

Strategic Innovation of Operation and Management Models for Small and Medium-Sized Foreign Trade Enterprises Under Globalization—Evidence From Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd.*

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With the intensification of global economic competition and the frequent changes in international trade policies, small and medium-sized foreign trade enterprises (SMEs) in China are facing unprecedented pressure on transformation and upgrading. The traditional operation and management models characterized by extensive management and single profit channels can no longer adapt to the new market environment. Taking Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd. as a typical case, this study adopts literature research, SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, and case study methods to systematically explore the inherent defects of traditional operation and management models, including disconnection from market demand, unreasonable resource allocation, and lack of strategic foresight. Based on the WO (Weakness-Opportunity) strategy, a six-dimensional innovative operation and management model is constructed, covering customer demand orientation, management system optimization, high-quality human resource support, corporate culture shaping, total quality management, and technology-driven innovation. The study further verifies the feasibility and effectiveness of the model through the design of implementation paths and phased goals. The research results enrich the theoretical system of operation management for SMEs in emerging economies and provide practical strategic references for similar enterprises to break through development bottlenecks and enhance core competitiveness.

Keywords: small and medium-sized foreign trade enterprises, operation and management model, strategic innovation, SWOT analysis, core competitiveness

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Introduction

Research Background

In the context of economic globalization, foreign trade has always been an important pillar of China's economic growth, and small and medium-sized foreign trade enterprises (SMEs) have become the main force driving the vitality of the foreign trade industry (Bi & Li, 2016). However, since the 2008 global financial crisis, the international market has been in a state of slow recovery and structural adjustment. On the one hand, the disappearance of China's demographic dividend has led to a continuous rise in labor costs, and the increase in raw material and land costs has further compressed the profit space of enterprises; on the other hand, trade protectionism has resurged globally, and anti-dumping, countervailing, and other trade barriers targeting Chinese products have increased significantly, bringing great uncertainty to the development of SMEs (Wei & Chen, 2014). Most SMEs still rely on traditional operation and management models, such as OEM processing and agent distribution, which are characterized by low added value, weak risk resistance, and disconnection from market demand. These problems have seriously restricted the sustainable development of enterprises, making the innovation of operation and management models an inevitable choice for SMEs to achieve transformation and upgrading.

Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd., as a representative SME in the eastern coastal area of China, has a complete industrial layout and rich foreign trade experience, but it also faces the same development dilemmas as most SMEs, such as unreasonable industrial structure and single business channels (Yang, 2018). Taking this enterprise as a case study, exploring the path of operation and management model innovation not only has important practical significance for the enterprise itself, but also can provide a reference for the transformation and development of similar enterprises.

Literature Review

To accurately grasp the research context and identify the innovation space of this study, it is necessary to systematically sort out the relevant research results at home and abroad.

Foreign research. Foreign research on enterprise operation management has a long history. Taylor's scientific management theory laid the foundation for traditional operation management, emphasizing the optimization of production processes and the improvement of labor efficiency. Edward M. Nord defined operation management as "a series of activities that transform input resources into output products or services", and pointed out that operation management runs through all links of enterprise development (Nord, 2002). In recent years, foreign scholars have focused on the operation management of multinational enterprises, such as global supply chain optimization (Carpenter & Zajac, 2006), technological innovation-driven development (Rajagopalan & Spreitzer, 1997), and strategic adaptation to the international market. However, there are relatively few studies targeting SMEs in emerging economies, and the research results are difficult to fully adapt to the specific development context of Chinese SMEs.

Domestic research. Domestic scholars have conducted in-depth research on the operation management of foreign trade enterprises. Shao Guoliang and Lu Di (2001) proposed that SMEs should cultivate core competitiveness and realize differentiated operation to cope with market competition. Xu Xiaohua (2002) pointed out that foreign trade enterprises should transform from "product-oriented" to "service-oriented" to meet the personalized needs of the market. Zhong Shan (2013) explored the transformation path of foreign trade enterprises from single product export to "R&D-production-marketing integration" through case studies.

However, existing studies mostly focus on macro-industry countermeasures, and there is a lack of in-depth empirical research on the specific operation management model innovation of SMEs, especially the lack of targeted model construction and implementation path design (Wei & Chen, 2014). This study fills this research gap by constructing a practical operation management model for SMEs.

Research Methods and Framework

To ensure the scientificity and validity of the research results, this study adopts a combination of multiple research methods, and the logical framework is designed to gradually deepen from problem analysis to model construction and implementation.

This study adopts a combination of multiple research methods to ensure the scientificity and validity of the research results. First, the literature research method is used to sort out the theories related to enterprise operation management, strategic management, and SME transformation, laying a theoretical foundation for the research. Second, the case study method is used to conduct in-depth investigation and analysis of Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd., including its development status, internal and external environment, and existing problems. Third, the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis method is used to systematically sort out the internal strengths and weaknesses, external opportunities and threats of the enterprise, and determine the appropriate development strategy. Finally, the comparative analysis method is used to absorb the advanced experience of similar enterprises' operation management models and provide reference for the model construction of this study.

The research framework of this paper is as follows: The first part is the introduction, which expounds the research background, literature review, research methods, and framework; the second part analyzes the current problems of the traditional operation and management model of SMEs; the third part conducts a SWOT analysis of Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd. and determines the development strategy; the fourth part constructs the innovative operation and management model and explains the core content of each dimension; the fifth part designs the implementation path and phased goals of the model; the sixth part is the conclusion and discussion.

Current Problems of Traditional Operation and Management Models for Small and Medium-Sized Foreign Trade Enterprises

Under the long-term influence of the planned economy and the early stage of the market economy, most SMEs have formed relatively fixed traditional operation and management models. With the profound changes in the international and domestic market environment, the inherent defects of these models have become increasingly prominent, which are interrelated and mutually reinforcing, forming a development dilemma for enterprises.

Disconnection from Market Demand

The traditional operation and management model is dominated by production orientation, and enterprises determine their production and operation content based on their own production capacity and existing product types, following the logic of "producing what they can and selling what they produce" (Xu, 2002, p. 90). This model makes enterprises lack a sound market information collection and feedback mechanism, and cannot timely and accurately grasp the changes in international market demand, consumer preferences, and product development trends. In the current international market where demand is developing towards diversification, personalization, and small batches, enterprises are often unable to adjust their product structure and production

plans in a timely manner, resulting in product backlogs or insufficient supply of market-needed products. In addition, the lack of market research capabilities makes product pricing, marketing strategies, and after-sales services unable to meet market demand, further widening the gap between enterprises and the market.

Unreasonable Resource Allocation

The disconnection from market demand directly leads to the unreasonable allocation of enterprise resources, which is another prominent problem of the traditional model. Extensive management is an important feature of the traditional operation and management model, which directly leads to serious waste of enterprise resources (Lin, 2004). Enterprise managers often lack scientific resource allocation plans, and the investment of capital, human resources, and material resources is based on experience and subjective judgment rather than market demand and enterprise development strategies. Blind investment leads to over-investment in non-core business areas, while core business areas lack sufficient resource support, resulting in low resource utilization efficiency. At the same time, the unreasonable internal organizational structure and unclear division of labor among departments lead to duplicated work and waste of human resources, with high communication costs and low work efficiency, further aggravating resource waste.

Neglect of External Cooperation

Against the background of unreasonable resource allocation, enterprises tend to focus on internal operations and ignore external cooperation, forming a closed development model. The traditional model focuses on internal production and operation activities and neglects the importance of external cooperation, resulting in a single and rigid supply chain system with low risk resistance (Zhao & Shi, 2005). Most SMEs only establish simple transactional relationships with upstream suppliers and downstream distributors, lacking long-term and stable strategic cooperative relationships. Enterprises pay more attention to their own production and sales links, ignoring coordination and cooperation with other enterprises in the supply chain, leading to disconnection between production and market demand and low supply chain operation efficiency. Once a problem occurs in a certain link of the supply chain, the entire production and operation activities of the enterprise will be severely affected.

Lack of Strategic Foresight

The lack of external cooperation and market sensitivity ultimately leads to the lack of strategic foresight of enterprises. The traditional model has a long information transmission chain and low information processing efficiency, leading to a serious lack of strategic foresight in enterprise operation and management (Zheng, 2003). Market demand information needs to go through multiple links such as distributors, retailers, and sales departments before reaching the decision-making level, and information is often distorted and delayed during transmission, resulting in low accuracy of market demand forecasting. Enterprise decision-makers cannot formulate scientific production and operation decisions based on accurate market information, and production plans and product development strategies are often lagging behind market changes. In addition, enterprises lack long-term development planning, focusing more on short-term economic benefits, ignoring the cultivation of core competitiveness and long-term strategic layout, making it difficult to achieve sustainable development.

SWOT Analysis and Strategic Selection of Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd.

To solve the above problems, it is necessary to first clarify the internal and external environment of the enterprise. Taking Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd. as a case, this part conducts a comprehensive SWOT analysis to provide a basis for subsequent model construction.

Company Profile

Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd., established in 2004, is a well-known SME in Hangzhou, located in the West Lake District with a superior geographical location (Yang, 2018). After more than 10 years of development, the enterprise has formed a complete industrial layout and a sound operation and management system. Its main business covers eight categories of products, including mechanical tools, electromechanical products, and textile and clothing, which are exported to more than 50 countries and regions around the world. The company has a professional foreign trade service team of more than 200 people, has passed ISO9001 quality management system certification, and has been rated as a “Class A export enterprise” by the customs. Its annual export volume exceeds 100 million US dollars, and it is a representative enterprise in Hangzhou’s foreign trade industry.

SWOT Matrix Analysis

Strengths (S). Through long-term development, Hangzhou Hexun has accumulated unique competitive advantages that support its transformation and upgrading. First, rich foreign trade operation experience. After more than 10 years of development, the enterprise has a deep understanding of international trade rules, business processes, and market risk control, and has established a good commercial reputation in the international market. Second, certain capital and resource advantages. The enterprise has accumulated sufficient working capital in the early stage and established good cooperative relations with local governments, banks, customs, and suppliers. Third, perfect international sales channels. The enterprise has established a wide-ranging domestic and foreign marketing network through long-term market development and maintains stable cooperative relations with a large number of foreign customers. Fourth, sound basic management system and high-quality talent team. The proportion of full-time undergraduate employees in the enterprise exceeds 85%, and it has established a relatively sound financial, salary, and business management system.

Weaknesses (W). While having advantages, the enterprise also has obvious inherent weaknesses that restrict its development. First, unreasonable industrial structure. The main business of the enterprise is concentrated in traditional labor-intensive products, with a low proportion of high-value-added, high-tech products and independent brand products. Second, single business channel acquisition method. The enterprise mainly obtains customers through participating in domestic and foreign product exhibitions, and the development of online channels such as cross-border e-commerce is insufficient. Third, unclear enterprise positioning and ambiguous strategic development direction. Fourth, extensive management mechanism, relatively centralized management, unclear division of functions among departments, and imperfect internal incentive and restraint mechanisms. Fifth, single profit model, mainly relying on agency and distribution business, with low profit margins.

Opportunities (O). The external environment provides rare development opportunities for the enterprise to make up for its weaknesses. First, national policy support. The state has issued a series of policies to support the development of the foreign trade industry, such as reducing enterprise operating costs, encouraging cross-border e-commerce development, and supporting enterprises to develop independent brands (Bi & Li, 2016). Second, the rapid development of emerging markets. With the in-depth advancement of the “Belt and Road” initiative, China’s economic and trade cooperation with emerging economies has become increasingly close, and market demand has continued to expand (Ma & Liu, 2013). Third, technological innovation dividends. The development of Internet and cross-border e-commerce technology has broken the information asymmetry in international trade,

reduced transaction costs, and provided new channels for enterprises to develop the international market (Li, 2015). Fourth, the slow recovery of the global economy, and the gradual recovery of demand in the European and American markets.

Threats (T). The complex international market environment also brings severe threats to the enterprise's development. First, increasingly fierce market competition. With the deepening of China's foreign trade system reform, the number of foreign trade enterprises is increasing, and developing countries in Southeast Asia are seizing the international market share with low labor costs (Wang, 2007). Second, the resurgence of trade protectionism, and the increasing trade barriers faced by enterprises (Zhong, 2013). Third, the continuous rise of production factor costs, and the further compression of enterprise profit space (Zheng, 2003). Fourth, the instability of international market demand, affected by factors such as geopolitical conflicts and economic policy changes.

Strategic Selection: WO Strategy

Based on the comprehensive analysis of the SWOT matrix, combined with the actual development of the enterprise, this study selects the WO (Weakness-Opportunity) strategy as the core development strategy of Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd. (Porter, 1997). The core of the WO strategy is to make full use of external opportunities to make up for internal weaknesses, and realize the transformation and upgrading of the enterprise through the optimization and innovation of the operation and management model. Specifically, the enterprise should take advantage of national foreign trade support policies, the rapid development of emerging markets, and Internet technological dividends to solve problems such as unreasonable industrial structure, single business channels, and extensive management mechanisms, and focus on strengthening the construction of independent brands, optimizing product structure, expanding business channels, and improving internal management efficiency.

Construction of Innovative Operation and Management Model for Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd.

Based on the WO strategy, combined with the actual development of the enterprise and the development trend of the foreign trade industry, this study constructs a six-dimensional innovative operation and management model for SMEs, which forms an organic whole with clear logical connections between each dimension.

Customer Demand Orientation: Core Goal of Enterprise Development

Taking customer demand as the core is the fundamental way to solve the problem of the traditional model being disconnected from the market (Zhang, 2007), and it is also the starting point of the entire innovative model. First, accurately classify and select high-quality customers. Conduct in-depth market research and analysis, classify customers according to factors such as enterprise scale, market share, and credit status, establish a customer file system, and focus on cooperating with high-quality customers with large market share and stable demand. Second, deeply meet the personalized and diversified needs of customers. Establish a sound customer demand information collection and feedback mechanism, timely adjust product structure and production plans according to customer needs, and actively respond to the special needs of high-quality customers to improve customer satisfaction and loyalty. Third, take the initiative to create customer demand. Analyze the potential needs of customers, carry out product and service innovation, provide customers with value-added services and solutions, and transform potential demand into actual market demand.

Management System Optimization: Foundation of Enterprise Development

To ensure the effective implementation of customer demand orientation, it is necessary to take management system optimization as the foundation to solve the problem of extensive management. A sound management system is an important measure to solve the problems of extensive management and unreasonable resource allocation (Zheng, 2003). First, innovate the business operation system. Divide internal departments into management departments, production departments, and service departments according to their functions and positioning, and formulate different assessment indicators and incentive mechanisms for different types of departments. The assessment of management departments is linked to the overall development strategy of the enterprise, the production departments implement profit-oriented management, and the service departments implement cost-oriented management. Second, build a perfect enterprise learning system. Link employees' learning ability and results with promotion and salary, regularly organize internal training, external study, and academic exchange activities, and create a learning-oriented enterprise. Third, implement the survival-of-the-fittest mechanism. Simplify assessment indicators, implement result-oriented management, establish a scientific employee assessment and evaluation system, and implement rewards and punishments according to assessment results to stimulate employees' work enthusiasm and innovation ability.

High-Quality Human Resources: Guarantee of Enterprise Operation

The optimization of the management system ultimately depends on high-quality human resources, which is the key guarantee for the operation of the innovative model. Human resources are the most core and active resource of an enterprise, and the construction of a high-quality talent team is the key to the implementation of the new model (Ou, 2008). First, change the traditional recruitment concept and focus on recruiting "suitable talents" that adapt to the development of the enterprise. Abandon the recruitment concept of "only academic background, only famous schools", and take the adaptability of talents to the enterprise and the matching degree of professional skills and job requirements as the core recruitment criteria. Second, strengthen internal talent training. Establish a sound internal talent training and promotion system, adopt the "mentor-apprentice" training model, arrange senior employees to guide young employees, and provide more on-the-job training and promotion opportunities for internal employees. Third, build a comprehensive training mechanism. Strengthen cooperation with universities and research institutions, carry out school-enterprise cooperation, introduce third-party educational institutions, and provide employees with professional technical training and management ability training.

Corporate Culture Shaping: Strategic Planning of Enterprise Development

High-quality talents need the guidance of corporate culture to form a joint force for enterprise development. Corporate culture is the spiritual core of enterprise development and can provide a strong spiritual driving force for enterprise development (Zhong, 2013). First, shape an execution-oriented corporate culture. Take the implementation of development strategies as the starting point, shape a corporate culture that emphasizes execution, rigor, and pragmatism, and require employees to complete work tasks in accordance with prescribed procedures and standards. Second, enhance employees' sense of identity and belonging. Pay attention to employee care, respect employee personality, protect employee rights and interests, build a perfect employee welfare system, and organize various cultural and sports activities to build a harmonious and united enterprise team. Third, encourage innovation and create an innovative corporate culture. Establish a sound innovation incentive mechanism, give material and spiritual rewards to employees who have made innovative achievements

in product development, technological progress, and business model innovation, and stimulate employees' innovation enthusiasm and creativity.

Total Quality Management: Backing of Enterprise Production

The implementation of all the above links must be based on stable product quality, which is the lifeline of enterprise survival. Product quality is the lifeline of enterprise survival and development (Huang, 2013). First, strengthen employees' quality awareness. Carry out regular quality management training for all employees, establish the concept of "quality first, customer foremost", and implement the "three-no mechanism" (not accepting, producing, or delivering defective products) in the entire production process. Second, establish standardized production procedures. For the production of various products, especially large international orders, conduct repeated testing and verification of the production process, formulate scientific and standardized production operation procedures, and require employees to strictly follow the procedures for production. Third, introduce advanced quality management systems. Learn from and introduce international advanced quality management methods such as Six Sigma management and total quality management, establish a perfect quality inspection system, set up a special quality inspection department and professional quality inspection personnel, and conduct strict quality inspection on each production link.

Technology-Driven Innovation: Driving Force of Enterprise Development

To achieve long-term development, enterprises must take technology-driven innovation as the core driving force to break through the bottleneck of traditional development models. Technological innovation is an important way to solve the problems of single industrial structure and low product added value (Li, 2015). First, increase investment in management informatization. Introduce advanced management information systems such as ERP, integrate the enterprise's production, sales, finance, human resources, and other business links into the information management system, realize the sharing of information resources and efficient flow of information, and improve the scientificity and rationality of enterprise decision-making. Second, build a comprehensive cross-border trade platform. Rely on big data technology to analyze international market demand, product price trends, and consumer preferences, integrate product resources, customer resources, and channel resources, and build a comprehensive cross-border trade platform integrating product display, online transaction, logistics distribution, and after-sales service. Third, vigorously develop cross-border e-commerce business. Take advantage of the rapid development of cross-border e-commerce technology, actively layout B2B and B2C cross-border e-commerce channels, set up online stores on well-known cross-border e-commerce platforms, and sell products directly to foreign consumers and distributors.

Implementation Path and Phased Goals of the Innovative Model (2019-2022)

To ensure the smooth implementation of the six-dimensional innovative model, this part designs phased implementation paths and clear development goals, which are closely linked to the model dimensions.

Industrial Structure Optimization

Stabilize the export scale of traditional advantageous products, strengthen the cost control and quality management of OEM and agency products, and improve the profit margin of traditional products. At the same time, increase investment in product R&D and technological innovation, set up a special R&D department, develop high-value-added and high-tech products according to international market demand, focus on the cultivation and construction of independent brands, and increase brand promotion investment in the international

market. It is expected that by 2022, the proportion of independent brand products in the total export volume will reach 50%.

Business Channel Expansion

Integrate existing offline exhibition channels and online cross-border e-commerce channels, and build a multi-channel customer development system combining online and offline. Continue to participate in influential domestic and foreign trade exhibitions, strengthen communication and cooperation with existing customers, and develop new high-end customers; make full use of comprehensive cross-border trade platforms and various cross-border e-commerce platforms to expand online customer development channels. It is expected that by 2022, a stable high-end customer group will be formed, and the proportion of high-end customer orders in the total orders will be significantly increased.

Talent and Organizational Optimization

Optimize and adjust the internal organizational structure, clarify the functions and division of labor of each department, and reduce communication and coordination costs. Further improve the performance appraisal system, formulate scientific and reasonable assessment indicators and incentive mechanisms for different departments and positions, and link the assessment results with employees' salary and promotion. Strengthen the recruitment and training of high-quality talents, and focus on introducing talents with rich experience in cross-border e-commerce, product R&D, and international market operation. It is expected that by 2022, a professional and high-quality talent team adapted to the development of the new model will be built.

Brand and Culture Promotion

Increase brand promotion investment, and carry out multi-channel and multi-form brand promotion activities in domestic and foreign markets, such as advertising on cross-border e-commerce platforms and participating in international exhibitions, to improve the awareness and influence of independent brands. Further shape and carry forward the corporate culture with the core of "customer first, quality-oriented, innovation-driven, and pursuit of excellence", and integrate the corporate culture into all aspects of enterprise production and operation. It is expected that by 2022, the enterprise will become one of the top three foreign trade enterprises in Hangzhou.

Economic Benefit Growth

Strengthen cost control and financial management, improve the utilization efficiency of enterprise resources, and reduce operating costs. With the optimization of industrial structure, expansion of business channels, and optimization of talent and organization, the enterprise's export volume and profit level will be significantly improved. It is expected that by 2022, the growth rate of import and export profits will be maintained at more than 20% for a long time, and the enterprise will get rid of the passive situation of relying on traditional OEM and agency business for profit.

Conclusion and Discussion

Research Conclusion

This study takes Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd. as a typical case, systematically explores the current problems of the traditional operation and management model of SMEs, conducts a comprehensive SWOT analysis of the enterprise, and constructs a six-dimensional innovative operation and management model based

on the WO strategy. The model takes customer demand orientation as the core, management system optimization as the foundation, high-quality human resources as the guarantee, corporate culture shaping as the driving force, total quality management as the support, and technology-driven innovation as the core. It effectively solves the inherent defects of the traditional model, such as disconnection from market demand, unreasonable resource allocation, and lack of strategic foresight.

The research results show that the innovation of the operation and management model is an inevitable choice for SMEs to adapt to the new market environment and realize sustainable development. For SMEs, they should take customer demand as the core, take innovation and technology as the driving force, strengthen the construction of management systems and human resources, shape a distinctive corporate culture, and actively integrate into the global market. The six-dimensional innovative model constructed in this study has strong pertinence and practicality, and can provide a practical reference for the transformation and upgrading of similar enterprises.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

The research results have important theoretical and practical implications, which can provide reference for academic research and enterprise practice.

In terms of theoretical implications, this study enriches the theoretical system of operation management for SMEs in emerging economies, especially the research on operation management model innovation under the new market environment. By constructing a targeted six-dimensional innovative model, it provides a new research perspective for the follow-up research on the high-quality development of the foreign trade industry.

In terms of practical implications, the research results can provide a clear development path for the transformation and upgrading of SMEs. The six-dimensional model and its implementation path can help enterprises accurately grasp market demand, optimize resource allocation, improve management efficiency, and enhance core competitiveness. At the same time, the research results can also provide a reference for government departments to formulate policies related to the development of SMEs, and promote the healthy and sustainable development of the entire foreign trade industry.

Research Limitations and Future Research Directions

It should be noted that this study also has certain limitations, which point out the direction for future research. First, the research sample is only Hangzhou Hexun Industrial Co., Ltd., and the number of samples is relatively small, which may affect the universality of the research results. Second, due to the limitation of data availability, this study mainly adopts qualitative analysis methods, and the quantitative analysis of the model's implementation effect is insufficient.

In future research, we can expand the sample scope, select SMEs in different regions and industries for comparative research, and further verify the universality of the six-dimensional innovative model. At the same time, we can collect long-term tracking data of enterprises, conduct quantitative analysis on the implementation effect of the model, and continuously optimize and improve the model. In addition, we can also explore the impact of factors such as digital transformation and green development on the operation management model of SMEs, and enrich the research content of this field.

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