

Berlin international university of applied sciences

Faculty of business administration

Bachelor thesis

Building an online platform

“Selling German second-hand automobiles to developing countries: The case of Afghanistan.”

Ali Yaser Safar Zada

Student ID: 1701450

Current semester: 6th semester

Advisor: Pro. Dr. Manfred Lieb

Examiner: Pro. Dr. Peter Mantel

Abstract

This research paper analyzes the business opportunity of building an online platform for selling German second-hand automobiles to Afghanistan. The study investigates the demand for German automobiles in Afghanistan, automobile importers' obstacles, usage of online platforms among sellers and importers, obstacles for building such an online platform, and payment method needed for the online platform. The data analyzed shows that there is a business opportunity because the demand for German automobiles is in a considerable number in Afghanistan market, and the importers have main obstacles for importing automobiles from Germany. Only 10% of adults in Afghanistan have bank accounts, and two-thirds of enterprises use the banking system on their daily business money transactions. However, the online platform for selling German second-hand automobiles can be built by offering transportation and payment services. The platform owner can open a bank account in Afghanistan for receiving money from the customers, and then transfer it to the seller. This online platform will have a competitive advantage in the market because it delivers the automobiles faster than the typical import companies.

List of figures

1. *Figure 1.* Chart of Afghanistan imports in 2017 12
2. *Figure 2.* Graph of Afghanistan's imports from 1995 till 2017 12
3. *Figure 3.* Chart of automobile imports in Afghanistan 13
4. *Figure 4.* Table of Banking Sector Financial Statistics 17

Table of contents

Abstract	i
Table of figures	ii
1. Introduction	1
1.1. General introduction	1
1.2. Need and justification for the study	2
1.3. Research objectives and questions	2
1.3.1. Research objectives	2
1.3.2. Research questions	2
2. Theoretical part	3
2.1. General introduction	3
2.2. Concept 1 <i>The platform scale</i>	3
2.2.1. The platform manifesto	4
2.2.2. Network effects	5
2.2.3. Platform canvas	6
2.3. Concept 2 <i>CRM and platform</i>	6
2.3.1. The new value	7
2.3.2. Platform ecosystem	7
2.4. Concept 3 <i>Platform strategy for retail</i>	8
2.4.1. What is a platform strategy?	8
2.4.2. Digitalization and retail business	9
3. Research approach	10
3.1. Research strategy	10
4. Empirical part	10
4.1. Data collection and data analysis	10
4.1.1. Data collection procedure	10
4.1.2. Sample considerations	11
4.1.3. Data analysis	11
4.2. Discussion and conclusion	18
4.2.1. Discussion of results	18
4.2.2. Revisiting the research objectives and questions	20
4.2.3. Conclusion and practical implication	21
4.2.3.1. Conclusion	21
4.2.3.2. Practical implication	22

4.2.4.	Recommendations and limitations	23
4.2.4.1.	Limitations	23
4.2.4.2.	Recommendations	23
5.	Bibliography	24
6.	Appendix	26
6.1.	Interviews with the transportation companies	26
6.2.	Questionnaires with automobile importers	28
6.3.	Questionnaires with automobile sellers	34

1. Introduction

1.1. General introduction

Platform business models have gained more market share over the past few decades than pipeline business models could do it in the same period. Nowadays, lots of companies integrate platform model in their businesses, and it has become crucial for companies to adapt to the new business model. The online platform business models have become very important not only for businesses but also for societies since it turns on to account decentralized production, network effects, development of artificial intelligence, innovative ideas, and economies of scale and scope. The platform business model provides an infrastructure of plug-play ground that allows consumers and producers to connect and interact. This interaction brings together consumers and producers that are the leading value creators of a platform ecosystem. The allowance for rapid exchange and interaction between more parties in a platform provides the ability of creation of more and more value. With this business model, some popular platforms have got millions or even billions of users in the past few years (OECD, 2019). In the past few years, lots of businesses have chosen to integrate online platform business model in their business strategy to get more of a competitive advantage in the market.

Companies in lots of industries like the automobile industry, textile industry, retail industry, and the finance industry have chosen to integrate the online platform model in their businesses. In the automobile industry, Germany is a well-known country for its high-quality automobiles, and lots of other countries are eager to import German automobiles, especially the developing countries. Afghanistan is one of the countries that imports lots of its passenger cars and Trucks from Germany. Automobile import of Afghanistan is 17% of its total imports, which was around \$5.07 billion in the year 2017 that makes \$862 million. Besides from 2010 till 2017, 91% of its Trucks import and 7% if its passenger car import was from Germany and it is assumed around the same percentage in the following years (Simoes et al. 2017). The above data shows a considerable demand for German automobile in Afghanistan, and by this, the author of this paper tries to analyze the building of an online platform for selling German Automobile to Afghans. Besides this, the author will also analyze critically the business opportunity of building such an online platform and also the obstacles for running such an online business. Last but not least, the author will discuss and emphasis on the platform characteristics

and microeconomics part of it; thus, macroeconomics part of running such a platform or such a business is not included in this research.

1.2. Need and justification for the study

Afghanistan imports an enormous amount of its trucks and passenger automobiles from Germany, however, it is not easy for Afghans to come to Germany for buying autos or doing business, but on the contrary, it is time taking due to strict visa regulations of German consulates for Afghan citizens. In average, it takes at least six months for an Afghan businessperson to get the visa, come to Germany, buy and transport back the automobiles to Afghanistan. This research is about analyzing of building an online platform for selling German second-hand automobile to Afghans, thus; by using this platform, Afghans will have the opportunity to buy the automobile online without coming to Germany, and the platform will have the service of transporting the automobiles to Afghanistan. This platform will not only make it possible and easy for Afghans to import automobile from Germany but also, it will be easier for auto sellers in Germany to use this platform and sell their automobiles easier and faster to their Afghan customers.

1.3. Research objectives and questions

1.3.1. Research objectives

In order to make this research narrow and focused, the author has provided some research objectives as follow:

- Analyzing of building such an online platform and its characteristics
- Critically analyzing the business opportunities of such an online platform.
- Analyzing the obstacles for running the platform and providing solutions for it.

1.3.2. Research questions

The main questions of this research paper are as follow:

- How to build an online platform, and what kinds of automobiles should it offer?
- What characteristics can this platform has, in order to satisfy both sellers and consumers?
- What services should this platform offer, so it would be convincible for the customers to use this platform?

2. Theoretical part

2.1. General introduction

Over the past decade, an emerging type of businesses has gained the largest market share. These new business models have overcome the pipelines business models which had dominated the industry for many decades. This new business model is the development of the platform business model; thus, it is crucial to understand the main aspects and reasons that resulted in platform revolution and how these businesses demonstrated rapid valuation gains, gaining the largest market share in few years. These online platforms have become very important to businesses and societies by turning to account network effects, innovative ideas, decentralized production, development of artificial intelligence, and economies of scale and scope.

Some of these companies like Google, Uber, Amazon, and Apple are the fastest scaling companies of the last decade, which they have used a different approach for achieving scale. This approach brought new forces for designing a whole new business model, creating opportunities for companies to innovate and transform themselves by increasing connectedness, decentralized production, and development of artificial intelligence (Choudary, 2015). Nevertheless, these businesses provide a plug-play ground that allows the consumers and producers to interact and connect, and also enormous benefits to governments, companies, and consumers in a way that was not achievable in the past. This ground brings together producers and consumers that are the leading value creators of the platform's ecosystem. Therefore, the platform's allowance for rapid exchange between more parties provides the ability to create new and more value. By this model, lots of platforms have growth at unprecedented rates that they got millions or even billions of users (OECD, 2019).

The objective of this paper is to get together a literature review about the online platform, and the author of this paper has put three concepts; Platform scales, models, and platform strategies for retailing and how it changes competition.

2.2. Concept 1 "*The platform scale.*"

The old way of aggregation and efficiency are changing as the world move toward the platform era. Labor and resources are not aggregated internally in businesses, but rather externally (Choudary, 2015). A platform scale is about bringing producers and consumers together, for exchange and creation of value in

an ecosystem, which is connected globally, and to manage or to orchestrate such scale there must be an excellent design or optimization of interaction (Parker et al. 2017).

In comparison to the pipe scale, platform scale can grow more quickly without or with very fewer marginal costs, and this comes from the low cost of processing, warehousing, and transmitting data in the platform business model. It is because of that when online platforms devour fixed cost for first assets like a computer or software needed for the platform, and then they can get millions of users without additional costs (OECD, 2019). In the past few years, lots of businesses have chosen to use platform structure rather than the pipeline structure, and in this shift, the simple pipeline structure has given its place to a complicated relationship of consumers and producers within a platform (Parker et al. 2017).

2.2.1 The platform manifesto

The online platforms have changed business principles in a way that the aggregation by which values creation was attained by focusing internally in the world of pipes has changed to external aggregation in platform era, although value creation still stands in need of resources and labor aggregation but the method has changed for achieving it (Baumol et al. 2016). Adapting business models in a digital era may bring along blended models, which means these models will combine or emerge with other models in order to meet companies intended goals (Saldana, 2016).

The platform manifesto explains the shift from pipeline structure to platform structure, which still aggregation is in focus for value creation (Parker et al., 2017). In the platform era which the world is networked, lots of businesses are using new ways of scale: that is an external ecosystem of users connected over the internet to the business, and this can be called a new warehouse which is the ecosystem. Lots of well-known online platforms like Amazon and Airbnb uses this type of online marketplace model, Amazon brought up a scale from the supply side by leveraging warehouses and inventory which gave chances for more merchants to serve consumers and Airbnb works as a virtual living place provider by gripping rooms in its ecosystem (Parker et al. 2017).

This ecosystem of platforms functions as both the new warehouse and supply chain, the rise of platforms made it easy for suppliers and consumers to connect and work together in the platform, which also creates value, and this means

that platforms can achieve aggregation more efficiently in many kinds of activities than pipeline companies (Choudary, 2015).

The concept of the ecosystem as a new source of warehouse and supply chain shows a fundamental shift in the world of network and scale, thus; scale is achieved through gripping interactions in the ecosystem rather than an aggregation of labor and resources in a business (Parker et al. 2017). The shift of change into platforms has also affected organizations absorption of data rather than the dollar, and this means that businesses are measured in terms of monetizable data gathered from their users by which it can yield more sources of making money (Choudary, 2015).

Nevertheless, community management in a platform business is about structuring incentives for platform users, and it must be the same way of human resource management within an organization. Community management is as essential for platforms as Human resource management is essential for traditional companies, like Airbnb, which competes with traditional hotels. Traditional hotels invest in employee training, and for platform businesses like Airbnb, it is vital to invest in its community management, redesigning, and development (Choudary, 2015).

2.2.2. Network effects

Network effects refer to values created for each user by the number of users the platform has, and it can be positive or negative, which positive network effects are the central part for value creation. The more value creation means the more positive network effect for the platform and platforms use these effects as a scale for their businesses (Parker et al., 2017). As value creation expands, it gets more users for the platform and the more users in a platform the more significant value creation, thus this creates a long-lasting value creation for the platform (Brodie et al. 2013).

Uber provides matching service for riders and drivers in its platform which is a mobile app and has gained very fast in the past few years, this comes from the network effect, and it is because of the service uber provides. This service gets more riders for drivers and less wait time for riders which in both cases the demand get higher because of the network effect, like as Uber gets more drivers in its platform, it can cover more area and as a result, more riders will appear also, so this makes a long-lasting cycle of increasing riders and drivers (Parker et al. 2017).

2.2.3. Platform canvas

Platform canvas has all elements of a platform in its central planning theme, and the canvas is a mechanism for makers to make or architect a platform business model. One thing that all platforms have in common is that they provide a plug-and-play ground that enables interactions and they usually have an open system that allows producers and consumers to interact and create value (Choudary, 2015).

These interactions must be one at a time and rival to pipe business, and platform business must not optimize its experience on one group of its users when it has different types of users so not to let other groups discourage for using the platform. This interaction is the starting point of a platform canvas that involves providing an infrastructure for the creation of value and its transfer between producer and consumer in the platform (Choudary, 2015).

It is also essential for a platform to provide tools or services so that they will facilitate these interactions and transfer of value in the platform, these tools and services can be for creation, curation, and consumption of value or any data that the platform lets its users create or transfer (Choudary, 2015).

2.3. Concept 2; CRM and platform

Nowadays, digitalization has made lots of new ways and improved care for the customer relationship. CRM in digital or platform era has become more timely and fast that lots of e-commerce companies and platform using companies provide or create dynamic customer profiles that let customers get information on services and products of the companies, this rich customer profile can provide robust CRM solutions for the companies (Celaya, 2015).

Digitalization has made it easy also for the companies to provide mobile and PC platforms for their CRM applications and also by these, they can make or create advanced techniques and artificial intelligence for extracting artifacts and data to provide an excellent customer relationship management and operational efficiency for their customer demands (Hollebeek et al. 2014).

Nevertheless, mobile platforms and desktop platforms are not the same in case of their useful legacy systems, but still, mobile phones are used more frequently by users, and mobile phones provide more on time positioning sensors and built-in browsers and context awareness applications (Celaya, 2015).

2.3.1. The new value

In this digital era, consumers are gaining more influence on organizations in the online sphere, and this influence comes from a rapid pace in interactions of consumers and organization in terms of CRM and marketing (Brodie et al. 2013). Nevertheless, consumers are taking into consideration mostly the information shared about the product or brands by other consumers rather than the marketing material of the companies (Baumol et al. 2016).

Nowadays, companies must put lots of efforts to build a good consumer experience and consumer engagement, which in turn to get customer loyalty (Brodie et al., 2013). A platform's value comes from the interactions it allows, Platforms work as an infrastructure that users create and add value on it. The value of a platform is in the amount of activity and its ecosystem of connected users, not in its technology or number of users (Choudary, 2015). Nowadays, social media platforms provide more rapid proliferation that has resulted and influenced customers' needs and wants for more interactive and personalized interactions (Baumol et al. 2016).

Social media platforms have built internet-based platforms and applications that let their users interact, collaborate, and participate in sharing of their own produced contents (Baethge et al. 2016). Well-known companies like Facebook or Google have built such a platform that has changed the nature of online communication into broad dialog ways between their users, and this allows their users to share not just their content but also get social topics about companies' products and services (Brodie et al. 2016).

This kind of open conversations on social media about companies' products and services may bring both risk and opportunities for the companies. Which as a risk, companies' level of control on the details about their products will get lower and as a result they will have to show more transparency and on the opportunity side the companies have more ways of connecting and interacting with their customers (Baumol et al. 2016).

Engaging with users or customers actively on social media about companies' marketing or business processes could bring or have a high value on the company's customer relationship management (Baumol et al. 2016).

2.3.2. Platform ecosystem

Pipe companies had the idea that the more a company owns, the more it wins, and they were competing through control and resource ownership. This old

way of thinking has dominated by platform revolution, and platforms have a brought up an ecosystem of producers and consumers that it is a new source of competitive advantage (Choudary, 2015). The platform works as an infrastructure that lets its users interact and share their contents, and some platforms also let third-party innovations from customers and business partners to meet their needs and utilize indirect network effect (Ceccagnoli et al. 2011).

Platform ecosystem model has risen by this harmonious innovation and this system of innovation to make supplements that result in platforms more wordiness (Gawer and Cusumano, 2002). For managing an ecosystem of a platform, it is essential to develop and optimize algorithms, and these algorithms are vital for finding solutions about complex problems and ecosystem stimulations (Bonsma, 2000). Small technology companies try to get into a platform ecosystem not just to achieve or get profit from the platform network effect, but also to achieve technology concord with a platform (Ceccagnoli et al. 2011).

2.4. Concept 3; *Platform strategy for retail*

In this digital era, lots of new online platforms battled for platform market share, but some of these technology platforms were more durable and profitable than others due to essential features of the platform for its users or customers (Mcintyre, 2019). Platforms like Amazon has risen by using scale and scope strategic advantages, but this rise or successfulness is not just Amazon's platform structure instead it is Amazon's unique way of controlling interactions between its users (Knee, 2017).

Users come to use a platform mostly when there are other users in that platform also, like, when a user joins Facebook they need to be able to interact with their friends, workmate, or partner on the platform otherwise it would make no sense to use it. Similarly, if it is a video game platform or an entertaining platform, the users will try to choose the one which is accessible and provides more opportunity to interact with other users (Mcintyre, 2019). In accordance, platform companies try to create and strengthen their network value by making these subtle distinctions from other platforms to exert a flawless platform strategy (Mcintyre, 2019).

2.4.1. What is a platform strategy?

Platform entrepreneurs need to use some distinct tools in their platform strategy to overcome the challenges of value gain and value creation, thus; platform

strategy means the approach of entering a market which hinges on letting platform users to gain or benefit from the existence of other users in the platform and gain competitive advantage for the platform (Church, 2017).

The platform idea itself is less critical to triumph than the platform strategy; it is like, the chicken and egg problem (Parker et al. 2017). Organizations face a critical challenge in making strategy due to the current environment uncertainties, great business race, changing consumer taste, and developing technologies. The more accurate assumption of executives about future business opportunities or business capabilities of assertive businesses will generate a competitive advantage for their business strategy (Choudary, 2015).

Powerful platforms have defined new competition that includes two main digital designs; digital platforms and ecosystems (Parker et al. 2017). This new competition implies that platform owners should follow a strategy that can overcome both competitors and attracting users. The competitors of a platform are not just other platforms, but also complementors who use the platforms for sharing their Applications or products (Boudreau & Jeppesen, 2014). However, some content contributors like remix song contributors on SoundCloud or video providers for Youtube gets no sales no revenues and this shows that contributors are mostly motivated by factors other than revenues, thus; network effect can be achieved by zero cost (Afuah & Tucci, 2012).

2.4.2. Digitalization and retail business

In the last few decades, digitalization has brought up a hypercompetitive environment, and this change is preferably like competition (Bughin et al. 2019). The five-force model by Michael Porter, which was used by many companies for making strategies now has been challenged by some scholars. Porter's model had introduced five forces that alter the strategy of a business, and these five forces are; the bargaining force of suppliers, the bargaining force of consumers, competition in the same and the hazard of a newcomer to the market (Parker et al. 2017).

Lots of companies used Porter's model to guide them for making decisions on their entry strategies, which supply chain strategy to choose, and how to pursue product innovation or what sorts of it (Parker et al. 2017). This 21st-century digitalization has given a chance to lots of powerful platforms to reach their customers in global markets, thus; making it hard for some incumbent company's digital conversion (Bughin et al. 2019).

Digitalization has made it so easy, especially for retail companies to reach the global market, companies like, Alibaba and Amazon have reached to many customers globally that it was not easily possible in the classical world. This vast development of these companies was not possible if they had not the chance to use the tools and techniques brought technology and digitalization (Parker et al. 2017). However, a new competition is also defined by new trends of digitalization, which is digital platforms and its ecosystem (Bughin et al. 2019).

3. Research approach

3.1. Research strategy

In this research paper, which is quantitative research, the data are collected firstly from records, like records of Afghanistan's chamber of commerce and ministry of finance that are shared for the public. These records are used to check automobile imports data and quantity, and to analyze the demands for German automobiles in Afghanistan market. Furthermore, the author has conducted some interviews and questionnaires with major automobile sellers in Germany, as well as, with some automobile importers in Afghanistan. To increase the interview's quality and focus on the research objectives, the author has used a semi-structured interview method to give the interviewers the possibility to expand their questions for interviewee's answers and this method is flexible.

4. Empirical part

4.1. Data collection and data analysis

4.1.1. Data collection procedure

The author of this research paper firstly analyzed the automobile market of Afghanistan, as well as, import records of the automobile in Afghanistan. The yearly reports of Afghanistan's ministry of finance and chamber of commerce were used for this. This allowed the author of this research to get a first impression on demand for German automobiles in Afghanistan market and the number of German automobile imports in the past few years. Secondly, the author conducted some interviews with automobile importers in Afghanistan and with some automobile sellers in Germany. The interviews with automobile importers in Afghanistan gave the author details like the automobile import procedure, the types of automobiles they import, and the importers' obstacles for import. Besides these, the author's main questions from both automobile importers in Afghanistan and sellers in

Germany were about their usage of any online platforms for either selling or buying. Last but not least, the author of this research also conducted interviews with two major transport companies in Hamburg to get information on the services they offer and their pricing. The author then used all these data for analyzing the business opportunity for building an online platform as well as the services the platform must have in order to get a competitive advantage in the market.

4.1.2. Sample considerations

In this research, data are collected from questionnaires, interviews, and records. For convenience in questionnaires and interviews results, sample considerations are based on the accessibility and availability of the people and also their expertise in the business. To draw a better conclusion and minimize sampling error, the questionnaire and interviews are conducted with well-known businesspeople who are doing import and export business either in Afghanistan or Germany. The questionnaires are conducted with importers who have imported automobiles from Germany, and the questionnaires with automobile sellers in Germany are conducted with the ones who get Afghan customers through online platforms or in store.

4.1.3. Data analysis

In this research which quantitative research, data are collected from interviews, questionnaires, and records. The data collected from the records shows us the amount of automobile import to Afghanistan, including passenger cars, trucks, and other heavyweight vehicles. The main idea here is to analyze the demand for German automobiles in Afghanistan market. The demand analyzes of a market is essential for any new business that wants to enter that market. Automobile imports (including trucks, passenger cars, trailers) was seventeen percent of Afghanistan's total imports in 2017, as showed in figure (1).

Afghanistan imports automobile from different countries, and most of its imports are from European countries. However, the automobile imports from European countries are almost the same brand, which are Mercedes Benz company products like Mercedes Actros, Axor, and MAN. The reason for this can be the high quality of the products and their distribution in the whole of Europe. Moreover, the usage of these automobiles are controlled according to European standards, and they are in a good situation in means of quality than the same products used in Asian countries. This means that customers in Afghanistan give priority to the products that are used in European countries. The automobile imports of Afghanistan from countries in Asia include other brands like Toyota, Mazda, and Tata. In figure (3), the import data of automobiles in Afghanistan is showed as below.

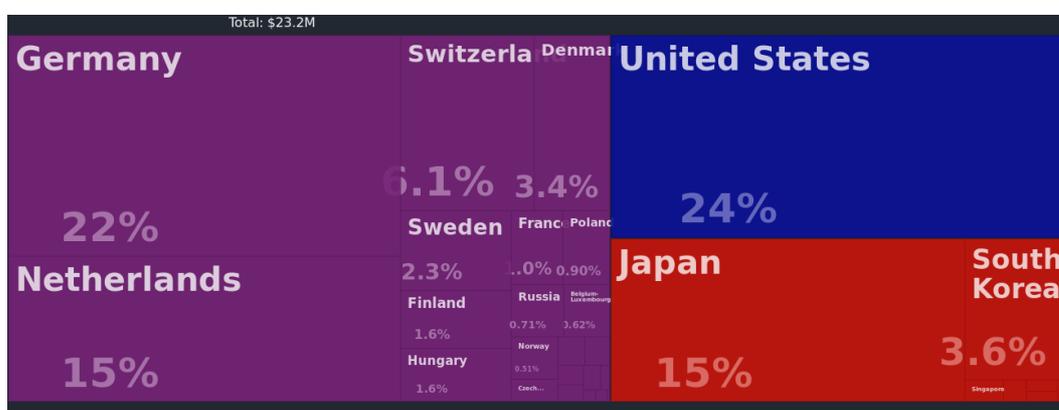


Figure 3. Chart of automobile imports in Afghanistan. Observatory of

Economic Complexity. Retrieved from

https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/visualize/tree_map/hs92/import/afg/show/8704/2016/

The author conducted questionnaires with eight automobile importers in Afghanistan in two different cities. Each questionnaire consisted of nine questions consisting of the import/export procedure, obstacles, means of transportation used for importing. The data collected from questionnaires with importers in Afghanistan shows that there is a considerable demand for German second-hand automobiles in Afghanistan and despite the many obstacles the importers have, but still, they try hard to get to Germany and buy automobiles for importing to Afghanistan.

The data shows that the main obstacle for the importers is to get to Germany, and one of the biggest obstacles they have is German visa restrictions. In average it takes three to six months to get a visa for coming to Germany and one to three months to buy the automobiles they want and transport them back to Afghanistan. In average it takes nine months for an importer in Afghanistan to import a package of automobiles to Afghanistan and this long period just for importing has a significant impact on the loss or gain of an import company in Afghanistan. As it is easily sensible that in nine months there can be lots of changes in a market like the demand for a product and the price of it. Doing import business in this kind of situation is hard and stressful for business people since the importers want to gain some profit from the import of automobile and develop their business, but this situation persuades fewer investors or business people to participate in such business.

The data collected from the questionnaires show that there is a considerable percentage of online platform usage among the importers in Afghanistan for searching automobiles in the German market. The importers who responded to the questionnaires maintain that they use different online platforms for searching automobile in the German automobile market. The platforms they use are mobile.de, eBay.com, trucks.com, and some Facebook pages. These online platforms are just for sharing an offer from the seller part, and the buyer can search their desired automobile on the platform and get in touch with the seller. However, these platforms do not offer any other services like transportation or online payment for the buying process, thus; the buyer needs to get to seller store or place in person for buying the product they want.

The author had also asked questions about the transportation procedure of importing the automobiles to Afghanistan and the automobile importers' respond were that they use other transportation companies in this situation. To get a better understanding of the transportation procedure and details, the author conducted interviews with two major transportation companies in Hamburg city of Germany. The companies chosen for the interview were the ones who had done transferred automobiles to Afghanistan. The interviews were conducted in person with Mangal transportation company and Interfracht transportation company in Hamburg.

The data collected from the interviews show great details about the transportation procedure and the costs for it. The transportation companies responded that on average they have a shipment of three containers per month to

Afghanistan, and most of the time their shipment consists of automobiles. It takes around thirty days for a container shipment to reach to Afghanistan, and the shipping route is from Hamburg port to United Arab Emirates port, and then to Karachi port of Pakistan and afterward delivery of the container inland route to Afghanistan, because Afghanistan is not connected with the sea. Moreover, some of the importers hire a driver and takes the automobile by land to Afghanistan. However, this way costs more than seaway.

The author also asked about the prices for the services of the transportation companies and their response that it differs and depends on the type of automobile. However, the regular price for a seven-ton weighted truck is three thousand eight hundred euros, and for a small passenger car with a weight of two tons is one thousand euro. These costs include all costs coming from transportation by sea and delivery of the automobile by land from Karachi port of Pakistan to Afghanistan. However, it excludes the custom cost or tariff cost of Afghanistan's custom office. The transport companies maintained that a forty-foot container has the capacity of three trucks each seven tons or eight-passenger cars with the weight of two tons each, and in this case the total price of delivering a forty-foot container eight thousand euros.

In order to get ideas of automobile sellers in Germany, the author conducted some questionnaires with around five automobile sellers in Germany. The questionnaire's questions consisted of platform usage percentage among the sellers as well as the number of Afghan customers they get per month. The data collected from these questionnaires shows that German automobile sellers mostly use mobile.de platform for their online sale offers. Besides, the automobile sellers use also other online platforms like eBay.de, german-trucks.com, trucks.com, and some other online platforms. The automobile sellers emphasized that they get in average five to seven Afghan customers per month, and three out of seven of them usually finalize a deal. These details show that, although there are restriction and obstacles for Afghan to get German visa and come to Germany, still there are a considerable number of Afghans who succeeds in getting the visa and come to Germany. This means that, if there is a demand in a market, people or businesses will try to bring supplies for the demand.

One other aspect that is important for an online retail platform is the payment method. The possibility of online payment in a platform is essential because this persuades buyers for online shopping and also gives them the chance

to use their time better. Moreover, online payment also provides an ease of doing business for companies, and in an online platform, it is one of the essentials characteristics that bring competitive advantage for the platform. Since this research is about building an online platform for selling German second-hand automobiles to Afghans in Afghanistan, the author of this report evaluated the online banking system of Afghanistan and also analyzed the infrastructure of it. This evaluation will provide a brief understanding of the online payment possibilities for Afghans as well as the gap that needs to be filled with alternative payment methods. The idea behind this is to introduce a new way of payment other than online payment for an online platform.

The records of Afghanistan banks association and Afghan central bank shows that fifteen leading Banks are operating in Afghanistan, which three of them are public banks, nine of them are private commercial banks, and three of them are branches of foreign banks operating in Afghanistan (“Afghanistan Country Snapshot,” 2015). Afghanistan had domestic violence and war from 1970 till 2001, and still, it is one of the unsafest countries in the world. During the years of war, the country did not develop in means of infrastructure for every sector and industry, however, after 2001 by coming of foreign countries' troops and the end of the war, Afghanistan government got the chance to work on the country's infrastructure for every sector.

Now it is estimated that ten percent of Afghans have accounts in banks, although, it was less than five percent in 2011 (Biallas et al. 2013). Till today, Afghan banking sector was not able to assist and support economic development in finance sector like lots of banks are operating mainly in major cities of Afghanistan, and only ten percent of adults have bank account, however, it is estimated that seventy percent of enterprises have bank accounts (“Modernizing afghan state,” 2018).

Furthermore, the use of informal money transactions in very common in Afghanistan and lots of people or even enterprises use this payment and transfer method on their daily basis. This informal money transaction is cheaper than banks, and most of the people prefer this method rather than banks. This informal money transfer is used even by Afghans in foreign countries for sending money to their families in Afghanistan and vice versa. According to the Afghanistan banks association's report, as shown in figure (4), there is an increase in the number of bank account cardholders, and it is estimated to increase in the following years.

Moreover, from the total population of Afghanistan, just ten percent has bank accounts, and the total number of depositors to banks is 3,673,107.

S.No	Items	Quarter 4 End, 2018	Quarter 1 End, 2019
1	Total Deposits	273,786	257,771
2	Current Account	203,813	185,929
3	Time Deposits	19,546	21,392
4	Saving Account	50,427	50,449
5	Total Foreign Exchange Deposits	193,330	183,727
6	Total banking sector Liability including equity	316,787	299,706
7	Total banking sector Assets	316,787	299,706
8	Capital Adequacy Ratio	25.70	27.39
9	Liquidity (Median)	76.57	76.55
10	RETURN ON ASSETS (ROA) Cum.	0.80	0.11
11	RETURN ON EQUITY (ROE) Cum.	6.88	0.99
12	Performing Loan (%age)	91.08	89.09
13	Non performing Loan (NPL) (%age)	8.92	10.91
14	Loans Extended (Total)	41,435	41,936
15	Borrowing by Banking Sector	3,068	2,907
16	Total banking Sector Capital	34,411	34,408
Statistics in Numbers			
17	Total Number of Depositors	3,687,206	3,673,107
18	Number of ATM Machines	341	348
19	Number of Borrowers	72,454	74,403
20	Total Number of Branches	415	415
21	Debit card	506,557	559,039
22	Credit card	2,008	1,964
23	ATM Card	226,066	231,837
24	WebSerfer Card	12,887	13,480
25	Prepaid Card	5,088	5,438
26	Master Card	1,566	2,737
27	Total Cards	754,172	814,495

Figure 4. Table of Banking Sector Financial/non-Financial Statistics,

(2019). Retrieved June 17, 2019, from

http://www.aba.org.af/uploaded/pdf/banking_sector_quarterly_update/Banking_Statistics_with_Analysis_Q4_End_2018-Q1_End_2019.pdf

Furthermore, from the statistics shared by Afghanistan banks association, it can be understood that a smaller number of Afghans are using Master cards as well as for credit cards, and debit card users are also not in a considerable number. The less percentage of bank users makes it harder for companies to develop or invest in online businesses, although, the central bank of Afghanistan supports the online

banking system for other banks, there is a small number of banks that offer online banking service. Besides, usage of other online financial systems like PayPal, cryptocurrencies, or any other one is almost zero, and there is no information if any of the mentioned systems would be allowed in Afghanistan. Besides, the critical situation of Afghanistan either in means of security or finance, could be one of the reasons that foreign companies do not have the interest to invest in Afghanistan. The figure (4), above shows financial and nonfinancial statistics of Afghanistan's banking sector, and the numbers are in a million AFN expect the statics in numbers for bank account and cardholders

4.2. Discussion and conclusion

4.2.1. Discussion of results

Building an online platform and entering a market for doing business needs it's analyzing of the situation like demand in the market, existing competition, and opportunities. Since this research is about building an online platform for selling German second-hand automobiles from Germany to buyers in Afghanistan, the author of this paper firstly analyzed the demand for German automobiles in Afghanistan in the data analysis part of this paper. The data of this market demand analysis shows that Afghanistan imports almost all of its needed automobiles from foreign countries like European countries and some countries in Asia, and automobile imports were seventeen percent of Afghanistan's total imports in 2017.

Furthermore, Afghanistan imports more than twenty-two percent of its trucks, buses, and heavyweight automobiles from Germany, however, the imports from other European countries are also the automobiles that are produced in Germany like Axor, Actros, and MAN. The reason for this can be the high quality of German automobiles and its popularity among buyers in Afghanistan. Besides, some small passenger automobiles are also imported from Germany, but the percentage is not high as for heavyweight automobiles, and it was just between five to seven percent in 2016 and 2017. The reason for this is the scarcity of automobile parts or material in Afghanistan market.

In the last few years, Afghanistan's total imports have increased dramatically, as shown in figure (1), and it is estimated to increase in the following years. This increase in total imports has a positive impact on automobiles imports also, and it could be estimated that due to no production of automobiles in Afghanistan, demand for more automobile would increase automatically. The

existence demand for German automobile and an estimation of its increase shows an excellent business opportunity for foreign companies to enter the market.

Moreover, the author of this research paper had conducted questionnaires with some automobile importers in Afghanistan. The implication of these questionnaires was for understanding the obstacles of the importers as well as their procedure for importing automobiles from Germany, and the data from these questionnaires would give general and precise information for the author to find the gap in this business. Moreover, understanding the gap in this business and finding a solution for it would give a competitive advantage for the online platform. The data collected from the questionnaires with automobile importers in Afghanistan shows that it takes in average from six months to nine months for an importer to get a German visa, come to Germany, buy the automobile, and transfer it back to Afghanistan. The too much time-consuming obstacle was prevalent for every importer according to the data collected from the questionnaires. Nine months is a long time for just importing a package of an automobile, because during the nine months lots of changes may occur to the market in Afghanistan like demand for the particular automobile and the price of it.

Another aspect is the transportation of the automobiles from Germany to Afghanistan, and the author found out that lots of importers use some transportation companies' services in this part. The author of this paper conducted interviews with two major transportation companies in Hamburg city of Germany. The data collected from these interviews show that these transportation companies give the service of transporting automobiles in containers from the port of Hamburg to ports like port of Karachi in Pakistan and port of Bandar-Abbas in Iran, and afterward transport the containers inland to Afghanistan. The costs for their transportation services varied depending on the kind of automobile. However, the cost for a truck with seven tons weight is three thousand eight hundred euro, and for a small passenger car with a weight of maximum three tons is on thousand euro, but for a forty-foot container which has the capacity of three heavyweight trucks or eight small passenger car the price is eight thousand euro.

The data collected from the questionnaires conducted both with automobile importers in Afghanistan and automobile sellers in Germany shows that both parties use online platforms. The sellers use online platforms for sharing their automobile offers online, and the importers or buyers search for automobiles on online platforms like mobile.de, german-trucks.com, or eBay.de. The author asked both

importers and sellers about using an online platform that gives service of delivering the automobiles to Afghanistan and the possibility to buy online, and the two parties showed enthusiasm toward using such a platform, and even the importers maintained that they would use it definitely in case the platform makes their businesses more accessible.

The data analysis on Afghanistan financial system showed that usage of the banking system is not so popular among Afghans, and only ten percent of adults in Afghanistan have a bank account, and a smaller number of them are using online banking. However, more than two-thirds of enterprises use the banking system for their daily business transactions. The fewer number of bank account holders in Afghanistan is a significant problem for an online platform or online businesses because online payment is a significant part of online platform integrated businesses. However, there is an alternative way, since two-thirds of the enterprises and ten percent of adults have bank accounts, and it is not necessary to have a bank account to deposit another bank. The platform manager can open a bank account in Afghanistan, and whoever wants to buy an automobile from the platform can send the price of the auto plus the bank commission for sending the money abroad to that bank account, and then the platform manager transfers the money to the seller in Germany. This way is also convenient for the buyer because he gets a receipt from the bank, and also for the seller which get the money through the platform.

4.2.2. Revisiting research objectives and questions

In this research paper, the main objectives were to analyze the business opportunity of building an online platform for selling German second-hand automobile to Afghans in Afghanistan and critically analyzing the obstacles for running such an online platform. To analyze the business opportunity of building such an online platform, the author of this research analyzed the demand for German automobiles in Afghanistan as well as the importers' obstacles for importing German automobiles from Germany. The author analyzed that the demand for German automobiles in Afghanistan market is a considerable amount and has increased in the past few years. Besides, the importers had the obstacles for importing automobiles from Germany, and the main obstacle for them was time-consuming like it takes a minimum of six months to import a package from German to Afghanistan.

The main research questions of this research were to investigate which kinds of automobiles should the platform offer, what characteristics should it have, and what must be the services of the platform? The data collected from the questionnaires and interviews show that Mercedes Benz brand automobiles are in high demand in Afghanistan; thus, the platform should offer this brand to get the customers. Another aspect was the services of the platform, and the data from the questionnaires and interview shows that importers use online platforms for searching for automobiles, and other transporting companies for transporting the automobiles back to Afghanistan. The platform should give or offer the service and products that are demanded. The product to offer was determined Mercedes Benz brand automobiles, and for services, transportation of automobiles to Afghanistan is demanded. The platform can offer this service by outsourcing, and transportation companies can be used as a source of outsourcing. Furthermore, the obstacle of the importers can be a competitive advantage for the platform. It takes for the importers to come to Germany then buy their desired automobile and then transfer it back to Afghanistan. This procedure takes up to nine months to accomplish. However, the platform can get this job done in one month. This can be done by outsourcing like using the transportation companies to transfer the automobiles, which it takes around thirty days.

4.2.3. Conclusion and practical implication

4.2.3.1. Conclusion

This research is about building an online platform for selling German second-hand automobiles to Afghanistan, and the author of this research paper, firstly analyzed the demand for German automobiles in Afghanistan. The data analysis part showed that Afghanistan has imported around twenty percent of its automobiles from Germany, which a considerable number. Secondly, the author conducted questionnaires with some automobile importers in Afghanistan and automobile sellers in Germany. The data from these questionnaires showed that the main obstacle the importers have is time-consuming of importing automobiles from Germany. It takes up to nine months to import a package of automobiles from Germany to Afghanistan. The common practice between sellers and importers was using online platforms either for searching automobiles or sharing their automobiles offer for sale. Furthermore, online banking and online payment are not commonly used in Afghanistan. Only ten percent of adults and two-thirds of enterprises have

a bank account. There are no usage of cryptocurrencies, PayPal, or any other online payment services in Afghanistan. This can be an obstacle for running an online platform since online payment is essential. However, there is an alternative way of managing the payment method. The author of this research paper suggested an alternative for it in the discussion of the result part of this paper.

In conclusion, building and running such an online platform has its obstacles and threats; however, the opportunities of this business is much more. The demand is high enough, and the importers have their obstacles for importing, and the importers' obstacle can be a competitive advantage for the online platform. It can be estimated that in the long run, the platform will have a considerable number of customers and suppliers.

4.2.3.2. Practical implications

The data analysis and discussion of results of this research show that there is a business opportunity in building such an online platform. The demand in Afghanistan market is high, and the importers have their obstacles. Besides, there are transportation companies as a source for outsourcing. In the long run, this online platform can gain a considerable amount of profits from this business.

The online platform for selling German second-hand automobiles must be built in an easy to use interface. The buyer should have the possibility to search, filter their search, and check every characteristic of the automobile. The sellers also should have the possibility to put and share their offer for sale and give the details about the automobile. Furthermore, when a buyer chooses an automobile on the online platform and wants to buy it. The buyer should send the price of the automobile plus the bank commission to the account number provided. Furthermore, the online platform transfers the money to the seller, and then by using one of the outsourcing companies' transports the automobile to Afghanistan. Besides, the buyer will be notified about the transportation price, and the buyer would pay for it after receiving the automobile. The whole procedure for this will be around forty days, and in comparison, to other importers' importing time, which was nine months, this is a substantial decrease. The competitive advantage of the online platform would be this; less time than typical importers' period. This business model can attract a considerable number of buyers and importers toward the online platform. They will not need to waste their time by going to Germany. They will just need to find their desired automobile on the online platform, and

order it, and then pay for it. They will receive their product in thirty days. Thirty days in comparison to nine months is a huge difference.

4.2.4. Recommendations and limitations

4.2.4.1 Limitations

This research paper has limitations in different parts. This research emphasizes on building an online platform, and the main objective is to analyze the business opportunity. The author of this research describes the online platform itself and the microeconomics around the topic. Macroeconomics part and legal issues about the matter are limited in this research. Moreover, the author had a limitation of reaching random importers in Afghanistan, and the questionnaires were conducted with importers in two major cities in Afghanistan.

4.2.4.2. Recommendations

The author of this research recommends for further research about the topic, and research on macroeconomics part of this business is highly recommended. The legal issues surrounding this business like legal issues in Afghanistan as well as legal issues in Germany for running such a business.

5. Bibliography

1. AFGHANISTAN Country Snapshot (Publication). (2015). Retrieved June 15, 2019, from World bank group website:
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/307891467998464206/pdf/100112-WP-PUBLIC-Box393225B-Afghanistan-Country-Snapshot.pdf>
2. Afuah A, Tucci C. (2012). *Crowdsourcing as a solution to distant search*. *Academy of Management Review* 37.
3. Baethge, C., Klier, J., and Klier, M. (2016). *Social commerce: state-of-the-art and future research directions*. *Electronic Markets*, In Press, doi: 10.1007/s12525-016-0225-2.
4. Banking Sector Financial/non-Financial Statistics. (2019). *Table of Banking Sector Financial/non-Financial Statistics*. Retrieved June 17, 2019, from
http://www.aba.org.af/uploaded/pdf/banking_sector_quarterly_update/Banking_Statistics_with_Analysis_Q4_End_2018-Q1_End_2019.pdf
5. Baumol, U., Hollebeek, L. & Jung, R. (2016), *Electron Markets*, Retrieved May 11, 2019, from <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12525-016-0227-0>
6. Bonsma, E. Shackleton, A., and Shipman, R. (2000). *An evolutionary and ecosystem research platform*. *BT Technol Journal*. Vol 18.
7. Boudreau, J., & Jeppesen, B., (2014). *Unpaid crowd complementors: the platform network effect mirage*. *Strategic Management Journal*.
8. Brodie, R. J., Ilic, A., Juric, B., & Hollebeek, L. (2013). *Consumer engagement in a virtual Brand Community: an exploratory analysis*. *Journal of Business Research*
9. Bughin, J. & Catlin, T. & Dietz, M. (2019). *The right digital platform strategy*. *Mckinsey Quarterly*.
10. Ceccagnoli, Marco and Forman Chris and Huang, Peng and Wu, D. J., (2011) *Co-Creation of Value in a Platform Ecosystem: The Case of Enterprise Software*.
11. Celaya, J., (2015). *New business models in the digital age*.
<https://www.dosdoce.com/2015/04/07/new-business-models-in-the-digital-age/>
12. Choudary, P.S., (2015), *Platform scale: how an emerging business model helps startups build vast empires with minimum investment*. Platform thinking labs, Pte. Ltd.

13. Church, Z. (2017). *Platform strategy explained*. MIT Sloan management review. Retrieved May 01, 2019, from <https://mitsloan.mit.edu/ideas-made-to-matter/platform-strategy-explained>
14. Gawer, A., and Cusumano, M.A. (2002). *Platform Leadership: How Intel, Microsoft, and Cisco Drive Industry Innovation*, Boston: Harvard Business School Press.
15. Hollebeek, L., Glynn, M. S., & Brodie, R. J. (2014). *Consumer brand engagement in social media: conceptualization, scale development, and validation*. Journal of Interactive Marketing.
16. Knee, J. A. (2017). *Why some platforms are better than others*. MIT Sloan management review. Retrieved May 01, 2019, from <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/why-some-platforms-are-better-than-others/>
17. Mcintyre B. (2019), *Beyond 'winner takes all' strategy for platforms*. MIT Sloan management review, Retrieved May 01, 2019, from <https://sloanreview.mit.edu/article/beyond-a-winner-takes-all-strategy-for-platforms/>
18. Modernizing afghan state-owned banks project (Rep. No. PAD2481). (2018, March 6). Retrieved June 16, 2019, from the world bank website: <http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/644081522461645615/pdf/Afg-hanistan-Afghan-State-Owned-Banks-PAD-PAD2481-03142018.pdf>
19. OECD, (2019), *An introduction to online platforms and their role in the digital transformation*. Paris: OECD Publishing.
20. Parker, G.G., Alstyne, W., Choudary, P.S. (2017), *Platform revolution*. New York: W.W. Norton.
21. Saldana, I. (2016), *how the new business models in the digital age have evolved*. Retrieved May 11, 2019 from: <https://www.dosdoce.com/2016/03/04/how-the-new-business-models-in-the-digital-age-have-evolved/>
22. SIMOES, A., LANDRY, D., & HIDALGO, C. (2017). *Afghanistan country profile*, Observatory of Economic Complexity. Retrieved May 05, 2019, from <https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/afg/>
23. SIMOES, A., LANDRY, D., & HIDALGO, C. (2017). *Chart of Afghanistan imports in 2017*, Observatory of Economic Complexity.

Retrieved June 05, 2019, from

<https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/afg/>

24. SIMOES, A., LANDRY, D., & HIDALGO, C. (2017). *Graph of Afghanistan's imports from 1995 till 2017*. Observatory of Economic Complexity. Retrieved June 05, 2019, from

<https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/afg/>

25. SIMOES, A., LANDRY, D., & HIDALGO, C. (2017). *Chart of automobile imports in Afghanistan*. Observatory of Economic Complexity. Retrieved June 05, 2019, from

<https://atlas.media.mit.edu/en/profile/country/afg/>

6. Appendix

6.1 Interviews with transportation companies

Interview #1 with Interfracht transportation company in Hamburg

Interviewer: What are your services for transportation to Afghanistan?

Interviewee: *we offer shipment of containers to Afghanistan, and it is till Port of Karachi in Pakistan by ship, and then by road to Afghanistan. We also do the loading of automobiles inside containers in Germany.*

Interviewer: Which transportation ways do you use?

Interviewee: *We offer just Shipment from Hamburg.*

Interviewer: How often do you send (containers or packages) per month?

Interviewee: *In average we get 3 to 5 containers for sending to Afghanistan*

Interviewer: How long does it take the transportation via ship or land?

Interviewee: *The average time of shipment and delivering of the containers is between 30 to 35 days.*

Interviewer: How often do you get Afghan customers?

Interviewee: *It depends on the season; we get more customers in summer than winter. I can say in average it is 4-7 customers per month.*

Interviewer: What services do Afghan customers demand from your company?

Interviewee: *some customers ask if we can deliver it by land*

Interviewer: Which transportation means do they prefer more?

Interviewee: *Some of them prefer transportation by land; however, no companies are offering this service as I know.*

Interviewer: How is your pricing for the services?

Interviewee: *The cost for a full forty-foot container which can be filled with 8 small automobile or 3 trucks is 8000 euro. We also transport a single automobile, but the costs differ depending on the type and weight of the automobile. For a truck with a weight of 7 tons the price is 3500 euro and for a small passenger car with a weight of 2 tons is 1000 euro.*

Interview #2 with Mangal transportation company in Hamburg

Interviewer: What are your services for transportation to Afghanistan?

Interviewee: *We offer shipment of containers to Afghanistan, and the container can be filled with any type of goods*

Interviewer: Which transportation ways do you use?

Interviewee: *we offer just shipment, and it is from Hamburg port to the port in UAE or port of Karachi in Pakistan and then delivering the container to Afghanistan.*

Interviewer: How often do you send (containers or packages) per month?

Interviewee: *It depends on the number of customers we get per month, but on average, it is 5 containers per month.*

Interviewer: How long does it take the transportation via ship or land?

Interviewee: *the total time needed for transportation including shipment to the port in Pakistan and delivering by trailer to Afghanistan is 35 to 40 days.*

Interviewer: How often do you get Afghan customers?

Interviewee: *we usually get Afghan customers, but I cannot say an exact number*

Interviewer: What services do Afghan customers demand from your company?

Interviewee: *they ask for loading of the container in Hamburg, and some of them ask for delivering through land roads.*

Interviewer: Which transportation means do they prefer more?

Interviewee: *it depends on the customer; most of them prefer the shipment way.*

Interviewer: How is your pricing for the services?

Interviewee: *for a full forty-foot container the price is 7800 euro, and for packages, it depends on their weight and size. Our prices are not fixed, and they can be negotiated.*

6.2. Questionnaires with automobile importers in Afghanistan

Questionnaire #1 with Shahin Yaser; an automobile importer.

- 1) From which countries do you import or buy Autos?
 - a) *It depends on the type of automobile, I usually import Toyota brand from the United Arab Emirates, and Mercedes brand from European countries, especially from Germany.*
- 2) Do you use any online platforms for searching or buying?
 - a) *I usually search on Google or Facebook when I want to search in the UAE market, but for Germany, I usually use mobile.de.*
- 3) How do you mostly import the Autos (sea, land)?
 - a) *The way from UAE and from Germany is by sea. However, the shipments are till Pakistan. Then by land road to Afghanistan*
- 4) Do you have any obstacles to transportation or importing?
 - a) *For transporting there are lots of transportation companies, and we have no problems, and it is easy to import from Dubai Toyota car. For Germany, there are lots of problems. It takes too much time.*
- 5) What are the main problems you encounter?
 - a) *For Germany, I have a visa problem, and it is not easy to get. They ask for lots of documents and most of the time they refuse to give visa*
- 6) How long does it take for you to import a container or package of Autos?
 - a) *Importing from Germany takes lots of time. We need to get visa firstly which takes 3 months, and total importing time is around 8 to 9 months.*
- 7) How much does it cost (On average) for importing an Auto?
 - a) *The main cost is for transporting, and it differs depending on the automobile type.*
- 8) How long does it take for getting the visa for going to the destination country?
 - a) *Normally it takes 3 months. We must go to India or Pakistan for getting the visa. The German embassies in Afghanistan do not issue a visa.*
- 9) Would you prefer to use a platform for buying (with its service of delivery)?

- a) *If that solves our problem and delivers the automobiles, why not.*

Questionnaire #2 with Bashir Ahmad; an automobile importer.

- 1) From which countries do you import or buy Autos?
 - a) *I import autos form some European countries like Poland, Austria, and Germany.*
- 2) Do you use any online platforms for searching or buying?
 - a) *Of course, I use online platforms, especially in Europe we have to use platforms to search for automobiles*
- 3) How do you mostly import the Autos (sea, land)?
 - a) *I use both ways, but most of the time, I choose transportation companies, and they transport it for me.*
- 4) Do you have any obstacles to transportation or importing?
 - a) *I have some problems, but I do know how to solve them.*
- 5) What are the main problems you encounter?
 - a) *For Europe, it is hard to get visa frequently, especially business visa.*
- 6) How long does it take for you to import a container or package of Autos?
 - a) *It takes around 7 months*
- 7) How much does it cost (On average) for importing an Auto?
 - a) *In total it costs around 4000 euro per truck*
- 8) How long does it take for getting the visa for going to the destination country?
 - a) *It depends on the documentation. If I provide all documents faster, then it takes around 2 months*
- 9) Would you prefer to use a platform for buying (with its service of delivery)?
 - a) *I am using online platforms for searching automobiles, and if there is a platform that delivers the automobiles to me in Afghanistan, that would be cool.*

Questionnaire #3 with Zia Nazari; an automobile importer.

- 1) From which countries do you import or buy Autos?
 - a) *I import automobiles from some European countries.*
- 2) Do you use any online platforms for searching or buying?
 - a) *Yes, I use online platforms for searching automobiles for sale, online platforms like trucks.com and mobile.de*
- 3) How do you mostly import the Autos (sea, land)?

- a) *I use transportation companies for transport, and they usually transport by ships.*
- 4) Do you have any obstacles to transportation or importing?
 - a) *For transportation, there is not such a big problem, but in total it takes a too long time to import from Europe*
- 5) What are the main problems you encounter?
 - a) *I have a visa problem, and it is not easy to get. They ask for lots of documents and most of the time they refuse to give visa*
- 6) How long does it take for you to import a container or package of Autos?
 - a) *Mostly around 8 months*
- 7) How much does it cost (On average) for importing an Auto?
 - a) *It differs, but on average around 1500 euros per small cars.*
- 8) How long does it take for getting the visa for going to the destination country?
 - a) *Most of the time, it takes between one month to 3 months.*
- 9) Would you prefer to use a platform for buying (with its service of delivery)?
 - a) *I would like to, but I need to check their prices. I can't say anything now.*

Questionnaire #4 with Majid Ibrahimi; an automobile importer.

- 1) From which countries do you import or buy Autos?
 - a) *Most of the time from Europe, countries like Germany, Netherlands, France, and Austria.*
- 2) Do you use any online platforms for searching or buying?
 - a) *Yes, I use online platforms like german-trucks.com and mobile.de*
- 3) How do you mostly import the Autos (sea, land)?
 - a) *There are transportation companies that deliver by ships, and I use these companies for transportation.*
- 4) Do you have any obstacles to transportation or importing?
 - a) *Sometimes it is quite hard, I must collect all the automobile in one place for loading into containers for shipment.*
- 5) What are the main problems you encounter?
 - a) *The main problem in this business is to get a visa. It is time-consuming.*
- 6) How long does it take for you to import a container or package of Autos?
 - a) *Importing from Europe takes lots of time. We need to get visa firstly which takes 3 months, and total importing time is around 8 to 9 months.*

- 7) How much does it cost (On average) for importing an Auto?
 - a) *The main cost is for transporting, and it differs depending on the automobile type.*
- 8) How long does it take for getting the visa for going to the destination country?
 - a) *Normally it takes 3 months. We must go to India or Pakistan for getting the visa. The German embassies in Afghanistan do not issue a visa.*
- 9) Would you prefer to use a platform for buying (with its service of delivery)?
 - a) *Yes, if it makes the procedure faster, why not.*

Questionnaire #5 with Abbas Safari; an automobile importer.

- 1) From which countries do you import or buy Autos?
 - a) *I usually import from Germany; it is more convenient for me.*
- 2) Do you use any online platforms for searching or buying?
 - a) *I usually use mobile.de.*
- 3) How do you mostly import the Autos (sea, land)?
 - a) *Most of the time it is by the sea which the transportation companies do it.*
- 4) Do you have any obstacles to transportation or importing?
 - a) *Yes, there are problems like visa problem and delivering the autos to the transportation companies.*
- 5) What are the main problems you encounter?
 - a) *For Germany, I have a visa problem, and it is not easy to get. They ask for lots of documents and most of the time they refuse to give visa*
- 6) How long does it take for you to import a container or package of Autos?
 - a) *It depends how fast I buy the automobiles and deliver them to the transportation companies.*
- 7) How much does it cost (On average) for importing an Auto?
 - a) *It costs in total around 10,000 euros per package which is 4 trucks*
- 8) How long does it take for getting the visa for going to the destination country?
 - a) *Most of the time around 2 months, but sometimes they refuse to issue a visa.*
- 9) Would you prefer to use a platform for buying (with its service of delivery)?
 - a) *If it gives in good prices, I will give it a try.*

Questionnaire #6 with Akbar Ibrahimi; an automobile importer.

- 1) From which countries do you import or buy Autos?

- a) *From European countries.*
- 2) Do you use any online platforms for searching or buying?
 - a) *I use some platforms for searching automobiles for sale like Google, mobile.de, and trucks.com.*
- 3) How do you mostly import the Autos (sea, land)?
 - a) *Both land and sea.*
- 4) Do you have any obstacles to transportation or importing?
 - a) *By sea it is easy, but by land, there are lots of problems.*
- 5) What are the main problems you encounter?
 - a) *The main problem for me is to buy and collect them in one place.*
- 6) How long does it take for you to import a container or package of Autos?
 - a) *It depends; if its by sea it takes 2 months if by land it takes around 3 months.*
- 7) How much does it cost (On average) for importing an Auto?
 - a) *It is hard to say, but on average it is 4000 euro per truck and 2000 euros per small car.*
- 8) How long does it take for getting the visa for going to the destination country?
 - a) *Most of the time, it takes around 3 months.*
- 9) Would you prefer to use a platform for buying (with its service of delivery)?
 - a) *I would prefer to buy it from the seller by myself.*

Questionnaire #7 with Aziz Turkmany; an automobile importer.

- 1) From which countries do you import or buy Autos?
 - a) *Form European countries like Germany, Austria, Netherlands, and some other countries.*
- 2) Do you use any online platforms for searching or buying?
 - a) *Yes, of course, I have to use the online platforms; it is the easiest way to find a car.*
- 3) How do you mostly import the Autos (sea, land)?
 - a) *I prefer to use transportation companies for transporting the automobiles to Afghanistan, and they use seaway.*
- 4) Do you have any obstacles to transportation or importing?
 - a) *For transporting there are lots of transportation companies, and I have no problems, but there are some problems.*
- 5) What are the main problems you encounter?

- a) *For Germany, I have a visa problem, and it is not easy to get. They ask for lots of documents and most of the time they refuse to give visa*
- 6) How long does it take for you to import a container or package of Autos?
 - a) *Around 8 months in total.*
- 7) How much does it cost (On average) for importing an Auto?
 - a) *It costs a lot. It costs in total for a 3 trucks package around 10,000 euros*
- 8) How long does it take for getting the visa for going to the destination country?
 - a) *In average around 3 months.*
- 9) Would you prefer to use a platform for buying (with its service of delivery)?
 - a) *Probably, it depends on how the costs and services would be.*

Questionnaire #8 with Zakariya Amini; an automobile importer.

- 1) From which countries do you import or buy Autos?
 - a) *Some European countries and Dubai.*
- 2) Do you use any online platforms for searching or buying?
 - a) *I usually search on Facebook when I want to search in the UAE market, but for Germany, I usually use mobile.de.*
- 3) How do you mostly import the Autos (sea, land)?
 - a) *The way from Dubai is by sea, but from European countries both by sea and land.*
- 4) Do you have any obstacles to transportation or importing?
 - a) *Sometimes it is really hard, and time-consuming.*
- 5) What are the main problems you encounter?
 - a) *It is hard to say, but most the time visa is the main problem.*
- 6) How long does it take for you to import a container or package of Autos?
 - a) *From Dubai, it takes around 20 days but from Europe around 4 months.*
- 7) How much does it cost (On average) for importing an Auto?
 - a) *From Germany or any other European countries, the average cost is 6,000 euro for 7 small passenger cars.*
- 8) How long does it take for getting the visa for going to the destination country?
 - a) *Visa for Dubai is easy, and it takes one week to get it, but for European countries, it is really hard.*
- 9) Would you prefer to use a platform for buying (with its service of delivery)?
 - a) *If buying from the online platform costs less than the normal one, then yes why not.*

6.3. Questionnaires with automobile sellers in Germany

Questionnaire #1 with Expo NFZ, wahren GmbH.

- 1) Which platforms do you use for advertising or selling your Autos?
 - a) *We use mostly mobile.de, which is a very good platform and eBay.de.*
- 2) Which platform do the customers use mostly?
 - a) *The customers contact us through the mobile.de platform, and most of the time, they come directly to our store.*
- 3) How often do you get Afghan customers monthly?
 - a) *We get Afghan customers on average around 15 per month, but few of them buy an automobile.*
- 4) Do they use the platforms or just come to your store directly?
 - a) *They come directly to our store if they know us, and the new ones use platforms to contact us.*
- 5) Which Autos do they prefer to buy?
 - a) *Afghan customers prefer Mercedes Benz brand automobiles almost all the time.*
- 6) Would you like to use a platform for handling your sales to Afghan customers?
 - a) *If the platform can get for us more customers or can sell out offers at a good price, then we would use it, of course.*

Questionnaire #2 with Nadiry KFZ & GmbH.

- 1) Which platforms do you use for advertising or selling your Autos?
 - a) *Platforms like mobile.de and eBay.de.*
- 2) Which platform do the customers use mostly?
 - a) *The customers contact us through the mobile.de platform.*
- 3) How often do you get Afghan customers monthly?
 - a) *They often come in summertime, and in winter they come randomly. In average I can say around ten per month.*
- 4) Do they use the platforms or just come to your store directly?
 - a) *Most of the time, they contact us through the online platforms and then come to our store.*

- 5) Which Autos do they prefer to buy?
 - a) *They usually prefer to buy Mercedes Benz brand automobiles.*
- 6) Would you like to use a platform for handling your sales to Afghan customers?
 - a) *That would be good, we would use it.*

Questionnaire #3 with E&E NFZ, GmbH.

- 1) Which platforms do you use for advertising or selling your Autos?
 - a) *We use numerous online platforms like truck.com, mobile.de, and eBay.de.*
- 2) Which platform do the customers use mostly?
 - a) *They use almost all of them, but we get the most customers from the mobile.de platform.*
- 3) How often do you get Afghan customers monthly?
 - a) *We get many Afghan customers every month. The median would be around 12-14 per month.*
- 4) Do they use the platforms or just come to your store directly?
 - a) *They contact us usually through online platforms.*
- 5) Which Autos do they prefer to buy?
 - a) *They prefer trucks like Actros, Axor, and MAN.*
- 6) Would you like to use a platform for handling your sales to Afghan customers?
 - a) *I haven't used such a platform before, this sounds interesting. We would try it, of course.*

Questionnaire #4 with Rehmats GmbH.

- 1) Which platforms do you use for advertising or selling your Autos?
 - a) *We use most of the time mobile.de platform, because it is convenient, and we get lots of customers from it.*
- 2) Which platform do the customers use mostly?
 - a) *Our customers also use mobile.de.*
- 3) How often do you get Afghan customers monthly?
 - a) *We get around 7 to 8 Afghan customers monthly.*
- 4) Do they use the platforms or just come to your store directly?
 - a) *They find us firstly on the platform, and if they want, they visit our store.*
- 5) Which Autos do they prefer to buy?

- a) *They prefer all the time Mercedes Benz brand automobiles like Actros, Axor, and MAN.*
- 6) Would you like to use a platform for handling your sales to Afghan customers?
 - a) *We use online platforms for sharing our offer for sale, and if there is a platform that sales on behalf of us with no fee; we would definitely use it.*

Questionnaire #5 with Samadi NFZ & Gmbh.

- 7) Which platforms do you use for advertising or selling your Autos?
 - a) *Platforms like mobile.de, eBay.de, and we have a page on Facebook that our Afghan customers use it mostly.*
- 8) Which platform do the customers use mostly?
 - a) *They use mobile.de, but sometimes we get more Afghan customers through our Facebook page.*
- 9) How often do you get Afghan customers monthly?
 - a) *It is hard to give a number, but you can say around 9 or 10 per month.*
- 10) Do they use the platforms or just come to your store directly?
 - a) *They contact us through our FB page and mobile.de, but they also come to our store.*
- 11) Which Autos do they prefer to buy?
 - a) *They prefer trucks like Actros, Axor, and MAN.*
- 12) Would you like to use a platform for handling your sales to Afghan customers?
 - a) *That is interesting, we would use it if it really can sale our autos to customers.*

Building an online platform “Selling German second-hand automobiles to developing countries: The case of Afghanistan.”

By

Ali Yaser Safar Zada

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Bachelor in Business Administration

At Berlin International University of Applied Sciences

The author hereby grants Berlin International University of Applied Sciences (BIU) permission to place this thesis in the library, reproduce and distribute copies of this thesis, in whole or in part, for educational purposes.

Any original of the thesis will not be available for borrowing.

The author hereby legally declares that he/she has completely written the attached thesis on their own and has not used any other tools than those explicitly mentioned in it. In all instances where the author has borrowed content created by other authors, either directly or in paraphrase, it has been explicitly marked in the thesis as such.

This thesis has not been presented, fully or in part, to another examination authority, or been published anywhere.

(The above declaration has legal value both internally at Berlin International University and externally under German public law as an „Eidesstattliche Erklärung“.)

Signature of the Author:

Date of Submission: 25/06/2019

