

Competitiveness Analysis and Promotion Path of Export Trade of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises

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Abstract: This article focuses on the export competitiveness of Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Under the background of global economic integration, the export trade of SMEs is of great significance to economic development. However, it faces many challenges and it is urgent to enhance its competitiveness. Through theoretical analysis, this article deeply analyzes the theoretical basis of export trade competitiveness of SMEs, such as comparative advantage theory and competitive advantage theory, and discusses in detail the internal and external factors that affect their competitiveness. Internal factors include innovation ability, management level, talent reserve and brand building, while external factors include policy environment, trade barriers, market demand and industrial chain support. Based on this, this article puts forward the promotion path from three levels: enterprise itself, government and industry association. Enterprises should strengthen innovation drive and optimize management mode. The government needs to improve the policy support system and optimize the trade environment. Trade associations should strengthen industry self-discipline and build information platforms. This article aims to provide theoretical reference for SMEs to enhance their export competitiveness and promote their sustainable development in the international market.

1. Introduction

With the acceleration of global economic integration, SMEs occupy a pivotal position in the economic systems of various countries, and their export trade activities play a key role in economic growth, employment creation and international market expansion [1]. According to relevant statistics, the export volume of SMEs in many countries accounts for a high proportion of the total export volume, which has become an important force to promote the development of international trade [2]. However, SMEs are facing many challenges in the field of export trade, such as limited resources, insufficient technological innovation ability, fierce market competition and high trade barriers. These factors have seriously restricted the promotion of its export competitiveness [3].

Under this background, it is of great theoretical and practical significance to study the competitiveness of SMEs' export trade and explore effective ways to improve it. From a theoretical perspective, although the current research on the export competitiveness of SMEs has achieved certain results, there are still many things to be improved [4]. Some studies focus on large enterprises or specific industries, and the systematic theoretical analysis of SMEs as a whole is still insufficient; Different theories have certain limitations and disputes in explaining the formation and promotion mechanism of export trade competitiveness of SMEs [5]. In-depth analysis and integration of relevant theories will help to build a more perfect theoretical framework and enrich the theoretical system of international trade.

From a practical point of view, improving the export competitiveness of SMEs will help enhance their own survival and development capabilities and make them occupy a more favorable position in the international market. It can also promote the optimization and upgrading of industrial structure, promote the coordinated development of regional economy and stabilize the employment situation [6]. By studying the export competitiveness of SMEs, it can provide theoretical basis for enterprises to formulate scientific and reasonable development strategies and provide decision-making reference for the government to formulate targeted support policies. In view of this,

this article aims to explore practical ways to improve the export competitiveness of SMEs through in-depth analysis, with a view to contributing to the development of related theories and practices.

2. Theoretical basis of export trade competitiveness of SMEs

The research on the export competitiveness of SMEs relies on several important theories. The theory of comparative advantage is one of the cornerstones. This theory emphasizes that countries should carry out production and trade according to their own resource endowment differences. Although SMEs are limited in scale, they can produce products with cost advantages for export by virtue of a certain resource advantage, such as low labor cost and abundant characteristic raw materials [7]. In labor-intensive industries, SMEs in some developing countries can make full use of cheap labor resources to produce low-priced textiles, toys and other products and gain competitive advantages in the international market.

The competitive advantage theory further deepens the understanding of the competitiveness of SMEs. It points out that the competitive advantage of enterprises depends not only on resource endowment, but also on innovation ability, brand building and management efficiency [8]. SMEs can develop unique products or services through continuous innovation and enhance the added value of products; Strengthen brand building, improve product visibility and reputation; Optimize management processes and reduce operating costs to build their own core competitiveness. By virtue of technological innovation, some small and medium-sized scientific and technological enterprises have launched products with leading technology in market segments and successfully made their mark in the international market.

The theory of scale economy also has some enlightenment to SMEs. Although the SMEs are small in scale, through the form of industrial clusters, many related SMEs gather to achieve external economies of scale [9]. Enterprises in industrial clusters share infrastructure, labor resources and technical information, reduce production costs, improve production efficiency, and then enhance the overall export competitiveness. In some characteristic industrial cluster areas, many SMEs have formed strong industrial competitiveness through cooperation and supporting, and their products are exported in large quantities. These theories provide a solid theoretical support for analyzing the export competitiveness of SMEs from different angles.

3. An analysis of the influencing factors of export trade competitiveness of SMEs

(1) Internal factors

Innovation is the core driving force for SMEs to enhance their competitiveness. Enterprises with strong innovation ability can develop unique products or services to meet the diversified needs of the market, and then improve the added value of products and market share. However, due to the lack of capital and talents and insufficient investment in innovation, some SMEs have serious product homogeneity and are difficult to stand out in the international market [10]. Efficient management mode helps SMEs to optimize resource allocation and improve operational efficiency. Reasonable organizational structure can ensure the smooth flow of information and rapid decision-making within the enterprise; Scientific production management can ensure stable product quality and controllable production progress; Effective financial management can rationally plan funds and reduce financial risks. On the contrary, chaotic management will lead to the waste of resources, increased costs, low production efficiency and weaken the competitiveness of export trade.

Talent is the key resource for enterprise development. In export trade, we need not only business talents who are familiar with international trade rules and proficient in foreign languages, but also R&D and production talents with professional technical knowledge. SMEs with rich talent reserves can better cope with changes in the international market and carry out technological innovation and market expansion activities. However, SMEs are often difficult to attract and retain high-quality talents due to factors such as salary and development space, which limits the promotion of enterprise competitiveness. Brand is a symbol of corporate image and product quality. Brands with

high popularity and reputation can make consumers feel trust and loyalty and bring premium ability to products. If SMEs ignore brand building and compete only at low prices, they will not only have limited profit space, but also easily fall into trade disputes. Strengthening brand building, such as improving product quality, shaping brand culture and developing brand marketing, can effectively enhance the competitiveness of SMEs in the international market. The evaluation of the influence of internal factors of SMEs on the competitiveness of export trade is shown in Table 1:

Table 1: Evaluation of the Impact Degree of Internal Factors of SMEs on Export Trade Competitiveness

Internal Factors	Impact Degree (Scale 1-5, with 5 indicating an extremely high impact degree)	Main Impact Manifestations
Innovation Capability	4	Determines product differentiation and added value, influencing market competitiveness.
Management Level	3	Relates to resource allocation and operational efficiency, affecting enterprise costs and benefits.
Talent Reserve	4	Governs the enterprise's innovation and market expansion capabilities, influencing development potential.
Brand Building	3	Affects product premiums and market recognition, concerning profit margins and market share.

(2) External factors

The government's trade policies and industrial policies have a significant impact on the export trade of SMEs. A perfect policy support system can create a good development environment for SMEs and enhance their export competitiveness. Tariff barriers and non-tariff barriers are important obstacles to the export of SMEs. Tariff increase will directly increase the price of products and reduce their competitiveness in the importing market; Non-tariff barriers, such as technical standards and environmental protection requirements, increase the export cost and market access difficulty of SMEs. In recent years, with the rise of global trade protectionism and increasing trade barriers, it has brought severe challenges to the export trade of SMEs.

The change of international market demand directly affects the export trade of SMEs. Factors such as changes in consumer preferences and fluctuations in the economic situation will lead to changes in the scale and structure of market demand. SMEs need to pay close attention to market dynamics and adjust product structure and marketing strategy in time to adapt to changes in market demand, otherwise they may face problems such as unsalable products and overstocked inventory, which will affect their competitiveness. A perfect industrial chain can provide SMEs with stable supply of raw materials, efficient logistics services and convenient technical support. SMEs in areas with perfect industrial chain can reduce procurement costs, shorten production cycle and improve overall competitiveness by cooperating with upstream and downstream enterprises. If the industrial chain is not perfect, SMEs may face problems such as unstable supply of raw materials and high logistics costs, which will weaken their export trade competitiveness.

4. Ways to enhance the export competitiveness of SMEs

From the perspective of the enterprise itself, strengthening the innovation drive is the key path. SMEs should increase R&D investment, set up special innovation funds, cooperate with scientific research institutions and universities in Industry-University-Research, and enhance their innovation ability with the help of external scientific research forces. It is equally important to optimize the management mode. Enterprises need to build a modern management system and introduce advanced management software to realize digital management of enterprise operations. The scientific setting of organizational structure clarifies the division of responsibilities among departments, effectively reduces management difficulties, and improves decision-making implementation efficiency. At the same time, the precise cost control of production and sales

processes has significantly reduced overall operating costs.

Talent is the core resource of enterprise development, and it is essential to strengthen talent training. SMEs should formulate a perfect talent training plan, provide employees with regular internal training and external learning opportunities, and improve their professional skills and comprehensive quality. The improvement of salary and benefits levels, as well as the improvement of the working environment, coupled with a reasonable promotion mechanism, provide broad development space for high-quality talents, effectively enhancing their attractiveness and retention rate. The implementation of brand strategy requires the establishment of a strict quality control system to ensure product reliability through continuous improvement of product quality. The deep exploration of brand culture connotation integrates product features with target market culture, successfully shaping a unique brand image. Through participating in international exhibitions, online marketing and other channels, we will strengthen brand promotion and improve brand international visibility and reputation. Specific measures are shown in Figure 1 below:

Improvement Direction	Specific Strategies	Expected Outcomes	Implementation Challenges	Response Strategies
Innovation-Driven	Establish a special innovation fund, and engage in industry-university-research collaboration to develop new technologies and products.	Enhance product differentiation and added value, gaining a competitive edge.	Fund shortage, difficulty in collaborative cooperation	Seek government funding support, and establish an effective communication mechanism.
Management Mode Optimization	Introduce advanced software for digital management, scientifically design organizational structures, and reduce hierarchical levels.	Improve operational, decision-making, and execution efficiency.	Difficulty in changing management concepts	Strengthen management layer training, and gradually promote reforms.
Talent Cultivation	Develop training plans, improve compensation, benefits, and promotion opportunities.	Attract and retain talent, and enhance team quality.	Increased costs, intense talent competition	Highlight the company's unique strengths and advantages, and conduct precise recruitment.
Brand Strategy Advancement	Establish a quality control system, explore cultural elements, and promote through multiple channels.	Increase the brand's international recognition and reputation.	Long brand-building cycle	Make continuous investments, and focus on long-term planning.

Figure 1 Measure for enterprises to enhance their competitiveness in export trade

At the government level, it is very important to improve the policy support system. The government should formulate preferential tax policies for SMEs, such as reducing enterprise income tax, increasing the proportion of export tax rebate, reducing the burden on enterprises and enhancing their price competitive advantage. To optimize the trade environment, the government needs to strengthen trade negotiations with other countries, actively sign free trade agreements and reduce tariff and non-tariff barriers. The government should strengthen the construction of public service platform and build an information service platform to provide international market trends, policies and regulations and other information for SMEs; Establish a technical service platform to provide technology research and development, testing and inspection services for enterprises; Set up a financing service platform, broaden the financing channels of SMEs, and ease the financing problems.

Trade associations also play an important role in enhancing the export competitiveness of SMEs. Trade associations should strengthen industry self-discipline, formulate industry norms and standards, guide enterprises to operate in good faith, and avoid vicious competition; Organize enterprises to carry out industry exchange activities and promote experience sharing and cooperation among enterprises. Trade associations can also build information sharing platforms, collect and sort out international market information and industry trends, and deliver them to enterprises in time. At the same time, trade associations should represent the interests of enterprises, communicate and coordinate with the government, reflect the demands of enterprises and strive for favorable policies for enterprises. The handling of international trade frictions requires the organization of enterprises to jointly respond and effectively safeguard the legitimate rights and interests of enterprises by hiring a professional legal team.

5. Conclusions

Focusing on the export trade competitiveness of SMEs, this article makes a comprehensive analysis from the theoretical basis, influencing factors and promotion paths. On the theoretical level, theories such as comparative advantage and competitive advantage provide an important basis for understanding the export competitiveness of SMEs. In terms of influencing factors, internal innovation, management, talent and brand building, external policies, trade barriers, market demand and industrial chain support all significantly affect the export trade competitiveness of SMEs, and the weakness of any link may limit the development of enterprises.

Based on the above analysis, promoting the export competitiveness of SMEs needs multi-party cooperation. Enterprises themselves should take strengthening innovation drive, optimizing management mode, strengthening personnel training and promoting brand strategy as their core tasks, and constantly improve their internal strength. The government should give full play to the role of guidance and support, improve the policy support system, reduce the burden on SMEs and enhance their competitive advantages, at the same time optimize the trade environment, strengthen the construction of public service platforms, and create a good external environment for enterprises. Trade associations should actively perform their duties, strengthen industry self-discipline, build information sharing platforms, promote exchanges and cooperation among enterprises, and strive for favorable policies on behalf of enterprises. Only by making concerted efforts and forming a joint force can we effectively enhance the export competitiveness of SMEs, so that they can gain a firm foothold in the complex and changeable international market and achieve sustained and healthy development.

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