



Exporting Sports Goods from Pakistan to Finland: A Strategic Business Plan for Market Entry and Growth

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2025 Laurea



Laurea University of Applied Sciences

**Exporting Sports Goods from Pakistan to Finland: A Strategic Business Plan for Market
Entry and Growth**

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Bachelor of Business Administration

Thesis

June, 2025

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Year	2025	Number of pages	28
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The objective of the thesis is to establish a business plan for Lamda Industries, a Pakistani business seeking to export sports goods to the Finnish market. The objective is to establish a market entry plan that will make the business capable of satisfying Finnish customers' needs and thrive in a highly regulated, sustainability-focused market.

This thesis is based on a case study method involving a semi-structured interview of a top executive of Lamda Industries. Key analysis methods were a SWOT analysis and thematic analysis. Theoretical models like the Uppsala Model, OLI Paradigm, Porter's Diamond Model, and Network Theory are the pillars of the study.

The findings show that Lamda has strong product quality and CE certification but lacks environmental certifications, logistics control, and a clear brand presence in Finland. To succeed, Lamda must invest in sustainability, upgrade its digital logistics, and build brand trust among Finnish consumers.

This business plan offers practical recommendations to help Lamda Industries enter and grow in the Finnish market. The plan can also guide other Pakistani exporters aiming to enter high-compliance international markets.

Keywords: Finnish market, sustainability, compliance, Lamda Industries, sports goods.

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1 Introduction

This thesis explores the potential of Pakistani exports of sports goods to Finland by examining opportunity and threat measures for Pakistani exporters in penetrating a tightly controlled, eco-friendly market. The research offers a strategic perspective through examining trade regulation, supply chain, consumer focus, and competition strategy. The research focuses on Lamda Industries, a mid-sized sports goods manufacturer based in Sialkot, Pakistan, as the case company. Lamda provides protective gear, CE-certified clothing, and gloves, and is aiming to grow its footprint in the Finnish market.

This topic was chosen because Finland offers a growing but underexplored opportunity for Pakistani exporters. Although Pakistan is globally recognized for its sports goods industry, especially in Sialkot, most companies struggle to meet the strict sustainability and compliance standards of Nordic markets. By focusing on Lamda Industries, this study aims to provide a practical strategy that supports market entry and long-term competitiveness in high-compliance regions like Finland.

1.1 Background and Structure of the Study

The international sporting equipment market has grown significantly, fueled by a growing health consciousness and post-pandemic demand for wellness and physical health (Chen et al. 2025, 3). According to the World Federation of the Sporting Goods Industry and McKinsey (2023), the global sporting goods industry rose above USD 89 billion in market size in 2021 and is projected to grow at an average annual rate of 3.5% up to 2030. Pakistan, and Sialkot city especially, has a focal position in this international trade. Sialkot is globally known as the center of hand-stitched football manufacturing, catering to all top brands and representing more than 70% of world output (Atkin et al. 2016, S35). The cluster consists of around 130 units and has been a source of Pakistan's exports to over 100 nations globally (Sialkot Chamber of Commerce & Industry 2024).

Finland is a yet-to-be-penetrated but growing market for Pakistani exports. With the estimated yearly expenditure on sports equipment of EUR 2.5 billion and a population of more than 90% engaged in regular physical training (Mehta 2024), Finnish customers present a massive desire for eco-friendly, quality sporting equipment (Bank of Finland 2024). However, successful entry requires a deep understanding of Finland's consumer culture, regulatory frameworks, and competitive landscape, elements that challenge many first-time exporters

This thesis is divided into five chapters:

Chapter 1 introduces the topic, provides background information, and presents the research aim and scope.

Chapter 2 reviews the relevant literature and theoretical models related to international business and market entry.

Chapter 3 explains the research methodology and describes how the data was collected and analyzed.

Chapter 4 presents the case study findings and summarizes key insights.

Chapter 5 provides the final conclusions and practical recommendations for entering the Finnish market.

1.2 Research Aim, Problem, and Scope

The objective of this thesis is to develop a business entry strategy for Lamda Industries, a Pakistani exporting industry of sports goods, in order to enter the Finnish market. Finland is a country with strict import regulations and high standards of quality and sustainability on the part of consumers (Bank of Finland 2024). This thesis provides Lamda with a step-by-step strategy to fulfill those expectations and expand in the market.

The issue is that Pakistani exporters find it difficult to excel in highly regulated economies like Finland (ITC 2020). They encounter the issues of poor branding, poor control of logistics, and poor environmental regulation awareness (Malik et al. 2017). These issues hold them back from venturing into new markets despite having good quality products.

This thesis focuses on helping Lamda understand and overcome these barriers. It uses a case study method based on a detailed interview with a senior executive at the company. The main research questions are:

1. What strategies can Lamda use to enter the Finnish market?
2. What logistics and supply chain solutions are suitable?
3. What rules and certifications are required?
4. How do these rules affect long-term success?

The scope of this research is limited to Lamda Industries as the case company. It focuses only on sports goods exports from Pakistan to Finland. The findings may also be useful for other similar exporters who want to enter high-compliance markets in Europe.

1.3 Limitations of The Study

Despite its focused contribution, this research has several limitations that affect the scope and generalizability of its findings. The primary limitation is the reliance on data from a single semi-structured interview with a senior executive at Lamda Industries. While the respondent holds substantial decision-making authority and provided meaningful insight into export challenges and strategy, the findings reflect a single organizational perspective. The study lacks input from other stakeholders such as policy experts, logistics providers, or Finnish buyers, which limits the depth of triangulation.

Furthermore, because of confidentiality restrictions, no internal documents or quantitative performance data were shared by Lamda Industries. This reduces the study's ability to offer detailed operational or financial analysis. The research also assumes a relatively uniform Finnish regulatory and consumer landscape, without exploring potential regional variations. The limited sample size and qualitative approach constrain the broader applicability of the conclusions, which should be interpreted as exploratory rather than definitive. Future research would benefit from including multiple firms and diverse stakeholder voices to enhance the robustness and relevance of the findings.

2 Literature Review

This chapter reviews existing academic and industry literature relevant to the export of sports goods from Pakistan to high-compliance markets such as Finland. The review is structured around six key themes that shape the theoretical and practical foundation of this thesis. These themes were selected based on gaps observed in previous research, policy reports, and industry analyses, and are intended to support the hybrid theoretical framework that guides this study. Each section simplifies complex insights from the literature and relates them to the specific context Pakistani SMEs seeking entry into the Finnish market.

2.1 Theoretical Frameworks for Market Entry

This theme was chosen to ground the research in existing internationalization theory. Each model contributes a different lens for understanding how SMEs navigate entry into a high-compliance, distant market like Finland. This section draws on four international business theories: the Uppsala Model, Dunning's Eclectic Paradigm (OLI), Porter's Diamond Model, and Network Theory. These models are adapted to suit the unique case of Pakistani SMEs operating in compliance-intensive export environments like Finland.

The Uppsala Model views internationalization as a gradual process shaped by experiential learning and risk minimization. Originally proposed by Johanson and Vahlne (1977), the model

suggests firms first enter culturally and geographically closer markets before expanding further (Oliveira et al. 2018). However, for many Pakistani exporters, this sequence is often bypassed. SMEs frequently aim directly for distant, high-compliance markets such as Finland without first operating in intermediate EU countries (Ansari 2015). Ansari (2015, 44) notes that such exporters regularly skip incremental learning phases, making the Uppsala model only partially applicable.

Dunning's Eclectic Paradigm (OLI) argues that firms expand internationally based on Ownership, Location, and Internalization advantages (Zhou & Guillen 2016). While low-cost labor may provide a Location advantage for Pakistan, Ownership advantages, such as strong branding or technological innovation, remain weak among many Pakistani SMEs (Nouman et al. 2009, 21). Internalization, which involves managing legal and logistical processes internally, is also limited. As Hill (2014, 72) points out, the OLI framework becomes fully effective only when backed by solid firm-level capabilities, capabilities that are often underdeveloped in Pakistan's export landscape.

Porter's Diamond Model explains national competitiveness through four interrelated factors: firm strategy, demand conditions, related and supporting industries, and factor conditions (Bakan & Doğan 2012). While Pakistan's sports goods industry benefits from specific factor conditions such as skilled manual labor, the model assumes a robust domestic demand to drive innovation, something not present in Pakistan's internal market (Malik 2022). Hill (2014, 73) critiques this shortcoming, suggesting that Porter's model needs to be adapted when applied to low-income economies with weaker institutions and consumer markets.

Network Theory offers a complementary lens by emphasizing trust-based relationships and social capital in driving foreign market entry (Caldarelli et al. 2012). Unlike other models that focus on tangible resources or internal capabilities, Network Theory highlights relational assets (Caldarelli et al. 2012). SMEs are known to enter foreign markets via personal or intra-organizational connections that can bypass traditional entry barriers (Cukurs 2020, 42). In Pakistani SMEs context, building relationships with environmental auditors, Finnish logistics firms, and digital marketplaces may offer a more practical pathway than relying solely on intermediaries.

With restricted resources, Pakistani SMEs rely on diaspora networks, informal networks, and trust relationships to manage the intricacies of regulation compliance (Malik et al. 2017). An example of this is, how Pakistani textile exporters have managed to use European wholesalers' networks to continue accessing markets despite increasing requirements for sustainability (Malik 2022, 24-25). Likewise, Sialkot sports goods manufacturers have cultivated stable networks with European importers, with the focus on reliability and long-term partnership as substitutes for formal compliance systems. Such networks are both a risk-

reduction system and a market intelligence source. Such trust-based relationships, as noted by SMEDA (2021, p. 16), can serve as gateways for managing cultural and regulatory barriers in markets such as Finland.

In summary, this thesis adopts a hybrid model that blends gradual capability-building (Uppsala), asset-based strategy (OLI), competitive positioning (Diamond), and relational entry (Network Theory). This multi-theoretical approach allows for a more flexible and operationally grounded entry strategy into the Finnish market, particularly for resource-limited firms.

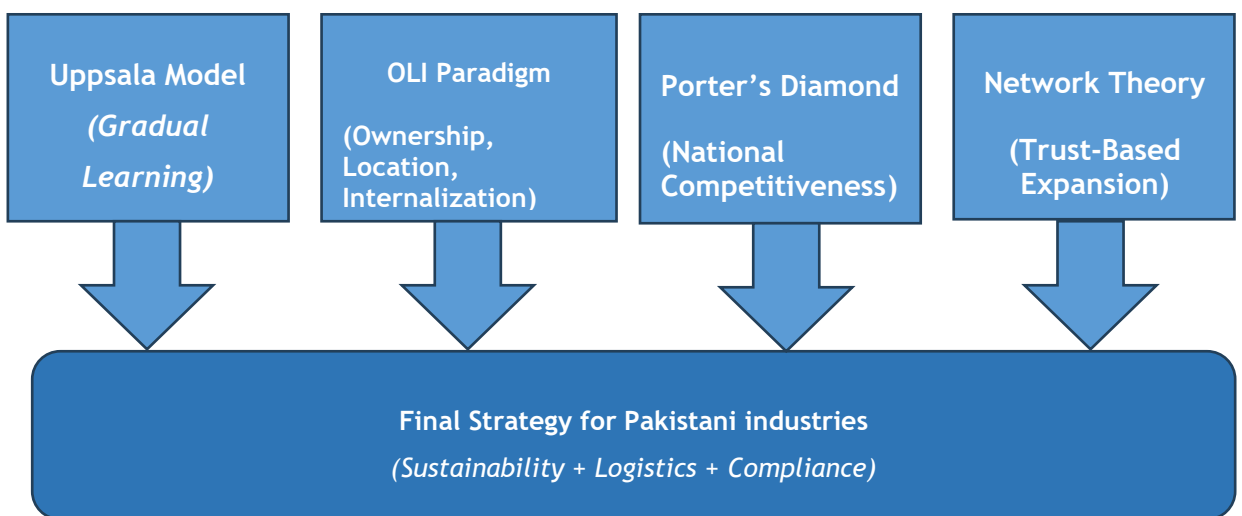


Figure 1 Conceptual Framework Guiding Pakistani Industries Market Entry Strategy

2.2 Exporting from Pakistan to High-Compliance Markets

This theme was selected to assess how trade advantages like RCA need to be reinterpreted in markets that prioritize compliance, ethics, and certification over volume. Pakistan's sports goods industry holds a favorable Revealed Comparative Advantage (RCA), particularly in hand-stitched items such as inflatable balls (Shahzad, Aslam & Javaid 2023, 96). RCA is a standard measure of trade, where one compares a nation's export ratio in a product to the international average. The value of an RCA more than 1 is a measure of comparative advantage to produce a particular product (Tampubolon 2019). In the case of Pakistan, high RCA scores above 1 indicates strong export specialization across some categories of sports goods. However, RCA is a backward-looking metric; it emphasizes export volume but fails to capture readiness for regulatory compliance, brand development, or sustainability alignment, which are essential in high-compliance markets like Finland (Chakraborty et al. 2023).

Finland's procurement expectations extend far beyond cost. Buyers increasingly demand verifiable certifications (e.g., ISO 14001), eco-labeled products, and supply chain transparency (Bank of Finland 2024). Pakistani firms rarely incorporate such features into their export strategies. Moreover, the global trade environment is shifting toward compliance-based competitiveness, requiring exporters to align with policies like the EU Green Deal and Finland's Bioeconomy 2035 Roadmap (Arasto et al. 2021).

Thus, for Finland, success requires a transition from volume-based advantage to value-based readiness. This entails the application of traceability systems, pursuing ethical certifications, and product and packaging redesign to make them value sustainability. Export strategies that continue to prioritize cost-efficiency over environmental and ethical factors are likely to be left out of value market segments.

2.3 Pakistan's Sports Goods Industry: Capacity vs. Capability

This theme highlights the internal limitations of Pakistan's sports goods industry, especially in technology and certification, despite its global market presence.

Despite Pakistan's global reputation for producing high-quality sports goods, particularly in Sialkot, many firms remain unprepared to meet the advanced standards required in high-compliance markets (Malik et al. 2017). Shahzad et al. (2023, 96) argues that Pakistan's strength in export categories such as martial arts equipment and hand-stitched footballs is grounded in manual labor processes rather than innovation or systemic compliance.

One of the key limitations is technological stagnation. As noted by Shakoor and Rehan (2019, 92), outdated machinery and manual processes lower productivity and make it challenging to meet buyer expectations for traceability and sustainable manufacturing. This technological gap not only increases costs but also limits firms' responsiveness to international quality standards (Shakoor and Rehan 2019).

Compounding this issue is the slow pace of certification adoption. According to Nawaz, Javed & Ullah (2020, 99), firms that lack international standards such as ISO 9000 or ISO 14001 are effectively excluded from certified European supply chains, where such credentials are often mandatory (TDAP 2024, 52).

Moreover, Shahzad et al. (2023) observe stagnation in Pakistan's dynamic RCA scores, especially across six of the top ten export categories. This indicates that the traditional export model, based on labor-intensive processes, may have reached its limits. Moving forward, capability enhancement through digital integration, quality control, and compliance alignment is critical for accessing advanced markets such as Finland.

2.4 Regulatory Barriers in the Finnish Market

This theme focuses on understanding how Finnish regulations act as entry barriers. It is included because Pakistani SMEs must overcome these barriers to export successfully. Although Pakistan has successfully exported to countries like the UK and Germany, the Finnish market poses distinct challenges, primarily because of non-tariff barriers (NTBs). These include stringent requirements for product labeling, technical documentation in EU-standard languages, and packaging rules, all of which increase entry complexity (Ansari 2016, 58).

Finland operates under the EU's Single Administrative Document (SAD) system and the Import Control System (ICS), both of which introduce additional layers of documentation, security checks, and customs protocols (Ansari 2015, 36-38). These are safe and transparent in design but are likely to be troublesome for exporters who are not accustomed with EU procedures.

Classification under the TARIC system of the European Communities also presents a challenge to exporters. TARIC assigns a specific code to each commodity, which determines the duty, quota, and trading rules available within the EU. Misclassifications lead to delayed exports, miscalculation of duty or outright rejection (Ansari 2016, 37). These administrative complications also exceed the cost of tariffs, and the exporters also need to incur additional resources on documentation, repackaging, and compliance testing (Ansari 2016).

Moreover, Finnish regulations, aligned with the EU Green Deal and Finland's national Bioeconomy Strategy, place strong emphasis on environmental and ethical standards (Malik et al. 2017). Importers must demonstrate carbon neutrality, ethical sourcing, and sustainability compliance as a condition for market access (Arasto et al. 2021, 5-6).

To successfully access the Finnish market, exporters must therefore navigate dual thresholds: formal institutional compliance and alignment with evolving ethical consumer expectations. Without meeting both, entry becomes either delayed, restricted, or commercially unviable.

2.5 Logistics and Technology Constraints

This theme was chosen to highlight how inefficient logistics and lack of digital systems undermine export readiness, especially in a technologically advanced market like Finland. Pakistan's sports goods industry faces significant logistical inefficiencies that limit its ability to compete in highly organized markets like Finland. These constraints include long inland transit times, outdated digital infrastructure, and non-sustainable shipping practices (World Bank 2021, 24-26).

Goods are primarily routed through Karachi or Port Qasim, both located more than 1,400 kilometers from Sialkot. According to Bilal Hafiz Muhammad (2016, 15), this distance,

combined with road congestion and poor coordination, results in high transportation costs and frequent delivery delays.

Few firms utilize ERP (Enterprise Resource Planning) or WMS (Warehouse Management Systems) to track inventory or coordinate shipments. These systems enable real-time tracking and inventory control and are considered standard in Nordic supply chains (Bilal Hafiz Muhammad 2016, 13). Their absence places Pakistani exporters at a disadvantage when engaging with digitally integrated buyers.

Manual warehousing further limits operational efficiency. In the absence of automation, delays and human errors are common (Abdulrahman 2022). In addition, informal partnerships with uncertified freight agents reduce delivery reliability and increase exposure to documentation errors and customs-related risks (WTO 2018, 59-63).

Meanwhile, Finnish procurement systems emphasize low-emission transportation, recyclable packaging, and carbon-neutral logistics (Saldatsenkava 2024, 19-21). These are no longer competitive preferences but compliance requirements for accessing regulated markets.

For exporters like Lamda Industries to remain viable, modernization of logistics is essential. This includes:

- Integration of ERP and WMS systems
- Collaboration with certified 3PL/4PL providers
- Commitment to traceable, environmentally low-impact logistics

Without these improvements, Pakistani firms' risk being sidelined in high-transparency, regulation-led markets like Finland.

2.6 Finnish Consumer Behavior and Sustainability Expectations

Finnish consumers are increasingly motivated by values such as sustainability, ethical sourcing, and supply chain transparency (Malik et al. 2017). Unlike traditional price-sensitive markets, Finnish buyers prioritize conscious consumerism, particularly in sectors like sports goods. The Finnish Bioeconomy White Paper confirms that eco-conscious values influence product choices more strongly than price in categories like sustainable equipment and carbon-neutral logistics (Arasto et al. 2021, 21).

Yet, much of the existing Pakistani literature continues to treat the EU as a uniform market, often ignoring country-specific buyer expectations. Viitamäki (2024) highlights that ethical sourcing, responsible marketing, and sustainability certification are essential to gain trust in the Finnish market. Failing to meet these standards can result in reputational risks and restricted access to premium retail channels (Viitamäki 2024, 15).

Moreover, third-party certifications such as OEKO-TEX, ISO 14001, and the Nordic Swan label are widely recognized by Finnish consumers to verify environmental and ethical claims (Bank of Finland 2024). Products lacking these certifications are often excluded from major retail platforms. According to Viitamäki (2024, 16), sustainability in Finland is not just a value-add, it is a baseline requirement for market participation.

Another requirement is traceability in the digital world. Consumers increasingly use technologies like QR codes, mobile applications, and open-source audit platforms to check product origin, labor practices, and environmental performance (Viitamäki 2024). Not being open results in exclusion from top platforms like XXL Sports and Verkkokauppa.com, which require full traceability and ethical branding (Viitamäki 2024, 27).

Despite these evolving expectations, much of the Pakistani export strategy remains focused on price discounts and mass production. For instance, Shahzad et al. (2023, 106) emphasizes volume competitiveness while neglecting consumer perception, traceability, or eco-labelling—factors that are increasingly decisive in buyer behavior.

To succeed in Finland, Pakistani exporters must regard sustainability and ethical branding not as optional marketing tactics, but as non-negotiable elements of entry strategy. This includes eco-friendly packaging, localized ethical marketing, and third-party certification—along with full alignment across physical and digital consumer touchpoints.

2.7 Summary of Literature Themes

This chapter explored six core themes that structure this thesis and provide both analytical and operational insight into Pakistani exports to Finland. These themes were chosen because they directly address the multi-dimensional challenges faced by SMEs when entering high-compliance, sustainability-focused markets. Each theme links to a research objective and supports the hybrid framework that underpins the study.

Theoretical Frameworks for Market Entry - These models (Uppsala, OLI, Diamond, and Network) provide layered insight into how SMEs expand internationally and form the foundation of the hybrid model guiding this research.

Exporting to High-Compliance Markets - Emphasizes that RCA and export volume are insufficient without meeting regulatory and sustainability requirements.

Industry Capacity vs. Capability - Explains how internal gaps in technology and certification readiness limit competitiveness, despite strong export potential.

Regulatory Barriers - Focuses on the complexity of Finnish and EU systems, from customs codes to environmental certifications, which shape market access.

Logistics and Technology Constraints - Shows how Pakistan's outdated logistics systems and lack of digital integration hinder market entry.

Finnish Consumer Behavior and Sustainability Expectations - Highlights the shift in consumer values toward traceability, eco-labelling, and ethical branding.

These themes directly informed the development of the interview questions and coding framework in Chapter 3, and the analysis in Chapter 4. Together, they ensure full alignment between the literature, the research design, and the findings.

3 Methodology

3.1 Research Design and Case Selection

This study adopts a qualitative, single-case research design, selected for its ability to provide deep insight into real-world export challenges faced by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The focus is on Lamda Industries, a mid-sized sports goods manufacturer in Pakistan, and how it can navigate the regulatory and market complexities of entering Finland, a sustainability-driven, compliance-heavy market within the European Union.

A qualitative approach is appropriate because it captures the nuanced decision-making processes, strategic trade-offs, and operational limitations that quantitative methods might overlook. Rather than relying on numerical trends, this method focuses on rich contextual detail, enabling the researcher to understand how a firm like Lamda experiences and responds to the dynamics of internationalization and compliance-driven export expectations.

Lamda Industries was selected as the case company based on its partial presence in European markets and its expressed strategic interest in expanding toward the Finnish region. Founded in 1990 and located in Sialkot, Pakistan, a global hub for sports goods manufacturing—Lamda produces motorcycle protective gear, CE-certified clothing, denim garments, and sports gloves. The company maintains multiple contracts with EU-based buyers, including operations across the UK, Sweden, Germany, and Finland. According to the 2024 Internal Inventory Report, Lamda Industries employs over 120 permanent workers, supports additional contractual staff, and operates more than 90 production units, including flatbed sewing machines, bar-tack machines, and heat press systems.

The firm was deemed particularly relevant for this study due to its partial experience in high-compliance markets (e.g., CE certification testing in France and Italy) and its ambition to strengthen its footprint in Finland. However, the company has yet to adopt systems such as ERP or WMS and does not currently hold sustainability certifications like ISO 14001, making it

a representative case for SMEs navigating the gap between basic compliance and value-driven market integration. This strategic position allowed the study to examine both capabilities and limitations within an evolving export context.

For this research, a semi-structured interview was conducted with a senior executive responsible for Lamda's international business development. While internal documents were not shared due to confidentiality protocols, the interview offered valuable insight into the company's logistical structure, product positioning, market entry planning, and awareness of compliance gaps. Lamda's hybrid experience, balancing existing EU exposure with gaps in sustainability and branding, makes it an ideal candidate for exploring the thesis themes.

3.2 Data Collection Method, Data Analysis and Reliability

The primary method of data collection was a semi-structured interview with a senior executive at Lamda Industries. This method was chosen for its ability to provide both direction and flexibility, enabling structured inquiry into key areas while allowing the respondent to elaborate freely. Semi-structured interviews are well-suited for case-based research, especially where strategic intent, operational constraints, and cultural readiness are under investigation.

The interview was designed around four core themes, which were drawn directly from the six literature themes and aligned with the study's research questions:

Competitive Strategy - exploring how Lamda differentiates itself from global competitors, manages cost-quality trade-offs, and builds its brand identity in compliance-heavy markets.

Logistics and Supply Chain - examining production timelines, use of third-party logistics, internal visibility, and infrastructure limitations, particularly in light of Finnish procurement expectations.

Market Entry Barriers - assessing Lamda's market knowledge, buyer relationships, regulatory readiness, and cultural fit in the Finnish context.

Compliance and Regulation - evaluating Lamda's current certifications, sustainability practices, and alignment with Finnish and EU trade norms.

The interview lasted approximately 60 minutes on whatsapp call; it was conducted in English. Detailed notes were taken during the interview discussion. Interview was not recorded but careful notes ensured that all important information was preserved. The participant, as a key decision-maker with over 15 years of export experience, provided critical insight into both the company's strategic direction and the operational realities it faces in trying to enter a high-compliance Nordic market.

These four core themes were not selected arbitrarily; they were synthesized from the thematic literature and used to guide both the interview structure and subsequent data analysis.

The information gained from the interview was analyzed by manual thematic analysis, an appropriate method to expose patterns and make sense of qualitative data. The method was utilized because of its ease and ability to expose underlying recurring themes around the research questions.

After organizing the handwritten notes, the interview data were coded and analyzed to four pre-specified themes: Supply Chain Management, Competitive Strategy, Market Entry Barriers, and Compliance and Regulation. These themes directly relate to the research aims of the study and were employed to structure responses into effective analytic groups. Thematic coding enabled the researcher to chart how various operational matters and strategic predicaments were aligned during the various Lamda Industries export procedures. Rather than aiming for generalization, the method provided rich, detailed understanding of the firm's experiences in preparing to enter a high-compliance, sustainability-focused market like Finland.

To ensure validity, the interview questions were directly aligned with the research aim. Each question was designed to extract insights relevant to the four key themes, ensuring that the responses supported the study's analytical focus.

The reliability of the research was enhanced through a clearly documented process. This includes detailed records of the interview structure, transcription procedures, and thematic coding framework. The transparency of this process allows the study to be replicated under similar conditions, potentially yielding consistent results.

Although the use of a single interview limits the generalizability of findings, the depth of the respondent's knowledge and experience provided valuable insights. These findings are not intended to represent all SMEs but instead offer a context-specific perspective that can inform strategic planning for firms facing similar export challenges.

3.3 Ethical and Data Management Considerations

Thematic analysis was used to process and interpret the interview data. After transcription, the researcher manually coded the data under the four pre-defined themes aligned with the research questions. This method was chosen for its ability to identify recurring patterns, link findings to the literature, and generate actionable insights without overgeneralizing from a single case.

To ensure validity, both the questions and coding themes were derived from the thesis objectives and the literature review, particularly the theoretical model. This ensured that insights gathered directly addressed the study's research questions. Reliability was strengthened by maintaining a transparent workflow—documenting the interview process, coding framework, and analytical decisions.

4 Case Study Findings

While the literature review was structured across six thematic domains, the empirical data in this chapter is analyzed through four practical themes: Competitive Strategy, Logistics and Supply Chain, Market Entry Barriers, and Compliance and Regulation. These themes were derived from the research questions and the hybrid theoretical framework, ensuring a coherent bridge between theory and practice.

The findings, gathered from a semi-structured interview with a senior executive at Lamda Industries, are organized using the hybrid framework that combines the Uppsala Model, OLI Paradigm, Porter's Diamond Model, and Network Theory. This chapter presents both descriptive insights and analytical observations, drawing connections between Lamda's actual strategies and the conceptual models underpinning the study.

4.1 Competitive Strategy

Lamda Industries' competitive approach is to utilize its product quality, safety compliance, and cost advantage strengths. The company has built a reputation for manufacturing CE-certified motorbike safety clothing, a critical requirement for export to the European Union. Products are tested in accredited laboratories in France and Italy, ensuring conformity with international safety standards.

This compliance focus enables Lamda to position itself favorably against competitors in terms of reliability and adherence to mandatory regulations. However, mere compliance is not enough in high-compliance markets like Finland. Finnish consumers prioritize not only product safety but also sustainability, ethical sourcing, and environmental impact.

Lamda's pricing strategy is competitive but not aggressively cost-cutting. The firm consciously integrates higher-quality raw materials when necessary, acknowledging that value-added quality can justify premium pricing in the Finnish market. The senior executive noted that

Finnish buyers are prepared to pay more for products that reflect ethical values and superior craftsmanship.

Lamda's lack of localized branding approach implies a constraint in the development of robust ownership-specific advantages, one of the elements of the OLI Paradigm. Although the company enjoys cheap production (location advantage) and existing partnerships (network support), it does not have proprietary brand equity or new-product differentiation to reinforce its market presence in value-sensitive markets such as Finland.

Although Lamda is already active in Finnish and other Nordic businesses, its operations are presently mainly set up in terms of B2B alliances instead of direct, branded market presence. This partial entry approach partially adheres to the Uppsala Model's gradual internationalization trajectory. Still, introducing a direct-to-consumer brand in Finland—without prior testing in culturally compatible markets—may still be risky since it means having to adapt locally to compliance and consumer demands at short notice.

4.2 Logistics and Supply Chain

Lamda's logistics operations are marked by dependency on external partners and limited internal control over scheduling and delivery timelines. The company depends on third-party logistics (3PL) companies to handle its exports, scheduling pickups according to in-house production readiness. One day of delayed production by any company can upset shipping schedules, leading to missed bookings, penalty, and customer loss.

The absence of digital infrastructure aggravates these issues. Lamda fails to utilize cutting-edge logistics management software like ERP or WMS systems that are common in Nordic and European markets. This deficiency results in poor visibility in inventory, shipping status, and delivery coordination.

As noted in the interview with Lamda Industries' senior executive, the firm experiences logistical issues including shipping delays related to production, absence of ERP/WMS systems, and use of third-party logistics providers. These constraints reflect wider inefficiencies noted among Pakistani exporters (Muhammad 2016, 15) and have adversely affected Lamda's capacity to satisfy Finnish buyers' expectations.

Finnish customers increasingly require environmentally compliant logistics, such as low-emission transport, returnable packaging, and complete traceability – aspects deeply rooted in Finland's regulatory and procurement culture, especially under the EU Green Deal.

The interview also indicated that Lamda's lack of significant control over its logistics process constrains internalization, an important weakness noted by the OLI framework. Also, its

reliance on loosely arranged external partners lowers reliability in a market where smooth and clear operations are vital, as predicted by Network Theory.

If Lamda fails to modernize its logistics infrastructure and adapt to eco-logistics standards, it is at risk of operational inefficiencies that directly affect its credibility and competitiveness in Finland. In addition, Lamda's logistical issues are indicative of a wider location disadvantage, even with low-cost labor in Pakistan, high inland transport costs and delays in shipping erode cost efficiency overall, especially in time-sensitive, regulation-intensive markets.

4.3 Market Entry Barriers

Lamda Industries face a range of regulatory and cultural barriers in its efforts to expand into the Finnish market. The firm has established initial contact with Finnish consumers through indirect export and European exhibitions since 2022, according to the senior executive. However, the extent of contact is limited and there are no permanent distributors and authorized retailing partners in Finland.

Among the most important issues are the limited Finnish consumer awareness of Lamda, especially in the areas of sustainability and corporate responsibility. While the company has personal connections with the Nordic firms, it lacks formalized local market research and systematic feedback systems. Thus, product development is generic instead of Finnish value-specific or certification standard-specific.

Lamda's senior executive stated that the company has faced clearance delay of shipments to Nordic countries due to insufficient packaging details and last-minute corrections on documents. Even though Lamda is capable of managing EU regulatory documents otherwise, the lack of proactive compliance planning typically leads to shipment delays, additional costs, and reputation problems with buyers.

This responsive strategy, waiting for buyer needs rather than anticipating them—has hindered the ability of the company to align its product lines with Finnish expectations, such as third-party environmental audits, eco-certifications, and product traceability. Lacking prior-stage awareness of such needs, Lamda has not been able to maximize follow-up inquiries from Finnish wholesalers.

the company's entry attempts avoided contiguous or culturally similar EU markets that might have provided a softer landing. This has limited Lamda's institutional learning curve and increased its exposure to market-specific risks in Finland. The interview highlighted that no

pilot project or phased approach was used; instead, the company pursued direct outreach, which intensified compliance challenges.

While Lamda does leverage trust-based partnerships across Europe, it has not yet developed strong in-market networks within Finland—such as through trade associations, logistics providers, or cultural intermediaries. This absence limits the firm’s ability to reduce information gaps and respond effectively to local buyer expectations.

4.4 Compliance and Regulation

Lamda Industries has demonstrated a strong record in meeting safety compliance requirements, particularly through its CE-certified motorbike gear and protective clothing, which is tested in accredited labs in France and Italy. These certifications have enabled the company to export successfully to several EU markets and fulfill baseline safety requirements.

However, when it comes to environmental and sustainability standards—especially those emphasized by Finnish buyers, Lamda is still in the early stages of alignment. According to the interview with the export manager, Lamda does not currently hold ISO 14001 or other eco-focused certifications. The respondent explained that while they are aware of the growing demand for sustainable goods, especially in Scandinavia, the company has not yet adapted its packaging or production practices to meet specific Finnish or EU environmental expectations.

The senior executive noted that requests from Nordic buyers often include requirements for recyclable packaging, carbon-neutral shipping options, and traceable supply chain documentation, areas where Lamda is not yet fully prepared. These limitations have already impacted business opportunities; for instance, a potential buyer from Finland inquired about biodegradable packaging and declined further engagement when such options weren’t available.

While Lamda’s regulatory documentation and labeling comply with general EU rules, the lack of third-party eco-certifications and sustainable branding continues to be a barrier for establishing long-term relationships with Finnish clients. The firm has begun discussions on

investing in ISO 14001 and better packaging solutions, but no implementation has started yet due to budget constraints.

As it stands, Lamda's compliance level is sufficient for transactional exports, but insufficient for building the kind of long-term, high-trust relationships required in Finland's ethically conscious market.

4.5 Summary of Strategic Considerations

Lamda Industries' strengths are in quality products, safety compliance, and established relationships in the Nordic region. The company has strategic vulnerabilities in branding, logistics overhauls, environmental compliance, and market studies. The vulnerabilities restrict it from becoming an effective competitor in the Finnish market of high regulatory requirements and value-conscious consumers.

These strategic determinants capture Lamda's reliance on network-driven growth (Network Theory), limited internal resources and proprietary assets (OLI Paradigm), and minimal market learning from a non-linear internationalization approach (Uppsala Model), and an awareness of the complexity of running high-compliance markets from a resource-constrained platform. The below SWOT analysis gives a combined perspective of Lamda Industries' internal weaknesses and strengths as well as external opportunities and threats pertinent to its entry into the Finnish market.

Table 1 Analysis of Lamda Industries for Finnish Market Entry

Strengths	Weaknesses
CE-certified, quality products	Lack of own brand in Finland
Established partnerships in Nordic markets	No sustainability-focused certifications (e.g., ISO 14001)
Competitive pricing for high-quality goods	Limited logistics control and no ERP/WMS systems
Experienced documentation handling	Poor understanding of Finnish consumer expectations
Opportunities	Threats
Growing demand for ethical sports products	Strong competition from global brands (Nike, Adidas)

Eco-certification could unlock new buyers	Regulatory risks due to incomplete compliance
Digital logistics can improve efficiency	Cultural mismatch or failure to adapt
Potential to build a direct-to-consumer brand	Rising eco-logistics standards in Finland

Aside from the SWOT analysis, the following chart also measures the relative effect of the most important strategic issues confronting Lamda Industries. Logistics was identified as the most pressing issue, followed by branding and compliance concerns, while market intelligence, while important, has relatively less influence. The impact values in Figure 3 were assigned by the researcher based on coded interview data and triangulated with strategic literature, to reflect perceived influence on Lamda's export success.

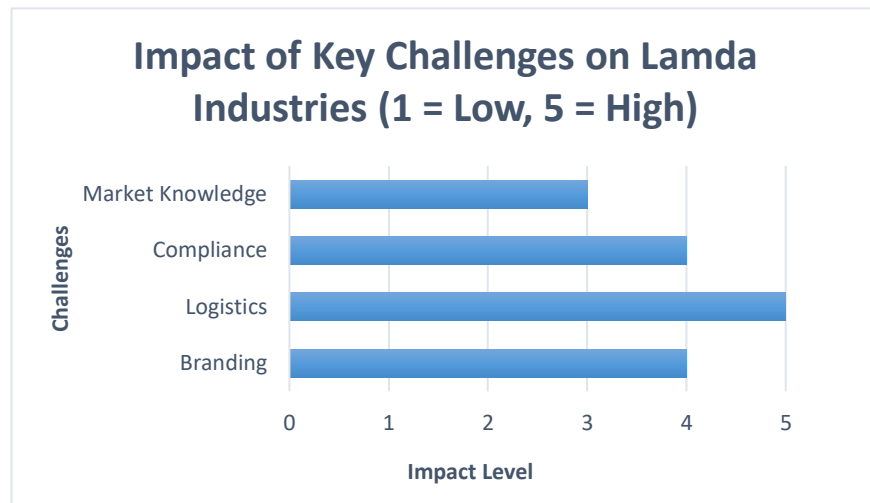


Figure 2 Impact values assigned based on interview coding and triangulation with strategic literature (1 = Low, 5 = High)

In order to put Lamda Industries' strengths and weaknesses into perspective, the next section offers a comparative analysis of other Pakistani SMEs operating in similar European markets.

4.6 Comparative Analysis with Similar Exporters

To put Lamda Industries' problems further into perspective, it is worth comparing its readiness for market entry against other Pakistani SMEs who have performed or failed in comparable high-compliance export markets, especially in the European Union. The

comparative perspective focuses attention on industry-wide problems and strategic decisions that might shape Lamda's own trajectory.

Pakistani textile exporters offer a useful benchmark for understanding strategic evolution in the Nordic markets, including Finland (Yasir 2023, 25). These firms, with a longer history in the region, initially entered through basic cost competitiveness and rudimentary compliance measures such as CE certifications. However, over time, their growth depended on transitioning toward value-based market integration (TDAP 2024). This involved securing ISO 14001 certifications to prove environmental consciousness, establishing partnerships with indigenous Finnish retailers to create trust, and embracing sustainable-centered logistics practices like recyclable packaging and low-emission transportation (Malik et al. 2025). These moves not only allowed them to maintain their presence but also to move past the level of simple suppliers, receiving co-branding benefits and more integrated trading arrangements in the Finnish market.

Contrarily, in the Lamda Industries interview, the firm does not presently own a collection of value-driven features typical of Pakistan's successful Pakistani textile exporters to the European markets. While the company has a strong foundation in product quality, it has yet to achieve the level of environmental alignment or market visibility demonstrated by textile exporters. This difference highlights the importance of brand positioning, compliance beyond minimum requirements, and active collaboration with local market actors. The textile industry experience holds strategic lessons relevant to Lamda's repositioning in terms of penetrating an ethically conscious and regulation-plagued European market.

Wider trends among Pakistani SMEs suggest even greater challenges that Lamda is facing. Based on the TDAP Annual Report (2024), there are different exporters who are facing with limited branding strategies, inadequate utilization of digital logistics systems, and over-dependence on conventional compliance systems. These are exacerbated by system-level challenges, such as restricted access to export credit, discouraging tariff regimes, and poorly developed trade facilitation infrastructure (World Bank 2021). Lamda's export challenges mirror these structural weaknesses, which render SMEs incapable of competing within technologically advanced economies such as Finland.

Vietnamese exporters have way outperformed their counterparts worldwide by aggressively pursuing qualifications, actively engaging the government's assistance, and strategically drawing foreign direct investment to enhance production systems (Luu & Parsons, 2022). Pakistani SMEs, on the other hand, are inward-looking and suffer from poor public private coordination and insufficient export promotion infrastructure (World Bank 2024). The

difference emphasizes the manner in which institutional support and policy advice are essential to assist businesses to internationalize successfully.

For Lamda Industries, the study identifies several strategic imperatives. To thrive in the Finnish market, the business has to stay ahead of the world in sustainability trends, rather than minimum compliance levels. It has to spend on branding and visibility, particularly in light of the consumer consciousness in Finland. Leveraging trade facilitation tools provided by institutions like TDAP and utilizing preferential schemes such as the EU GSP+ can enhance its competitive edge. Furthermore, improving logistics systems and cultivating local partnerships will be essential for building trust and ensuring reliable delivery. Ultimately, Lamda's long-term competitiveness depends on its ability to transition from a compliance-oriented exporter to a value-driven market participant.

The case of Lamda Industries finds a blend of operational competencies and gaps. The company has developed a presence in foreign trade with product compliance and a track record in the markets of Europe, but it does not have fundamental infrastructure, market-specific knowledge, and environmental certifications necessary for effective long-term entry into Finland. Closing these gaps will be needed for Lamda to be an acceptable and competitive supplier in Finland's high-compliance and sustainability-oriented retail sector.

5 Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined Lamda Industries' strategic opportunity to enter the Finnish market, which is characterized by high regulatory standards, strong sustainability demands, and intense brand competition. The study employed a hybrid theoretical framework, blending the Uppsala Model, Dunning's OLI Paradigm, Porter's Diamond Model, and the Network Theory—to analyze the preparedness of Lamda under four broad themes: Competitive Strategy, Logistics and Supply Chain, Market Entry Barriers, and Compliance and Regulation.

The results suggest uneven preparedness. This was supported by the company's export manager in an interview, who further noted that as much as the CE marking is a benefit, buyers pointed to full traceability as well as green packaging as a primary gap. Alignment with sustainability standards, digital infrastructure, and market-specific research, are factors that are fast becoming key to sustained success in Finland's compliance-oriented market.

Specifically, the firm does not have a local brand strategy and has not achieved globally accepted environmental certifications like ISO 14001 or OEKO-TEX. While price and product quality by Lamda are competitively advantageous, missing in its Finnish buyer appeal are eco-

friendly packaging, low-emission logistics, and direct-to-consumer brand. These are added to by a reactive strategy, reacting to buyers' needs rather than pre-empting them—which further constrains strategic control.

While the Uppsala model focuses on incremental learning and sequential market entry via culturally or geographically similar nations, Lamda's case is a more complex variation. The company has held long-term alliances in Sweden and Finland, indicating a more regionally integrated strategy than a leap into unknown terrain. Yet, its product quality and CE compliance priority is more evident than its branding or sustainability positioning, which can restrict internalization deeper in the market. From an OLI and Network Theory focus, although Lamda has established relational capital with Finnish partners, the lack of a strong brand identity and minimal in-house presence could constrain ownership-specific advantages and trust-building in the Finnish market.

Although this study was theoretically informed, practical observations from the interview suggest a more complex reality: in order to thrive in Finland, one must do more than meet the minimum requirements. It demands a value-based market identity that aligns with Finnish consumer values, environmental goals, and institutional expectations. Company-specific information, such as workforce and machine capacity, was obtained from Lamda Industries' internal records (2024) and contributed to understanding the firm's operational profile.

This research's provides strategic insights not only for Lamda Industries but also for other Pakistani SMEs aiming to penetrate high-compliance, sustainability-focused markets like Finland.

5.2 Discussion

While this case study offers rich, firm-specific insight into Lamda Industries' export readiness, the findings are not broadly generalizable due to the single-case design and reliance on one key informant. Nevertheless, the challenges identified, branding limitations, sustainability gaps, and weak digital infrastructure—mirror wider issues among Pakistani SMEs, as confirmed by industry reports.

The research is grounded in 2024 data and reflects a real-time assessment of market readiness within an evolving regulatory landscape. As such, it serves as a diagnostic tool and strategic blueprint for other firms with similar profiles. As the Lamda executive indicated, it had already caused a Finnish buyer to turn away business, illustrating the extent to which practical interview evidence mirrors wider strategic shortcomings. However, further research involving multiple firms and stakeholders could enhance the external validity of these insights and provide a more comprehensive understanding of SME internationalization in high-compliance markets.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the analysis conducted in this study, several strategic recommendations are proposed to support Lamda Industries in successfully entering and sustaining a presence in the Finnish market. These recommendations are intended to improve the company's current weaknesses while being aligned with the values and aspirations of Finnish consumers, regulators, and business partners.

To become competitive and establish a lasting market presence in Finland, Lamda Industries must shift from a compliance-driven, volume-based export approach to one of sustainability, market integration, and brand presence.

5.3.1 Create a Finland-Specific Brand Strategy

Lamda must move away from being a disembodied supplier and establish a branded identity to which the Finnish will respond. That's building an inspiring story of its higher ethical standards of production, expert craftsmanship, and ecological thinking. Establishing a Finnish-language website, product labeling in Finnish, and participation in trade shows will improve credibility and visibility. Social media campaigns for sustainable practices and community engagement can further improve brand authenticity.

5.3.2 Get Environmental Certifications and Enhance Packaging

Pursuing certifications like ISO 14001, Nordic Swan, and OEKO-TEX is critical to conveying compliance and trust to Finnish consumers and retailers. The company executive confessed during the interview that the lack of such certifications had directly limited buyer involvement from Nordic customers. The certifications are not only regulatory passports but marketing tools in sustainability-oriented markets. Lamda needs, simultaneously, to switch to biodegradable or recyclable packaging solutions, which are frequently obligatory in the public procurement channel and big retailing channels of Finland.

5.3.3 Upgrade Digital Logistics Infrastructure

Dependence of Lamda on third-party logistics service providers with no in-house digital systems is one of the most critical vulnerabilities. ERP and WMS adoption will improve transparency, tracking of deliveries, inventory management, and customer real-time communication. These digital technologies will make it possible for Lamda to satisfy Finnish expectations of full traceability and avert delays in shipments due to coordination shortcomings. Furthermore, the use of eco-certified 3PL providers will improve credibility and performance.

5.3.4 Develop Local Networks and Partnerships

To mitigate entry risks and gain market insights, Lamda must actively create alliances with regional stakeholders. These are trade organizations, ethical retail chains, consulting lawyers and logisticians, and sustainability lobbies. The networks will provide policy change advisories, offer certifications, and help Lamda become more embedded in the region. Co-branding initiatives or pilot programs also can be the result of cooperation with Finnish public-private SME or sustainability initiatives.

5.3.5 Implement a Phased Market Entry Strategy

Lamda should not initiate a mass entry prior to closing gaps within foundations. A three-stage framework is recommended:

Short-Term (0-12 months): Achieve environmental certifications, establish a Finnish-facing website, and launch packaging improvements.

Medium-Term (12-24 months): Launch pilot exports, participate in trade shows, and establish direct relationships with environmentally friendly retailers.

Long-Term (>24 months): Build local distribution, develop Finnish-prioritized product offerings, and consider direct to consumer sales channels.

This methodical strategy enables step-by-step adaptation with no monetary and reputation-related risk.

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Appendix 1 Interview Questions Used in the Study

1. Could you briefly describe Lamda's current export operations-such as the main Countries you export to, and which product categories are most in demand?
2. What aspects of Lamda's products do you believe make them competitive or attractive to international buyers?
3. If Lamda were to enter a new European market like Finland, what key strategies would you prioritize regarding pricing, branding, or product customization?
4. What are the biggest challenges you encounter in international shipping or delivery?
5. Does Lamda rely on external logistics partners (such as third-party logistics providers), or are these operations managed in-house?
6. Have you received inquiries or attempted to export to Nordic countries such as Finland? If so, what was the experience like?
7. From your perspective, what are the biggest barriers when entering a new market-compliance, building trust, or something else?
8. What kind of feedback do European buyers typically provide, especially related to product quality, packaging, or sustainability?
9. Are there any specific certifications or standards that your buyers frequently request? How prepared is Lamda to meet EU/Finland-style compliance requirements?
10. Have you ever experienced regulatory delays or documentation issues that complicated exports?
11. If Lamda were to seriously pursue the Finnish market, what would you say are the three most critical factors to get right?
12. Do you think Finnish buyers prioritize pricing or place more value on sustainability, ethics, and transparency?
13. Is there any insight from your export journey that you believe would benefit new exporters-something you wish you had known earlier?