

## COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY AND MICRO SMALL MEDIUM ENTERPRISES FOR ENHANCING EXPORT FROM INDONESIA

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### Abstract

Despite the numerous international digital trading platforms such as eBay, Amazon, and Shopee Export, which can facilitate the business-to-consumer (B2C) business, fewer MSMEs entrepreneurs in Indonesia utilize these. Many MSMEs were merely utilizing email and WhatsApp as the primary communication tools to communicate with their overseas clients. The lack of employing other forms of communication tools or digital trading platforms raises questions. This research, therefore, aims to examine the likelihoods of improving the international online trading platform that use by Indonesia's entrepreneurs. The research objective is to examine the present communication tools used by entrepreneurs as well as to reveal the communication obstacles that occur during international trade. To obtain the narrative of current international business realm in Indonesia MSMEs industry, a qualitative study performed: literature study, case study, and in-depth interview. This research uses several theories (i.e., diffusion of innovation, contextual design, elaboration likelihood model, motivation, uncertainty reduction, and general system) to examine how invention in trading platforms may shape the export-oriented business process. This research reveals several key results, such as the need to establish an export-focused trading platform that can provide overseas buyer pools, and language as one of the primary communication barriers to perform export. A further challenge for academicians, developers, and governments is to establish a trading platform to enhance export sales which can encounter the buyers pools and language barrier.

**Keywords:** *B2C, communication tools, digital trading platform, export, MSMEs.*

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### INTRODUCTION

Considering the country's expanding economy, micro, small, and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) significantly contribute to Indonesia's GDP. The Ministry of Coordinating Economic Affairs estimates that MSMEs provided more than 60% of Indonesia's GDP and more than 96% of its employment in 2022 (The Ministry of Coordinating Economic Affairs, 2022). This fact showed that MSMEs are one of the significant drivers of Indonesia's economy. It believes that, in the future, MSMEs will continue their vital contribution to boosting the national economy in terms of GDP, providing job opportunities, and creating a new generation of entrepreneurship. On the contrary, the contribution of MSMEs to the export can be considerably low. Based on data in 2021 from the Ministry of Coordinating

Economic Affairs, this sector only contributed less than 16% of export shares from Indonesia (The Ministry of Coordinating Economic Affairs, 2022). These adverse circumstances are challenges to solve in order to bolster exports in MSMEs.

Information and communication technology (ICT) has advanced significantly since the start of the 5.0 industrial revolution. For instance, ICT has significantly altered many corporate sectors' approaches to making international trade (Chung et al., 2013; Cieřlik, 2022; Firmansyah et al., 2021). The likes of eBay, Amazon, Rakuten, Alibaba, TikTok, and Shopee have differed in how global MSMEs business strategic for international trade vis-à-vis to Business-to-Business (B2B) and Business-to-Consumer (B2C) line of business (IMARC Group, 2023; Nicolas-Sans & Díaz, 2022;

Supriyanto et al., 2023). Nicolas-Sans and Díaz (2022) argue that in the international trade ecosystem, to acquire overseas sales, it is essential for MSMEs businesses to shift to the digital world by utilizing global trading platforms, such as the cross-border trading platform. Additionally, several previous studies on digital media and e-commerce also mentioned the importance of digitalization and using ICT for their business to improve global sales (Chung et al., 2013; Firmansyah et al., 2021; IMARC Group, 2023). This research considers that trading platforms are essential for MSMEs businesses to bolster their exports. For the sake of this research, the trading platform will be narrowing its definition to e-commerce.

In Indonesia, the trading platform development started in 1999 (Mustajibah, 2021). During that period, Kaskus and [www.bhineka.com](http://www.bhineka.com) pioneered the online trading transaction in Indonesia. In the coming ten years, Indonesia has had a significant advancement for new trading platforms such as TokoBagus, Bukalapak, Tokopedia, and GoJek (Mustajibah, 2021). Mustajibah (2021) also states that the rapid development of online trading platforms has changed Indonesia's social structure for business processes and that these trading platforms have rapidly accelerated the MSMEs' business within the domestic sector.

Several studies argue that vis-à-vis a nation's economic growth, export considerably concluded as one of the primary drivers to achieve nations' welfare (Batranea, 2022; Gizaw et al., 2022; Nurwahida et al., 2022; Stievany & Jalunggono, 2022). Businesses can carry out exports through various ICT technologies, such as websites, trading platforms, corporate directories, and social media. In recent years, trading platforms such as Amazon and Alibaba have been considered the market leader in performing export from the United States of America (USA) and China, respectively (Kenney & Zysman, 2020; Pogodin & Yagya, 2022). The MSMEs industries from these countries have flourished by developing

these trading platforms (Garcia, 2021; Naidu et al., 2019). While Amazon focuses its business on B2C, on the other hand, Alibaba puts its effort into the B2B global trade (Kenney & Zysman, 2020; Pogodin & Yagya, 2022). In developing these trading platforms, businesses outside the two countries can also register as merchants to sell their products domestically or overseas. This research desires to examine the trading platforms used by Indonesia's MSMEs to perform their export overseas.

In Indonesia, there are several online platforms to facilitate export, namely, [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id) (a business directory type of online platform developed by the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia in the form of B2B), [www.indonesiadirect.id](http://www.indonesiadirect.id) (a private creative industry online business directory platform which focuses on B2B), and for the B2C business model is the Shopee Export Indonesia and [www.erigostore.co.id](http://www.erigostore.co.id). This research will examine the business and communication process from these platforms to obtain knowledge on how online global trading platforms have performed. This research aims to reveal the likelihoods for improvement from those online platforms to bolster exports from Indonesia's MSMEs sector because one of the central issues in Indonesia is that the export contribution of the MSMEs industries still needs to be considerably higher.

Vis-à-vis research objectives, to support obtain the research aims, this research identifies two pivotal objectives. First, the importance of examining the communication tools that used by MSMEs entrepreneurs to perform the export business. Fraccastoro et al. (2021) stress the importance of understanding the utilization of communication tools, such as social media, that helps businesses in increasing the engagement and persuasion process in the international trades' realm. From the Indonesian perspective, previous studies argue that in order to compete at the ASEAN level, the utilization of e-commerce as the intermediaries can accelerate

the economic growth of Indonesia's MSMEs (Rakhmadi, 2019; Ramadhani & Arifin, 2013).

The second research objective of this research is to reveal the obstacle that may disrupt the intermediaries (i.e., e-commerce) to accelerate the communication and business process in the international trade realm. Ku a Zussman (2010) identifies that English as the primary language to perform international trade. Tomec and Gričar (2023) argue that language as one of obstacle in performing seamless business communication process. Previous study stresses the importance of commanding good English because all business documents (e.g., bill of lading, packing list, and airway bill) are written in English (Nufus et al., 2023).

Based on these facts, communication placed itself in the epicentrum of international business. Shannon and Weaver model of communication highlights the importance of feedback loop, in which the feedback loop can only be obtained if both parties understand each other (Shannon, 1948). To utilize international communication tools, Indonesian users need to understand English language. To communicate seamlessly with overseas clients' Indonesian entrepreneurs, need to have a good command of English language. Therefore, the research question formulated for this research is: "To what extent the Indonesian MSMEs entrepreneurs are utilizing communication tools for leveraging their export business and are there obstacles in performing their international business communication?"

By addressing this research question, this research intends to obtain knowledge on the practical needs of MSMEs businesspersons, which can be developed in the future. Previous research in Indonesia on communication technology or trading platforms is merely focused on domestic trade (Dina, 2023; Haeruddin et al., 2023; Mustajibah, 2021; Sudiantini et al., 2023). There was no adequate research evidence that discussed and observed the suggestion of developing communication technology to focus on exports from Indonesia.

There was also lack of studies that discuss language as barrier for Indonesian to perform export-focus trade. Thus, this study believes there is a gap in the communication field of study in which little research focuses on developing the most suitable digital platform for export purposes from Indonesia's point of view. In addition to that, this research will bridge the gap on the communication gap (i.e., language barrier) of MSMEs while performing international trade.

This study's limitations are related to the actual business models of communication technologies that perform exports and the general attitudes of MSMEs businesspeople toward the growth of the country's existing export-focused trading platform.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

A considerable amount of literature has been published on the innovations of communication technology that lead to countries' prosperity. Over the past decade, most research on communication technology innovations has emphasized how trading platforms have shaped and developed small businesses worldwide. Many small businesses worldwide have gained significant growth by utilizing trading platforms. This research will use several theories (i.e., diffusion of innovation, contextual design, elaboration likelihood model, motivation, uncertainty reduction, and general system) to examine how invention in trading platforms may shape the export-oriented business process.

Diffusion of Innovation (DOI) theory describes how an innovation or technology will be adapted through societies over time (Rogers, 1976). Rogers (1995) later explained that there is an innovation cycle: innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggards. Fuller et al. (2022) reveal that, in some cases, there are relative advantages to being an early adopter of invention in a trading platform. DOI also observes why societies prefer specific innovations and what motivates them to utilize such technology

(Rogers, 1995). Previous research concerning trading platforms and DOI showed that DOI can be utilized to examine how businessperson utilize innovation to enhance their sales (Fuller et al., 2022; Hussain et al., 2020). This research wants to reveal the current application of MSMEs business in using the trading platform for exporting goods. Therefore, this research would like to examine the perception of Indonesian stakeholders (innovators and early adopters of export traders) toward developing inventions in the name of export (focus on Indonesian exporters) trading platforms that focus on B2C and B2B models.

To develop a new product in a digital environment, one needs to consider that developers need to obtain knowledge concerning the current business process itself (Kraus et al., 2021; Wixon et al., 1990). This research will use the Contextual Design Theory (CDT) to examine the pivotal role of knowing the suitable innovation for developing B2B and B2C applications to enhance exports from Indonesia's MSMEs industry by obtaining current business processes to have competitive advantages in the future. Previous research in digital transformation mentioned that innovation of technology leads to business process transformation to obtain competitive advantages (Kraus et al., 2021). CDT explains that developers shall understand the current workflow of business, the system that will best suit to support the business process, the transformation of workflow due to the technological changes, and challenges that may occur upon the technology's development (Wixon et al., 1990). Additionally, Wixon et al. (1990) stressed the importance of understanding its users' needs during the innovation development process. Obtaining these understandings through user interviews, challenges analysis, incorporating the results into the design, and innovation evaluation (Wixon et al., 1990).

Uncertainty Reduction Theory (URT) is a process to reduce ambiguity between parties during communication (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Berger and Calabrese (1975) explained

that URT consists of three stages: entry, personal, and exit. In the entry stage, demographic information is obtained and controlled by norms and rules. During the personal stage, values and beliefs are revealed. The exit stage explains that the communicators start negotiating and planning for future communication plans. Previous research on the URT perspective towards trading platforms depicts how a live streaming feature from trading platforms may alter users' online behavior regarding buying intention (Lu & Chen, 2021). Lu and Chen (2021) observe how live broadcasts may reduce the uncertainty of products merchants try to sell toward the trading platform. It was also revealed that live selling broadcasts may also grow trust from the buyers' point of view (Lu & Chen, 2021). Therefore, URT will be the basis theory to explain how Indonesia's MSMEs establish communication with their overseas counterpart. This research aims to learn how Indonesian MSMEs businesspersons utilize communication technology or other resources to reduce the uncertainty of obtaining export sales.

Decisions on using new technology can be classified into two factors, namely emotion and logic. These two factors are well explained by the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), which informs the decision-making process of humans (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). ELM further explains that emotion-based decision-making divines as the peripheral route processing. In this route, humans will operate in a low elaboration process in which they tend to be affected by emotion (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). On the contrary, logic-based decision-making refers to the central route processing. In this route, humans act as high elaboration, paying attention to details and thinking hard before the decision-making process (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Petty et al. (2020) further explain that this process can be performed simultaneously, in which humans can elaborate both routes during the decision-making process. Previous research on the ELM and trading platform in the shape of crowdfunding finds that the central route processing relates to the information provided, the strain on the

fundraising process, and the innovation of the products (Wang & Yang, 2019). Meanwhile, the peripheral route processing relates to the application's user interface and user experience (UIUX), review features, and content availability (Wang & Yang, 2019). Hence, this research believes that ELM can be used to explain the decision-making of Indonesia's MSME businessperson in using particular trading platforms for their export business.

Entrepreneurs are driven to pursue commercial success in the midst of the exponential increase in global commerce. Motivation Theory (MT) of Maslow (1943) explained that humans have at least five sets of hierarchy of needs, namely, physiological needs, safety needs, love and belonging, esteem, and self-actualization. Previous research in MT and entrepreneurship explains that the hunger for commercial success is part of self-actualization, in which a businessperson can achieve the desire to be at the top of the game (Ogunnaiké et al., 2019). Ogunnaiké et al. (2019) argue that businesspersons should work hand-by-hand and collaborate to achieve common goals, such as exports. Accordingly, the common motivation to achieve sales overseas would help obtain greater efficiency, leading to higher sales. Therefore, this research will utilize MT in the notion that Indonesia's MSMEs businesspersons are motivated to use trading platforms for exports.

One of the critical determiners of a society's collective goals is to elaborate between its stakeholders (Renn et al., 2022). Stakeholders concerning exports in Indonesia include producers, traders, shippers, customs, banks, trading platform developers, venture capitalists, and buyers. Collaboration between these entities as a compact system is vital to bolstering exports. General System Theory (GST) explains that an ecosystem may support its living organisms to live (Bertalanffy, 1972). However, should one of the living chains in the ecosystem break down, it will lead to the malfunction of the ecosystem. Therefore, the need for collaboration for common goals is essential. This research believes that GST

would examine the need for establishing innovation as a trading platform that can contribute to export sales from the MSMEs sector.

## **METHOD**

This research considers that a qualitative approach serves the purpose of exposing the requirement for innovation in communication technology to support Indonesian exports. Previous studies explained that qualitative methodology enables researchers to interpret meaning in deeper layer as well as able to expose natural environments while trying to explain or make sense of phenomena (Aspers & Corte, 2019). Therefore, to reveal the meanings of phenomena, this research will perform several qualitative methods, namely, literature study, case study, and in-depth interview from August to October 2023.

Literature study aims to reveal evidence of occurrence and to elevate knowledge for future study (Snyder, 2019). In addition to that, Snyder (2019) further explains that a literature study can expose the knowledge gap. Hence, future studies can have better research accuracy. This study will discuss previous studies that already discussed innovation in communication technology, accelerating the growth of exports from the MSMEs business sector. The previous studies will oversee how B2C and B2B digital trading platforms shape local MSMEs businesses, leading to countries' prosperity. Through literature study, this research also aims to reveal the communication technology gap and the MSMEs industry in Indonesia.

Case study divides into four phases of research process, namely, foundation, prefield, field, and reporting phases (Rashid et al., 2019). Establishing a knowledge of the philosophical premise of research is referred to as the foundation phase. Creating rules and codes for researchers to do step-by-step research (i.e., choosing the research question, study method, and ethical issue) is referred to as the pre-field

phase. The idea for carrying out the research itself is created during the field phase. Finally, researchers address their findings at the reporting step of the research process. This research will perform case studies of trading platforms in the name of [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id), which MSMEs businessperson in Indonesia uses to enhance sales and expand their business networks.

Furthermore, to obtain greater information, this research performed in-depth interviews. In the wake of information technology, this research performed two types of interviews, namely, face-to-face and digital (e.g., WhatsApp, Email, and Zoom) interview. Face-to-face interviews are a powerful interview method because it is synchronized in time and space, in which the researcher can generate instant feedback and observe the gesture of its participants (Saarijärvi & Bratt, 2021). Meanwhile, the digital interview has the advantage of performing long-distance interviews as it will be cost-efficient (Thunberg & Arnell, 2022). Thunberg and Arnell (2022) explain this method's drawbacks as technical issues may occur during the interview that may lead to the quality of this method. In addition, several previous research also explains the digital interview, in the form of WhatsApp and Zoom application, as a fast method to obtain knowledge (researcher can generate information faster), time efficient (no need to find a suitable time for the interview), and superior in cost-effectiveness for the researcher (Gray et al., 2020; Mavhandu-Mudzusi et al., 2022). This research performed the interview with several key actors, they are government agency, marketplace developer, and entrepreneur who already performed export. For research ethics purposes, this research also provides consent for participants who were deliberately involved in this research.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

Previous studies on the role of innovation of communication technology to bolster export business processes are discussed in this section. The previous studies mention that the digital transformation of business for international trade, in the form of trading platforms, has derived businesses to adapt to new systems concerning the business model, communication tools, and marketing tools (Kenney & Zysman, 2020; Nicolas-Sans & Díaz, 2022). The trading platform in this research is defined as an online-based application (i.e., web-based or mobile apps-based) to perform international trade. The digital trading platform is believed to open Pandora's box of more buyers for businesses (Nicolas-Sans & Díaz, 2022). In addition, another research further explains that digital trading platforms also have several advantages, such as third-party trading platforms (e.g., Amazon, AliExpress, and eBay) ease the utilization of information technology gap for small and medium enterprises (SMEs) (Cassia & Magno, 2022). It may be concluded that digital transformation of international trade is inevitable, resulting in businesspersons adapting to the new model, as the DOI theory explains.

A previous study mentioned that innovation in cross-border trading platform businesses is one of the significant factors in the growth of SMEs for international trade (Freund & Weinhold, 2004). This study is confirmed by several studies worldwide, which mention that cross-border trading platforms have increased the number of exports. For instance, cross-border trading platforms in Italy contributed up to 7% of Italian exports of B2C products in 2019 (Cassia & Magno, 2022). Additionally, in the case of Spain, it was declared that cross-border e-commerce is targeted to contribute up to 25% of revenue from the SMB sector by 2025 (Nicolas-Sans & Díaz, 2022). Moreover, In the case of the United Kingdom (UK), ASOS, a fashion-based online retailing shopping platform based in London, gained 271% of sales growth

in 2021 alone, operating trading platforms as the primary business method (Parker & Alexander, 2022).

On the other hand, Asian countries such as Japan see e-commerce as one way or another to expand their SMEs business worldwide (Tachiki et al., 2004). In addition, In Alibaba's case, export from China has increased drastically because of the innovation of Alibaba B2B (Pogodin & Yagya, 2022). AliExpress, on the other hand, has improved significantly the B2C international trade from China to its overseas clients in past years (Nicolas-Sans & Díaz, 2022). Another trading application based in China, namely TikTok Shop, has influenced the growth of the export from the textile industry in China (Junzhi, 2021). Previous research also mentioned that one major issue is the differences in perception towards application quality from different cultures (Kim & Lee, 2006; Loiacono et al., 2002). These findings highlight the critical significance of trading platforms in shaping and growing countries' international trade operations.

Based on these previous studies, the paramount role of utilizing the cross-border trading platform is to increase international trade in exports. The likes of Alibaba, AliExpress, TikTok, Rakuten, eBay, Amazon, ASOS, and other cross-border trading platforms have molded business models into digital transformation. DOI theory states that technological inventions (such as cross-border trading platforms) will be adapted through societies over time (Rogers, 1976, 1995). So then, Indonesia's MSMEs industry or society should become aware of this digital transformation for export business. This research then raised questions vis-à-vis the implication of trading platforms for Indonesia's international trade in terms of exports. In Indonesia, a notable cross-border trading platform is

www.erigostore.co.id. This fashion-focused e-commerce elaborates with MSMEs of the fashion sector, which sales within Indonesia whilst started to expand their business overseas in 2020 in cooperating with Shopee Export (Dewi & Aslami, 2022). Furthermore, several trading platforms developed in Indonesia, such as www.inaexport.id, www.indonesiadirect.id, and www.madeinindonesia.id. Table 1 illustrates the trading platforms in Indonesia and the business type and list of products in the trading platform applications.

A case study was performed on the trading application of www.inaexport.id, in which this research tries to reveal the detailed business process of this trading platform. The Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia has developed this trading platform. Unlike other commercial trading platforms, such as www.erigostore.co.id, Shopee Export, Amazon, or Alibaba, www.inaexport.id focuses its service solely as a business directory. Based on a face-to-face interview with the person-in-charge (PIC) from the Ministry of Trade of the Republic of Indonesia, He said “The objectives of www.inaexport.id as a trading platform is to promote Indonesia's exporters' products from the application, conduct business matching between Indonesia's exporters and international buyers, provide overseas buyers for request for quotation (RFQ), assist Indonesian entrepreneurs during the negotiation process if the entrepreneurs do not poses the good command of English language, and conduct export related business training”. The trading platform of www.inaexport.id utilizes their international commerce attaché, based in the overseas Embassy, to fetch overseas demands. These commerce attachés also promote Indonesian products and firms and identify demand for products that Indonesian exporters can supply.

**Tabel 1. List of Existing Export-Oriented Trading Platform in Indonesia**

Trading Platform	Business	Productss
www.erigostore.co.id	B2C E-commerce	Fashion-based Products
www.inaexport.id	B2B Business directory	All Products
Shopee Export	B2C E-commerce	All Products
www.indonesiadirect.id	B2B Business directory	Furniture, Food and Beverages
www.madeinindonesia.id	B2B Commerce	Agriculture, Furniture, Seafood

Furthermore, this trading platform does not provide payment gateway functions because its objective is not to become a commercial-oriented e-commerce platform. Indonesia's exporters who desire to join this business directory platform shall have a business registration number (*nomor induk berusaha – NIB*) as one of the primary requirements. Later, the [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id) team will evaluate the business entities upon submission of the registration form. Exporters in this trading platform consist of producers, manufacturers, resellers, agents, or distributors. Shall they hold NIB and the [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id) team be able to verify it. After registration, exporters can post their products' pictures, available quantities, and products' specifications and descriptions.

In addition, exporters may also access the RFQ posted by overseas buyers. The RFQ includes the buyer's detailed business information, desired product description, and wanted quantity. Furthermore, exporters who access the RFQ may request to chat with buyers. Before, exporters need to be reverified by [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id) to ensure they have the requested products. After that, exporters can start to chat, through the [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id) application feature, to the buyer. Later, the negotiation process regarding the pricing, terms of payment, and other issues will be discussed directly (out of the [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id) platform).

Furthermore, [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id) has an in-app feature that enables communication between parties, such as a chatting feature. This feature works in the sense that [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id) determines which exporters are qualified to carry out the business, and then

they can start chatting with potential buyers directly. The interview with [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id)'s PIC revealed that communication is an obstacle for MSMEs businesses to perform global trade. He said, “Many of Indonesian entrepreneurs do not poses the basic level of English, therefore it become one of the major obstacles in performing the international business. However, we try to encounter this issue by facilitating them with assistance from the Ministry”. This obstacle is in the form of language barrier and negotiation skills. Many MSMEs businesspersons needed to be more confident negotiating in English with their overseas business counterparts during face-to-face or digital meetings. These concerns were tackled by [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id)'s team by escorting MSMEs businesspersons who needed company.

Moreover, findings also revealed that [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id) also provides escorting the MSMEs from the start of company introduction up to shipment of the export. During this phase, exporters and buyers are performing URT. URT states that communication parties are entitled to eliminate ambiguity to have a clear conception and build trust (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Berger and Calabrese (1975) explained that URT consists of three stages: entry, personal, and exit. Business matching, or company profile introduction, is considered an entry and personal stage. While during the negotiation process, it can be classified as the exit stage. Exporters will share their company capabilities and profiles in the entry and personal stages. At this stage, buyers will determine whether the exporters can run the trade or project.



Meanwhile, they plan for the payment terms, delivery schedule, and detailed specifications of desired products in the exit stages. To improve communication engagement in [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id), the developer's team plans to develop several new in-app features, such as live chat and exporters' badge. He said, "To improve the two-ways communication in the platform, we will innovate by adding comment section to the existing one". This was in line with Shannon and Weaver communication model, which stress the importance of providing feedback in order to obtain effective and seamless communication (Shannon, 1948). In line with Shannon and weaver, this research argues that the feedback loop in an online platform is believed to be pivotal during engagement, persuasion, and business closing process.

Moreover, the interview was carried out with PIC from [www.indonesiadirect.id](http://www.indonesiadirect.id), based in Jakarta. This company is regarded as a business entity that helps MSMEs from Indonesia to export their goods overseas through their trading platform. Unlike [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id), this trading platform verifies exporters prior to performing business with buyers and taking care of the commercial business. Meanwhile, exporters only focus on preparing the certification documentation according to regulations regulating the export products.

This research contends that to improve export trade, one issue that needs to be handled is to provide innovation to handle this language gap to make international trade smoother. Currently, innovation in communication technology of trading platforms lies in live selling broadcasting. For instance, Amazon has developed Amazon Live as a new feature for its sellers to perform live selling broadcasting, and buyers can purchase instantly during this live selling broadcasting process. In Indonesia, trading applications that also utilize live selling broadcasting, such as Lazada, TikTok Shop, Tokopedia, and Shopee, have a significant

impact on their sales (Rahmawaty et al., 2023; Ramadhayanti, 2023). In Indonesia, live streaming from e-commerce is a prosperous marketing communication business strategy. It has derived the "old school" selling by utilizing live selling features to increase its sales. However, these trends are used exclusively for domestic trade.

The current research also conducted interviews with numerous export practitioners from Indonesia's MSMEs business entities in order to gain a more comprehensive comprehension of the export business practice in the international export trade. The first interview was performed with PIC from UKM Eksportir Indonesia, based in Jakarta. UKM Eksportir Indonesia is a company that focuses on performing export trading, providing training, and sharing networking with other MSMEs businesspersons. The organization's objective is to help new entrepreneurs who are interested in trading goods by providing training on how to start a business, find clients, reach agreements with clients, create international contracts, explain payment terms, explain the Incoterms 2020 (international trade of supply chain management code), and distributing information on export or international exhibitions. During the interview, it was revealed that their business focuses mainly on B2B. Therefore, they rarely use eBay, Amazon, or Shopee Export for international trade operations. The trading platform they use for obtaining exports is called [www.go4worldbusiness.com](http://www.go4worldbusiness.com), a business directory developed in the USA and India, which provides pools of products for international buyers.

Concerning the perception of development of trading platform from Indonesia which focus on export, later it was revealed that one vital element that need to be included is the needs to provide buyers pools, hence exporters from Indonesia could easily find buyers. Their motivation in using trading platform is that the ability of such platform to

give greater possibilities to buyer, hence it will increase the chance of selling goods overseas. From ELM point of view, this can be explained that UKM Eksportir Indonesia using the central route processing in decision-making process of using trading platform. In this stage UKM Eksportir Indonesia wants to use trading platform which can increase their sales. This logic-based decision-making process is related to their motivation in performing business which generates sales and profits. From MT perspective, it relates to the self-actualization, in which they want to achieve commercial success in the business (Maslow, 1943; Ogunnaike et al., 2019).

Further, UKM Eksportir Indonesia noted during the interview that communication regarding language hurdles emerges during business. Whether the conversation is performed by means of unsynchronized communication technologies (e.g., WhatsApp and Email), this problem can be handled since they can use translator applications, such as Google Translate, for responding to messages. However, during face-to-face business matching, UKM Eksportir Indonesia later explains that the language barrier is a challenging factor in having a smooth and successful business presentation. Because no such application can help, businesspersons must have a good command of English to describe and explain their company and products to their overseas counterparts.

The second interview was conducted with PIC from Ladouchevita, a fashion-oriented MSMEs business entity located in Bandung. Ladouchevita has experience exporting their products (e.g., shirts, jeans, and sandals) to Australia for B2B and B2C clients. During the interview, it was revealed that they acquired clients from a networking process in Bali. Further, they develop communication through WhatsApp and Email for commercial negotiation, design approval, monitoring, quality control, packaging, shipment, and invoicing. Their experience in exporting goods

finds fewer issues with language barriers because they used unsynchronized communication tools. Currently, Ladouchevita has not yet utilized international trade applications for export selling. Ladouchevita stresses the importance of developing well-suited export-focused trading to enrich their export sales.

The third interview was taken with PIC from Nadira Hijab, a Bekasi-based Muslim apparel MSMEs business entity. Nadira Hijab exports its products to several countries. Nadira Hijab supplies international customers (i.e., Taiwan, Hong Kong, and Singapore) with shoes, bags, clothes, and perfumes. These B2B and B2C customers know Nadira Hijab through Instagram. As a result, Instagram and WhatsApp are the primary communication methods for export. According to the interview, Nadira Hijab intends to extend its business into the Middle East market. They suggest establishing an export-focused trading platform to meet their commercial and branding success objective.

This research argues that in terms of export focus trading platforms, according to DOI, Indonesia is classified as the early majority because, in Indonesia, there are already several trading platforms that focus on export, such as [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id), [www.indonesiadirect.id](http://www.indonesiadirect.id), and [www.erigostore.co.id](http://www.erigostore.co.id). However, despite the number of Indonesian-based export trading platforms, many MSMEs businesses were still not using this platform to enrich their international trade business. UKM Eksportir Indonesia states that having the buyers' pool feature is critical to developing an export-focused trading platform because the exporters from Indonesia want an abundant inventory of potential overseas buyers. This research believes developers and academicians should consider the CDT model to build further or develop export-focused trading platforms. CDT explains that competitive advantages are crucial to unlocking success in developing applications

(Wixon et al., 1990). According to the results of this research, advantageous competitive advantages are gained by providing exporters with an extensive collection of potential consumers through its buyers' pool function.

The collaboration between governments and MSMEs business entities, in the case of [www.inaexport.id](http://www.inaexport.id), shows the importance of collaboration between entities to reach common goals. This situation is in line with GST which states supporting entities within ecosystem is important to establish desired goals and objectives (Bertalanffy, 1972). In this sense, the entities would be MSMEs business entities in Indonesia, government (whether Indonesia or export destination government), shippers, venture capital, developers, and buyers. Furthermore, developing an export-focused trading platform to bolster exports from Indonesia will depend on Indonesia's stakeholders (i.e., government, MSMEs industry, venture capital, developers, and shippers) collaboration.

## CONCLUSION

The aim of this research is to reveal Indonesia's MSMEs entrepreneurs toward the likelihood of invention of export focus trading platform to enhance international trade. The findings show that trading platforms, developed by third parties, may contribute considerably to a nation's exports for the B2B or B2C business. This research reports several conclusions to be addressed concerning two research objectives: first, examining the communication tools that used by MSMEs entrepreneurs to perform the export business; and second, to reveal the obstacle that may disrupt the intermediaries to accelerate the communication and business process in the international trade realm.

Concerning the examining the communication tools that used by MSMEs entrepreneurs to perform the export business this research concludes that Indonesia is the early majority in the diffusion of innovation of export-

focused trading platforms because we already have several export-focused trading platforms, despite little research taken considering the effectiveness of these trading platforms. In addition, this research also concludes that the importance of having an export trading platform which can enable entrepreneurs to have access to buyers' pools as exporters can easily overlook potential buyers as a prominent feature to be developed.

Regarding the obstacle that may disrupt the intermediaries to accelerate the communication and business process in the international trade realm, this research concludes there are gaps in the communication process due to language barriers, specifically in the synchronous and face-to-face communication and negotiation process, whereas the ability of English command of MSMEs in Indonesia. Therefore, to develop a communication technology to assist MSMEs in Indonesia to bolster exports, Indonesia's stakeholders should collaborate to achieve these goals. The novelty of this research is adding the importance to the business communication knowledge that to perform seamless international trade, Indonesia should have export-focus trading platform which enable its users to connect to potential buyers easily. The trading platform application that can give access to overseas clients can be achieved by collaboration between stakeholders such as private trading platform developers, the Ministry of Trade, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Furthermore, this research urges that future studies be carried out in four sectors. They are first developing a pilot project of the desired and well-suited cross-border digital platform to encourage and help the MSMEs business sector to export in B2C and B2B. Second, research on regulation for exporting goods and international trade through digital platforms. Third, study the supply chain management (SCM) system to support this digital platform to thrive for export-focused oriented. Fourth, the cyber security system maintains trust and protects the data privacy of its users because there will be a lot of

commercial transactions towards the trading platform.

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