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AN IMPROVED CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF B2B MARKETING STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING THE EXPORT POTENTIAL OF REGIONS

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Abstract: This article develops an improved conceptual model of B2B marketing strategies aimed at enhancing the export potential of regions by synthesising the theories of regional innovation systems, the Triple Helix, and smart specialisation. The proposed model consists of three interlinked layers — strategic specialisation, institutional cooperation, and enterprise support — connected by continuous feedback, and addresses three governance questions: what to prioritise, with whom to cooperate, and whom to support and how. The practical interpretation of the model for the cotton-textile cluster of the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan shows that government–business ties in the region are relatively stable, whereas the involvement of universities remains the weakest link. The model bridges firm-level B2B strategies and region-level policy and can guide the design of regional export support programmes.

Keywords: B2B marketing, export potential, regional innovation system, Triple Helix, smart specialisation, cluster, Khorezm region.

Annotatsiya: Mazkur maqolada hududlarning eksport salohiyatini oshirishga qaratilgan B2B marketing strategiyalarining takomillashtirilgan konseptual modeli hududiy innovatsion tizimlar, Triple Helix va aqlli ixtisoslashuv nazariyalarini sintez qilish asosida ishlab chiqilgan. Taklif etilayotgan model uzluksiz qayta aloqa orqali o'zaro bog'langan uchta qatlam — strategik ixtisoslashuv, institutsional hamkorlik va korxonalarni qo'llab-quvvatlashdan iborat bo'lib, boshqaruvning uchta asosiy savoliga: nimaga ustuvorlik berish, kimlar bilan hamkorlik qilish hamda kimni va qanday qo'llab-quvvatlash masalalariga javob beradi. Modelning O'zbekistonning Xorazm viloyatidagi paxta-to'qimachilik klasteri misolida amaliy talqini hududda davlat va biznes o'rtasidagi aloqalar nisbatan barqaror ekanligini, universitetlarning ishtiroki esa eng zaif bo'g'in bo'lib qolayotganini ko'rsatadi. Mazkur model korxona darajasidagi B2B strategiyalarini hududiy siyosat bilan bog'laydi hamda hududiy eksportni qo'llab-quvvatlash dasturlarini ishlab chiqishda yo'nalish sifatida xizmat qilishi mumkin.

Kalit so'zlar: B2B marketing, eksport salohiyati, hududiy innovatsion tizim, Triple Helix, aqlli ixtisoslashuv, klaster, Xorazm viloyati.

Аннотация: В статье разработана усовершенствованная концептуальная модель B2B-маркетинговых стратегий, направленных на повышение экспортного потенциала регионов, на основе синтеза теорий региональных инновационных систем, Triple Helix и умной специализации. Предлагаемая модель состоит из трёх взаимосвязанных уровней — стратегической специализации, институционального сотрудничества и поддержки предприятий, объединённых непрерывной обратной связью, и отвечает на три ключевых вопроса управления: чему следует отдать приоритет, с кем необходимо сотрудничать и кого и каким образом следует поддерживать. Практическая интерпретация модели на примере хлопково-текстильного кластера Хорезмской области Узбекистана показывает, что связи между государством и бизнесом в регионе являются относительно устойчивыми, тогда как участие университетов остаётся наиболее слабым звеном. Модель обеспечивает взаимосвязь между B2B-стратегиями на уровне предприятий и региональной политикой и может использоваться в качестве ориентира при разработке региональных программ поддержки экспорта.

Ключевые слова: B2B-маркетинг, экспортный потенциал, региональная инновационная система, Triple Helix, умная специализация, кластер, Хорезмская область.

INTRODUCTION

Most studies of B2B export marketing are conducted at the firm level, addressing the heterogeneity of exporters, the choice of marketing tools, and the evaluation of marketing effectiveness. At the same time, a region's export potential can be viewed as the combined outcome of individual firms and the effectiveness of the broader regional ecosystem. It depends on how effectively an integrated system — comprising enterprises at different stages of development, educational institutions, and government bodies — operates as a whole. Carefully designed corporate strategies can achieve greater potential when they are effectively connected

with the regional environment. In this context, strengthening interaction between enterprises and regional programmes, as well as enhancing the consideration of enterprises' needs, can contribute to further improving regional export potential.

The scalability and sustainability of a firm's B2B strategy are supported by strong connections with the surrounding systems of education, information, finance, and organisational support. A conceptual model can therefore serve as a "translator" between corporate strategy and regional policy, creating opportunities for their effective alignment and integration. The aim of this article is to synthesise the theories of regional innovation systems, the Triple Helix, and smart specialisation in the context of B2B export marketing, to develop a three-layer conceptual model on this basis, and to substantiate it using the cotton-textile cluster of the Khorezm region as a case.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE ON THE SUBJECT

According to the regional innovation systems concept developed by Cooke, a region's competitiveness is determined by the quality of the network of knowledge exchange and interaction among enterprises, education and research institutions, and government bodies [1]. Applied to B2B export marketing, this implies that a firm's marketing capability depends directly on the quality of the regional "ecosystem" surrounding it. This perspective explains why two firms with the same marketing knowledge may achieve different results in different regions. Asheim and Coenen further show that regional innovation systems differ according to the knowledge base on which industries rely — analytical, synthetic, or symbolic knowledge [2] — which justifies the need for different support instruments for different industries.

The Triple Helix model developed by Etzkowitz and Leydesdorff interprets regional development as dynamic, overlapping cooperation among government, universities, and industry [3]. In contrast to linear, state-led innovation policy, the model shows that hybrid organisational forms emerge as each actor partly takes on the role of the others — for example, when universities engage in entrepreneurial activity. In a later work, Etzkowitz describes the Triple Helix not as a rigid organisational scheme but as a process that evolves over time [4]. Because the model originated in the experience of advanced economies, regions with limited institutional resources should adapt its underlying logic — the need for trilateral hybrid cooperation — rather than its specific organisational forms.

The smart specialisation concept proposed by Foray, David, and Hall recommends that, instead of attempting to develop all sectors equally, regions should identify their genuine comparative advantages through an "entrepreneurial discovery process" and concentrate resources accordingly [5]. McCann and Ortega-Argilés applied the concept to European Union regional policy and showed that its success depends on the active participation of firms, researchers, and public authorities in the discovery process [6]. An important lesson follows for resource-constrained regions: deep specialisation in selected areas is strategically more rational than attempting to develop everything at once. Porter's cluster theory likewise establishes that geographically concentrated, interconnected firms and institutions are a source of competitive advantage [7].

Each of these three theoretical approaches explains a different dimension of regional development — systemic interaction, institutional cooperation, and strategic prioritisation — yet studies that integrate them into a coherent model applicable to B2B export marketing are scarce. In developing economies, these approaches are often applied through separate, unconnected policy documents. The scientific novelty of this article lies in presenting them as a single model with interlinked layers.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study is based on systems analysis and theoretical synthesis, with the applied part carried out as a case study. The model was constructed by synthesising three theoretical streams: the logic of smart specialisation shaped the strategic layer, the Triple Helix model shaped the institutional layer, and the regional innovation systems concept shaped the enterprise support layer. During the synthesis, particular attention was paid to the compatibility of these theories — for example, to how the entrepreneurial discovery process can be organised within Triple Helix cooperation. The practical applicability of the model was assessed for the cotton-textile cluster of the Khorezm region on the basis of scholarly research on the regional economy [8; 9]. The model is intended not to replace existing national and regional programmes but to integrate them into a single coherent framework.

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The theoretical synthesis resulted in a three-layer conceptual model. The strategic specialisation layer identifies the region's genuine competitive advantage through the entrepreneurial discovery process. The

institutional cooperation layer establishes formal and informal mechanisms of cooperation among government, education, and industry. The enterprise support layer delivers differentiated services to enterprises at different stages of development. The layers answer a consistent sequence of governance questions: the first — “What should be prioritised?”; the second — “With whom should we cooperate?”; and the third — “Whom should we support, and how?” (Table 1, Figure 1).

Table 1.

A three-layer conceptual model for enhancing the export potential of regions¹

Layer	Function	Theoretical basis
1. Strategic specialisation	Identifying the region's genuine comparative advantage through the entrepreneurial discovery process	Smart specialisation [5; 6]
2. Institutional cooperation	Establishing formal and informal cooperation mechanisms among government, education, and industry	Triple Helix model [3; 4]
3. Enterprise support	Delivering services differentiated by development stage	Regional innovation systems [1; 2]

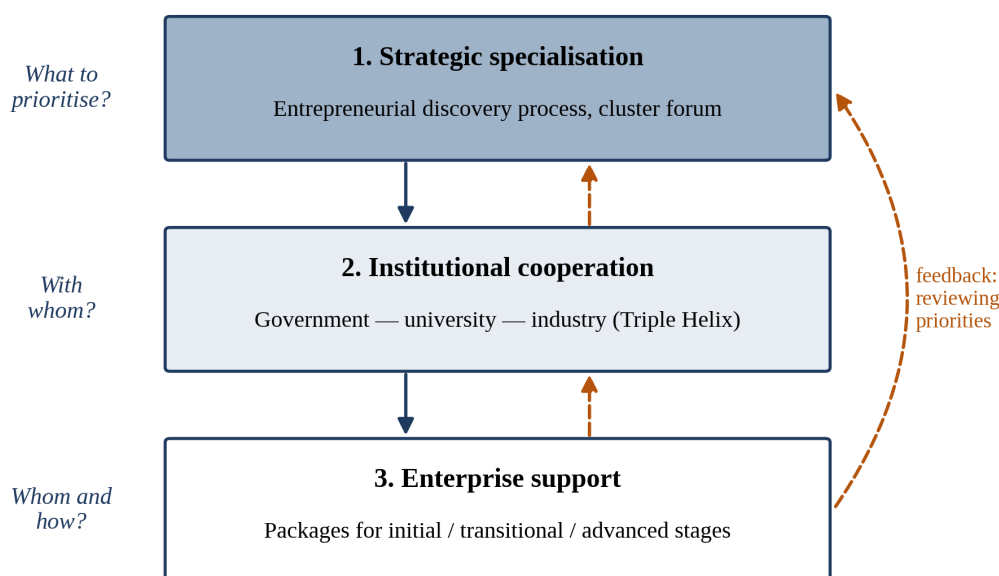


Figure 1. Three-layer conceptual model of regional B2B export marketing²

In the context of Khorezm, the strategic layer implies that the region can focus particular attention on sectors with an established comparative advantage, such as the cotton-textile cluster, while continuing to support the broader economic structure. The entrepreneurial discovery process could be organised through regular consultations involving cluster enterprises, regional universities, and representatives of the regional administration — for example, through an annual “cluster forum” — while the identified priorities could be formalised in a flexible document reviewed every two to three years. Regular consultations and active participation of stakeholders in decision-making can strengthen the effectiveness and practical relevance of the process. This approach combines broad sectoral support with focused attention to priority areas, thereby contributing to the more efficient allocation and effective utilisation of available resources.

The function of the institutional cooperation layer is to pool the specific resources of the three actors: government bodies provide financial and regulatory support, higher education institutions offer training programmes in B2B marketing and international trade, and cluster enterprises contribute practical experience

¹ Source: author's elaboration.

² Source: author's elaboration.

and market knowledge. Such cooperation could be institutionalised by establishing a university-based applied centre or consulting service for B2B export marketing. The success of such a centre depends on its going beyond theoretical lectures to participate in projects that support real export transactions. The centre would also serve as a practical training ground for students, linking the quality of education to the strengthening of the region's export potential.

The enterprise support layer recognises that B2B exporters operate at initial, transitional, and advanced stages and provides a distinct package of services tailored to the needs of each stage. A differentiated approach enables resources to be directed towards areas with greater potential returns and supports the effective utilisation of available resources. In addition, stage-based services provide enterprises with a clear development roadmap and create favourable conditions for progressing to the next stage. This approach also highlights the importance of strengthening regional statistical monitoring: alongside total export volumes, the progress of enterprises through different development stages can also be systematically assessed.

A key feature of the model is continuous feedback between the layers. Experience gained at the enterprise level contributes to improving institutional cooperation mechanisms, which in turn provides a basis for the periodic refinement of strategic priorities. This learning cycle represents an institutional manifestation of the entrepreneurial discovery process and enables the model to function as an adaptive and continuously developing system. When the outcomes of a selected priority provide new insights, feedback from the third layer can support the refinement of decisions at the first layer. Clearly designated institutional actors for each layer can further strengthen coordination, accountability, and the effective implementation of the model.

The practical significance of the model for the Khorezm region is summarised in Table 2. Yaxshimuratov identifies industrial diversification and the enhancement of export potential among the priority tasks for the region's economic growth [8], which provides a policy basis for the choice made at the strategic layer. Atajanova's analysis of the statistical indicators of cotton-textile clusters [9], in turn, empirically supports the selection of this sector as a smart specialisation priority. The strategic choice thus derives from available evidence rather than theoretical assumption. This also offers a general lesson for other regions: in setting priorities, relying on local statistical and scholarly evidence is more reliable than following general trends (Table 2).

Table 2. Practical interpretation of the three-layer model for the Khorezm region³

Layer	Current situation in the region	Recommendation
Strategic specialisation	The comparative advantage of the cotton-textile cluster is substantiated in scholarly research	Formally designate the cluster as a priority sector
Institutional cooperation	Government–business ties are stable; university involvement is limited	Establish a university-based B2B export centre
Enterprise support	A uniform approach is applied to all enterprises	Differentiate services by development stage

The model also highlights opportunities for further strengthening Triple Helix cooperation: in Khorezm, universities have the potential to expand systematic applied consulting and training services in B2B export marketing, creating additional opportunities to enhance the institutional layer. At the same time, relations between cluster enterprises and the regional administration are relatively stable, providing a strong foundation for developing bilateral (government–business) cooperation into a trilateral (government–education–business) model. Since universities already possess established educational infrastructure, they can serve as an effective platform for strengthening enterprises' skills and competencies and further developing institutional support for B2B export marketing.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

The study developed a three-layer conceptual model of B2B marketing strategies aimed at enhancing the export potential of regions. The scientific novelty of the model lies in integrating the theories of regional innovation systems, the Triple Helix, and smart specialisation into a single framework and in linking firm-level strategies with region-level policy.

The following practical recommendations are proposed: the Khorezm regional administration should institutionalise regular “entrepreneurial discovery” consultations involving cluster enterprises, regional

3 Source: author's elaboration.

universities, and business associations, with the regional chamber of commerce and industry acting as a neutral coordinator; an applied centre for B2B export marketing should be established at a regional higher education institution; and cluster enterprises should be classified by development stage on the basis of available statistical data and short interviews with managers, with a separate support package designed for each stage. The adoption of a regional programme or regulatory act supporting the model would facilitate its implementation.

A limitation of the study is that the model is conceptual in nature, and its implementation requires institutional change and the commitment of stakeholders. Future research will involve piloting the model in the Khorezm region and monitoring its results over the long term, in particular examining how effectively feedback operates from the enterprise layer to the strategic layer, as well as testing the transferability of the model to other priority sectors such as agricultural processing. Overall, improving individual enterprises is not sufficient to enhance a region's export potential; the institutional environment surrounding them must also be purposefully redesigned.

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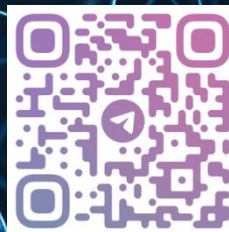
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