Items                  | Description       | Frequency | Percentage |
|------------------------|-------------------|-----------|------------|
| Gender                 | Male              | 210       | 89%        |
|                        | Female            | 26        | 11%        |
|                        | **Total**         | **236**   | **100%**   |
| Age                    | 25–35             | 42        | 18%        |
|                        | 36–50             | 181       | 76%        |
|                        | >50               | 13        | 6%         |
|                        | **Total**         | **236**   | **100%**   |
| Education              | Bachelor Degree   | 120       | 51%        |
|                        | Master’s Degree   | 108       | 46%        |
|                        | Doctorate         | 8         | 3%         |
|                        | **Total**         | **236**   | **100%**   |
| Position in the company| General Manager   | 125       | 53%        |
|                        | Vice Manager      | 69        | 29%        |
|                        | Marketing Manager | 42        | 18%        |
|                        | **Total**         | **236**   | **100%**   |

Source: Survey data (2022).

4.2. Measurement Model Analysis

The measurement model is the part of the model that examines the relationship between the latent variables and their measures [90]. The measurement model helps to establish the reliability and validity of the constructs. In PLS-SEM, the measurement model is the first step to examine the validity and reliability of the indicators.
4.2.1. Reliability and Validity Test

This study checks the validity and reliability of all pertinent questionnaire items using PLS-SEM statistical software. The measurement model examined the validity and reliability through factor loadings, Cronbach's alpha, composite reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity [82]. Accordingly, the convergent validity results of the study were portrayed in Table 2 below. Both Cronbach Alpha and composite reliability measure the internal consistency of the scale items [91]. According to the rule of thumb, Cronbach Alpha and composite reliability (C.R.) should be greater than 0.70, whereas average variance extracted (AVE) and factor loadings should be greater than 0.50 [92]. In the current study, Cronbach Alpha and C.R. values are higher than 0.70, as shown in Table 2 and Figure 2, confirming that the sample data is stable and reliable. The result also revealed that the values of AVE and factor loadings are greater than 0.50, indicating high relationships between items and valid convergent validity.

Table 2. Measurement model analysis.

| Constructs/Latent Variables | Items     | Indicator Reliability | Internal Consistency Reliability | Convergent Validity |
|-----------------------------|-----------|-----------------------|----------------------------------|---------------------|
| Management commitment (MC)  | MC1       | 0.861                 | 0.820                            | 0.871               | 0.575               |
|                             | MC2       | 0.710                 |                                   |                     |                     |
|                             | MC3       | 0.721                 |                                   |                     |                     |
|                             | MC4       | 0.742                 |                                   |                     |                     |
|                             | MC5       | 0.749                 |                                   |                     |                     |
| Corporate social responsibility (CSR) | CSR1 | 0.797                 | 0.812                            | 0.869               | 0.571               |
|                             | CSR2      | 0.774                 |                                   |                     |                     |
|                             | CSR3      | 0.806                 |                                   |                     |                     |
|                             | CSR4      | 0.700                 |                                   |                     |                     |
|                             | CSR5      | 0.694                 |                                   |                     |                     |
| Sustainable export performance (SEP) | SEP1 | 0.675                 | 0.875                            | 0.910               | 0.670               |
|                             | SEP2      | 0.767                 |                                   |                     |                     |
|                             | SEP3      | 0.820                 |                                   |                     |                     |
|                             | SEP4      | 0.741                 |                                   |                     |                     |
|                             | SEP5      | 0.880                 |                                   |                     |                     |

Source: Estimation by the authors.

4.2.2. Correlation Matrix and Discriminant Validity

After the convergent validity and reliability test, we conducted a statistical analysis of discriminant validity. The purpose was to confirm that no two items within the same construct measure the same thing, resulting in data redundancy [93]. Three techniques were employed to establish discriminant validity in SMART-PLS [94]. The Fornell–Larcker
criterion, cross-loadings, and Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) ratio analysis. Firstly, we used the Fornell–Larcker correlation to examine discriminant validity [95]. According to the Fornell–Larcker principle, discriminant validity is ensured if AVE’s square root for a particular construct is higher than its correlation with other constructs [94]. As shown in Table 3, the squared AVE value in bold diagonal is greater than the inter-construct correlation, indicating no discriminant validity issue. This means a construct is unique and explains concepts not reflected in the model by other constructs [96].

Table 3. Fornell–Larcker.

|       | Mean  | S.D   | CSR   | MC    | SEP   |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| CSR   | 14.3475 | 3.11995 | 0.756 |       |       |
| MC    | 15.6610 | 2.56070 | 0.648 | 0.758 |       |
| SEP   | 14.3475 | 3.11995 | 0.728 | 0.577 | 0.818 |

Source: Estimation by the authors.

Secondly, cross-loadings were employed to check discriminant validity. According to this technique, a particular item should have higher loadings on its parent constructs than other constructs in the study [94,95]. In the present study, the particular item has higher loadings than others do, indicating a low relationship among variables and valid discriminant validity, as shown in Table 4.

Table 4. Cross-loadings.

|       | CSR   | MC    | SEP   |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| CSR1  | 0.797 | 0.638 | 0.578 |
| CSR2  | 0.774 | 0.511 | 0.497 |
| CSR3  | 0.806 | 0.512 | 0.542 |
| CSR4  | 0.700 | 0.395 | 0.587 |
| CSR5  | 0.694 | 0.354 | 0.551 |
| MC1   | 0.498 | 0.861 | 0.549 |
| MC2   | 0.339 | 0.710 | 0.291 |
| MC3   | 0.413 | 0.721 | 0.305 |
| MC4   | 0.381 | 0.742 | 0.334 |
| MC5   | 0.683 | 0.749 | 0.567 |
| SEP1  | 0.627 | 0.495 | 0.875 |
| SEP2  | 0.497 | 0.379 | 0.767 |
| SEP3  | 0.617 | 0.488 | 0.820 |
| SEP4  | 0.591 | 0.460 | 0.741 |
| SEP5  | 0.632 | 0.523 | 0.880 |

Source: Estimation by the authors.

Finally, the Heterotrait Monotrait (HTMT) correlation ratio is another measure of discriminant validity. According to Henseler et al. [93] and Afthanorhan et al. [96], if the path model includes constructs that are conceptually very similar, a threshold level of 0.90 is acceptable; if the HTMT value is above 0.90, it indicates a lack of discriminant validity. In our case, the result below in Table 5 shows that all the HTMT values were less than 0.90, and the result confirms the low relationships among the variables and acceptable discriminant validity.

Table 5. Heterotrait and monotrait ratio.

|       | CSR   | MC    | SEP   |
|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| CSR   |       |       |       |
| MC    | 0.733 |       |       |
| SEP   | 0.863 | 0.631 |       |

Source: Estimation by the authors.
4.3. Structural Model Analysis

Following the measurement model analysis, the structural model was examined. The structural model is the relationship between the latent variables. It assesses the significance of the relationship between the latent variables. In structural model analysis, the first step is evaluating collinearity issues [97]. Thus, the possibility of a collinearity problem was investigated before examining the structural relationship between latent variables. When there is a collinearity problem, the authors can remove or combine predictor variables into one construct [82]. This study used the variance inflation factor (VIF) to test the existence of multicollinearity problems. As displayed in Table 6, collinearity statistics produced VIF values ranging from 1.338 to 2.942 below the threshold of 5, indicating that the constructs were free of collinearity issues [81].

Table 6. Multi-collinearity test result.

| Items | VIF   |
|-------|-------|
| CSR1  | 1.896 |
| CSR2  | 1.788 |
| CSR3  | 1.980 |
| CSR4  | 1.672 |
| CSR5  | 1.649 |
| MC1   | 2.399 |
| MC2   | 1.854 |
| MC3   | 1.691 |
| MC4   | 1.828 |
| MC5   | 1.338 |
| SEP1  | 2.769 |
| SEP2  | 1.793 |
| SEP3  | 2.052 |
| SEP4  | 1.567 |
| SEP5  | 2.942 |

Source: Estimation by the authors.

4.3.1. Hypothesis Testing

After the outer models’ reliability, and validity was established and the multicollinearity problem was checked, the hypothesized relationships of the inner models were evaluated. In this case, the result of the direct effects of independent variables on the dependent variable are shown in Table 7. The significance level of path coefficient can be determined by their magnitude sign, +1, and by using t-statistic values. As a rule of thumb, the recommended range for t-value is 1.96 and above. For this purpose, the bootstrapping technique was used to determine the significance of each structural path in this study. In the first hypothesis (H1), management commitment (MC) is assumed to contribute positively to sustainable export performance (SEP). As shown in Figure 3 and Table 7, MC has a positive and significant effect on SEP ($\beta = 0.182, t = 3.188, p$-value < 0.001). As a result, the research supports H1. In H2, we claimed that the management commitment positively contributes to corporate social responsibility. The findings revealed that MC significantly influences corporate social responsibility at a beta value ($\beta = 0.648, t = 20.698, p$-value < 0.001). This shows that increasing MC by 1 unit increases corporate social responsibility by 64.8% when other factors are constant, and we therefore confirm H2. Furthermore, in H3, we proposed that corporate social responsibility (CSR) contributes positively to sustainable export performance (SEP), and the result revealed that (SEP) is influenced significantly and positively by (CSR) ($\beta = 0.611, t = 12.499, p$-value < 0.000). This means that if CSR is increased by 1 unit, sustainable export performance will increase by 61%—if other factors remain constant. Thus, H3 is proved. To conclude, the data confirm all the direct hypotheses.
In order to ascertain the goodness of fit, the coefficient of determination ($R^2$), effect size ($f^2$), and the predictive relevance measure ($Q^2$) were assessed in the present study [98]. The $R^2$ values are used to determine the predictive accuracy of the model and show how the dependent variable changes due to the change of the independent variable(s) [99]. Hair et al. [93] and Hair et al. [99] suggested that when focusing on marketing issues, $R^2$ values of 0.75, 0.50, or 0.25 for endogenous latent variables can be a rough rule of thumb, respectively described as substantial, moderate, or weak. In this model, the $R^2$ value of CSR was 0.420, whereas sustainable export performance (SEP) was 0.550. This means that the 42% change in CSR can be explained by management commitment, and the 55% change in sustainable export performance can be explained by management commitment and corporate social responsibility.

The study also used $f^2$ to determine the effect size of the independent variable on the dependent variable. According to Cohen [100] and Hair et al. [101], the recommended values for $f^2$ can be $> 0.02$, small, $> 0.15$, medium, and $> 0.35$, large. In the present study, the effect size ($f^2$) values from MC to CSR, CSR to SEP, and MC to SEP were 0.723, 0.481, and 0.043, respectively, which is above the recommended threshold.

Finally, the study used $Q^2$ values to test the predictive relevance of the model. $Q^2$ is used to measure whether a model has predictive relevance and establishes the predictive relevance of the endogenous constructs found using the blindfolding methods [99]. In $Q^2$, a range of greater than zero is acceptable and indicates that the model is well constructed and has predictive relevance [99]. As shown in Figure 3, the $Q^2$ values of the study were 0.223 and 0.344 for CSR and SEP, respectively, which is above the threshold values.

### 4.3.2. Mediation Analysis

The mediation analysis was carried out to see if CSR played a role in mediating the link between management commitment and sustainable export performance. As shown in Table 8, the total effect of management commitment on sustainable export performance was significant (H4: $\beta = 0.577$, $t = 15.660$, $p < 0.000$). In the presence of a mediating variable (CSR), the relationship between management commitment and sustainable export performance (SEP) also remains significant ($\beta = 0.182$, $t = 3.210$, $p < 0.001$). The indirect effect of management commitment on sustainable export performance via corporate social responsibility was also significant ($\beta = 0.396$, $t = 9.805$, $p < 0.000$). As both direct and
indirect paths were significant, the relationship between management commitment and sustainable export performance was partially mediated by CSR [72].

Table 8. Mediation analysis.

| Total Effect (MC → SEP) | Direct Effect (MC → SEP) | The Indirect Effect of MC on SEP |
|-------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Coefficient | p-Value | Coefficient | p-Value | Coefficient | SD | t-Value (Bootstrap) | p-Value | BI [2.5%; 97.5%] |
| 0.577 | 0.000 | 0.182 | 0.001 | H4. MC -> CSR -> SEP | 0.396 | 0.040 | 9.805 | 0.000 | 0.315; 0.473 |

Note: BI = bias corrected confidence interval; MC = management commitment; CSR = corporate social responsibility; SEP = sustainable export performance.

5. Discussion

The results of this study, which drew conclusions from the resource-based view (RBV) theory, showed a positive association between management commitment and sustainable coffee export performance. This suggests that Ethiopian managers of coffee export companies who are dedicated to allocating and deploying significant human and financial resources will see a sustained improvement in coffee export performance. This conclusion is consistent with those of Chugan and Singh [53] and Saha, G. et al. [102]. Additionally, the study’s findings indicated a strong and positive association between managerial commitment (MC) and corporate social responsibility (CSR). The more corporate social responsibility measures are implemented, the greater the management commitment. This claim could be justified by the idea that determined corporate leaders can impose rules and regulations within the firm to help it reach its objectives. Additionally, this investigation supported the findings of earlier studies by Yusliza M. et al. [103] and Yang Spencer et al. [69].

The study’s findings also indicated a significant correlation between CSR activity and successful exports of sustainably grown coffee. This entails putting into practice CSR strategies such as community development through infrastructures like road building, school building, pure water supply, and health facility services that result in a sustainable export performance: enhancing productivity and product quality, increasing market access, and increasing the technical assistance of non-government and governmental organizations. These results support the study by Guo et al. [104], who discovered that successful CSR implementation improves business performance and leads to sustainable growth. Stakeholder theory states that businesses should emphasize the value of incorporating social issues into daily operations and should set forth their responsibilities to all stakeholders, including clients, employees, funders, suppliers, and communities. Accordingly, the current study also lends credence to the stakeholder theory [105]. Because CSR practices guarantee the health and safety of employees, customer happiness, and community well-being, they improve the company’s performance in the coffee export market. These conclusions have been supported by a prior study by Ghaderi et al. [106], which examined the function of CSR strategy in marketing analysis and long-term company expansion. However, despite the fact that CSR is crucial for the sustainability of coffee export performance, only a few cooperative unions implement it in the research area’s coffee sectors, according to the interviews with the respondents. On the other hand, our results contradict those of Refs. [21–23]. Applying CSR lowers firm performance because it is an expense for the company, as claimed by Buallay et al. [21], Hu et al. [22], and Nguyen et al. [23].

We consider the idea of a mediating influence for CSR, MC, and SEP in addition to looking at the direct relationship between CSR and sustainable export performance. The outcome thus supports the existence of a partial CSR mediation between managerial commitment and successful sustainable exports. It shows that committed management is concerned about CSR application by producing high-quality coffee and providing excellent customer service because it uses production techniques and marketing channels capable of giving customers who interact with the company both financial and emotional satisfaction.
In this case, coffee export can be enhanced by keeping current clients while attracting new ones, enabling businesses to attain sustainable export performance. These results are in line with those of an earlier study by Uyar et al. [107], who discovered that dedicated corporate managers could successfully implement CSR practices that provide sustained business success.

6. Implications for Theory and Practice

6.1. Theoretical Implications

The results so far have important ramifications for both theory and practice. From a theoretical standpoint, this research makes use of the RBV to comprehend how the interaction of certain resources and capabilities leads to sustainable export performance and stakeholder theory to understand any potential link between CSR and company performance [68]. Therefore, by analyzing the effect of MC and CSR in enhancing sustainable export performance, this study added to the current body of knowledge. The conceptual model with mediated interactions offered more in-depth insights into the interaction of management commitment and CSR and their impact on sustainable export performance. The study further added to the hypothesis by exploring the mediating function of CSR between MC and SEP. The study also adds to the body of knowledge on sustainable export performance literature by illuminating the connection between the constructs in improving export performance and providing evidence of Ethiopian coffee exporting enterprises. As a result, the study’s findings are consistent with the RBV, which maintains that businesses can develop and utilize internal resources to their advantage, and the stakeholder theory, which contends that businesses should create value for all stakeholders and enhance sustainable export performance.

6.2. Practical Implications

First and foremost, our empirical findings help managers of coffee exporting companies improve the sustainability of their export performance by identifying, assessing, and improving the key export drivers found in this study. They can also create the necessary training programs for their teams to help them overcome current weaknesses, increase their international engagement, and take advantage of global markets. In order to improve the accessibility and quality of coffee production, which improves sustainable coffee export performance, company management must also consider CSR practice in community development activities, such as school building, road construction, pure water supply, and health center construction. Additionally, the study’s conclusions offer guidance to exporting businesses on how to enhance their export performance and utilize the findings as a yardstick for competing in international markets, particularly those in emerging economies such as Ethiopia. The study’s conclusions also help managers concentrate on managing a business’s internal resources (i.e., human and financial), which is crucial for enhancing the performance of sustainable coffee exports. To sustain their commitment to exporting and increasing export performance, managers must dedicate significant human and financial resources, as putting into place strong CSR procedures in the community will grant them a competitive advantage. Second, public authorities can use the findings of the current study to create programs for sharing corporate management expertise with other nations that have coffee exporting companies. In addition, disseminating information about how to engage in sustainable practices profitably within large businesses leads to an increase in sustainable practices [58]. Therefore, it is logical to expect that the government disseminating information about how to engage in sustainable practices profitably in Ethiopia would lead to a similar increase. As a result, this technique helps a business by raising the administration’s degree of dedication, which enhances the performance of sustainable coffee exports. Additionally, policymakers can use the findings of the current study to develop strategies and policies for exporting businesses to engage in CSR activities, which support local efforts to produce high-quality coffee in large quantities and support sustained export performance.
7. Limitations and Direction for Future Research

The current study includes several constraints, similar to many earlier investigations. First of all, the sample’s scope limits are evident in the fact that it was exclusively drawn from Ethiopian coffee exporting enterprises. In order to generalize the findings, this study proposed that subsequent researchers use data from various countries provided by various companies. Another shortcoming of the study has been noted to be the use of two constructs, namely management commitment and CSR, to assess the sustainability of export performance in coffee companies. Future researchers could therefore use additional variables, such as employee commitment, customer satisfaction, and export experience as intervening variables between management commitment (MC) and sustainable export performance (SEP), in addition to corporate social responsibility (CSR) practice, to enhance the current model.

Author Contributions: Conceptualization, Q.J. and A.N.S.; methodology, software, validation, formal analysis, investigation, resource, data curation, and writing—original draft preparation, A.N.S.; writing—review, editing, and supervision, Q.J. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Funding: This research received no external funding sources.

Institutional Review Board Statement: Not applicable.

Informed Consent Statement: Not applicable.

Data Availability Statement: The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding authors upon reasonable request.

Acknowledgments: We are grateful for the support provided by the School of Management at Wuhan University of Technology, and we appreciate everyone who responded and gave us accurate data for the study.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Appendix A

Table A1. List of constructs with their measures and sources.

| Constructs                        | Items                                                                 | Source     |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------|------------|
| Management commitment             | (1) Our company’s commitment to applying CSR practices to export activity is significant (MC1). | [69–71]    |
|                                   | (2) The amount of human and financial resources devoted to the export activity by our company is substantial (MC2). |
|                                   | (3) The extent of management engagement in export practice is considerable (MC3). |
|                                   | (4) Our company has the required organizational structure to handle all export activities (MC4). |
|                                   | (5) Our company is highly committed to participating in community development programs (MC5). |
| Corporate social responsibility    | (1) Our company participates in initiatives and projects that promote societal safety (CSR1). |
|                                   | (2) Our company considers environmental issues when making business decisions (CSR2). |
|                                   | (3) Customer satisfaction is essential for our company (CSR3). |
|                                   | (4) Our firm has procedures and practices to ensure our employees’ health and safety (CSR4). |
|                                   | (5) Our company is regarded as a part of the local community, and we care about its growth and infrastructure improvements (CSR5). | [30,74]    |
| Sustainable export performance    | (1) Our company revenue growth rate is stable (SEP1). |
|                                   | (2) The sales of our company are increasing (SEP2). |
|                                   | (3) The market share of our company meets our goals (SEP3). |
|                                   | (4) The profit of our company is steadily rising (SEP4). |
|                                   | (5) Our company enjoys a high level of customer satisfaction (SEP5). | [68–70]    |
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