



Navigating Export Barriers in Emerging SMEs: Documentation, Tariff Challenges, and Adaptive Marketing Strategies in the Indonesian Export Sector

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Abstract. *This study examines the export barriers encountered by emerging small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Indonesia, with a focus on export documentation challenges, tariff constraints, and the adaptive marketing strategies employed to sustain international market engagement. Employing a qualitative case study approach, this research investigates PT Albarka International Group, a nascent export-import company established in 2021 and headquartered in Malang, East Java, which specializes in the export of natural commodities including Bakhur-related materials (opercula shells, damar resin, agarwood), spices, and other Indonesian products to Middle East markets including Yemen, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Libya, Sudan, and Djibouti. Data were collected through in-depth interviews with key company personnel and supplemented by document analysis. Findings reveal three primary export barriers: (1) high shipping tariffs relative to regional competitors, frequently triggering order cancellations by importers; (2) complex and time-intensive export documentation requirements, particularly for regulated natural resource products subject to CITES compliance, fish quarantine certification (Health Certificate), and customs declaration (PEB); and (3) internal organizational constraints stemming from overlapping job roles. In response, PT Albarka has adopted adaptive strategies including Full Container Load (FCL) consolidation to reduce per-unit shipping costs, advance payment systems (TT in advance) to mitigate importer default risk, and collaborative consultation with customs and quarantine authorities. The study contributes to the SME internationalization literature by demonstrating how resource-constrained emerging exporters navigate institutional and logistical complexities in developing economy contexts, offering practical insights for SME practitioners and export policy stakeholders.*

Keywords: *Adaptive Marketing Strategy; Export Barriers; Export Documentation; Middle East Market; SME Internationalization.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) play a pivotal role in driving economic growth and employment across developing economies, yet their participation in international trade remains disproportionately limited. In Indonesia, SMEs account for more than 99 percent of total business units and contribute approximately 60.5 percent of gross domestic product (GDP); however, their share of national export value is estimated at below 15 percent (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2022). This disparity reflects a broad set of structural and operational barriers that constrain the internationalization of smaller firms, including limited financial resources, inadequate export knowledge, and complex regulatory requirements (Kahiya, 2018; Leonidou, 2004). Addressing these barriers is increasingly recognized as critical not only for firm-level competitiveness but also for achieving national export diversification targets in line with Indonesia's economic development agenda.

Export barriers have been broadly classified into internal barriers stemming from resource and capability limitations within the firm and external barriers arising from regulatory environments, institutional constraints, and logistical infrastructure (Pinho & Martins, 2010; Suarez-Ortega, 2003). Among the most persistently cited external barriers are documentation complexity and high shipping costs, both of which are acutely relevant to Indonesian SMEs exporting regulated natural resource commodities. Compliance with international frameworks such as the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (CITES), domestic fish quarantine certification (Health Certificate), and the national customs declaration system (Pemberitahuan Ekspor Barang/PEB) imposes significant procedural burdens on small exporters lacking dedicated compliance personnel (Wengel & Rodriguez, 2006). Concurrently, Indonesia's structurally elevated freight rates—a product of its archipelagic geography and underdeveloped logistics infrastructure—reduce the price competitiveness of Indonesian commodity exports relative to regional peers (World Bank, 2023).

In response to these barriers, emerging SME exporters often develop adaptive marketing strategies—informal yet deliberate adjustments to pricing, payment terms, shipping modalities, and market selection—that allow them to sustain cross-border trade activities despite constrained resources (Knight & Cavusgil, 2004; Zou & Stan, 1998). The selection of payment instruments such as Letter of Credit (LC) versus Telegraphic Transfer (TT in advance), and shipping terms under Incoterms® 2020 such as Free on Board (FOB), reflects strategic decisions that balance risk allocation, cost efficiency, and buyer relationship management (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). Despite growing recognition of adaptive strategy in SME internationalization, empirical studies documenting these practices among niche commodity exporters in emerging markets—particularly those targeting Middle Eastern buyers—remain limited.

This study addresses this gap through a qualitative case study of PT Albarka International Group, a nascent export-import SME established in 2021 in Malang, East Java, Indonesia. Specializing in the export of Bakhur-related natural commodities (opercula shells, damar resin, agarwood) and other Indonesian products to markets in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, the UAE, Libya, Sudan, and Djibouti, PT Albarka exemplifies the resource-constrained emerging exporter navigating complex documentation requirements, high tariff pressures, and organizational limitations in pursuit of sustained international market engagement. By examining the firm's operational and strategic responses to these challenges, this study aims to contribute empirically grounded insights to the SME internationalization and export marketing literature (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009; Teece, 2014).

Specifically, this study seeks to: (1) identify the primary export barriers faced by PT Albarka International Group in its Middle East-oriented export operations; (2) examine the export documentation procedures and compliance practices governing its commodity shipments; (3) analyze the payment and shipping strategies employed and their strategic rationale; and (4) explore the adaptive marketing responses developed to overcome tariff and regulatory constraints. The findings are expected to offer both theoretical contributions to the SME internationalization literature and practical implications for SME practitioners and Indonesian export policymakers.

2. THEORETICAL STUDY

SME Internationalization Theory

The internationalization of SMEs has been extensively examined through the Uppsala model, which conceptualizes the firm's gradual foreign market commitment as a function of accumulated experiential knowledge and network relationships (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009). In its revised form, the model emphasizes that internationalization is driven not merely by psychic distance but by the firm's position within business networks. Firms outside relevant networks face a 'liability of outsidership' that limits their access to market knowledge and opportunities. For emerging market SMEs, this liability is compounded by institutional voids and limited relational capital in target markets (Ciravegna et al., 2014). More recent scholarship has further highlighted that SMEs in developing economies often internationalize through necessity responding to domestic market saturation or buyer-initiated demand rather than through deliberate strategic planning (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017). This reactive internationalization pathway is particularly relevant in understanding how firms such as PT Albarka entered export markets in response to direct requests from foreign trading partners rather than proactive market analysis.

Export Barriers in SMEs

Export barriers refer to the attitudinal, structural, operational, and other constraints that hinder firms' ability to initiate, develop, or sustain export activities (Leonidou, 2004). (Kahiya, 2018) categorized these barriers into internal dimensions such as limited managerial expertise and financial resources and external dimensions encompassing regulatory complexity, logistical costs, and foreign market uncertainty. In the context of Indonesian SMEs, documentation-related barriers are particularly prominent, given the multilayered compliance requirements governing the export of natural resource commodities, including CITES permits, phytosanitary and fish quarantine certificates, and national customs declarations

(Pemberitahuan Ekspor Barang/PEB) enforced through the INSW (Indonesia National Single Window) portal (Wengel & Rodriguez, 2006). Tariff and freight cost barriers further constrain export viability, especially for low-margin commodity products where shipping expenses can exceed the value of the goods (World Bank, 2023). Collectively, these barriers constitute a systemic challenge that requires adaptive firm-level responses.

Adaptive Marketing Strategy in Export Contexts

Export marketing strategy encompasses the decisions firms make regarding market selection, product adaptation, pricing, and distribution in international markets (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994). For resource-constrained SMEs, this strategy is rarely formalized; instead, it manifests as an adaptive, iterative process of responding to buyer requirements, regulatory demands, and competitive pressures (Zou & Stan, 1998). Payment method selection — whether Letter of Credit (LC), Telegraphic Transfer (TT), or open account — reflects a strategic trade-off between risk mitigation and relationship building with foreign buyers (Soufani & Poutziouris, 2005). Similarly, the choice of shipping terms under Incoterms® 2020, particularly Free on Board (FOB), determines the allocation of logistical responsibility and cost between exporter and importer, directly affecting export pricing strategy and competitiveness (International Chamber of Commerce, 2020). Viewed together, these operational decisions constitute a coherent, if informal, adaptive marketing strategy that enables SMEs to navigate external constraints while sustaining international market engagement.

Dynamic Capabilities and SME Export Resilience

The dynamic capabilities framework, introduced by Teece et al. (1997) and further developed by (Teece, 2014), posits that firms sustain competitive advantage through their capacity to sense market opportunities, seize relevant resources, and reconfigure operational routines in response to environmental change. Applied to SME export contexts, dynamic capabilities manifest as the firm's ability to realign documentation procedures, renegotiate shipping terms, and adjust payment modalities in response to evolving regulatory and market conditions (Zahra et al., 2006). For nascent SME exporters in emerging markets, these capabilities are often embedded in the tacit knowledge of individual owner-managers rather than in formal organizational systems making the study of individual adaptive behavior central to understanding firm-level export resilience (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017). This theoretical lens is employed in the present study to interpret PT Albarka's strategic responses to export barriers as expressions of nascent dynamic capabilities operating under conditions of severe resource constraint.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study adopts a qualitative research design using a single case study approach. Qualitative methodology is appropriate when the research objective is to explore complex, context-dependent phenomena that cannot be adequately captured through quantitative measurement (Creswell & Poth, 2018). The case study method is particularly suited to examining 'how' and 'why' questions in real-life organizational settings, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and its context are not clearly defined (Yin, 2018). PT Albarka International Group was selected as the unit of analysis based on its status as a revelatory case a newly established Indonesian SME actively engaged in commodity exports to Middle East markets, whose operational experience provides a unique empirical window into the intersection of export barriers, documentation compliance, and adaptive marketing strategy.

Data Collection

Primary data were collected through semi-structured in-depth interviews with two key informants at PT Albarka International Group: (1) the Office Staff (Putri Khalifah), responsible for day-to-day administrative operations; and (2) the Secretary/Administrative Officer (Orisna Isnaini), who oversees export documentation preparation. Semi-structured interviews were selected to allow flexibility in exploring emerging themes while maintaining focus on core research questions (Bryman, 2016). Interviews were conducted on-site at the company's office in Wagir District, Malang Regency, East Java, in June 2024, and lasted approximately 60–90 minutes each. Secondary data were obtained through document analysis of export records, including sample export documents (Invoice, Packing List, Health Certificate, PEB, Certificate of Origin), company profile materials, and publicly available regulatory sources including Permendag No. 50/2013 and Permendag No. 123/2015.

Data Validity and Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of findings, this study employed triangulation of data sources cross-referencing interview data with physical export documents and regulatory frameworks (Denzin & Lincoln, 2018). Member checking was applied informally by verifying key factual details with informants during the interview process. Transferability is addressed through thick description of the case context, enabling readers to assess the applicability of findings to similar SME export settings in Indonesia and comparable developing economy contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The researchers acknowledge that findings are context-specific and generalizability is analytical rather than statistical in nature (Yin, 2018).

Data Analysis

Data were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-phase framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (Braun & Clarke, 2006): (1) familiarization with data, (2) generating initial codes, (3) searching for themes, (4) reviewing themes, (5) defining and naming themes, and (6) producing the report. Interview transcripts and document data were coded inductively to identify recurring patterns related to export barriers, documentation practices, payment strategies, and adaptive responses. The analysis yielded three primary thematic clusters: (i) regulatory and documentation barriers, (ii) tariff and logistical constraints, and (iii) adaptive marketing and operational strategies, which form the organizational basis of the findings section.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents findings organized around three primary thematic clusters derived from interview and document analysis: (i) export procedures and documentation compliance; (ii) payment and shipping strategy; and (iii) export barriers and adaptive marketing responses. Each theme is discussed in relation to relevant theoretical frameworks to develop analytical insights beyond descriptive reporting.

Company Profile: PT Albarka International Group

PT Albarka International Group was established in July 2021 in Wagir District, Malang Regency, East Java, Indonesia. The company originated from a network-based business opportunity when its founder, Pak Ahmed (Muaadh Ahmed), received a request from an Arab trading partner for agarwood (oud) a premium aromatic resin widely used in Middle Eastern Bakhur (incense) culture. Unable to ship cost-effectively as an individual, Pak Ahmed formally incorporated the company to conduct export activities under a registered business entity, thereby accessing institutional trade channels and reducing per-shipment documentation costs.

This founding narrative closely reflects the 'reactive internationalization' pathway described by *Ribeiro-Soriano* (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017), wherein SMEs enter international markets in response to inbound demand rather than deliberate strategic planning. It also illustrates the Uppsala model's emphasis on network relationships as the primary driver of market entry (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009) with the founder's pre-existing social ties to Middle Eastern buyers serving as the critical internationalization trigger.

The company currently employs a lean organizational structure of five functional roles: Director (Dian Kustiyasari), EXIM Manager (Muaadh Ahmed), Secretary/Administrative Officer (Orisna Isnaini who simultaneously holds both roles), and a part-time warehouse

worker (Yogi). Its export portfolio encompasses opercula shells, damar resin, agarwood, spices, lotions, paper products, and garments, targeting buyers in Yemen, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Libya, Sudan, and Djibouti. Import supply relationships are maintained with partners in China, Turkey, Mexico, and the UAE.

Table 1. PT Albarka International Group – Company Profile Summary.

Year Established	July 2021
Location	Jl. Raya Gondowangi RT 05/RW 01, Wagir, Malang Regency, East Java
Business Focus	Export-import of natural commodities and Indonesian products
Key Export Products	Opercula shells, damar resin, agarwood, spices, lotion, paper, garments
Export Destinations	Yemen, Saudi Arabia, UAE, Libya, Sudan, Djibouti
Import Sources	China, Turkey, Mexico, UAE
No. of Employees	5 (including 1 part-time warehouse worker)
Organizational Structure	Director – Secretary – EXIM Manager / Admin / Warehouse

Source : Primary data, PT Albarka International Group (2026)

Export Procedures and Documentation Compliance

PT Albarka's export procedure follows a sequential process aligned with Indonesian customs regulations and international trade norms. The process begins with negotiation between the company and the importer regarding product specifications, pricing, shipping terms, and payment modality, culminating in a formal sales contract. Consistent with standard risk management practice in emerging market trade (Soufani & Poutziouris, 2005) the company requires a 50 percent advance payment (TT in advance) before proceeding with order fulfillment. Following payment confirmation, quality assurance is conducted, after which export documentation is prepared and submitted for customs clearance prior to shipment.



Figure 1. PT Albarka's Export Procedure Flow.

Source : Processed by authors based on interview data, PT Albarka International Group (2026)

As illustrated in Figure 1, the export procedure comprises six sequential stages: negotiation and sales contracting, advance payment receipt, quality assurance, document preparation, customs clearance, and final shipment. This procedural sequence reflects a risk-averse operational logic designed to minimize exposure to importer default, a concern particularly acute in trade with buyers in politically volatile markets such as Libya, Yemen, and Sudan.

Export Documentation Requirements

Documentation requirements vary by commodity type and are determined through the INSW portal via HS code identification. For opercula shells (tutup kerang), one of the company's primary commodities, compliance requires six mandatory documents, reflecting the product's regulated status under both domestic and international frameworks. The company must comply with *Permendag RI No. 50 Tahun 2013* (governing export of unprotected wildlife not listed under CITES) and *Permendag RI No. 123 Tahun 2015* (governing export-import licensing under INSW). This regulatory layering imposes substantial procedural burden on a lean organization with no dedicated compliance officer.

Table 2. Mandatory Export Documents for Opercula Shell (Tutup Kerang) Export.

1	Invoice	Commercial document stating price, quantity, and total payable value; required by importer and customs authority.
2	Packing List	Itemized list of package contents, weights, and dimensions; supports customs inspection and logistics processing.
3	Health Certificate (HC)	Issued by BKIPM; certifies the shell product meets export health standards. Basis: Ministry of Marine Affairs and Fisheries regulation.
4	BAP – BKSDA/CITES	Berita Acara Pemeriksaan issued by BKSDA; confirms CITES non-detriment compliance for regulated species. Basis: Permendag No. 50/2013.
5	PEB	National customs export declaration submitted electronically via INSW portal. Basis: Permendag No. 123/2015.
6	Certificate of Origin (COO)	Certifies Indonesian origin of exported goods; required for tariff preference eligibility in destination markets.

Source : Permendag No. 50/2013; Permendag No. 123/2015; Interview data (2026)

The documentation profile above is consistent with (Kahiya, 2018) classification of documentation as a primary external export barrier, particularly for SMEs exporting regulated natural resource products. The requirement for Health Certificates from BKIPM and CITES-related BAP documentation from BKSDA necessitates multi-agency coordination, a process that is time-intensive and susceptible to procedural delays. As the company's Secretary/Admin

Officer noted, preparation of complete documentation for regulated commodities requires advance consultation with both the customs authority and the quarantine agency before each shipment, a practice that aligns with *Wengel and Rodriguez's (2006)* observation that Indonesian SMEs face disproportionate administrative burdens relative to larger exporters.

Payment Methods and Shipping Strategy

Payment Methods

PT Albarka employs a tiered payment strategy calibrated to buyer relationship maturity and associated transaction risk. For new trading relationships, the company prioritizes Letter of Credit (LC) as the primary payment instrument, given its provision of bank-guaranteed payment security (International Chamber of Commerce, 2020). For established trading partners, the company transitions to Telegraphic Transfer (TT) with a 50 percent advance, reflecting an adaptive posture that balances efficiency with protection against order cancellation. Currently, the company operates primarily on a TT in advance basis for all active export transactions — requiring full pre-shipment payment to eliminate financial exposure in volatile destination markets (Soufani & Poutziouris, 2005)

Table 3. Payment Method Strategy at PT Albarka International Group.

LC (Letter of Credit)	New / unfamiliar buyers	Bank-guaranteed; maximum security	Buyer default and non-payment
TT 50% Advance	Established partner relationships	Faster processing; lower bank charges	Partial cost recovery before production
TT in Advance (100%)	Current primary method — all exports	Full cost recovery before shipment	Prevents unilateral cancellation post-preparation

Source: Processed by authors; International Chamber of Commerce (2020)

Shipping Terms and Incoterms® 2020

PT Albarka primarily utilizes FOB (Free on Board) under Incoterms® 2020 as its standard shipping arrangement, typically through the Port of Tanjung Perak, Surabaya. Under FOB, the exporter's responsibility terminates when goods are loaded aboard the vessel at the agreed port of shipment at which point risk and cost transfer to the importer. This arrangement is advantageous for the company as it limits logistical exposure and simplifies cost calculation (*International Chamber of Commerce, 2020*). The company demonstrates flexibility in accommodating alternative Incoterms® such as DAP (Delivered at Place) and CIF (Cost, Insurance, and Freight) when requested by importers who prefer inclusive or door-to-door delivery arrangements, reflecting a buyer-centric orientation that supports relationship maintenance in competitive Middle East commodity markets.

Export Barriers and Adaptive Marketing Strategies

The findings reveal three primary export barrier categories: (1) tariff and freight cost barriers, (2) documentation and regulatory compliance barriers, and (3) internal organizational capacity constraints. Each is discussed alongside the adaptive strategies developed in response, consistent with the dynamic capabilities framework (Teece, 2014; Zahra et al., 2006).

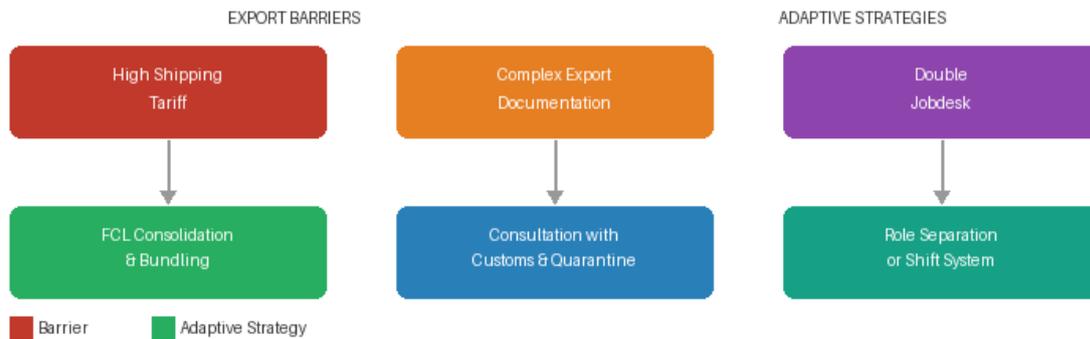


Figure 2. Export Barriers and Corresponding Adaptive Strategies at PT Albarka.

Source : Processed by authors based on interview data, PT Albarka International Group (2026)

Tariff and Freight Cost Barriers

The most operationally significant barrier identified in the interviews is the high cost of shipping from Indonesia to Middle East destinations. Indonesia's freight rates are structurally elevated relative to regional competitors including Vietnam, Thailand, and Malaysia due to the country's archipelagic geography, port inefficiency, and limited direct shipping routes to Middle Eastern ports (World Bank, 2023). For commodity products with inherently low value-to-weight ratios such as opercula shells, damar resin, and spices shipping costs can exceed product value on small consignments, rendering transactions economically non-viable. This dynamic has directly resulted in the cancellation of multiple orders by importers who found total landed costs prohibitive.

In response, PT Albarka developed a cargo consolidation strategy centered on achieving Full Container Load (FCL) status for each shipment. Rather than shipping individual orders as Less-than-Container Load (LCL) consignments which incur per-cubic-meter charges and are significantly more expensive per unit the company actively offers importers complementary products to fill remaining container capacity. This bundling approach cross-subsidizes shipping costs across multiple product lines, effectively reducing per-unit freight burden. This strategy reflects the 'resource reconfiguration' dimension of dynamic capabilities (Teece, 2014) wherein the firm creatively realigns its product offering and logistics to overcome structural cost constraints.

Documentation and Regulatory Compliance Barriers

Export documentation complexity constitutes the second major barrier. The export of regulated natural resource commodities requires multi-agency coordination involving the customs authority (DJBC), the Regional Fish Quarantine and Inspection Agency (BKIPM), and the Natural Resources Conservation Agency (BKSDA). Procedural requirements are dynamic changing with commodity classification, destination country regulations, and periodic Indonesian export policy revisions making it difficult for a small firm without dedicated compliance personnel to maintain consistent regulatory currency (Kahiya, 2018).

The company's adaptive response is to maintain ongoing consultative relationships with key regulatory agencies, engaging them proactively before each shipment to verify current requirements. While resource-intensive, this practice significantly reduces documentation rejection risk and shipment delays. This approach exemplifies what (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009) describe as 'institutional knowledge development' within internationalization networks the firm gradually building regulatory competence through repeated interaction with institutional actors.

Internal Organizational Capacity Constraints

The third barrier category is internal, relating to organizational capacity constraints from the company's lean staffing. A single employee (Orisna Isnaini) simultaneously holds both Secretary and Administrative Officer roles performing document preparation, correspondence management, cargo reception, and administrative coordination concurrently. This double jobdesk creates processing bottlenecks during peak export activity, potentially delaying shipment scheduling and increasing documentation error risk.

This finding is consistent with Leonidou's (2004) categorization of managerial resource limitations as a primary internal export barrier for small firms. The company's proposed solution — either separating the two roles into distinct positions or implementing a shift-based work schedule — reflects a recognition that organizational design must evolve with transaction volume growth. From a dynamic capabilities perspective (Zahra et al., 2006), the capacity to reconfigure internal role structures in response to growing operational complexity represents a foundational organizational capability that PT Albarka is in the early stages of developing.

Table 4. Summary of Export Barriers and Adaptive Strategies at PT Albarka International Group.

1	Tariff & Freight Cost	High shipping rates render LCL shipments economically unviable; frequent order cancellations by importers.	FCL consolidation via product bundling across commodity lines to cross-subsidize freight costs.
		Multi-agency compliance (BKIPM, BKSDA, DJBC); dynamic regulatory requirements per commodity and destination.	Proactive pre-shipment consultation with customs and quarantine authorities to verify current requirements.
2	Documentation & Regulatory Compliance		
3	Organizational Capacity	Double jobdesk (Secretary + Admin) creates processing bottlenecks and potential documentation errors.	Role separation into two distinct positions or implementation of a shift-based work schedule.

Source : Processed by authors (2026)

Discussion: Implications for Theory and Practice

The findings of this study contribute to the SME internationalization and export marketing literature in several substantive ways. First, the case of PT Albarka extends the empirical scope of reactive internationalization research (Ribeiro-Soriano, 2017) by documenting a specific mechanism through which network-initiated market entry unfolds in an Indonesian commodity export context. The founder's pre-existing social ties to Middle Eastern buyers served not merely as an initial market signal but as the structural foundation upon which subsequent operational and regulatory learning was built, consistent with the network-based revision of the Uppsala model (Johanson & Vahlne, 2009).

Second, the study advances understanding of adaptive marketing strategy as a coherent, if informal, strategic system. PT Albarka's payment method selection (TT in advance), shipping term preference (FOB with flexibility), documentation compliance strategy (proactive agency consultation), and logistics approach (FCL consolidation) together constitute an integrated adaptive marketing strategy enabling the firm to sustain international market engagement despite structural constraints. This finding supports (Cavusgil & Zou, 1994) assertion that export marketing strategy encompasses a broad range of operational decisions, while extending

their model to include documentation and logistics management as strategic marketing variables in emerging market SME contexts.

Third, the documentation-tariff barrier nexus identified in this study, wherein low-margin commodity exports are rendered economically unviable by combined compliance complexity and elevated freight costs carries important policy implications. Unlike large exporters with dedicated compliance and logistics departments, emerging SMEs such as PT Albarka navigate these barriers with minimal institutional support, relying on direct agency consultation and improvised bundling strategies. This highlights the need for targeted policy interventions including simplified export documentation pathways for SMEs, subsidized freight programs for regulated commodity exports, and enhanced INSW portal accessibility for small-scale exporters (Wengel & Rodriguez, 2006; World Bank, 2023).

5. CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study investigated the export barriers faced by PT Albarka International Group and the adaptive marketing strategies employed to sustain its operations in Middle East commodity markets. Three primary barriers were identified: high shipping tariffs, complex export documentation requirements, and internal organizational capacity constraints arising from overlapping job roles. In response, the company developed practical adaptive strategies including Full Container Load (FCL) consolidation to reduce freight costs, advance payment systems (TT in advance) to mitigate order cancellation risk, proactive consultation with customs and quarantine authorities to manage documentation compliance, and flexible shipping term arrangements under Incoterms® 2020. Together, these strategies constitute an informal yet coherent adaptive marketing system that enables the company to navigate structural export constraints despite limited resources.

The case of PT Albarka illustrates that emerging SME exporters in Indonesia can develop effective market responses to institutional and logistical barriers through practical improvisation grounded in direct operational experience. The company's trajectory — from a single commodity request to a multi-product, multi-market export operation — demonstrates the potential of network-initiated internationalization for small enterprises in developing economies.

Suggestions

For PT Albarka and similar SME exporters, it is recommended to formalize the existing adaptive practices into documented standard operating procedures (SOPs) to reduce dependency on individual knowledge and improve organizational resilience. Role separation between administrative and secretarial functions should be prioritized as transaction volumes increase. For export policymakers, simplified documentation pathways within the INSW portal and freight support programs targeted at small-volume commodity exporters would substantially reduce the barriers currently constraining SME export participation in Indonesia.

Future research should extend this study through comparative case analyses across different commodity categories and export destinations, as well as longitudinal studies tracking how SME adaptive capabilities evolve with growing internationalization experience.

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