

Article

Improving the Methodology of Applying B2B Marketing Strategies to Enhance Regional Export Potential

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Abstract: This article presents the results of a study on improving the methodology for applying B2B marketing strategies to enhance regional export potential, using the Khorezm region of Uzbekistan as a case. The relevance of the topic stems from the fact that, despite steady growth in aggregate national exports, only a small share of the country's enterprises actually participate in foreign trade, and the region's export structure remains predominantly raw-material based and weakly diversified. The purpose of the study is to develop an integrated three-level methodology combining a conceptual model of B2B marketing strategy application, a mechanism for its practical implementation, and an algorithm for adapting it to the region's sectoral structure. The study draws on competitive advantage theory, the value chain concept, global value chain governance theory, and the interaction (network) approach to industrial marketing. The findings show that enhancing regional export potential requires a simultaneous shift by enterprises toward relational forms of value chain coordination and institutional support from regional authorities. The results are of practical relevance for shaping regional export policy in transition economies.

Keywords: B2B marketing, export potential, regional economy, value chain, competitive advantage

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1. Introduction

The development of the business-to-business (B2B) segment occupies a special place in the structure of modern international trade, since the bulk of raw materials, semi-finished products, industrial equipment, and services is realized precisely through inter-organizational transactions. In this regard, the ability of national and regional economies to effectively apply B2B marketing tools is becoming one of the key factors in building export potential, especially for transition economies seeking to diversify the structure of their foreign trade [1].

Uzbekistan demonstrates steady macroeconomic dynamics: in 2025, the country's real GDP grew by 7.7%, driven by export recovery, growth in private consumption, and industrial production. At the same time, according to the World Bank's Country Economic Memorandum on fostering private-sector growth and global integration in Uzbekistan, only about 6% of the country's enterprises actually engage in export activity, and the level of export diversification — both in terms of product structure and market geography — remains low. These structural constraints are also evident at the regional level: despite positive dynamics in foreign trade turnover, the share of high value-added

manufactured goods in the exports of most regions remains insignificant, and the involvement of small and medium-sized enterprises in international value chains remains limited [2].

This issue is particularly relevant for the Khorezm region — a region with a pronounced agro-industrial specialization (the cotton-textile cluster, the agro-processing complex, the chemical industry, and the construction-materials industry), bordering Turkmenistan and possessing substantial but not fully realized export potential. Existing studies typically examine individual aspects of B2B marketing application — theoretical-conceptual, institutional-mechanistic, or purely sectoral — in isolation from one another, which complicates their practical use by regional government bodies and export-oriented enterprises [3].

The purpose of this article is to develop and substantiate an integrated, three-level methodology for applying B2B marketing strategies to enhance regional export potential, combining: (1) a conceptual model revealing the logic of interaction between B2B marketing factors and export potential; (2) a mechanism for the practical implementation of this model through the lens of value chain governance; and (3) an algorithm for adapting the mechanism to the sectoral structure of a specific region, using the Khorezm region as an example. The article is structured as follows: the second section reviews the theoretical basis of the study; the third presents the research methodology; the fourth presents the results for each of the three levels; the fifth discusses the results in a broader context; and the conclusion sets out practical recommendations [4].

The theoretical foundation of B2B marketing research is traditionally formed by the model of organizational buying behavior, according to which a purchasing decision in an inter-organizational context is made not by a single individual but by a buying center comprising users, influencers, buyers, decision-makers, and gatekeepers. Building on this logic, the interaction (network) approach to industrial marketing views the firm not as an isolated participant in discrete transactions, but as an element of a stable network of relationships among suppliers, buyers, intermediaries, and institutions [5]. The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing further substantiates that long-term, trust-based ties between organizations yield higher economic returns compared with one-off transactions [6].

With respect to firm internationalization, the stage model of gradual internationalization remains significant, according to which firms typically begin their expansion in geographically and culturally close markets, gradually moving toward more distant and complex markets as they accumulate experience and knowledge [7]. At the regional and sectoral level, a key role is played by competitive advantage theory, which encompasses the analysis of factor conditions, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, and firm strategy, as well as the value chain concept, which allows the identification of the stages with the greatest value added. This logic was substantially developed in global value chain (GVC) governance theory, which distinguishes several types of coordination among chain participants — ranging from market and modular to relational, captive, and hierarchical — and shows that a shift by suppliers from developing countries toward more relational forms of coordination is one of the key conditions for industrial and export upgrading [8].

A separate strand of contemporary research is devoted to the digital transformation of B2B marketing. A systematic literature review covering 2000–2023 shows a robust link between the application of digital technologies and firms' internationalization strategies, as well as the emergence of new knowledge-flow patterns within networks and value chains. Empirical studies of the impact of digital marketing on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises likewise confirm a positive relationship between the level of digitalization of marketing activity and firm performance indicators [9].

Particular attention should also be paid to the literature on regional trade preferences as an instrument for expanding export-oriented enterprises' access to external B2B markets: a preferential trade regime reduces tariff barriers and increases the predictability of supply conditions for institutional buyers, which is especially significant for Central Asian countries integrating into the system of multilateral trade [10].

Despite the breadth of these theoretical strands, the existing literature rarely integrates them into a single, practically applicable methodology — spanning from the conceptual level to a concrete algorithm for adapting it to the sectoral structure of an individual region. It is precisely this gap that the present study seeks to address.

2. Materials and Methods

The study employs a combination of methods. The theoretical-analytical method was used to systematize the theories of organizational buying behavior, the interaction (network) approach, relationship marketing, stage internationalization, competitive advantage, and global value chain governance. The comparative-institutional method was applied to analyze foreign experience in institutional support for B2B exports — South Korea's KOTRA agency, the network of German Chambers of Commerce Abroad (AHK), and the Canton Fair in China as a model of a large-scale B2B platform. The statistical method was used to analyze official data from the State Statistics Committee of the Republic of Uzbekistan, the Statistics Department of the Khorezm region, and the World Bank's Country Economic Memorandum. Finally, the systemic-structural method was applied to construct the three-level methodology linking the conceptual model, the implementation mechanism, and the sectoral adaptation algorithm into a single logical sequence.

3. Results

3.1 The Conceptual Model for Applying B2B Marketing Strategies

The first level of the proposed methodology is a conceptual model revealing the logic of the relationship between the application of B2B marketing strategies and the growth of a region's export potential. The model follows an “input–process–output–feedback” logic. On the input side, the model considers the region's resource preconditions (factor conditions per: the natural-resource base, geographic location, human capital) and the initial level of enterprises' marketing and export competencies. At the process stage, three interrelated components play a key role: (a) segmentation of institutional buyers and adaptation of the offer to the structure of the buying center; (b) building long-term, trust-based relationships with foreign partners within a network of relationships; and (c) the consistent, staged expansion of market presence in line with the logic of gradual internationalization [11]. On the output side, the model anticipates growth in the volume and diversification of B2B exports, an increase in the share of enterprises engaged in foreign trade activity, and the advancement of regional producers up the value chain. The closing element of the model is feedback: the results of export activity are systematically used to adjust the marketing strategy at the input of the next cycle.

The fundamental difference between the proposed model and traditional, transaction-based interpretations of export marketing lies in the fact that it treats export potential not as a static characteristic of a region's resource base, but as a dynamic function of the quality and durability of the inter-organizational relationships that regional enterprises form with foreign partners.

The practical operationalization of feedback in the model involves the use of a limited set of measurable indicators: the growth rate of B2B export volume, the number of long-term contracts concluded (as opposed to one-off deals), and the share of regional

enterprises entering external B2B markets for the first time during the reporting period. These indicators make it possible not only to assess the effectiveness of the model, but also to promptly reallocate resources among the three process components — buyer segmentation, relationship building, and geographic expansion — should one of them become a “bottleneck” for the system as a whole [12].

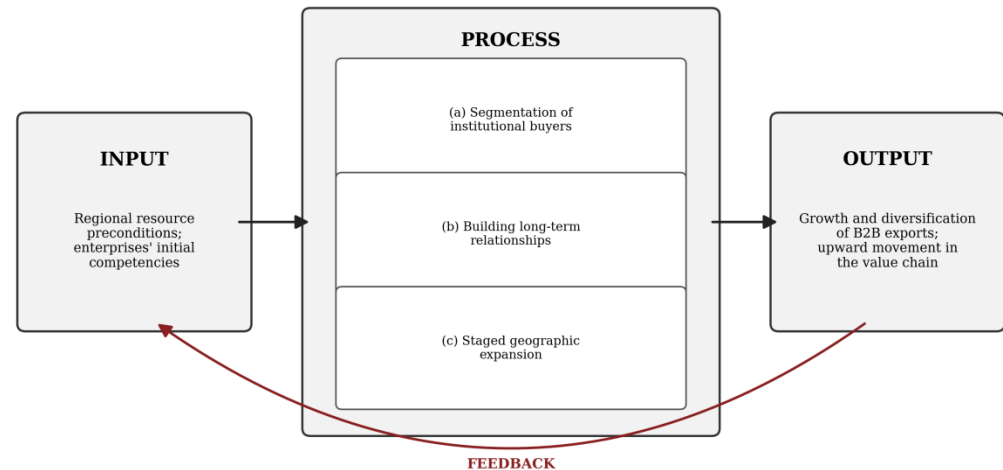


Figure 1. Conceptual model of applying B2B marketing strategies to enhance regional export potential

3.2 Implementation Mechanism: Shifting Toward Relational Forms of Coordination

The second level of the methodology is the mechanism for the practical implementation of the conceptual model. Unlike descriptive lists of tools, the proposed mechanism draws on value chain governance theory, according to which relationships between suppliers and buyers can take one of five forms of coordination: market, modular, relational, captive, or hierarchical. Most export-oriented enterprises in transition-economy regions are characterized by either market coordination (selling raw materials through intermediaries without long-term commitments) or captive coordination (rigid specifications imposed by a dominant foreign buyer, with minimal bargaining power for the supplier). Both forms limit the enterprise's ability to capture value added and reduce the stability of export earnings.

Table 1. Forms of Value Chain Coordination by Transaction Complexity, Codifiability, and Supplier Capabilities

Coordination Form	Complexity of Transactions	Ability to Codify	Supplier Capabilities
Market	Low	High	High
Modular	High	High	High
Relational	High	Low	High
Captive	High	High	Low
Hierarchy	High	Low	Low

Source: compiled by the author based on global value chain governance theory. As Table 2 shows, as the ability to codify transactions decreases and the required level of supplier capability increases, the form of coordination shifts from market toward more complex forms — modular, relational, captive, and hierarchical — accompanied by increasing explicit coordination and power asymmetry between buyer and supplier [13].

The mechanism proposed within this study is aimed at a deliberate shift of regional enterprises from market and captive coordination toward modular and relational

coordination, which involves three groups of instruments. First, institutional instruments — modeled on KOTRA, AHK, and the Canton Fair — include organizing the collective participation of regional enterprises in international sectoral trade fairs, establishing a regional B2B export support center on a “single-window” basis, and assisting enterprises in obtaining international quality certificates that reduce information asymmetry between supplier and buyer. Second, digital instruments — presence on specialized international B2B platforms, the adoption of customer relationship management (CRM) systems, and the use of artificial-intelligence-based analytics — enable regional enterprises to reach institutional buyers directly, bypassing intermediary links and strengthening their bargaining position. Third, capability-building instruments — training staff in the quality standards and specifications of target markets, and investing in design and branding — are a necessary condition for the transition from simply meeting a buyer's specifications to a full-fledged relational partnership.

It is important to emphasize that these three groups of instruments should be applied not sequentially but in parallel: institutional support without digital visibility for the enterprise on international markets, and digital presence without a corresponding build-up of internal capability, both fail to secure a sustainable shift toward more favorable forms of value-chain coordination.

An illustration of the proposed shift can be seen in the typical trajectory of an enterprise that initially sells its output through market coordination — that is, through independent traders with no long-term commitments. Obtaining an international quality certificate and participating in a sectoral B2B trade fair allow such an enterprise to move to modular coordination, in which the buyer imposes clear but standardized product requirements without deep involvement in the supplier's production process. Further investment in design, branding, and customer-service competencies, backed by a CRM system, creates the preconditions for a shift to relational coordination, characterized by mutual dependence and joint product development with key buyers — it is precisely this form of coordination that secures the most durable capture of value added by the exporting enterprise [14].

3.3 Sectoral Adaptation Algorithm: The Experience of the Khorezm Region

The third level of the methodology is an algorithm for adapting the general mechanism to the specific sectoral structure of a region, tested using the Khorezm region as an example. Applying the diagnostic tools of competitive advantage theory shows that the region possesses pronounced factor conditions (agricultural potential based on the water resources of the Amu Darya basin, geographic proximity to Turkmenistan) and certain supporting industries (cotton-textile clusters formed since 2020), yet demand conditions and firm strategy remain relatively underdeveloped: a significant share of the region's enterprises do not yet meet international B2B buyers' requirements for consistency of quality, delivery timelines, and environmental standards.

Analysis of the position of the region's main industries within the value chain and of the coordination forms typical of them made it possible to identify four priority directions, summarized in Table 1.

Table 2. Priority B2B Marketing Directions for Key Industries of the Khorezm Region

Industry	Position in the Value Chain	Priority B2B Marketing Direction
Cotton-textile cluster	Predominantly raw-material and semi-finished links (fiber, yarn)	Shift toward finished textile products, participation in specialized sectoral trade fairs, branding
Agro-processing complex	Primary processing with incomplete compliance with international certification standards	International quality certification, long-term contracts with chain retail buyers
Chemical industry	Narrow circle of institutional buyers, high requirements for technical parameters	Specialized sectoral B2B platforms, direct sales, technical marketing communication
Construction-materials industry	Orientation mainly toward neighboring markets, high share of logistics costs	Expansion of cross-border B2B cooperation, logistics integration

Based on the regional diagnosis, a five-step algorithm for the sectoral adaptation of the mechanism is proposed: 1) a comprehensive assessment of the export potential of each regional industry by volume, dynamics, and diversification of exports; 2) an analysis of factor and demand conditions for each industry, following the logic of competitive advantage theory; 3) mapping of the value chain and identification of the stages with the lowest value added; 4) determination of the target form of value-chain coordination (modular or relational) and the corresponding set of institutional, digital, and capability-building instruments; and 5) the consistent expansion of the sales geography — from existing markets in the CIS and neighboring states toward more distant markets, including the European Union under Uzbekistan's current GSP+ trade preference scheme — following the logic of gradual internationalization.

Applying the algorithm to the cotton-textile cluster reveals the following sequence: the assessment reveals a high dependence of exports on raw-material links in the chain; the analysis of factor conditions confirms the presence of a production base alongside insufficient development of design and branding competencies; value chain mapping points to a shift toward the finished-apparel segment as the priority direction; the target form of coordination is defined as a move from market to relational coordination through participation in specialized international trade fairs and direct contracts with foreign apparel manufacturers; and the geographic sequence envisages initial consolidation in CIS markets, followed by entry into markets offering Uzbekistan preferential access.

For the region's agro-processing complex, an analogous sequence looks different: the assessment reveals substantial processing capacity alongside incomplete compliance of output with international phytosanitary and quality standards; the target form of coordination is defined as a shift from captive coordination, in which a foreign buyer dictates all supply parameters, toward modular coordination — achieved through obtaining international certificates that standardize interaction with the buyer and reduce the buyer's control over the supplier's production process; the priority instrument is long-term framework contracts with foreign chain retail buyers, ensuring predictable sales while preserving the seasonal nature of production. Analogous, sector-specific algorithms can be constructed for the region's chemical industry and construction-materials industry.

4. Discussion

The proposed three-level methodology has a number of distinctive features compared with existing approaches to regional export policy. First, unlike universal recommendations that disregard sectoral specifics, the methodology explicitly links the choice of B2B marketing instruments to the position of a specific industry within the value chain and to the target form of inter-organizational coordination, which increases the practical applicability of the recommendations. Second, the integration of the conceptual, mechanistic, and sectoral levels into a single logical sequence helps avoid the gap between theoretical recommendations and their practical implementation that often characterizes studies confined to only one of these levels [15].

At the same time, a number of limitations should be taken into account. A shift toward relational forms of value-chain coordination requires substantial investment in enterprise capability-building, which implies the need for coordinated financial and institutional support from the state. The expansion of cross-border B2B cooperation depends on agreements at the interstate level, which fall outside regional competence. Finally, the availability of detailed firm-level statistical data remains limited, which complicates precise quantitative assessment of the effectiveness of the proposed instruments and calls for further empirical research, including survey-based methods at the level of regional enterprises.

Despite these limitations, the methodological logic of the study — from the conceptual model, through the implementation mechanism, to the sectoral adaptation algorithm — appears applicable not only to the Khorezm region but also to other agro-industrially specialized regions in transition economies, which underscores the broader scientific significance of the findings.

5. Conclusion

The study has developed and substantiated an integrated three-level methodology for applying B2B marketing strategies to enhance regional export potential. At the conceptual level, an “input–process–output–feedback” model is substantiated, treating export potential as a function of the quality of inter-organizational relationships. At the implementation-mechanism level, a deliberate shift of regional enterprises from market and captive toward modular and relational forms of value-chain coordination is proposed, achieved through institutional, digital, and capability-building instruments. At the sectoral level, a five-step algorithm for adapting the mechanism to a region's specific economic structure was developed and tested using the Khorezm region as an example.

Practical recommendations arising from the study include: establishing a regional coordination center for B2B export support; creating digital infrastructure to promote regional enterprises' products on international B2B platforms; prioritizing support for the cotton-textile cluster's shift from raw-material exports to finished products; assisting agro-processing enterprises in obtaining international quality certificates; and institutionalizing an annual review of priorities based on the proposed algorithm.

The scientific novelty of the study lies in integrating three previously separately examined levels of analysis — conceptual, mechanistic, and sectoral-applied — into a single methodology, as well as in applying global value chain governance theory to the analysis of B2B marketing in a transition-economy region, thereby extending the theory's scope of application beyond its traditional use for transnational production networks. Further research could be directed toward the empirical verification of the proposed methodology through surveys of regional enterprises and a quantitative assessment of the economic effect of shifting toward relational forms of value-chain coordination.

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