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Dilemmas and Breakthroughs in the E-Commerce Transformation of Foreign Trade in the New Era

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Abstract

With the advancement of the digital economy, the environment of international trade has continued to evolve. The B2B wholesale-oriented model on which traditional foreign trade enterprises have long relied is now facing new pressure, while the rapid rise of cross-border e-commerce has offered enterprises the opportunity to reach overseas consumers directly and has driven a transformation in the modes of foreign trade operation. From the perspective of international business, this paper examines the challenges confronting traditional foreign trade enterprises as they transform and upgrade toward cross-border e-commerce, together with the countermeasures available to them, and analyzes the mechanism through which enterprises evolve from original equipment manufacturing (OEM) toward international brand development. Drawing on the current state of the industry and on cases of representative enterprises, the study conducts its analysis in terms of transformation trends, differences among operating models, and internal constraining factors. The results indicate that cross-border e-commerce enables enterprises to respond to market demand more flexibly by shortening the trade chain, optimizing the allocation of resources, and improving the efficiency of information transmission, while at the same time reducing dependence on intermediaries to a certain extent. Enterprises of different types and scales adopt somewhat different strategies, yet they commonly confront the lagging renewal of business concepts, insufficient digital operational capability, and increasing uncertainty in international markets. On the basis of these findings, this paper puts forward strategic recommendations concerning the renewal of business concepts, the enhancement of operational capability, and the optimization of risk management. It emphasizes that enterprises should incorporate cross-border e-commerce transformation into their long-term development planning and, by optimizing organizational structure and supply chain management, should achieve an upgrade from export manufacturing to brand-oriented and value-added operation. This study not only provides a theoretical reference for the transformation practice of traditional foreign trade enterprises in the digital trade environment, but also offers insights for the building of global competitive advantage and the achievement of sustainable development.

Keywords

Cross-border e-commerce; traditional foreign trade enterprises; transformation and upgrading.

1. Research Background and Significance

Against the backdrop of continual adjustment in the global trade landscape and of the accelerating development of the digital economy, the forms of international trade have in fact undergone profound change. Cross-border e-commerce has long since ceased to be a dispensable supplementary means of trade and has become a core engine driving the growth of international trade. Judging from the relevant data of the Ministry of Commerce of China, the scale of China's cross-border e-commerce imports and exports has continued to expand over

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recent years, and the sector may be said to stand at a critical juncture in its transition from the earlier stage of "rapid growth" to the new course of "high-quality development."

In the course of this transition, the advantage in labor cost on which traditional foreign trade enterprises have long depended, together with their conventional advantages in B2B channels, has in fact been weakening continuously. At the same time, cross-border e-commerce makes full use of internet technologies, digital platforms, and intelligent supply chain systems, and through decentralized and flattened transaction models it has thoroughly restructured the original pattern of value chain distribution.

From the theoretical standpoint, this line of research helps to enrich the body of theory concerning cross-border e-commerce and the transformation and upgrading of traditional foreign trade enterprises. By introducing firm-level micro data and multidimensional risk indicators, it makes up for the absence in existing research of quantitative analysis and of early-warning mechanisms for risk, and it also offers digital trade theory a relatively novel micro-level perspective of observation.

From the practical standpoint, through in-depth analysis of such models as platform onboarding, the building of independent brands, and integrated development, this study provides traditional foreign trade enterprises with a transformation guide extending from problem identification through data support to the implementation of countermeasures. This can not only help enterprises to enhance their international competitiveness, but also, in a complex and volatile international trade environment, guide them in achieving a strategic shift from cost-driven to brand-driven operation and an upgrade from scale expansion to improvement in quality.

2. Analysis of the Current State of the Transformation and Upgrading of Traditional Foreign Trade Enterprises toward Cross-Border E-Commerce

2.1. The Actual State of Change in Business Concepts against the Background of Market-Oriented Transformation

Against the background of the rapid development of cross-border e-commerce, the operating logic of traditional foreign trade enterprises is undergoing evident change: the focus of enterprises is shifting gradually from the mere acquisition of orders toward operations organized around consumer demand. In recent years the scale of China's cross-border e-commerce has maintained relatively rapid growth. According to the data published by the Ministry of Commerce, the value of China's cross-border e-commerce imports and exports reached RMB 2.38 trillion in 2024, an increase of 15.6 percent year on year. The change in modes of trade means that enterprises no longer rely solely on overseas purchasers to complete sales but must directly confront the genuine needs of end consumers. Objectively, this change has prompted enterprises to reconsider their original business concepts and has caused the necessity of adjusting the traditional foreign trade model to emerge.

Judging from the actual progress of enterprise transformation, however, the pace at which concepts are renewed has not fully kept up with the rhythm of industry development. The China Enterprise Digital Transformation Index Report published by Accenture shows that at present only about 35 percent of traditional foreign trade enterprises have incorporated cross-border e-commerce into their long-term core strategy; a larger number of enterprises still treat cross-border e-commerce as an additional sales channel rather than as an adjustment at the level of the business model. Owing to insufficiently clear strategic positioning, some enterprises continue to employ the experience-dependent mode of decision-making of the past when undertaking product development and market judgment. The survey results of 100EC.cn also

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indicate that approximately 65 percent of foreign trade enterprises base their product selection mainly on historical orders or on the imitation of peers, while the proportion of enterprises that genuinely analyze consumer preferences by means of platform data is less than 30 percent. It can thus be seen that, although the cross-border e-commerce market has continued to expand, a considerable number of enterprises remain at the stage of order-oriented thinking, and their understanding and application of user-oriented thinking have not yet been genuinely established.

At the same time, corporate brand awareness remains on the whole at an incipient stage. Statistics from Statista show that among Chinese sellers engaged in cross-border e-commerce, only about 20 percent of enterprises have formed a relatively stable brand operation system, while the majority still adopt a wide-assortment approach in order to obtain sales volume. Although this mode of operation, oriented toward short-term sales results, can bring a certain growth in orders in the early period, it is difficult for it to generate long-term brand accumulation, and it does not favor the establishment by enterprises of sustained competitive advantage in international markets.

2.2. The Current State of Development in Specialized Talent and Digital Operational Capability

As competition in cross-border e-commerce intensifies continuously, the focus of rivalry among enterprises is changing: the earlier model of forming advantage by relying on production scale and manufacturing capacity is gradually turning toward one centered on operational capability and data capability. In reality, however, many traditional foreign trade enterprises still exhibit fairly evident shortcomings in human resource structure and in their level of digitalization, which to a certain extent restricts the advancement of the transformation process.

With the continued expansion of the scale of the industry, the demand of enterprises for interdisciplinary talent has increased markedly. The Report on the Development of Cross-Border E-Commerce Talent in China predicts that by 2025 the talent gap in China's cross-border e-commerce sector will reach approximately four million people. Although a large number of enterprises have already begun to develop cross-border e-commerce operations, their talent reserves have not kept pace. The results of surveys of relevant enterprises show that more than 72 percent of the enterprises surveyed regard the shortage of talent in operations and data analysis as having become an important factor constraining business expansion. Because of the scarcity of specialized personnel, some enterprises, even after having completed platform onboarding, remain at a comparatively basic stage in store operation, advertising placement, and data analysis, and find it difficult to form sustained and stable operational capability.

Meanwhile, the construction of digital infrastructure by enterprises presents a state of superficial prevalence coupled with insufficient practical application. Data from iResearch show that about 71 percent of foreign trade enterprises have deployed basic information systems such as ERP, yet the proportion of enterprises that have genuinely achieved interconnection among order, inventory, and marketing data is less than 30 percent. Because effective integration among systems is lacking, data are often dispersed across different modules, and enterprises can hardly adjust production plans promptly in response to changes in sales. This makes it difficult for the small-batch, high-frequency operational advantage emphasized by cross-border e-commerce to be brought into full play.

Changes on the production side further amplify this contradiction. The Alibaba Research Institute points out that the average scale of current cross-border e-commerce orders has already fallen to less than one-tenth that of traditional B2B orders, whereas only about 28 percent of manufacturing enterprises have completed the transformation to flexible production. Many enterprises still maintain a model dominated by large-batch production; once orders tend toward fragmentation, a mismatch arises between modes of production and market demand,

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inventory pressure increases accordingly, and enterprises face greater uncertainty in respect of capital occupation and operational risk.

2.3. The Practical Manifestation of External Risks under Changing Cross-Border Operating Conditions

As traditional foreign trade enterprises move step by step from the former model of indirect export toward direct participation in overseas retail competition, the operating environment confronting them has changed accordingly. The earlier way of carrying out production in reliance on stable orders possessed relatively strong predictability, whereas after entering the field of cross-border e-commerce enterprises must directly face instantaneous changes in consumer demand, platform rules, and market competition; the operating environment as a whole therefore exhibits a more pronounced characteristic of volatility.

This is reflected first in the continual rise of platform operating costs. Data from Marketplace Pulse show that in 2024 the average cost per advertising click on the Amazon platform rose by approximately 12 to 18 percent year on year, while platforms at the same time continually strengthened regulatory requirements in such areas as compliance review, intellectual property protection, and account management, raising the overall compliance costs of sellers by about 25 percent. At a time when the acquisition of traffic depends heavily on algorithmic distribution by platforms, enterprises often need to increase advertising investment continuously merely in order to maintain visibility; the rise on the cost side gradually compresses profit margins and also causes some small and medium-sized enterprises to face greater operating pressure.

The logistics link has likewise become an important variable affecting the stable operation of enterprises. Statistics of the China Federation of Logistics and Purchasing indicate that logistics expenses usually account for 30 to 50 percent of sales revenue among small and medium-sized cross-border e-commerce enterprises, a proportion evidently higher than that under the traditional B2B trade model. Because cross-border retail orders display the characteristics of small batches and high frequency, enterprises are more sensitive to changes in international freight rates, to delays in shipping cycles, and to regional fluctuations in supply chains; once logistics costs rise for a period, profit margins are readily subjected to direct impact.

From the perspective of market structure, the regional distribution of China's cross-border sellers still possesses a certain degree of concentration. Relevant reports published by Amazon Global Selling show that more than 65 percent of Chinese sellers derive their sales mainly from markets in Europe and North America. When exchange rates fluctuate, when trade policies are adjusted, or when platform rules change, this operating pattern of relatively high regional concentration often causes risks to be released in a concentrated manner within a short period; it also reflects that room remains for further optimization in the diversification of enterprises' market presence.

2.4. The Actual State of Capital Investment and of the Structure of Resource Allocation

The rise of the cross-border e-commerce operating model has to a certain extent altered the original manner in which funds circulated in traditional foreign trade enterprises. Previously, enterprises usually adopted the model of "order acceptance–production–delivery–payment collection," in which capital input was broadly synchronized with order confirmation; in the cross-border e-commerce environment, by contrast, enterprises often need to complete upfront investment in advertising placement, inventory stocking, and channel construction before sales revenue is realized. This causes the pressure on funds in the initial stage of transformation to rise markedly.

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The Monitoring Report on China's Cross-Border E-Commerce Market published by 100EC.cn shows that approximately 50 percent of enterprises experienced a decline in profits during the initial period of conducting cross-border e-commerce business, and that among these roughly 13 percent of enterprises saw profit declines exceeding 50 percent. The main reason lies in the fact that enterprises must bear traffic acquisition fees and the costs of stocking goods in overseas warehouses in advance, whereas the payment collection cycle under the cross-border retail model is relatively prolonged and the period during which capital is occupied increases significantly.

In terms of cost composition, research by the Ebrun Research Institute points out that among cross-border e-commerce operating expenditures, platform advertising fees usually account for 30 to 40 percent, investment in inventory and warehousing for approximately 25 to 35 percent, and logistics fulfillment costs in most cases for more than 20 percent. The superposition of several kinds of upfront investment causes enterprises to depend more heavily on the efficiency of capital turnover in the course of operation; once growth in sales volume is unable to match the scale of investment, enterprises are prone to situations of cash flow strain.

Insufficient financing channels further amplify the constraints on funds during the stage of transformation. A survey by the China Association of Small and Medium Enterprises shows that only 37 percent of small and medium-sized foreign trade enterprises are able to obtain relatively stable financing support for digital transformation, while a considerable proportion of enterprises still rely mainly on their own funds to advance business upgrading. With limited sources of funding, enterprises are often compelled to slow the pace of expansion or even to adopt more conservative operating strategies, which to a certain extent also affects the continued advancement of cross-border e-commerce transformation.

3. The Core Challenges in the Transformation of Traditional Foreign Trade Enterprises by Means of Cross-Border E-Commerce

3.1. Insufficient Transformation of Business Concepts and of Cognition

Many enterprises continue to follow an order-oriented operating model and regard cross-border e-commerce as a supplement to sales channels rather than as part of an overall strategy. This causes their decision-making in product selection, market response, and operations to lag, and makes it difficult for them to adapt rapidly to changes in the demands of overseas consumers. The inadequate use by enterprises of data analysis and of market feedback lowers the efficiency with which production is matched to the market, thereby affecting the effectiveness of transformation.

At present, most traditional foreign trade enterprises score relatively low overall on the three core dimensions of digital strategic cognition, data-driven decision-making, and user operation systems. The majority of these enterprises remain at the initial stage of digitalization or at a stage of partial application, and still exhibit fairly evident deficiencies in strategic deployment, in organizational adaptation, and in the application of data across the whole chain.

On further examination, this situation also reflects the relatively slow renewal of business concepts and of digital cognition within enterprises. Lacking the support of systematic digital thinking, enterprises find it difficult in actual operation to advance the application of data in an integrated manner, and they also find it difficult to complete the shift from order-oriented thinking to user-oriented thinking; this has to a certain extent become an important reason constraining the deeper development of cross-border e-commerce.

With regard to brand development, the absence of systematic investment over time has produced a somewhat awkward present situation. Relevant research notes that among the

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enterprises undergoing transformation, fewer than 20 percent are able to obtain stable revenue through independent brand websites, and the majority remain at an elementary stage in which any short-term order that yields profit is considered sufficient. Beyond this, there is a further highly practical problem: the traditional model of large-batch production is entirely misaligned with the small-volume, fast-response demands of e-commerce platforms. In addition, the internal organizational structures of many enterprises contain too many hierarchical levels and respond too slowly, which at once weakens their speed of response to the market. As a consequence of these difficulties, enterprises find it hard to form a stable capacity for price premium in the market, and this constitutes one of the more problematic features of the current situation.

3.2. Shortage of Specialized Talent and Insufficiency of Digital Capability

The operation of cross-border e-commerce requires a range of composite competencies, involving platform management, data analysis, marketing and promotion, and customer service. Most enterprises, however, possess only a limited talent reserve for the relevant positions, and inadequate information systems together with insufficient data management capability may result in a lack of efficient linkage among the order, inventory, and operational stages. The absence of specialized talent and of digital support makes it difficult for enterprises to form sustained competitive advantage in cross-border operations.

In recent years the gap between the supply of and the demand for talent in the cross-border e-commerce industry has displayed an overall tendency to widen. Since 2020 the rate of growth in talent demand has evidently exceeded the growth on the supply side, and the disparity between the two has widened progressively. Judging from the change in trend, this gap has continued to expand in subsequent years and is expected possibly to reach a comparatively high level in 2025, which indicates that against the background of rapid industry development the adjustment on the supply side of talent exhibits a certain lag, a lag that is even more evident in the case of interdisciplinary talent. This trend not only reflects the talent shortage that exists widely in the field of cross-border e-commerce, but also demonstrates to a certain extent that the mismatch in talent structure has become one of the important factors affecting the transformation of traditional foreign trade enterprises.

With respect to digital capability, although most enterprises acknowledge the efficiency-enhancing role of technology, the proportion that is genuinely able to achieve closed-loop management across the full ERP chain is less than 30 percent. This is chiefly because the cost of technological investment is too high while the return on output is uncertain, and such concerns directly limit the depth to which enterprises are able to advance into the global value chain.

3.3. Increase in External Operating Risks

As enterprises confront overseas markets directly, operating risks have displayed a tendency toward diversification: changes in platform rules, rising logistics costs, and fluctuations in the policies of international markets all place pressure on corporate profits and stability. In formulating strategies and allocating resources, enterprises must take account of uncertain factors in order to respond to potential operating risks. In terms of cost, fluctuations in logistics expenses are significant, with logistics costs accounting for as much as 30 to 50 percent for small and medium-sized sellers, far higher than the 15 to 20 percent of large and mature enterprises. By 2024, cost-per-click advertising on mainstream platforms such as Amazon had also risen year on year by roughly 12 to 18 percent, which further squeezed an already narrow profit margin. In 2024 the compliance costs on one mainstream platform rose by about 25 percent, and excessive dependence on a single platform significantly amplifies operating risk.

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In addition, the influence of international tariff policy must also be taken into account. In the first half of 2025, as exports to certain traditional markets came under pressure, enterprises were compelled to shift toward emerging markets such as those of ASEAN, where growth reached 14.3 percent; the capacity for risk management has thus become critical to the survival of enterprises.

3.4. Pressure on Capital Investment and on the Allocation of Resources

The operation of cross-border e-commerce requires continuous investment in advertising expenses, in inventory funds, and in platform operating costs. Compared with the traditional model that relies on payment collection from orders, the cycle during which enterprise capital is occupied is prolonged and the pressure of fund management increases markedly. Some small and medium-sized enterprises find it difficult to allocate resources effectively in the initial stage, thereby affecting operational efficiency and profitability. According to industry trend reports, nearly 50 percent of transforming sellers reported a decline in profits, and among them 13 percent of sellers experienced declines exceeding 50 percent.

After small and medium-sized foreign trade enterprises complete their transformation to cross-border e-commerce, their cost structure becomes concentrated mainly in several key components, including platform advertising fees, investment in inventory and warehousing, and logistics fulfillment costs. In terms of proportion, these three items occupy a comparatively large share of total operating costs, together usually exceeding 80 percent. That is to say, the greater part of an enterprise's funds is in fact occupied by front-end customer acquisition, by inventory preparation, and by the logistics delivery stage. From the standpoint of operating characteristics, such a cost structure requires enterprises to bear comparatively high upfront investment in the initial stage of transformation, while the cycle of capital recovery is also relatively long; they are therefore more prone to situations of cash flow strain. It can accordingly be understood that the decline in profits experienced by some enterprises in the initial stage of transformation bears a direct relationship to the high concentration of the corporate cost structure.

This increase in profitability pressure leaves small and medium-sized enterprises unable to act effectively in respect of digital upgrading and of the deployment of overseas warehouses. With regard to logistics resources, because their order volumes are small, small and medium-sized enterprises are in a disadvantaged bargaining position vis-à-vis logistics providers, and the imbalance between logistics cost and logistics efficiency has become a bottleneck constraining competitiveness. Finally, inadequate utilization of policy is also a practical problem: some enterprises, because they do not thoroughly understand compliance procedures such as export tax rebates and foreign exchange settlement, have consequently failed to convert policy dividends into effective benefit and have missed the opportunity to reduce operating risks by means of policy.

4. Countermeasures and Recommendations for Driving the Transformation and Upgrading of Traditional Foreign Trade Enterprises through Cross-Border E-Commerce

The deepening development of cross-border e-commerce has not only changed the basic rules of international trade but has also imposed new requirements for the reshaping of the modes of operation of traditional foreign trade enterprises. Taking into account the steady growth in the scale of China's cross-border e-commerce imports and exports and the gradient characteristics of enterprise transformation, enterprises need to build a closed-loop optimization system extending from strategic concepts to specific stages of execution, so as to ensure that the various links of transformation can be effectively connected.

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4.1. Strengthening Market Orientation and Adjusting Business Concepts

1. Establishing Mechanisms for Dynamic Demand Insight and for Product Development

Enterprises should abandon the lagging manner of obtaining information by relying on traditional trade fairs or on periodic market research, and should instead build a dynamic demand analysis system centered on market data. With the aid of digital tools, enterprises can conduct systematic analysis of search trends, of reviews of competing products, and of customer feedback on the major cross-border e-commerce platforms, and can thereby capture changes in consumer demand in a timely manner. On this basis, research and development departments can rapidly adjust product design and functional optimization, so that product development is able to match market demand quickly, thereby enhancing the market adaptability and the competitiveness of new products.

2. Advancing Brand Narrative and the Accumulation of User Assets

In the face of the problems of low added value and of limited capacity for price premium under the OEM model, enterprises should implement a strategy of brand personification. Brand building should not remain merely at the level of trademarks but should extend to systematic operations covering visual identity systems, brand storytelling, and social interaction. Enterprises may open multiple accounts on mainstream overseas visual platforms and may use short videos to display dust-free production processes, durability testing, and genuine usage scenarios of users, thereby upgrading the traditional export of products into the international development of brands characterized by user stickiness.

3. Promoting Organizational Flattening and Project-Based Management

The multi-layered decision-making structures of traditional foreign trade enterprises are somewhat difficult to adapt to the rapidly changing market environment of cross-border e-commerce. Enterprises may therefore optimize their organizational architecture by establishing cross-departmental project teams centered on product managers and by granting such teams a degree of autonomous decision-making authority in respect of product selection, pricing, and marketing plans. Through the collaborative work of the operations, procurement, and design departments, enterprises are able to respond more rapidly to changes in market demand, to improve decision-making efficiency, and to enhance the flexibility of overall operations.

4.2. Enhancing Talent Reserves and Digital Operational Capability

1. Building a Talent Development System that Combines Internal Cultivation with External Recruitment

To address the shortage of interdisciplinary talent, enterprises should establish systematic mechanisms for talent cultivation and for incentive. By conducting targeted training, they can improve the capabilities of existing employees in digital marketing, in data analysis, and in platform operations, while introducing business partnership mechanisms that closely link team performance and the operating results of stores. Enterprises may also set up measures for internal entrepreneurship and for innovation incentives so as to encourage employees to propose optimization schemes and business innovations, thereby strengthening team vitality and resolving the bottlenecks that small and medium-sized enterprises face in the recruitment and retention of talent.

2. Strengthening Digital Infrastructure and Flexible Manufacturing Capability

Enterprises may build digital infrastructure that integrates ERP, warehouse management systems, and customer relationship management systems, so as to achieve real-time synchronization of business processes, of information flows, and of capital flows. In the production stage, enterprises may advance a flexible manufacturing model by breaking traditional large-scale production lines into small production units that can be adjusted rapidly,

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thereby enabling production plans to change quickly in accordance with order demand. By means of intelligent production scheduling systems that convert platform orders directly into production plans and shift arrangements, enterprises can not only reduce inventory risk and the losses caused by errors in forecasting but also improve overall production efficiency and the capacity to respond to the market.

3. Optimizing Overseas Warehouses and the Localized Delivery System

The optimization of the supply chain is a core means of enhancing the competitiveness of enterprises. Enterprises should stock goods in advance according to sales heat maps and should shorten physical distance by means of overseas warehouses: the best-selling stock-keeping units in the top 20 percent of sales volume should be shipped by sea to overseas warehouses in advance so as to achieve the goal of local dispatch with guaranteed delivery within three days, whereas items that sell less well should be sent by direct air freight, thereby balancing logistics cost against delivery timeliness.

4.3. Optimizing Competitive Strategy and Risk Management

1. Promoting the Coordinated Operation of Platforms and of Independent Websites

To address the operational fragility caused by excessive dependence on a single platform, enterprises should adopt an omnichannel deployment. Mature third-party platforms may be used as entry points for traffic acquisition in order to complete the primitive accumulation of capital, while simultaneously SaaS tools may be employed to build independent brand websites as asset positions for the accumulation of private-domain traffic and of core user data. By retaining user profiles in their own hands through independent websites, enterprises can not only avoid the risk of frequent account suspension by platforms, but can also apply the data in reverse to platform operations, thereby making product selection and advertising placement more precise.

2. Establishing Mechanisms for International Trade Compliance and for Early Warning

Enterprises should establish dedicated compliance departments or may engage third-party professional agencies in order to complete compliance certification in target markets with respect to intellectual property, environmental directives, and privacy policies before products are exported. At the same time, in response to the problem of exchange rate fluctuation, enterprises may make use of financial instruments such as forward foreign exchange settlement and sales in order to lock in exchange rates; with regard to continually rising logistics costs, they may conclude annual framework agreements with large logistics companies so as to secure shipping space and freight prices in advance, thereby safeguarding the stability of profit margins.

3. Promoting Market Diversification and Localization Adaptation

On the basis of consolidating their position in the markets of Europe and North America, enterprises may actively develop emerging markets, particularly regions that benefit from regional economic and trade agreements, and may implement localized marketing tailored to the culture and the consumption habits of each market. For example, in Southeast Asian markets they may emphasize cost-effectiveness and social sharing, whereas in Latin American markets they may stress the convenience of payment and after-sales guarantees. Through such differentiated strategies, enterprises are able to disperse effectively the uncertainty brought about by geopolitical risk and by fluctuations in demand.

4.4. Improving Capital Management and the Allocation of Resources

1. Refined Capital Management and the Integration of External Resources

Enterprises may achieve the rational allocation of resources during the transition period by optimizing the efficiency with which funds are used. In the initial stage a prudent investment strategy may be adopted, avoiding excessive concentration on advertising or marketing

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expenditure; at the same time, enterprises may take advantage of the traffic dividends offered by emerging platforms in order to conduct market trials at relatively low cost, and may gradually expand the scale of investment once the model has matured. In addition, enterprises may actively engage with the innovative credit products provided by financial institutions, such as order financing and warehouse financing, which can be used to alleviate the pressure on funds caused by inventory stocking and to safeguard the stability of cash flow during the transition period.

2. Leveraging Policy Dividends to Promote Clustered Development

Enterprises may make full use of the policy support provided by comprehensive cross-border e-commerce pilot zones, for example the models of B2B direct export and of overseas warehouse export, and may improve operational efficiency through green customs clearance and through the optimization of tax rebate procedures. At the same time, they may actively apply for national-level or provincial-level subsidies for overseas warehouses and for special funds for digital transformation, so as to reduce the cost of transformation. Enterprises may also participate in joint actions organized by industry associations, such as the sharing of overseas after-sales service centers or the joint procurement of logistics resources, enabling small and medium-sized enterprises to convert their disadvantage of scale into an advantage of collective bargaining and thereby to enhance overall competitiveness and to achieve the clustered development of cross-border e-commerce business.

3. Differentiated Upgrading Strategies for Enterprises

Enterprises of different scales should adopt targeted upgrading programs in the course of transformation. Large manufacturing enterprises may, by integrating the stages of production and trade and by mastering core technologies, leap toward the high value-added links of the global value chain, whereas small and medium-sized foreign trade enterprises may focus on vertical market segments, for example smart home accessories or specific pet products, and may form market barriers that are difficult to surmount through specialization and differentiation. The systematic implementation of these measures helps enterprises to overcome traditional operating habits and shortcomings in resources and, in a complex and volatile international trade environment, to achieve high-quality development from low-end processing toward the international development of brands.

5. Conclusion

This study has systematically reviewed the transformation mechanism of traditional foreign trade enterprises and has pointed out that cross-border e-commerce is not merely a replacement of sales channels but represents a profound restructuring of the business model of enterprises, namely an enterprise-wide adjustment from order dependence to data-driven operation. By shortening the trade chain and by enhancing the transparency of information, enterprises are able to grasp global consumer demand more precisely and to achieve the upgrading of the value chain in a digital environment. This shift from passively accepting orders to actively gaining insight into market demand is a key path by which traditional foreign trade enterprises can strengthen their competitive resilience in an uncertain environment.

In analyzing the current state of transformation and its challenges, this study has combined macro-level industry data with enterprise practice and has found that enterprises commonly face the contradiction between traditional operating inertia and insufficient digital capability; gaps in talent, the tightening of compliance regulation, and constraints of capital and resources have become the principal limiting factors in the process of transformation. At the same time, because differences exist in enterprise scale and in resource endowment, strategic choices must also be differentiated. For example, through multi-channel operating models and through the building of independent brands, enterprises can disperse external risks effectively and improve

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the effectiveness of transformation. The incorporation of such differentiated analysis into the research framework constitutes an important point of innovation in the logical structure of this study.

With regard to the analysis of countermeasures, this study holds that in order to achieve high-quality transformation enterprises should advance agile reform in organizational architecture and in supply chain management, including the establishment of flexible production systems and of rapid response mechanisms, while making full use of policy support and of the collaborative advantages of industry clusters so as to reduce operating costs and to enhance overall competitiveness. The improvement of digital capability not only assists short-term response to the market but can also provide foundational support for long-term brand accumulation and for value-based operation, thereby driving enterprises to shift from single-purpose export manufacturing toward comprehensive value creation.

Although this study has provided a relatively systematic review of theoretical analysis and of strategic recommendations, the acquisition of micro-level operating data has been limited, and the analysis therefore still relies mainly on logical deduction. Future research may employ large-sample econometric analysis in order to verify further the actual effect of digital investment on enterprise returns. In addition, with the application of artificial intelligence and of other emerging technologies in cross-border supply chains, differentiated transformation models for specific industries and innovations in organizational form still present broad scope for research; such work would help to enrich the theoretical system of digital trade and could provide further reference for enterprise practice.

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