

IMPROVING THE EXPORT PERFORMANCE OF INDONESIAN SMES THROUGH
ENHANCED INTERNATIONAL MARKETING CAPABILITIES AMIDST THE CRISIS:
UTILIZING FLEXIBLE STRATEGIES AND DIGITAL TECHNOLOGY

Zaenal Aripin^{1*}, Fitriana², Farida Yulianty³

¹Sangga Buana University, Bandung, 40124, Indonesia, Zaenal.arifin@usbypkp.ac.id

² Sangga Buana University, Bandung, 40124, Indonesia, Fitriana@usbypkp.ac.id

³ Sangga Buana University, Bandung, 40124, Indonesia, Fys@usbypkp.ac.id

ABSTRACT

This journal focuses on efforts to improve the export performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia in the face of the global crisis situation. The research aims to investigate how improving international marketing capabilities, using flexible strategies, and utilizing digital technology can help SMEs overcome export challenges. The research methods used involved surveys, interviews, and data analysis. The results revealed that SMEs that successfully adopt these strategies tend to achieve better export growth than those that do not. They have the ability to adjust to changing global market demands and access a wider market through the utilization of digital technology. Therefore, it is important for SMEs to understand and implement these practices in their export activities. In addition, the journal also presents a discussion on the implications of the research results. Improved export performance of SMEs can have a positive impact on the national economy, create new jobs, and increase the competitiveness of domestic industries. Practical suggestions are also presented, such as international marketing training, access to digital technology, and cooperation with relevant government agencies and industries. This research provides valuable insights for Indonesian SMEs and relevant stakeholders to develop more effective strategies to improve export performance amidst the unpredictable global crisis.

Keywords: Improving Export Performance, SMEs, Indonesia, International Marketing Capability, Crisis, Utilization, Flexible Strategy, Digital Technology.

INTRODUCTION

Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) are the backbone of Indonesia's economy, contributing significantly to economic growth, employment generation, and income distribution. In recent years, the export performance of these SMEs has gained prominence due to its pivotal role in sustaining and enhancing the nation's economic health. This essay explores the importance of SME export performance in Indonesia, emphasizing the challenges faced during global crises and the strategies to overcome them.

SMEs and Indonesia's Economic Growth

SMEs in Indonesia are crucial drivers of economic development. They account for a substantial portion of the country's GDP and are responsible for employing millions of people (Smith, 2021). Their significance goes beyond mere job creation; they also contribute significantly to income distribution, as they tend to hire from local communities and provide opportunities for individuals to become entrepreneurs. The health and prosperity of SMEs, especially in the context of international trade, are therefore closely linked to Indonesia's overall economic well-being.

Challenges Faced by SMEs in Global Crises

SMEs play a vital role in Indonesia's economic landscape, but they are not immune to the challenges posed by global crises. The COVID-19 pandemic, for instance, highlighted several obstacles that SMEs face in maintaining and expanding their exports

Decreased Demand from International Markets: One of the primary challenges during global crises is the decline in demand from international markets (Brown, 2019). Factors such as reduced consumer spending, economic uncertainty, and disruptions to global trade can lead to a decrease in export volumes for SMEs. With a smaller international market share, these businesses may struggle to sustain their operations and workforce

Travel and Trade Restrictions: Global crises often lead to the imposition of travel and trade restrictions by other countries, which can hinder SMEs' access to international markets (Clark, 2018). These restrictions may include limitations on the movement of goods and people, making it difficult for SMEs to establish and maintain relationships with foreign customers and partners.

Supply Chain Disruptions: Disruptions in global supply chains can have a significant impact on SMEs that rely on exports. Delays in shipping goods, interruptions in the availability of raw materials, and logistical issues can cause severe problems for these businesses (White, 2017). SMEs may struggle to fulfill orders, leading to dissatisfaction among their international customers and potential loss of business.

Decline in Domestic Consumer Demand: While focusing on international markets, SMEs must also consider the impact of global crises on domestic consumer demand. A decline in domestic spending can have a ripple effect, reducing revenue for these businesses and making it challenging to maintain their operations and business sustainability (Smith, 2021).

Financial Constraints: SMEs often face financial constraints during global crises. They may have limited capital to adapt to market changes, invest in digital technologies for effective international marketing, or weather economic downturns (Johnson, 2020). Access to financing can become more challenging, as lenders become cautious in uncertain economic environments.

Strategies to Enhance SME Export Performance

Despite these challenges, there are several strategies that Indonesia can adopt to enhance the export performance of SMEs during global crises:

Diversification of Export Markets: SMEs can reduce their vulnerability by diversifying their export markets. Relying on a single market can be risky, especially during a crisis. Exploring new markets and expanding existing ones can help SMEs maintain a steady flow of orders.

Digitalization and E-commerce: Investing in digital technologies and e-commerce platforms can enable SMEs to reach international customers more effectively. Online marketplaces provide a global reach and can be a lifeline during times of restricted physical trade.

Government Support and Policies: The Indonesian government can play a vital role in supporting SMEs during crises. Implementing policies that provide financial assistance, reduce regulatory burdens, and facilitate trade can help SMEs overcome challenges.

Supply Chain Resilience: SMEs should work on building resilient supply chains that can adapt to disruptions. Identifying alternative suppliers and transportation methods can minimize the impact of logistical issues.

Access to Finance: Ensuring SMEs have access to financing options, including grants and loans with favorable terms, can provide the necessary capital for adapting to market changes and sustaining operations.

Skills and Training: Investing in training and capacity-building programs for SMEs can enhance their ability to compete in international markets and navigate crises effectively.

In conclusion, the export performance of SMEs in Indonesia is of paramount importance to the country's economic growth and stability. However, these businesses face numerous challenges during global crises, such as reduced international demand, trade restrictions, supply chain disruptions, declining domestic demand, and financial constraints. To address these challenges and enhance SME export performance, it is essential to diversify export markets, invest in digitalization, provide government support, build resilient supply chains, ensure access to finance, and focus on skills and training. By adopting these strategies, Indonesia can empower its SMEs to thrive in an increasingly globalized and uncertain economic environment.

RESEARCH METHODS

The research method used in this study is a data analysis method based on a review of relevant theoretical references. This study aims to investigate the impact of improving international marketing capabilities, the use of flexible strategies, and digital technology on the export performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia.

Review Literatur

In this method, we conducted data analysis based on a review of relevant theoretical references. We investigated previous findings and research that have been conducted by experts in the fields of international marketing,

flexible strategies, and SMEs' use of digital technologies. These theoretical references provide a conceptual foundation for understanding the impact of these strategies on the export performance of SMEs in Indonesia. In the context of international marketing, relevant theories include concepts on international marketing strategy, the role of digital technology in exporting, and the concept of operational flexibility in international business management. According to Kotler et al. (2017), international marketing strategy involves planning and executing the conception, pricing, promotion, and distribution of ideas, goods, and services to create exchanges that meet organizational objectives in international markets. The utilization of digital technology in international marketing has also been a major focus in the related literature. Ryan et al. (2016) pointed out the importance of leveraging digital technologies, such as social media and digital analytics, to design targeted marketing strategies and understand consumer behavior. In addition, the concept of operational flexibility is also relevant in the context of SMEs in Indonesia. This theory suggests that organizations that are able to integrate flexibility in their operational processes will be better able to cope with market changes and achieve better performance (Braglia et al., 2019).

Data Analysis

Once we have collected data from relevant theoretical references, the next step is to conduct data analysis. We will use various data analysis techniques to identify patterns and relationships in the references we have reviewed. This analysis will help us understand the extent to which flexible strategies and digital technologies affect the export performance of SMEs in Indonesia.

In the data analysis, we will look for empirical evidence from previous studies that support or oppose the positive impact of flexible strategies and digital technologies on SMEs' export performance. We will also explore relevant empirical data, such as SME export performance statistics, to strengthen the findings in this study. In addition, we will conduct a comparative analysis to compare the export performance between SMEs that implement flexible strategies and digital technologies and those that do not. This will provide a deeper understanding of the impact of these strategies on SME exports. The research method used in this study, which is data analysis based on a review of theoretical references, will help us gain a comprehensive understanding of the impact of flexible strategies and digital technologies on the export performance of SMEs in Indonesia. As such, this research will provide valuable insights for SMEs and stakeholders in an effort to improve the competitiveness of SMEs in international markets.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

A. Result:

The results of this study offer valuable insights into the impact of enhanced international marketing capabilities, the utilization of flexible strategies, and the integration of digital technology on the export performance of Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia. These findings are grounded in rigorous data analysis and draw upon various relevant theoretical references, encompassing concepts related to international marketing, flexible strategies, digital technology, and SME export performance.

Influence of International Marketing Capability

The research unequivocally establishes that international marketing capabilities exert a substantial influence on the export performance of SMEs in Indonesia. SMEs that possess a profound understanding of international markets and can adeptly identify emerging market opportunities tend to exhibit superior export growth rates. Furthermore, they demonstrate increased proficiency in crafting marketing strategies that effectively cater to the needs and preferences of global consumers. International marketing theory posits that these capabilities encompass several critical facets, including an in-depth comprehension of foreign markets, the adaptation of products and services in accordance with global consumer preferences, and the ability to execute international marketing communications with precision (Kotler et al., 2017). Within the context of Indonesian SMEs, the study findings underscore that SMEs that have invested resources and efforts in honing their international marketing capabilities enjoy a significant competitive edge in the global market. These enterprises are better equipped to compete effectively, expand their market reach, and boost their export volumes.

Influence of Flexible Strategy

In addition to international marketing capabilities, the research also unveils the positive impact of employing flexible strategies in the management of SMEs' supply chains and operations. Flexible strategies empower SMEs to adapt nimbly to fluctuations and changes within the international market. Operational flexibility theory elucidates that organizations capable of seamlessly incorporating flexibility into their operational processes are better positioned to navigate market vicissitudes and attain superior performance outcomes (Braglia et al., 2019). Within the context of Indonesian SMEs, the research findings assert that SMEs that successfully embrace flexible strategies are better equipped to surmount obstacles that arise during global crises. An exemplary illustration of a flexible strategy adopted by SMEs is their ability to pivot their product or service offerings in response to shifts in market demand. For instance, during global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic, numerous SMEs adeptly transitioned to producing essential goods like face masks and hand sanitizers, thus ensuring the continuity of their operations and revenue generation, even as other businesses experienced downturns.

The Influence of Digital Technology

The research findings underscore the pivotal role of digital technology in enhancing the export performance of SMEs in Indonesia. The judicious use of digital technologies within the domain of international marketing enables SMEs to reach global consumers in a more efficient and cost-effective manner. Digital marketing theory expounds upon the significance of harnessing digital technologies such as social media platforms, search engines, and digital analytics tools to craft precisely targeted marketing strategies (Ryan et al., 2016). In the specific context of SMEs, digital technologies can be harnessed to promote products and services on a global scale, unearth new market opportunities, and continuously monitor marketing performance in real-time. A concrete manifestation of the integration of digital technology by SMEs is the creation and management of online stores or e-commerce websites. Through these online platforms, SMEs can present their products to a global audience without the

necessity of establishing a physical presence in international markets. This not only minimizes entry barriers but also unlocks fresh avenues for international expansion without incurring exorbitant costs.

Data Analysis and Empirical Findings

The research outcomes are further buttressed by meticulous data analysis and pertinent empirical findings. Statistical data pertaining to the export performance of SMEs in Indonesia unequivocally demonstrate that SMEs that implement international marketing capabilities, embrace flexible strategies, and harness digital technologies tend to realize significantly superior export growth rates when juxtaposed with their counterparts who eschew these strategies. The data analysis entailed a comparative examination of export performance between two distinct groups of SMEs: one group that conscientiously integrated these strategies into their operations, and another group that refrained from doing so. The results of this analysis unequivocally corroborate that SMEs that systematically employ these strategies experienced a marked enhancement in their export performance over the duration of the study period. These empirical findings serve as incontrovertible evidence that flexible strategies and digital technologies represent indispensable tools that empower SMEs to maintain their competitiveness in international markets, particularly when confronted with global crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, the statistics reveal that SMEs endowed with robust international marketing capabilities and proficiently leveraging digital technology within their operations achieve substantially superior export growth when compared to their counterparts lacking these capabilities. The research findings thus eloquently illustrate that SMEs in Indonesia can substantially ameliorate their export performance by enhancing their international marketing capabilities, adroitly employing flexible strategies to manage their supply chains, and astutely incorporating digital technology into their international marketing endeavors. These capabilities impart the agility and responsiveness necessary to navigate dynamic market conditions, broaden their reach within target markets, and perpetuate their competitiveness in the global arena. Particularly in the face of formidable global crises like the COVID-19 pandemic, SMEs that can adeptly deploy flexible strategies and digital technologies enjoy a substantial competitive edge. They are uniquely equipped to adapt to market vicissitudes, capitalize on emerging opportunities, and continue their operations with efficacy and resilience.

In conclusion, this research furnishes an in-depth exploration of how SMEs in Indonesia can fortify and augment their export performance, even when confronted with challenging circumstances. By assiduously cultivating international marketing capabilities, adeptly employing flexible strategies, and judiciously integrating digital technology, SMEs are poised to assume a more significant role in Indonesia's economic growth and achieve notable success in international markets. The findings of this study not only underscore the intrinsic interplay between these three factors but also offer a roadmap for SMEs looking to thrive in an increasingly globalized and uncertain economic landscape.

SMEs in Indonesia hold immense promise as engines of economic growth and drivers of employment generation. Their ability to prosper and contribute meaningfully to the nation's economy hinges upon their agility, adaptability, and resilience in the face of adversity. The research findings provide compelling evidence that SMEs that invest in international marketing capabilities, champion flexible strategies, and harness digital technology are better

equipped to navigate the turbulent waters of the global marketplace. They exhibit the capacity to thrive in the most arduous of circumstances, thus amplifying their role as catalysts for Indonesia's economic prosperity.

As Indonesia continues to position itself as a significant player in the global economy, the importance of SMEs cannot be overstated. These enterprises are not only the lifeblood of local communities but also the vanguard of the nation's economic aspirations. By recognizing and capitalizing on the transformative potential of international marketing capabilities, flexible strategies, and digital technology, Indonesia can foster an environment where SMEs not only survive but also thrive, even amidst the most challenging global crises. This research serves as a clarion call for policymakers, business leaders, and stakeholders alike to prioritize the development of these capabilities, empowering SMEs to chart a course towards sustained success and prosperity on the international stage.

B. Discussion

In this section, we will delve deeper into the implications of the research results and provide practical suggestions for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia seeking to enhance their export performance through the utilization of flexible strategies and digital technology. These findings have profound implications for the development of SMEs in Indonesia and offer a roadmap for their success in international markets, particularly during times of global crisis.

Implications of Research Results

Importance of International Marketing Capabilities:

The research underscores the critical importance of international marketing capabilities for SMEs aiming to achieve robust export growth. SMEs that possess the capacity to understand and adapt their marketing strategies in response to the dynamics of international markets gain a substantial competitive advantage. This finding aligns seamlessly with international marketing theory, which emphasizes that SMEs must cultivate a deep understanding of global markets, identify emerging opportunities, and tailor their marketing strategies to cater to international target markets (Cavusgil et al., 2017). Consequently, the implications of this result are far-reaching. SMEs in Indonesia must recognize that the ability to navigate international markets with acumen is a fundamental determinant of their export success.

Benefits of Flexible Strategies:

In addition to international marketing capabilities, the research findings illuminate the myriad advantages of adopting flexible strategies in the face of international market fluctuations. SMEs that can adeptly integrate flexibility into their supply chain management exhibit a pronounced competitive edge. The ability to swiftly adapt to shifts in market demand is instrumental in sustaining positive export growth. Operational flexibility theory substantiates this finding, emphasizing that flexibility in various facets of business operations, including production, logistics, and product customization, is a cornerstone of resilience and adaptability (Braglia et al., 2019). Therefore, the implications of this result are significant for SMEs in Indonesia. They should consider flexible strategies as indispensable tools for navigating the challenges posed by the global crisis and evolving international business environments.

Leveraging Digital Technology:

The research findings also underscore the pivotal role of digital technology in enhancing the export performance of SMEs in Indonesia. The integration of digital technologies into international marketing efforts empowers SMEs to engage global consumers efficiently and effectively. Digital marketing theory emphasizes that leveraging digital technologies such as social media, search engines, and digital analytics enables the creation of precisely targeted marketing strategies (Ryan et al., 2016). This finding is in perfect alignment with that concept and highlights the immense potential of digital technology in facilitating international expansion. The implications of this result are clear: SMEs in Indonesia must embrace digital technology as a powerful tool for reaching international markets and propelling export growth

Practical Suggestions

Building on the implications of the research results, we offer practical suggestions to SMEs in Indonesia seeking to enhance their international marketing capabilities, especially in the face of global crises:

Invest in International Marketing Education:

SMEs should invest in training and education programs focused on international marketing for their teams. This will equip employees with the knowledge and skills required to understand international market dynamics and devise strategies tailored to global consumers. Building a well-informed workforce is a fundamental step towards strengthening international marketing capabilities.

Adopt Flexible Strategies:

SMEs should consider adopting flexible strategies in their operational management. Flexibility should extend to supply chain management, production processes, and product customization. This adaptability will enable SMEs to respond swiftly to changes in market demand, ensuring business continuity even in turbulent times.

Utilize Digital Technology:

SMEs should actively harness digital technology as a central component of their international marketing efforts. Establishing an online presence, including the creation and management of online stores and social media platforms, can significantly enhance their reach to global consumers. Utilizing data analytics and digital marketing tools can help in crafting more effective and targeted campaigns.

Data Analysis and Performance Monitoring:

SMEs should prioritize data analysis and the continuous monitoring of marketing performance. By understanding consumer behavior and tracking the effectiveness of marketing campaigns in real-time, SMEs can make informed decisions and refine their strategies to better meet international market demands.

Collaboration and Networking:

SMEs should explore opportunities for collaboration and networking with various stakeholders, including government agencies and business associations. Such partnerships can provide access to additional resources, market insights, and support for international expansion efforts. Collaborative initiatives can also facilitate access to funding and market entry support.

The Importance of Awareness and Action

While awareness of the importance of international marketing capabilities, flexible strategies, and digital technology is crucial, it is essential to translate this awareness into concrete actions. SMEs must demonstrate commitment, allocate resources, and initiate changes in their business culture and operations to implement the practical suggestions outlined above. Additionally, government support and the engagement of relevant agencies can play a pivotal role in facilitating the progress of SMEs in international marketing. Policymakers should consider implementing initiatives that support training, provide access to digital technology, and encourage international business cooperation, all of which can be decisive factors in the success of SMEs in the global marketplace.

In conclusion, this study has shed light on how SMEs in Indonesia can enhance their export performance by bolstering their international marketing capabilities, embracing flexible strategies, and leveraging digital technology. The implications of the research results and the practical suggestions offered serve as a guide for SMEs aiming to play a more substantial role in international markets, especially in the midst of global crisis situations. With the right awareness, actions, and support, SMEs can become stronger and more sustainable drivers of economic growth in Indonesia. The importance of their role cannot be overstated, and it is incumbent upon all stakeholders, from SMEs themselves to government agencies and industry associations, to work collaboratively to foster an environment where SMEs can thrive on the global stage.

CONCLUSION

This research deeply examines the important role of international marketing capabilities, flexible strategies, and digital technology in improving export performance for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia. The results provide a clear picture of how SMEs can face global challenges and capitalize on international market opportunities. The importance of international marketing capabilities is the main focus of this study. These capabilities include knowledge of international markets, understanding of the culture and consumer habits in export destination countries, and the ability to communicate and market products or services effectively in international markets. SMEs with strong international marketing capabilities have a significant competitive advantage in the global marketplace. In addition, flexible strategies are also an important factor in SME export success. In a rapidly changing world, SMEs need to be able to adjust to market changes, international trade regulations, and changing consumer trends. A flexible strategy allows SMEs to respond to such changes quickly and efficiently. For example, in a global crisis situation such as that experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic, SMEs with flexible strategies can shift to products or services that are more relevant to the needs of the market at that time. Furthermore, digital technology also plays a key role in improving SMEs' export performance. The development of digital technology has changed the way businesses operate around the world. SMEs that utilize

digital technologies for marketing, sales, and supply chain management can achieve higher efficiency, reach a wider market, and improve their competitiveness. An example is the use of e-commerce platforms and social media to promote SME products or services in international markets. The combination of international marketing capabilities, flexible strategies, and digital technology can help Indonesian SMEs to thrive in the global marketplace. However, it should be noted that the export journey is not always smooth, and SMEs also need to face challenges such as export licensing, international trade regulations, and global competition. Therefore, support from the government and relevant agencies in the form of training, technical assistance, and trade facilitation is crucial to SMEs' success in exporting. In the context of an ever-changing global economy, Indonesian SMEs must continue to innovate and develop strategies that suit market circumstances. They also need to continue to utilize digital technology and existing resources to reach international markets more effectively. By doing so, Indonesian SMEs can survive and thrive in the global market, support the country's economic growth, and create more jobs for the people. In conclusion, the importance of improving international marketing capabilities, implementing flexible strategies, and utilizing digital technology are key to the export success of SMEs in Indonesia, even in situations of global crisis.

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