



Future of manufacturing **Open To Export – Internationalisation policy measure (UK)**

[Born globals and their value chains](#)

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Contents

1. Context	1
2. Content	2
3. Relevance of the measure to SME/born globals and internationalisation	4
4. The operation of the measure	5
5. Monitoring and evaluation	6
6. Evidence of outcomes and impact.....	7
7. Strengths and weaknesses of the measure	9
8. Recommendations	10
References	11

1. Context

1.1. Circumstances in which the measure was introduced, rationale, and relevance

‘Open to export’ (OTE) was introduced by the UK government’s [Department of International Trade \(DIT\)](#) in 2012 to encourage more small firms to export. Exporting was identified as the key driver of economic growth by the government. In 2011, the then Prime Minister, David Cameron MP, set the terms of the Export Challenge, aiming ‘to increase the number of SMEs that sell overseas by 100,000 which has the potential to add GBP 30 billion (equivalent to €35 billion) to the UK economy’ (Cameron, 2011). Together with the broader effects of the digital age, e-commerce is one of the main methods for many SMEs to export. Therefore, it is essential to create an online tool to help SMEs to develop their business plan, identify challenges and understand all the procedures for exporting.

The rationale for launching this scheme is also because SMEs appear to have a low propensity to export compared with larger firms. SMEs account for 99% of the total business population in the private sector, and contribute to about 40% of export turnover. However, the proportion of UK exporters is only 20% amongst SMEs, which is 5 percentage points lower than the average rate of exporting SMEs in the EU. In addition, only half of them are aware of the public schemes for export promotion, and only 12% of the total SMEs were actual users of these support services (UKTI, 2014). Information failures play a critical role in enhancing the need for business consultancy and networking, although the information gap is a problem that is not confined to internationalisation policies. In fact, it is a criticism of government SME policy more generally. Business networks are considered as the main source of information and important to internationalising SMEs.

In the past, the DIT mainly focused on larger firms and provided lots of investment in those businesses, rather than SMEs. Therefore, having recognised the significant contribution of SMEs to export turnover, the government started to restructure its support more towards small businesses to encourage them to start exporting.

The economic rationale for introducing OTE is to increase the number of exporters by raising the SMEs’ realisation of economies of scale and scope via exporting, improving their competitiveness, knowledge transfer and innovation. This intervention is designed to provide support to new exporters and those about to export. It is embedded in a variety of online supporting tools delivered by the DIT such as [Savvy Export](#), [Exporting is Great](#), [Passport to Export](#), and [E-exporting](#).

1.2. The process of developing the measure

OTE is a free online platform which provides SMEs guidance, consultancy in doing e-commerce, international business, and to expand their business in foreign markets. The idea was initially raised by the DIT and was supported by the [Federation of Small Business](#) (founded in 1974) and the [Institute of Export and International Trade](#) (founded in 1935), both of which are non-profit organisations aiming to support small businesses. DIT then launched a call for tender to invite organisations to participate to administer and implement the measure, and Yell, a private organisation, won the bid. As a result, the programme was launched by the DIT in partnership with Yell. OTE is managed by a not-for-profit Community Interest Company (CIC), of which the board of directors include representatives from the founders (DIT, Yell, Institute of Export and International Trade, Federation of Small Business) and is led by an independent, non-executive Chairman – Tech entrepreneur Julian Hucker, as explained on the [OTE website](#).

1.3. Any changes in policy context over time

Since inception, CIC managed the OTE under the budget allocated by the DIT. However, there has not been much interaction between the CIC and the DIT on a daily basis. From April 2017, OTE undergoes some changes in the organisational structure, governance and budget of the programme due to the withdrawal of DIT as the government backed funder. OTE is now funded by the Institute of Export and International Trade.

1.4. Evidence of complementarity and/or overlap between the measure and other policy measure

OTE was designed to complement other export support services provided by the DIT and to elaborate a new format of online services to utilise the synergies between the DIT team and the business community to enhance the knowledge transfer within the existing networks. In addition, the OTE is also a part of a wider strategy which aims to change the remit of the DIT from a ‘provider’ to a ‘facilitator’ of international business and e-commerce (Economics London, 2013). OTE has been developed based on the DIT’s experience in offering online services such as advice and information to firms from previous programmes with a similar format in terms of providing online information and advice to support SME internationalisation. ‘Export Savvy’ provides information, guidance, and a tool for developing international strategy and plans. On the other hand, ‘Passport to Export’ focuses on both new starters and experienced exporters, and the programme duration is only 12-18 months, offering both online and offline services. Similarly, ‘Exporting is Great’ provides consultation on export information, advice on target destinations, events, and links to other websites. However, this programme is a massive channel which targets both small and large companies, and has comprehensive information in terms of target markets and events, relevant to both new and established exporters.

2. Content

2.1. Objectives of the measure

OTE aims to act as an intermediary online platform which bridges the relationship between SMEs and DIT consultants/business advisors for export support services. As emphasised by the interviewee, the OTE’s ambition is to support 20,000 firms to export by 2020. More specifically, the OTE’s objectives are to help SMEs to expand their markets abroad, update information, enrich networking, develop export plans, and enhance the company image and reputation. In order to achieve each objective, a number of activities have been developed and listed below.

- *Market creation:* The programme enables small firms to access information about their target markets and export/import procedure, and help to match the sellers and buyers.
- *Knowledge transfer:* The programme offers free consultancy on international growth strategy, knowledge dissemination via its blogs, webinars, forum, seminars and workshops, and enhances knowledge transfer within the existing networks including the [Enterprise Europe Network](#), [Intellectual Property Network](#), [Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs](#), [Export Control Organisation](#), [UK Export Finance](#), industry links, chambers of commerce, commercial services (such as banks, European sponsorship schemes, logistics, solicitors and lawyers).
- *Building trust:* The programme elaborates networking and enhances trust amongst its members, and fosters credibility between sellers and buyers via the platform.

- *Export action plan:* OTE provides a tool to help small firms to develop international business planning. In this ‘my export action plan’, entrepreneurs are asked to complete five section tasks including: 1) Getting started, 2) Selecting a market, 3) Reaching customers, 4) Pricing and getting paid, and, 5) Delivery and documentation. The instructions are provided with the support of videos, and other resources such as workshops and seminars. Every year, OTE also organises the competition for the best export action plan. The winner is awarded with GBP 3,000 (equivalent to €3,420) in cash and obtains follow-up support such as business consultancy and developing websites from OTE and its sponsors. The finalists get free membership of the Institute of Export for a year and the opportunity to work with mentors and undertake training courses and support from the OTE’s sponsors.

2.2. General description of the measure

The four core features of the OTE are:

- A [news site](#): The website provides updated information on import and export regulations, news, practical insights and advice from successful exporters and subject matter experts via webinars, guides and case studies. There are different categories under the news section such as announcement (that is, updated information regarding the website), Brexit, delivery and documentation, ecommerce, events, blogs, interviews, photos, Ebooks/white papers.
- **Community Q&A platform:** This is the platform where members can post questions and receive responses from professional advisors/experts linked to the OTE, and engage in group discussion. This is an open platform and everything is posted transparently which enables discussions between experts and companies.
- **Network:** The website allows SMEs to connect with relevant support organisations, events, partners, business opportunities. On the website, there is a tab called ‘useful contacts’ which provides the full list of all the OTE’s network and partners including the government agencies, non-profit organisations, incubators, and commercial contacts (such as banks, business services, lawyers, freight forwarding companies). The OTE also attended and helped to promote several trade shows such as ‘Going Global’ or the ‘International Festival of Business’ which facilitates networking amongst SMEs.
- **Export action plan:** This online tool helps firms develop their business plan for exporting. In addition, OTE also organises several competitions for the best export action plan every year. Participants must meet the following criteria:
 - (1) Registered as a UK company;
 - (2) Have 50 employees or less;
 - (3) Member of OTE website;
 - (4) Completed the export action plan in full; and
 - (5) Able to send a company representative to pitch at the competition event

The winner is awarded with a GBP 6,000 package (approximately €7,000), half of which will be in cash, and the rest will be provided in other kinds of business support such as website development, training courses, and digital marketing development. Each of the shortlisted companies also receives a year’s free small business membership with the Institute of Export, a web translation voucher from the OTE sponsor - SDL Managed Translation and many other goodies on the day.

Its main type of support is information and consultancy. Members can get online advice from consultants that saves time and costs. The OTE can be considered as the first screen to exporters to link them to other public support because it provides basic steps and consultancy regarding the export procedure and networking/contacts to facilitate foreign market access (such as export documentation, export plan, customs issues, etc.).

2.3. Available budget

OTE is funded by the government, sponsored by the DIT. However, the budget was not revealed specifically because of the confidential policy from the CIC company. According to the interviewee, the budget allocated has been reduced year on year as the site became established; initial start-up costs were obviously larger. A grant was provided every year for the following 12 months' operations. However, the funding was discontinued in March 2016 by the UK government and was taken over by the charity organisation [Institute of Export & International Trade](#) (IOE). With operating synergies the budget allocated for 2017 is approximately half that of 2016.

2.4. Target groups of the measure

The target groups of the OTE are small and medium sized enterprises across sectors and regions in the UK. The main and dominant group is micro firms that have fewer than 10 employees. These companies are either new to export or have the intention to export. According to the latest survey (London Economics, 2013), 68% of the OTE users are micro firms, of which 25% are strong active users (that is, visit the OTE website at least once a week). The next group is small sized firms, which account for 20% of the total users, of which 15% are strong active users. Medium and large sized firms are less dominant amongst the OTE members because they mainly approach the website to find their potential clients and networking rather than to update their knowledge on exporting. The main reason of its stronger focus on smaller firms is that the OTE's services are more appealing to small firms or young new exporters who lack information about exporting, in comparison with larger firms.

3. Relevance of the measure to SME/born globals and internationalisation

3.1. Relevance in relation to different types and stages of internationalisation

As mentioned above, the measure provides small firms with information, contacts and networking. The main type of the supported international activities is export, especially to newcomers who seek advice for the export procedure or how to launch their products to a new market. There are no differences amongst the type of support offered to firms across regions.

3.2. Support for cooperation between SMEs/born globals and wider international collaboration

OTE supports the firm's international collaboration in a wider context (that is, not only export and import but also other activities such as networking (Enterprise Europe Network), guidance, and consultancy on how to access to resources (that is, finance (competition, linkage with start-up loans from UK government, European sponsorship schemes, banks) and information support (via webinars, online platform). This supports them to identify new resources, high value opportunities bids (these bids are often informed by the DIT which helps to integrate SMEs to

subcontract for or working with larger firms in fulfilling international big bids). OTE links with many support organisations, trade advisors from the UK Institute of Export and International Trade and DIT. OTE also participates in trade shows such as ‘Going Global’ or the ‘International Festival of Business’.

This is particularly helpful for born globals who intensively engage to the international market and lack resources and networking to expand their target destinations.

3.3. Contribution of the measure to tackle SMEs’/born globals’ internationalisation support needs

The measure contributes to raise SMEs’ awareness of existing public support for exporters, as part of the DIT strategies. Its information and advice are helpful for new exporters and those who wish to go international to have a guideline of basic steps and documentation to prepare for the exporting process. The online tool ‘export action plan’ lays the ground for SMEs to strategically plan for their activities, targets and how they can achieve them in practice. The competition organised by OTE provides a good opportunity for participating firms to test their business ideas, raise their company profile, and have financial and business support in terms of prizes and funding for their activities (that is, promotion and website development). This support is essential to SMEs/born globals who lack information and experience in exporting, enhancing their networking and boost their confidence to launch their products to the foreign market with a well-prepared export plan.

4. The operation of the measure

4.1. Promotion of the measure to internationalising businesses

The measure is promoted via a website, the DIT, and the Federation of Small Businesses. It is also promoted via its webinars, its relationships with the Chambers of Commerce in Germany, China, the [China Britain Business Council](#) (CBBC), the [UK Indian Business Council](#) (UKIBC) in both UK and Indian offices, and banks, such as HSBC. The promotion is mainly done via websites or through its participating members. It also advertises its services in social media such as LinkedIn.

According to the team manager, there have been some changes in the method of promoting the measure, compared to the past years. For example, the promotion of OTE was primarily based on strong advertising and was recommended by the DIT to SMEs as a priority support platform before the campaign ‘Exporting is Great’ was introduced. However, after the ‘[Exporting is Great](#)’ scheme started in 2015, OTE was considered to complement the ‘Exporting is Great’ in terms of its online services (that is, webinars, online platform, consultancy, networking, events) and the level of support (that is, national scheme). However ‘Exporting is Great’ is a more comprehensive scheme with a wider range of activities for both UK based large and small firms and different level of internationalisation (that is, new exporters, occasional, and regular exporters), whereas OTE is more appealing to new exporters. Hence, OTE was not prioritised for promotion via DIT. Instead, OTE was more independent in promoting its services (that is, via website, LinkedIn), and relied more on internet search and social media to raise the public awareness about their services. As estimated by the team manager, about 60% of OTE users approached the website via google search, 20% from social media and mail campaigns, 5% from intermediaries such as business support organisations, and the rest is from the words of mouth.

4.2. The process of application and assessment of applications

The process for businesses to apply is very simple and everything is conducted online. Enterprises need to sign up for the website to use the online tool by providing details of the company such as name, address, website, number of employees, turnover, sector, contact details (that is, phone/email), or to engage in questions and answers and discussion, and register to webinars which they plan to attend. All of the services are free of charge. Enterprises will commit to follow the terms and conditions of subscription indicated by OTE. Even though OTE aims to target small and medium sized firms, they do not exclude large firms if they would like to subscribe. Hence, in general, all subscriptions are approved, no matter what firm size or industry the enterprises come from, or the type of ownership (for instance sole trader, limited company).

4.3. Delivery mechanism of the measure

As an online support tool, OTE delivers its services through its website. There are no intermediaries involved in delivering the measure. Once the entrepreneur approaches the website for information or developing his 'export action plan', the consultants and advisors will respond and provide them support when needed. The consultants and advisors are volunteers who have extensive experience in dealing with information regarding exporting and are often associated with government agencies such as DIT, IOE, UKEF, and Federation of Small Businesses. They are often recruited by CIC or engaged in the OTE's networks. They provide any relevant information regarding exporting/importing process such as documentation, administration, import/export taxation, export regulations, foreign market opportunities, events, international exhibition, news, networking opportunities, access to resources, any useful contacts (lawyers, commercial banks, freight forwarding companies), and information about any available supporting schemes from regional/national and European levels. The consultation process is mainly conducted on the Q&A platform of the OTE website.

4.4. Administration of the measure

OTE is managed by the CIC team, who share their data such as the statistics of participating companies, the operation and monitoring process of the programme and yearly report with DIT. The administrative and management team includes three people who are responsible for operating the platform, managing subscriptions, managing finance, and all areas of activities such as Q&A, annual competition on best Export Action Plan, organising webinars, tradeshows and blogs.

5. Monitoring and evaluation

5.1. Monitoring of the implementation: method and contents

The monitoring of OTE is conducted monthly by the internal team of CIC. The main method is to calculate the number of registered users, the frequency of users and the profiles of the participating firms such as their sector, firm size, turnover, main products/services, and target markets. As the organisation is small and has limited resources, the team is still trying to find out how to monitor its activities effectively.

5.2. Evaluation of the measure: methods and contents

The effectiveness of OTE was first evaluated by Economics London, an independent organisation, in 2013-2014. The report was conducted in three levels:

1. The first level included desk research on content platforms and community Q&A platform;

2. The second level involved interviews with six selected OTE partners who provide services to participating firms via the OTE, including a freelance expert, a training professional, a senior bank representative, and three representatives from business organisations in December 2013; and
3. The third level of the evaluation included a structured telephone survey (CATI)¹ to 292 registered users. The interviews were conducted during the period January-February 2014. The sample was recruited from the number of registered users who provided contact details and agreed to be contacted for research purposes.

OTE is also evaluated internally by the CIC team, using the Net Promoter Score (NPS)² to measure the effectiveness of the website.

5.3. Any changes to the content or delivery of the measure following monitoring and evaluation

There have not been any significant changes in the content or delivery of the measure following monitoring and evaluation. The only change is in the method of promoting the programme, which focuses more on social media, rather than depending mainly on campaigns and intermediaries such as the Chamber of Commerce and supporting organisations.

6. Evidence of outcomes and impact

6.1. Evolution of the measure's spending

There has not been any change in the measure's spending. The main expenditure is related to the human resource costs to manage the programme, and to organise webinars and the competition. The annual budget is allocated by the DIT. However, the detailed budget is confidential and not open to public.

6.2. The quantitative and qualitative outcomes of the measure

According to the team manager, the number of participating firms has steadily increased from 6,194 in 2012 to 14,000 in 2017. In terms of usage, on average, there are 17,000 unique visits a month within 2016-2017. In addition, the interviewee emphasised that 20,000 people consumed the core content of the OTE (such as Export Action Plan and Q&A platform) for a period of longer than two minutes, 3,109 attended their webinars and 160 people completed the business planning tool.

Overall, the external evaluation indicates that during the period October 2012-July 2013, the number of registered service providers (that is, OTE's partners and via its networks) is slightly higher than the number of exporters who use the OTE. By contrast, from July 2013 until March 2014, the number of exporter users significantly increased from 2,000 to more than 9,000, tripling the number of service providers. This suggests an increasing trend of exporters with a potential significant increase of the demand for export services as the growth of exporters outweighs the growth of service providers.

¹ Computer-assisted telephone interviewing (CATI) is a telephone surveying technique in which the interviewer follows a script provided by a software application.

² The Net Promoter Score is an index ranging from -100 to 100 that measures the willingness of customers to recommend a company's products or services to others. It is used as a proxy for gauging the customer's overall satisfaction with a company's product or service and the customer's loyalty to the brand.

Frequent users (that is, accessing the OTE at least once a month) are SMEs in the sectors of manufacturing (23.3%), transport and storage (35.7%), wholesale and retail (30.2%), financial and insurance services (22.2%) and ICT (20%). The frequency of usage amongst SMEs is also diverse across sectors. For example, the proportion of weekly users (that is, those who use the OTE website at least once a week) are the most dominant amongst small firms in the sectors including manufacturing, transport, wholesale and retail, ICT and finance. While micro and small firms were found to use OTE infrequently and for a number of different purposes such as for updated information and advice, medium sized firms used OTE more frequently, mainly to look for business opportunities with other firms or respond to SMEs' requests on relevant export services. More specifically, 7.4% of small firms with less than GBP 100,000 (equivalent to €114,000) turnover used OTE daily and 22.6% of them used it at least once a week. In addition, companies that aim at international growth or have a written business plan tend to engage more frequently in OTE and post more questions to the forum than other companies. This shows that firms that have formal planning to expand their markets abroad can take more advantages of the OTE to benefit their businesses.

The OTE's financial support (that is, competition for best export action plan) is useful for participating firms to verify their strategies and planning to prepare for their international growth. In addition, the webinars are perceived well by participating companies in terms of the information provided. The latest evaluation indicated that more than 80% of both frequent and infrequent users were satisfied with the quality of the webinars provided (London School Economics, 2013).

The above shows the value of OTE to small firms engaging in internationalisation. The recent assessment of the OTE services suggested that greater satisfaction was related to the greater usage of the website. However, 44% of the companies who used the service at least once a month were unhappy with the quality of the responses to their requests. Most users approached the website to look for factual information about exporting and to expand their business networks. Growth-oriented firms were more likely to be dissatisfied with the quality of the OTE. On the other hand, firms with written business plans were more likely to be satisfied with the website.

6.3. Impact of the measure on its beneficiaries and other actors

The overall impact of the measure is not measured. However, the export action plan competition launched by OTE has significantly contributed to well-prepare for SME internationalisation. So far, OTE has introduced six competitions and has attracted hundreds of participants. The tool helps SMEs to create a structured plan for international expansion, and strengthens their resources to prepare for the export process. There are several impact case studies to illustrate how OTE supported SMEs via Export Action Plan as follows:

- [Genevieve Sweeney](#): This is a British knitwear company based in Essex. The company won the Export Action Plan competition in 2017. The owner revealed: 'I am so excited to start my exporting plan and to enter a new market with a strong international website and marketing strategy'. She also emphasised that she first started launching the label in 2015 and set it up online. Within the first six months, the company had gained renowned stockists and global press coverage, with publications and enhanced brand awareness. This enabled the company to gain sales in the US market and it has now become a strong market for Genevieve Sweeney. This success could be attributed to the winning of the competition which contributed to lift the company's image, enhance the brand, and enable them to expand their international network in the US market.
- [Kilk2learn](#): This company is a former winner of the Export Action Plan competition in 2016. It specialises in creating blended learning content and courses for the digital native

generation. After winning the prize, the company launched a ‘kick-starter campaign’ to ‘revolutionise the lives of millions of young people who currently have no access to education. The project aims to develop mobile learning for basic skills in literacy, numeracy and English.

- [Lick Frozen Ltd](#): This UK based company is a finalist of Export Action Plan in 2017. It is specialised in producing frozen yogurt. The company started to export since 2016 following their first international trade show in Cologne, Germany. The Export Action Plan helped Lick Frozen to narrow down their focus to make best use of their resources, have a systematic assessment of marketing strategies including the products, pricing, location and route to target markets.

7. Strengths and weaknesses of the measure

7.1. Strengths of the measure

According to the evaluation report of OTE, every firm can approach OTE easily and the programme provides free online services and advice to exporting SMEs with a very simple and fast process. In addition, it also provides support via its website content and planning tools to enable newcomers to engage in the process during their exporting journey, which proved to be efficient by several case studies as described in section 6.3. In addition, everything is conducted online, which saves time and costs for both beneficiaries and administrators. The advisors’ responses are quite fast, taking normally one to two working days. What makes OTE innovative is its combination of both ‘soft’ and ‘hard’ aspects, by complementing its information and advice services with financial support in terms of prizes and awards.

7.2. Weaknesses of the measure

OTE is not managed directly by the DIT, but by an independent not-for-profit organisation. There is lack of collaboration between OTE and the funder on how to operate and implement the programme. This may lead to the differences between the DIT and the CIC’s expectations on how to do and what to do to achieve their goals. This somehow confuses the team management in terms of planning and operating. This also increases the challenges of measuring the effectiveness of the programme management.

A second weakness is related to the OTE’s limited capacity in managing the programme. The OTE team consists of three people managing all aspects of its activities, which constrains their capacity to offer more products and services and the speed of response.

7.3. Evidence of policy learning over time

The OTE has triggered the programme ‘[First Time Exporters](#)’, which was also launched by the DIT in 2015, aiming to support the initial stages of new exporters. This programme includes both training, planning, and support to SMEs to grow internationally and access their export capabilities, across sectors and regions in the UK. Specifically [the support](#) includes a detailed assessment of their readiness to export, an action plan for export activity, workshops, market research support, event networking and trade show opportunities. This underlines the transferability of the OTE model. It has also been learned that this kind of programmes is more suitable to new exporters or at the very beginning stage of exporting. However, there is no evidence of transferability of this programme to other countries.

8. Recommendations

8.1. Overall recommendations regarding the measure

Overall, in order to increase the efficiency of the measure, the interviewee suggests the need to increase the number of the team members to strengthen the capacity and capabilities in managing the programme. Based on the recent OTE evaluation (2013), the advisors who work on the Q&A platform should be provided with more incentives (that is, both financial and non-financial bonus such as the upgrading status of the experts as suggested in the literature about the idea of ‘gamification’, such as the awarding of points, badges or other visible status upgrade for true/certified experts). This would also help to recruit external consultants, and successful entrepreneurs, who volunteer to support new exporters, which would expand the OTE resources and capacity to respond to small firms’ requests.

Regarding management issues, the link between CIC and the Institute of Export (the new funder which will probably replace DIT) should be enhanced to map out the strategic direction of OTE. This strategy should have an agreement on the targets and plans on how to measure and evaluate the impact. This measure can be transferrable in different contexts, for example, to larger sized firms with diverse information to meet their needs.

OTE should not work independently but should enhance their collaboration with other websites which are operated by the DIT, such as ‘Savvy Export’ and ‘Exporting is Great’, to complement their services and elaborate a stronger link, to avoid redundant or replicated services such as consultancy services, foreign market opportunities, legal documentation regarding exporting process, events and networking. This would help to improve the efficiency of its services and allow a focus on serving different needs of the internationalising SMEs.

In addition, there have not been any systematic external monitoring and evaluating systems for this measure. Most of the monitoring and evaluation reports were conducted internally by the CIC team. Considering the limited resources at CIC, it is essential to have support from the government to elaborate a systematic and regular monitoring and evaluation of the progress of the OTE, in order to enhance its efficiency and to ensure how it can achieve the targets set by both the government and the operating team of CIC.

8.2. Recommendation regarding the national support to SME/born global internationalisation

According to the interviewee, even though there are several support programmes for internationalisation, there is still the need for developing an integrated online tool to enable small firms to make business connections in foreign market effectively.

8.3 Any gaps in the provision of policy support and suggestions

In the UK, there are many public interventions to support small firms to export. However, they do not adequately consider if they meet the businesses’ needs, and whether the companies find the provided resources and support effective. A lot of firms are struggling to make connections in target markets and to find potential clients and distributors in foreign markets. In addition, there is not any aggregated programme to provide a full SME internationalisation support package. The dominant methods that firms use to connect with potential clients are trade shows, trade associations and chambers of commerce. With limited resources, market intelligence and power, it is very challenging for small firms to solve this problem. The question ‘how can I find the right people’ remains largely unanswered. Hence, it is recommended that a complete support system to not only guide small businesses but also engage them in identifying and connecting with the right people in the right destinations is developed.

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