



Analysis of Potential Export Market Strategy in Craft Business from Typical Karo Woven Cloth in North Sumatra

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Abstract

Export market research is an important component in carrying out export activities. In this research, an analysis of export market opportunities was carried out to find potential markets for craft business actors from typical Karo woven cloth in North Sumatra so that they could maximize marketing efforts globally. This research aims to determine the export market potential for Karo handicraft products and find the right strategy in marketing typical Karo handicraft products. The research method used in this research is a qualitative approach, then data collection is carried out through interviews, observation and surveys. The results of data testing show that the potential export markets for Karo craft products are Singapore and then Malaysia, so it is necessary to maximize market opportunities in these countries with appropriate export marketing strategies. Karo craft entrepreneurs need to maximize marketing to export destination countries with strategies that can be implemented starting from online marketing, participating in international exhibitions and events as well as carrying out strategic collaborations.

Keywords: Export Opportunities, Potential Market, Karo Craft Products, Marketing Strategy, North Sumatera

Introduction

As the domestic market matures and sales growth slows, businesses in all industries will realize the increasing importance of expanding their business in other countries. Therefore, expanding the market, distributing products, improving the company's image with a well-known brand in the global market, and increasing company revenue.

The era of globalization has had a big impact on the development of our time. We can feel progress after progress every day, in fact it almost affects all areas of life. The impact of globalization is felt in almost all sectors throughout the world, one of which is the economic sector. Globalization has changed many perspectives, where the world economy has developed from the simplest until the economy has grown more open to become a local economy and even a global economy. The era of globalization promises new business opportunities for companies operating in Indonesia, one of which is expanding the market for products from Indonesian MSME.

This development is very relevant in technological advances as a basis for social relations that can be connected via electronic media widely and universally, in this case companies are able to create optimal markets and greater opportunities in advertising through social websites and internet media. The internet can influence more modern and advanced businesses in the future so that economic development and telecommunications are expected to be able to create information infrastructure in the digital era.

In the era of globalization, it is still important to carry out market research. Market research is important information for companies to be able to create strategies, innovations and overall business decisions. It will be difficult for a business to compete if it does not understand the market and its customers. Carrying out export market research activities is currently not a difficult thing to do because of the ease of technology and information currently available.

The aim of this research is to determine the potential export market for craft products made from typical Karo weaving in North Sumatra and to find out the right strategy for marketing typical Karo handicraft products to export destination markets and globally.

Literature Review

Exports are goods and services produced in one country and sold to buyers in other countries. Exports shape international trade. Exports are vital to the modern economy because they offer people and companies more markets for their goods. One of the core functions of diplomacy and foreign policy between governments is to encourage economic trade, encouraging exports and imports for the benefit of all trading parties. Export goods are a benefit to a country's economy. These profits will trigger economic growth in the exporting country (*Todaro and Stephen, 2006*).

Rahmaddi (2011), explained that the important role of exports in Indonesia's economic growth is because exports are able to generate foreign exchange for Indonesia. The government's role in increasing the role of exports in generating foreign exchange is that the government must collaborate with exporters. The government plays a role in encouraging income by creating an export sector that can compete with export products from other countries, while exporters have a role in finding and increasing markets for export products.

Export Market Research

Marketing research is a systematic activity that identifies problems and opportunities, collects data, processes and analyzes data, and helps management in the company's marketing sector to identify and resolve them effectively and efficiently. The goal is to disseminate useful information to enable decision making (*Center, 2005*). According to the American Marketing

Analysis of Potential Export Market Strategy in Craft Business from Typical Karo Woven Cloth in North Sumatra

Association (AMA), marketing research is a function that can connect marketers with consumers and the public through information in identifying opportunities and problems in marketing. When marketing a product or service, it is not possible to sell it directly to everyone, although that is fine, it would be better to have a specific target to focus on promotions that have a greater chance of selling. Research is like we are approaching our potential consumers. Knowing what they need and the characteristics of our potential buyers. Market research is the activity of analyzing and evaluating the marketing potential of a product and service to obtain information that can be used for business continuity.

As markets expand around the world, competition increases in every international market. To stay competitive and maintain your position in an increasingly competitive market, you need a global perspective. Global competition also demands high quality products that are able to respond to changing consumer needs and increasingly sophisticated technology. Given shipping costs, customer satisfaction, and the increasing number of players, not all opportunities to improve international business practices need to be carefully considered in the context of a company's goals. Collaborative collaboration, strategic international alliances, strategic planning, and alternative market entry strategies are the keys to global marketing that must be applied when planning and organizing global marketing management. (*McGraw Hill Companies, 2007*)

Potential Market

Market potential is the total market value in rupiah if everyone has an interest in the related product and has purchasing power (*Indonesian Dictionary, 2008*). Market potential assessment is something important in supporting a company's strategic decisions, factors that influence strategic decisions in a particular case, for example demand growth, saturation and competition, are indicators from the supply side that can be used in assessing potential markets (*Arefjevs and Lindamanea, 2014*). In this way, it can be concluded that market potential is a measure of the strength that the market has regarding the attractiveness of a product or service over a certain period of time

(*Abdullah, 2012*) states that a market potential survey conducted on a service or product offered by a company to consumers is expected to obtain an overview of market conditions, potential purchasing power, preferred dimensions and attributes of the product or service as well as the price sensitivity that consumers can accept towards the product. new goods or services for the company. An important part of international marketing is identifying opportunities to sell export products. Small and medium-sized businesses that export to emerging foreign markets should conduct target market research to identify domestic opportunities. Export market research to identify target markets in selected countries in the world is actually a selection process that begins by collecting relevant information from these countries and screening potential countries. (*Rahayu, 2021*)

Research Method

The type of research used in this research is a qualitative research method. Qualitative research is research that focuses on human elements, objects, institutions, as well as

interactions between these elements to understand an event, behavior and phenomenon. The reason the researcher used qualitative methods was to look for similar data results between the export research sites and real evidence in the field regarding export market opportunities for typical Karo handicraft products. The instrument of this qualitative research is humans (researchers themselves). Where the researcher in qualitative research is a human interest whose function is to determine the focus of the research, select informants as data sources, carry out data collection, assess the quality of the data obtained, analyze the data and interpret the data and make a conclusion about everything. Sources of data obtained include the results of interviews and observations, documentation of research activities, supporting data; both journals and export research sites.

In this research, researchers interviewed the owner of a typical Karo craft business located in Berastagi City, North Sumatra on Sunday, August 27 2023 at 10.00 WIB. The research subjects consisted of 5 people who were owners of Karo craft businesses. The types of data in research consist of primary data and secondary data. Primary data is interview transcripts that have been obtained from interviews and secondary data is obtained from Trademap research results, which is a powerful tool that provides access to comprehensive international trade data. Developed by the International Trade Center (ITC), Trade Map provides valuable information about markets, trading performance, industry structure and trading trends to help entrepreneurs optimize their strategies. The results of data testing show that the potential export markets for Karo craft products are Singapore and then Malaysia, so it is necessary to maximize market opportunities in these countries with appropriate export marketing strategies. Karo craft entrepreneurs need to maximize marketing to export destination countries with strategies that can be implemented starting from online marketing, participating in international exhibitions and events as well as carrying out strategic collaborations.

Results

Owners of Karo Craft Business in Berastagi

Karo is a district in the province of North Sumatra. Located 77 km from Medan City, the capital of North Sumatra Province. The Karo Regency area is located in the highlands with an altitude of between 600 and 1,400 meters above sea level. Karo has a tourist destination that is a destination for foreign tourists. One of them is Berastagi City, which is famous for its cool air and abundant fruit and vegetable production.

Not only that, Tanah Karo is famous for its culture, one of which is the typical Karo cloth which is often used in traditional events. This typical Karo cloth, which is usually called *uis karo*, is beautiful because of its various patterns and motifs. The process of making Karo cloth is also woven manually. As time goes by, Karo cloth is processed into materials for other creative products such as bags, tissue boxes, clothing, scarves and various other products.

Craft business owners are the subjects in this research, namely Mr. AS as subject 1, Mrs. AG as subject 2, Mrs. EP as subject 3, Mrs. UK as subject 4 and Mrs. LP as subject 5.

Analysis of Potential Export Market Strategy in Craft Business from Typical Karo Woven Cloth in North Sumatra

They said that Karo cloth especially has the potential to be used as a Regional superior products which have beautiful motifs and patterns are suitable as craft materials.

This is a new breakthrough in the development of regional craft products. Products from typical Karo woven crafts have a beautiful appeal with various motifs and creativity. The only people interested in this product are local people and tourists. The presence of foreign tourists who have an interest in this product shows that this craft has great potential for export.

Based on the results of the interview, Subjects (S) 1, 2, 3 said that foreign tourists who bought Karo craft products were tourists from Singapore and Malaysia with a total purchase of more than 5 pieces on weekends. This is also supported by trade map data research.

Export Market for Typical Karo Craft Products

Information is now a key element in managing import and export businesses. Without accurate and regular data, it is difficult for companies to compete globally. Collecting and analyzing information allows companies to make decisions about their products, whether modifications or changes are needed, the advertising and marketing strategies they employ, and the needs and wants of target country markets. Collecting data and information used for decision making is quite difficult and not cheap, especially for foreign markets. Differences in politics, culture, social norms and perceptions, language, and demographics are usually the first factors faced when trying to sell in international markets.

Export market research aims to find information that companies can later use in making decisions regarding export markets. This information helps companies decide whether to export to a country. Market research information helps companies increase profits with low risk by investigating the company's ability to maintain product conformity, identify potential consumers, and analyze market competition. Understanding global trends in technology, product development, pricing, and more can help entrepreneurs identify which parts of their business need improvement. This information reminds companies of the obstacles and challenges they face as well as next steps to change their business strategy and export plans before it is too late. This is supported by the results of research in a research journal entitled *How export marketing research influences a company's export performance: Evidence from Turkish companies (2008)*, which shows that export research has an important influence on decision making.

The first research problem in foreign market research is related to the large number of markets or countries being studied. Which countries will be the target of our products and have the opportunity to sell. And the second problem is related to the lack of data or information needed to analyze or conduct research. To overcome this, there is now a solution to overcome this by modifying existing analysis techniques so that they are suitable for international market conditions. To identify requests that have limited data or information, this can be done by utilizing the relationship between economic and demographic indicators.

This is a very important condition that you must pay attention to to ensure that the product you want to export can be accepted and not rejected by the destination country. Apart from knowing the needs of the destination country, you can also set an appropriate export price based on the tariffs imposed on goods imported into the destination country. Each country has different requirements and standards. Therefore, we must do research first to understand our

opportunities in the destination country. The research results also support this from the journal entitled

"Towards understanding cross-country similarities and differences in the use of export information: A perception mapping approach" (2003).

This analysis activity can be done easily nowadays with the help of today's sophisticated information technology. Finding data or information related to export activities can be done through the export directory. Export directory is an online directory that allows users to easily search for supplies, by industry or product category and can access brief information about companies, products and services, key clients or successful projects, accompanied by product photos, addresses and websites, and allows users to contact the company regarding their needs or questions.

The convenience of this export directory helps exporters in promoting their business online to various potential buyers who are interested in looking for their products and services. Examples of export directories are Trademap, Inaexport, Ina-Access, and so on. Ease of obtaining information is now no longer an obstacle in conducting export market research.

Uis Mehaga products are handicrafts using original woven fabric from the Karo tribe which has beautiful and structured designs and motifs. The products provided include handbags, wallets, tissue boxes and woven bags with Karo ornamental motifs. Using this product shows uniqueness and beauty, especially if women use it. Just like using batik cloth which looks distinctive and different, so does using products from Uis Mehaga. The biggest desire to market this product is to preserve and introduce the variety of culture and art of the Karo tribe which has been created and modernized according to market trends.

Subjects (S) 1, S 2, S 3, S 4 and S 5 said they had never conducted in-depth research on potential export markets related to Karo crafts, but they could estimate product interest based on product purchases by tourists around tourist areas. Business owners don't know how to do online research from export directories.

In determining your target market research, of course you need to do research first. Research is an important part of getting exponential market potential. As an exporter, must always be up to date with new information to be able to compete globally. By conducting export research, it makes it easier to make decisions regarding products and services, whether modifications or changes need to be made to what promotional and marketing strategies will be used, consumer behavior and the market needs and desires of the country you want to target.

In conducting export market research and looking for large export market opportunities, we can use the Trade map. Trade map or market access map is an analytical portal that can help users to access, compare, analyze, and download customs tariffs, export tariff quotas, trade solutions, and non-tariff measures that apply to certain commodities or goods in international markets. Trade map also has its own application which is very easy to use.

As a portal developed by the UNCTAD/WTO International Trade Center (ITC), this portal is a solution for conducting market research, identifying market potential, and product diversification. Trade map has collaborated with European Union countries, then with the UN and with World Trade, apart from that, Trade map has covered 220 countries and 5300 products in HS. Therefore, the data and information from the Trade map is certainly valid and up to date. So it will be very helpful in developing trade for various companies, especially in the trade sector.

Analysis of Potential Export Market Strategy in Craft Business from Typical Karo Woven Cloth in North Sumatra

Apart from that, the trade map also provides various indicators for its users. These indicators include the performance of export destination countries, market demand, alternative markets, and the role of competitors, market access, countries and territories. Apart from that, there is also information presented in the form of tables, graphs and maps based on product groups, country groups for export or import purposes.

Based on the results of research conducted via Trade Map, the potential market for Uis Mehaga products is Singapore, followed by Malaysia. This is in accordance with evidence in the field, usually craft products in the Karo tourist area are most sought after by foreign tourists from Singapore and Malaysia based on the results of interviews conducted with related MSME (Micro small and Medium Enterprises). The owners of craft Micro small and Medium Enterprises located in the Berastagi tourist area said that foreign tourists who are interested in typical Karo craft products are tourists from Singapore and Malaysia. Based on shipping distance, these two countries are still in the Southeast Asia region and are neighboring countries to Indonesia.

Based on the results of the interview, Subjects (S) 1, 2, 3 said that foreign tourists who bought Karo craft products were tourists from Singapore and Malaysia with a total purchase of more than 5 pieces on weekends. This is also supported by trade map data research. Subjects (S) 4 and S 5 said that tourists from Europe and China don't like craft products, they usually just buy clothes in souvenir shops. Or they will buy fresh fruit in the market adjacent to the souvenir shop.

Table 1. Importing countries for handicraft bags from textiles based on Trademap data

Table Graph Map Companies Public tenders FDI data											
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HS8	Importers	Value imported in 2022 (USD thousand)	Trade balance in 2022 (USD thousand)	Quantity imported in 2022	Quantity Unit	Unit value (USD/unit)	Annual growth in quantity between 2018-2022 (%)	Share in world imports (%)	Average distance of supplying countries (km)	Concentration of supplying countries	Average tariff (estimated) applied by the country (%)
	World	928,880	-41,174	0	No quantity			100	6,589	0.17	
	Singapore	124,638	-89,699	6,977,242	Units	18	5	13.4	8,976	0.49	0
	Thailand	91,960	-31,124	41,127,246	Units	2.24	-5	9.9	6,463	0.31	18.7
	Italy	90,142	102,511	1,098	Tons	82,097	5	9.7	2,056	0.44	1.2
	Korea, Republic of	55,955	-49,579	274	Tons	204,215	-16	6	8,184	0.37	4.6
	Malaysia	36,154	-31,837	4,070,717	Units	8.88	-27	3.9	8,356	0.3	0
	United States of America	33,734	-538	6,315,696	Units	5.34	1	3.6	10,358	0.16	6.3
	France	33,328	18,013	858	Tons	38,844	9	3.6	3,941	0.17	1.2
	United Kingdom	33,130	-21,777	1,771	Tons	18,707	-2	3.6	6,277	0.33	0.6
	Germany	26,412	-8,405	1,197	Tons	22,065	18	2.8	3,251	0.24	1.2
	Indonesia	20,424	-13,916	11,319	Tons	1,804	13	2.2	4,497	0.6	18.7
	India	19,367	16,129	886	Tons	21,859		2.1	4,072	0.77	12
	Spain	18,061	13,939	1,117	Tons	16,169	8	1.9	5,844	0.18	1.2
	Panama	15,223	-8,877	1,542	Tons	9,872	8	1.6	13,223	0.29	9.8
	Portugal	14,689	-8,523	775	Tons	18,954	23	1.6	4,489	0.26	1.2
	Netherlands	12,291	-645	678	Tons	18,128	0	1.3	5,918	0.12	1.2
	Poland	11,882	1,764	1,811	Tons	6,218	35	1.3	6,213	0.53	1.2

Source: Trademap.org

Uis Mehaga products are handicrafts made from cloth by weaving. Judging from the trade balance side, it has negative results, which means that Singapore and Malaysia have high demand values so they import more products in this sector than they export. Singapore has the highest demand and is in first place in importing textile bag products. Singapore imported 6.9 million products while Malaysia imported 4 million products. The country of Singapore has a distribution of handbag product imports of 13.4% of the world, while Malaysia is 3.9%.

Furthermore, in terms of unit value, the value is higher than some of the selling prices of Uis Mehaga products. However, if the cost of goods sold can be minimized further, you will of course get higher profits. Based on the entry fee data displayed, Singapore and Malaysia do not charge entry fees. Of course this will help export entrepreneurs. Based on the overall research results, Singapore and Malaysia are potential markets for Uis Mehaga's craft business products. Therefore, it is necessary to maximize efforts to be able to export to that country.

Marketing Strategy for Export Products of Typical Karo Crafts

To market export products, especially in the craft sector, there are several strategies that can be applied. To market handicraft products, they must have their own appeal to attract buyers. Craft products have selling value in terms of art and story value in making the item. Strategies that can be used in marketing handicraft products from typical Karo woven fabrics can be done through the following.

1. Do online marketing

The development of the times has made everything online. To compete, of course, as an exporter, you can take advantage of this convenience to market your products. Now there are many platforms available to market export products. By utilizing online marketing, you can reach a wider market, even worldwide. Craft business owners can promote online as well as through social media. After being evaluated, it turns out that Karo craft products have not maximized online marketing. They only focus on developing their business physically through shops. One of the Karo craft business owners, Erkaliaga, has been marketing online but only includes social media. If you look at the business Instagram homepage, there is still a need for development in creating interesting content. Need optimization in posted photos and videos.

Of the five subjects, only S 2 and S 5 do online marketing. The tool used is social media and they say this is quite helpful in introducing the product and increasing sales even though it doesn't sell as much as directly from the store. According to them, this is because people there prefer physical shopping rather than online and still lack skills in managing content on social media.

Based on research research in China entitled "How is entrepreneurial marketing shaped by E-commerce technology: a case study of Chinese pure-play e-retailers" published in 2023 can be a guide in developing online marketing for Indonesian MSMEs. As we know, China really prioritizes the use of technology to support life, even in the business sector.

It is important to start marketing online, apart from being cheap it is also effective in promoting products. Karo craft business owners need to start creating websites and accounts on well-known social media platforms such as TikTok, YouTube and Instagram. Post content that can attract the attention of the audience. Apart from that, it is necessary to maximize the use of SEO (search engine optimization) in marketing products. These online marketing activities need to be implemented consistently to achieve significant progress.

2. Participate in International Exhibitions and Events

So that our products can be known to many people, of course we need a way to introduce and show our work to other people. In general, export product exhibitions can be important

Analysis of Potential Export Market Strategy in Craft Business from Typical Karo Woven Cloth in North Sumatra

capital for export businesses. One of them can support MSMEs to increase the competitiveness of local products. The existence of this export product exhibition has many benefits that can be felt by all export business people or exporters. With exhibition activities we can introduce our products directly to potential buyers and carry out direct communication.

Of the five subjects, only S 5 has ever exhibited. This is felt to be quite helpful in introducing the business and getting potential buyers. S 5 said there was a lack of exhibition information available locally by local government. And craft exhibitions are rarely held because the focus in the Karo area is not crafts but agricultural products.

Journal research in America entitled "Multi-Country International Catalog Exhibition: South American Experience" in 2006 showed the good influence of participation in the exhibition on small and medium companies. One helpful resource, the USDOC Commercial Services Multi-State International Catalog Exhibition Program (ICEP), is designed to work with state international business development offices and/or with individual client companies. Through active participation, small companies can make the most of their limited export promotion resources. The aims and benefits of multicountry international catalog exhibitions and details of participation are discussed.

Typical Karo craft products also need to be introduced at exhibitions. Based on the results of interviews conducted, the craft products made from typical Karo woven cloth had never participated in exhibition activities for reasons of complexity and lack of information. There needs to be cooperation between the local government and craft business owners in developing the craft potential in Karo. Typical Karo crafts can be said to have high artistic value and have beautiful patterns and motifs, certainly not inferior to other regional crafts. By participating in exhibitions, you can introduce regional works on an international scale.

Currently, many product exhibitions are organized by both the private sector and the government. This is an opportunity that should not be wasted. It is also necessary to prepare for participating in the exhibition, starting with preparing promotional tools such as business cards, brochures, catalogs and company profiles. Henceforth, it is important to communicate well with potential buyers or visitors. It's a good idea to establish a good relationship with each potential buyer and exchange information. Craftsmen can also ask for visitors' assessments of their products to be able to evaluate developing Karo craft products in the future.

3. Strategic Partnerships and Collaboration

Subjects 1, S2, S3, S4, and S 5 said collaborating with other parties in developing business. They work with craftsmen from outside the area to sell other products such as sandals, key chains, woven bags, wall hangings, glasses, hats, etc.

Networking is the main key in business. Networking is an activity to build or establish relationships with other parties. Networking has many benefits, one of which is being able to exchange information with other parties. A good network opens the door to getting the latest information about industry trends, market developments or the latest innovations. This allows

the business to remain relevant and adapt to changes in the business environment. Apart from that, by collaborating with other parties, it certainly expands the reach of the business and even provides innovation or new movements in developing the business. Collaboration in business can be done with local agents, distributors, or foreign companies that have good marketing.

Networking also provides an opportunity to exchange experiences and learn from other professionals in the same industry. Can get new views, suggestions, or insights from individuals who have relevant experience. When facing business challenges, having a strong network can help in finding solutions, getting support, or getting help from people who have the necessary skills or experience. By having a good network, businesses can build relationships based on trust and integrity. This trust is important in running a long-term business and increasing loyalty from business partners, clients and partners. This is supported by a journal article entitled *"The role of effectual networking in small business marketing"* which was published in 2019 in the *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*.

Business owners making crafts from typical Karo woven fabrics also need to expand networking and collaborate so that business does not stagnate. Collaboration can be done by selling through distributors, collaborating with sellers in tourist areas, and collaborating with other craftsmen to create new innovations or develop other business activities. Good networking will certainly have a good influence in the future.

Conclusion

Based on the results of research and discussion, it can be concluded:

1. The potential export market for typical Karo craft products made from weaving is Singapore and then Malaysia. This is proven through research on Trade map data which shows negative trade balance values. Both countries import handicraft bags made from textiles. Apart from that, what supports these two countries as potential markets is that they are not subject to import tariffs on goods and are located close to Indonesia. Of course, this will make export activities easier and sales to that country need to be maximized.
2. Based on the results of interviews conducted with the owners of typical Karo craft businesses at the Berastagi Fruit Market, it shows that those interested in craft products made from typical Karo woven fabrics are foreign tourists from Singapore and Malaysia. This is in accordance with the results of research carried out through the trade map at point number one.
3. Typical Karo craft entrepreneurs need to maximize marketing to export destination countries with strategies that can be implemented starting from online marketing, participating in international exhibitions and events as well as carrying out strategic collaborations

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