

E-Commerce as the Leader of International Business

Professional paper

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KEY WORDS: e-commerce, information and communication technology, international business

ABSTRACT - Information and communication technology in modern business conditions has become an important means of creating and maintaining a long-term competitive advantage. On the other hand, multinational companies, as the drivers of globalisation and internationalisation, implement ICT in their business strategy. This mode of operation leads to the creation of global markets and the internationalisation of trade. The aim of this paper is to highlight the role that ICTs play in the creation of global markets and the internationalisation of trade. For this reason, the focus of the work are novelties brought by the information and communication technologies, global market and trade in a "new-to-digital" economy, as well as the positioning of Serbia in terms of "digital" economy and information society. Using relevant statistical data, the goal is to determine where Serbia is in the implementation of ICT for business purposes.

Strokovni članek

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KLJUČNE BESEDE: e-trgovina, informacijska in komunikacijska tehnologija, mednarodno poslovanje

POVZETEK - Informacijska in komunikacijska tehnologija v sodobnem poslovnem okolju postaja pomembno sredstvo pri ustvarjanju in vzdrževanju dolgoročne konkurenčne prednosti. Po drugi strani pa multinacionalne družbe kot spodbujevalci globalizacije in internacionalizacije uvajajo IKT v svoje poslovne strategije. Ta način poslovanja vodi k ustvarjanju globalnih trgov in internacionalizaciji trgovine. Namen tega prispevka je osvetliti vlogo, ki jo ima IKT pri ustvarjanju globalnega trga in internacionalizaciji trgovine. Zato je poudarek na inovacijah, ki prinašajo informacijsko in komunikacijsko tehnologijo, globalne trge in trgovino v pogojih nove – »digitalne« ekonomije, kot tudi prikaz položaja Srbije v pogojih »digitalnega« gospodarstva in informacijske družbe. Z uporaba ustreznih statističnih podatkov želimo ugotoviti, kako daleč je Srbija pri uvajanju IKT za poslovne namene.

1 Introduction

Market globalisation and internationalisation of trade have marked the end of the 20th and early 21st century. As the drivers of globalisation, multinational companies (MNCs) recognise information and communication technology (ICT) as the source of competitive advantage and increased business performance. Hence, the effort of MNC leaders on the global ICT market to implement it in their business strategy, recognising it as the agent of globalisation. The Internet adoption in MNCs leads to the re-engineering of the entire supply chain, as well as the development of new business formats of trade in goods, services and capital. The concepts of virtual (electronic) transactions, electronic commerce, virtual supply chain, marketing and marketing information systems on the Internet have been accepted. Electronic commerce and electronic sales channels that were mentioned in MNC visions in the 1980s "have brought" the new concept of business economics, known as the "digital economy". The "Old Economy", driven by resources, has given way to the "New Economy"

(knowledge-based economy), whose main resource is knowledge – innovations and information. Furthermore, MNCs, former leaders of the “Old Economy”, have accepted the challenges of the “digital economy” and developed electronic business. The degree of acceptance of ICT reveals the level of (the lack of) information literacy and the transnational cooperation of “national-international” stakeholders: owners, managers, employees, suppliers, and the society as a whole. In addition, the globalisation of markets and the internationalisation of trade reveal the (in)ability of local managers to implement ICT in the marketing-management strategy. The “New Economy” opens questions such as: How to position the national economy into regional and global economic integration? How to master the secrets of the Digital Agenda and “the information society”, which Europe has set as a “pre-accession commitment” for the candidate countries prior to their entry into the EU market? And, how to master the secrets of the “network economy”, as a polygon where MNCs “measure” the strengths of “global players”? Within the framework of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA), the European Union identified insufficient development of ICT in Serbia as a limiting factor for the development of the “information society”, on the one hand, and the Web-digital economy, on the other. To this end, the EU has assigned the economic policy-makers in Serbia the digital “tasks”, where special significance has been attached to the development of the concept of electronic commerce, “the digital-Internet (Web) economy”, and the “information society”. On 1 March 2012, Serbia was granted the candidate status for the EU membership, and the Digital Agenda project and the “information society” has become the top priority.

2 Information and Communication Technologies – the Prerequisite for Increasing the Competitive Advantage of Companies in Conditions of Globalisation

Modern information and communication technology (ICT) and its use in the operations of multinational companies (MNCs) and other business systems is the feature of globalisation in the 21st century. The development of microelectronics, and the production and use of computers enabled the transition of industrial society to information society. The development of ICT has led to the convergence of traditional forms of operations of international business carriers, on the one hand, and computer science, on the other hand. Multinational companies that seek the possibility of diversifying business have recognised ICT as an important factor in raising their competitive advantage. Hence, the efforts of companies on the global market to implement ICT in their business strategies, recognising it as the agent of globalisation. The Government and the management of MNCs strive to encourage the development of innovative activities in electronics and communications.

2.1 Innovations Brought by Information and Communication Technology

The scientific and technical progress in the field of micro-electronics and the application of information and communication systems, such as: EAN system (European Article Numbering), scanning (bar codes), and the computerised collection of the so-called point of sale or POS (Point of Sale System), the EFTPOS (Electronic Transfer of Funds) system, electronic payment cards, EDI (Electronic Data Interchange), EDI-FACT (Electronic Data Interchange for Administration, Commerce, and Transport), and the SWIFT system (Society for Interbank Financial telecommunication), have led to the re-engineering of the international business carriers, affirming the concept of global information and communication strategy (Chaffey, Mayer, Jolnoston, Ellis-Chandwick, 2000).

With the development and implementation of the Internet, multinational companies have recognised the information-communication innovation as the resource to increase their competitive advantage and business performance on the global market. The adoption of the Internet in MNCs has led to the re-engineering of the entire supply chain, as well as the development of new business formats of trade in goods, services and capital. The concepts of virtual (electronic) transactions, electronic commerce, virtual supply chain, marketing, and the marketing information systems on the Internet have been accepted (Turban, Mc Lean, E., Wetherbe, 2003).

Electronic commerce and electronic sales channels that were mentioned in the visions of MNCs in the 1980s “spawned” the new concept of business economics, known as the “digital economy”. The “Old Economy”, driven by resources, has given way to the “New Economy” (knowledge-based economy), whose main resource is knowledge – innovations and information. Furthermore, MNCs, former leaders of the “Old Economy”, have accepted the challenges of the “digital economy” and developed electronic business (e-business). What happened was the “displacement” (transfer) of the traditional business functions: purchasing, sales, logistics, physical distribution, marketing, finance, customer services, and cooperation with business partners on the Internet (Čuzović et al., 2012). Electronic procurement and sales overcome spatial and temporal barriers. MNCs conduct business with emphasis on the marketing information system (MIS) in order to inform their consumers about the properties of the “package deals” that can satisfy their needs, desires, and expectations. They have accepted large and expensive projects, such as: a) Business-to-Business (B2B) – commerce between business systems, which includes not only business between parent companies and subsidiaries, but also other companies and supporting entities such as banks, insurance companies, customs, shipping organisations, financial institutions, etc.); b) Business-to-Consumer (B2C) – commerce between business systems and consumers. The best-known companies in the world of this type are Dell, Amazon.com, eBay; c) Business-to-Administration (B2A); d) Consumer-to-Administration (C2A) – this model is increasingly promoted by the European Union, aimed at reducing the complicated administrative procedures between administration and citizens. It is used by the makers of the “global society” as a platform for the development of the “information society”; e) Consumer-to-Consumer (C2C); f) Consumer-to-Business (C2B) – the

example of this e-business model was developed by the Price.Line.com company, where customers say the price at which they want to buy the product and the seller tries to deliver the product in accordance with their request; g) Government-to-Consumer (G2C) (government to citizens and others). In this model, e-business identifies the desire of the Government (Administration) of developed countries to make the global society developed in terms of ICT (Clinton and Gore, 2000).

Technological innovations, such as: EAN (GS1), EPOS, and EDI, caused quite a revolution in trade. On the other hand, they have served as a platform for further improvements in trade, such as the introduction of PSA (Personal Shopping Assistant), intelligent scales, electronic price labels, and RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) technology.

After single item numbering, the introduction of barcode and e-reading, the technology that has found its place in the stores is called PSA (Personal Shopping Assistant), which is a personal assistant during shopping (Kalyanam et al., 2010). This is a screen that works by touch (touch screen), equipped with a small computer and a wireless pad to facilitate movement. The use of this technology is implemented through linking the PSA with the consumer's loyalty card. The PSA is a mobile device which allows shoppers to visit a store, whereby the device is attached to their loyalty card. In addition, the PSA is equipped with a wireless connection to allow movement. The radio signal is transmitted via access points that are connected to the antenna and lead-regular network. Wireless access points are deployed throughout the store to allow the PSA to be connected everywhere.

These characteristics of the PSA provide numerous benefits to consumers. Firstly, it is easier to make a purchase because consumers who have the loyalty card can easily download a list of previous purchases that is stored on the central server. Secondly, consumers can scan the product to obtain information about various promotions. An important benefit of this technology is provided at the cash register because the payment process is very short, since the items are already scanned. At checkout, the PSA transmits data and the total amount of purchase. The cash register prints the amount and the account, and the customer pays it, which significantly shortens the time of purchase.

Intelligent Scale is another characteristic of modern technology in trade. Consumers use the scale to measure the product, as well as obtain the product and barcode label. In addition, the scale has a built-in camera that loads the product, which enables the self-service.

In terms of shopping, there is interaction between the PSA and the intelligent scale. Without the intelligent scale, the automated shopping experience that the PSA ensures is not complete. Consumers should measure the product at checkout and increase the time spent in the store.

Electronic price labels substitute paper labels, which are changed manually and often in the course of operations. Electronic price labels provide multiple benefits to consumers and retailers. Firstly, consumers receive accurate information on prices,

given the fact that the prices may not be accurate for products by 2-3%. Secondly, vendors can make use of the following benefits: 1) display the correct prices without errors at the cash register; 2) reduce any inconvenience due to queues at the cash register, caused by the checking of the price that is either not found on the product or is related to consumer advertising; 3) significant savings due to the elimination of manual price changes. Based on the aforementioned, these electronic labels contribute to the correctness of prices in shops, eliminate possible discomfort among retailers and consumers, and ensure that consumers pay the correct price.

In addition to the said technological innovation in trading, an innovation which has been gaining in importance in recent years is the well-known RFID technology. RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) is a system of product identification using radio frequencies. This is the remote sending and receiving of data via the RFID transponder or transmitter. This technology belongs to a group of automatic identification technology that automatically determines the identity of the target product. In the case of RFID, this is accomplished by the transmission of data via radio signals.

The RFID system consists of three components: the reader, the transponder (transmitter), and a network of computers for data processing (Glover and Bhatt, 2006). Readers are devices which send radio signals and search for an answer from one or more transponders. The transponder is used as a medium for information processing. When it comes to consumer products, which make up the structure of a range of most commercial formats, the transponder is in the form of thin plates, sticks, or is incorporated into the desired product, retail and wholesale packaging. The transponder transfers the information to the barcode scanner (reader) without any physical contact. Trading companies have realised the huge potential of RFID technology, and it is estimated that it will soon replace the technology of optical scan barcodes.

The great advantage of RFID technology lies in speeding up the payment process through automatic identification of RFID tags. This is especially important for the electronic retail segment in which there are no regular physical visits by consumers, as well as in traditional stores. In addition, customer service can be improved by shortening the time of product delivery. However, in order for this system to be implemented, it is necessary that every product has an RFID tag, and it is estimated that this will happen in the next 10 years (Muller-Seitz et al., 2009).

On the other hand, RFID technology has numerous disadvantages that are reflected in the possibility of theft of products tagged with RFID labels. Therefore, if a consumer takes a product outside the building with intent to steal it, the blame can be placed on the technology for the non-registration of the product or the manipulation of the code. However, these problems can be overcome by the use of electronic cash registers, which further reduce such risks (Muller-Seitz et al. 2009).

This does not exhaust the list of innovations brought by ICT. Along with information and communication re-engineering of the production and transport spheres of the global market, a kind of electronic revolution in the financial market has occurred. Based on EDI and the Internet, the concept of electronic financial markets is promoted, thus placing electronic exchanges at the focus of attention. Trading on the stock

market is based on software and hardware packages. The past physical, linguistic and administrative barriers have been “superseded” by information and communication technology to allow the movement of goods, services, capital, and labour in the global market.

3 Trade in the Era of the “New-Digital Economy”

With reference to contemporary theory and practice, we see that ICT is experiencing progressive development and that it is coming closer to international business carriers. Multinational companies recognise ICT as an important factor in raising their competitive advantage and improving business performance. Therefore, the efforts of MNCs, the global market leaders, are focused on the implementation of ICT in their business strategy and the promotion of themselves as the creators of the “new economy” (Daning, 1998).

The development and application of the Internet leads to a kind of global business re-engineering. Multinational companies internationalise their operations, thereby affirming the concept of electronic (virtual) business. There is virtual transnationalisation of business of MNCs. Parent companies open their branches (subsidiaries) around the world, whereby the spatial distance of the business partners is no longer a limiting factor in business.

3.1 “Moving” the Retail Network to the Internet

Modern ICT has removed the last geographic barrier among participants in the global business. Information and communication technologies and their services, such as the Internet, have become a platform for trading goods and services. Retail chains, which stand for the leaders of the “traditional economy”, such as Wal-Mart and Marks & Spencer, recognise ICT as an important determinant of the internationalisation of trade in the era of “digital economy” (Turban, McLean, Wetherbe, 2003). There is the “migration” of the retail network from the traditional trade institutions to the Internet. These retail chains develop the “brick and mortar” retail network and, at the same time, open online stores, known as retail stores, based on the “click and mortar” system. Commodity exchange is being digitalised. Information and communication technology and standardised trading rules internationalise the stock market trading (Dugalić i Štimac, 2005). Based on ICT, the London Metal Exchange has become a global stock market. Internet-Web economy has turned the London Metal Exchange into the trading platform for “accredited” electronic brokers from around the world. Therefore, trade moves from mechanical to electronic Internet-based development. This does not exhaust the list of innovations that ICT brings. E-money, e-payment card, e-check, e-payment and e-business documents (purchase orders, invoices, records of qualitative and quantitative goods receipt, goods and documentary letter of credit, customs declaration, etc.) are developed, which increases the competitive advantage of companies on the global market.

The Digital Economy (the “new economy”) requires changes in the marketing management skills. The concept of electronic (Internet) virtual marketing and management is being affirmed (Kolaković, 2011). The Network Economy has become a global polygon where MNCs “weigh” their strengths. The national competitiveness “tests” its authenticity on the global site. In other words, the global market has become the evaluator of the national business strategy. In addition, the global market is the place where the implementation of ICT strategies in the marketing strategy of the business system is being checked. In doing so, we must not forget the fact that ICT has abolished the model of “parochial” production and trade. The new ICT reveals the level of (the lack of) information literacy of local stakeholders: owners, managers, employees, suppliers and the society as a whole. Therefore, the appearance (entry) of local managers on the global market easily reveals their (un)preparedness for the implementation of ICT in the national business strategy. There are plenty of examples. One of the key issues is the digital divide between the developed North and the under-developed South.

In conditions of the “digital economy”, financial markets, financial institutions and financial participants are given the epithet “virtual”. Stock exchanges become virtual financial “conglomerates”, where electronic brokers from different websites trade. The distance of financial students is no longer a limiting factor in business, since the strategy of global financial markets is coming to the forefront.

4 Importance of the Implementation of Technological Innovations in Trade

Based on the aforementioned facts, we can conclude that numerous and various innovations are implemented in the course of trading, and that trade is an information-intensive activity. Thanks to the implementation of technological innovations, trade has managed to take precedence over the production in the marketing macrosystem. On the other hand, the application of these innovations has allowed for the reduction of operating costs, which can be considered as one of the direct effects of the implementation of technological innovations. In the following discussion, we will try to point out the importance of technological innovation in trade.

Numerous theoretical and practical research studies have shown that the application of technological innovation in the business of trading companies provides multiple effects (Soto-Acosta and Meron-Cerdan, 2009). These effects are reflected in timely access to information, the possibility of building an electronic communication and information exchange, as well as carrying out transactions electronically. When it comes to timely access to information and their exchange, there are great opportunities provided by Internet technology, which has already been mentioned. Internet technology can also be a source of creating competitive advantage through effective intra- and inter-organisational communication. On the other hand, intra-organisational communication has an impact on the reduction of the cost of doing business and, more

importantly, it allows employees to respond in a timely manner and thus be involved in the decision-making process (Lai, 2001). In addition, the communication system is important in building long-term relationships with customers, since it is through these innovations and the use of interactive applications, such as loyalty programmes, that the customers are retained.

As we have already pointed out, the implementation of technological innovations ensures the electronic realisation of transactions. This results in the reduction in the cost of sales and the provision of support to the staff so that they can perform more complex, rather than routine tasks (Kowtha and Choon, 2001).

In the context of the importance of the implementation of technological innovations in trade, we will focus on a number of studies that have pointed to the relationship between technological innovations and the business performance of companies that apply them (Ray et al., 2004; Subramaniam and Shaw, 2005). Specifically, these studies are based on the premise that technological innovations provide multiple benefits to companies. This stems from their impact on the volume of sales, the number of consumers and the quality of services. They enable timely access to information and connect companies with their consumers, which reduces operating costs. This helps increase the sales volume and the number of retained customers, as well as the business performance of the company. For example, virtual communication allows frequent interaction between companies and consumers, as well as the creation of loyalty programmes. At the same time, new business models are introduced, which increases the volume of sales and the number of customers. As a result, the overall business performance is increased, as well as the competitive advantage of the company that implements technological innovations.

5 Conclusion

Trade stands for the information-intensive economic activity. Innovation brought by the latest phase of scientific and technical progress could be applied in trade. Trade has gone from the classic process of sale and purchase to the electronic marketing channels. Along with electronic messaging and exchange of business documents, trade companies implement ICT in micro-macro organisational structure of the retail network. Modern information and communication technologies (ICT) and their application in the business of multinational companies (MNCs) and other business systems mark the globalisation of the early 21st century. Multinational companies, which seek the possibility of diversification of their business, recognised ICT as a factor that increases their competitive advantage. Scientific and technical progress in the field of micro-electronics and the application of information and communication systems, such as: EAN scanning system (bar-code), POS, the EFTPOS system, electronic payment cards, EDI, EDIFACT and the SWIFT system, have led to the re-engineering of international business carriers by affirming the concept of the global

information and communication strategy, which means finding its way into trade on the basis of the concept of a new business format or the trade of "new quality".

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Elektronska trgovina kot nosilka mednarodnega poslovanja

Informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije so v sodobnih pogojih poslovanja postale pomembno sredstvo za ustvarjanje in ohranjanje dolgoročne konkurenčne prednosti. Po drugi strani multinacionalne družbe, kot začetnice globalizacije in internacionalizacije, uvajajo informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije v svoje poslovne strategije. Ta način poslovanja vodi k ustvarjanju svetovnih trgov in internacionalizaciji trgovine. Namen tega prispevka je osvetliti vlogo, ki jo imajo informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije v tem procesu. Zato se v njem osredotočamo na inovacije, ki prinašajo s seboj informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije, globalni trg in trgovino v pogojih nove – »digitalne« ekonomije, pa tudi na določanje položaja Srbije v pogojih »digitalne« ekonomije in informacijske družbe.

Nove tehnologije, kot rezultat zadnje razvojne stopnje tehnično-tehnološkega napredka, najdejo svoje mesto in uporabo na skoraj vseh področjih gospodarskega in družbenega življenja. Trgovina se je izkazala kot primerno področje za prevzemanje novih tehnologij. Na ta način je avtomatizacija nadomestila mehanizacijo, s čimer trgovina vstopa v fazo tako imenovane informacijske trgovine oz. trgovine z novo kakovostjo. Za to fazo je značilno uvajanje tehnoloških inovacij. Medtem ko so se na mehanski stopnji razvoja trgovine oblike inovacij izražale preko mehanskih sredstev za delo, dobivajo v elektronski fazi oblike inovacij drugačno dimenzijo. Tehnološke inovacije, kot so: EAN (GS1), EPOS, EDI itd., so naredile v trgovini pravo revolucijo. Po drugi strani pa so predstavljale platformo za nadaljnje izboljšave, ki svojo izrazno obliko dobivajo z uvedbo PSA (Personal Shopping Assistant - osebni pomočnik pri nakupovanju), inteligentnih tehnic, elektronskih etiket za cene in tehnologije RFDI.

Nove informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije vodijo do prenove celotne dobavne verige (Supply Chain Management - SCM). Prihaja do reorganizacije vseh udeležencev v tej verigi, zmanjšuje se čas za dostavo blaga od proizvajalca do potrošnika, bolje so obveščeni odločevalci (uprava), razvijajo se nove poslovne oblike trgovine itd. Izzive novih informacijskih in komunikacijskih tehnologij so tradicionalno prepoznavne družbe „stare ekonomije“ začele uvajati v svoje poslovanje za podporo nabavi, prodaji in storitvam za stranke. Vzporedno s tradicionalnimi oblikami trgovinske mreže, t. i. »opeka in malta«, podjetja Wal-Mart, Target, Marks & Spencer, Sears, Bristol-Myers Squibb (BMS), Dell, Amazon.com in druga oblikujejo trgovinske mreže po sistemu »klik in malta«. Na podlagi tega je trgovina iz mehanske prešla v elektronsko fazo razvoja.

Elektronska trgovina je v svojem razvoju prehodila pot od izstrelitve Sputnika do pojava interneta. Vendar pa pri razvoju elektronskega poslovanja lahko ločimo dve razpoznavni fazi, in sicer: a) uporaba informacijskih in komunikacijskih tehnologij v tradicionalnih oblikah trgovine in b) razvoj novih elektronskih trgovskih oblik. Podlaga za to razlikovanje so novosti, ki jih prinaša znanstveni in tehnični napredek. Gledano skozi to prizmo, je za prvo fazo značilna uporaba računalnikov, razvoj sistemov EAN/GSI, EPOS in EFTPOS v tradicionalni trgovini. S pojavom standardov EDI in EDIFACT ter interneta nastaja nova faza institucionalnih inovacij v poslovanju, splošno znana kot e-poslovanje na internetu ali spletna trgovina.

Tako je v tržno razvitih državah v 90-ih letih prejšnjega stoletja trgovina zrasla v moderno trgovinsko institucijo s posebnimi značilnostmi v primerjavi s tradicionalno trgovino. Poleg virtualnih trgovin ter spletnih prodajalcev in kupcev se odvijajo tudi elektronske dražbe, elektronske borze, elektronski sejmi in druge elektronske institucije. Papirne poslovne knjige in dokumente je zamenjala elektronska poslovna dokumentacija (e-naročilnice, e-dobavnice, e-računi, e-carinske deklaracije, e-tovorni listi itd.). Razvijajo se novi modeli e-poslovanja, kot so B2B, B2C, B2A, C2a, C2C, C2b, G2C in drugi. Logično je, da razvoj informacijske in komunikacijske tehnologije odpira nova vprašanja, ki jih ni bilo mogoče raziskati, analizirati in posploševati po splošnih načelih tradicionalne ekonomije.

Med drugim pa je vprašanje, kako poenotiti elektronsko poslovanje na internetu, ne da bi uporabili predragega omrežja VAN kot platforme, na kateri deluje EDI kot temelj za model trgovine B2B. Problem je bil delno odpravljen z razvojem standarda EDIFACT in nato s sprejetjem transakcijskih protokolov HTTP in nastavitvijo varnostnih protokolov SET, s katerimi se zagotavlja večja varnost trgovine B2B. Razširja se področje raziskav na celotni dobavni verigi. Dejstvo je, da e-poslovanje ne prenese množice nacionalnih standardov. Treba je poenotiti celotno telekomunikacijsko infrastrukturo, ki bo zagotovila enovit jezik komunikacije v tržnem spletu, od iskanja in predstavitev poslovnih informacij, sistemov plačila, dostave blaga, pa do reševanja reklamacij. To vprašanje poskuša rešiti združenje trgovcev na drobno Global Netxchange (GNX), ki ga sestavljajo: Carrefour, Sears, Metro, Kroger, Sianabary's in Karstadt Quelle & Pinault Printemps Redoute v sodelovanju z IT podjetjem Oracle, ki je delničar GNX.

Druga maloprodajna mreža WWW Retail Exchange (WWWRE), ki povezuje nizozemski Royal Ahold in verigo ameriških drogerij CVS z IBM Consulting Services, deluje tako, da razvije standarde za model e-trgovine B2B. Vendar pa strah pred negotovostjo ni odpravljen, tako da prevladuje elektronska poslovna dokumentacija, standardizirana še po standardu EDIFACT. Zato je standardizacija informacijskih in komunikacijskih sistemov, poslovnih dokumentov in varnosti pretoka eden od ključnih pogojev za razvoj modela elektronske trgovine B2B. Ne da bi še razširili to vprašanje, želimo poudariti, da sta EDI in internetna tehnologija oživila razpravo ter spodbudila napovedi o nadaljnjem razvoju e-trgovine.

Gledano s tržnega vidika se z razvojem EDI-ja in interneta ter njuno uporabo v trgovini spreminja tudi narava konkurence. Do izraza prihajajo elektronski trgi in ele-

ktronske tržne poti. Na elektronskem trgu se srečujejo on-line prodajalci in kupci, pri čemer so odpravljene vse fizične, jezikovne in tehnične ovire. Tradicionalne institucije trgovanja, kot so veleblagovnice, nakupovalna središča na drobno, diskontne hiše in podobno, se nadomeščajo z virtualnimi trgovinami. Center kupoprodajnih transakcij ni več fizična zgradba, ampak splet, razširjen že po vsem svetu. Na spletnem omrežju se srečujejo kupci, prodajalci in drugi poslovni partnerji. Trguje se, ne da bi se s poslovnimi partnerji kdaj dejansko srečali.

Z informacijskimi in komunikacijskimi tehnologijami podprti trženjski informacijski sistemi omogočajo razvoj trženja na podlagi baze podatkov, ki zagotavljajo višjo kakovost storitev za stranke in uveljavljajo koncept neposrednega trženja. S tem ni izčrpan seznam novosti v trgovini in trženju, ki jih prinaša s seboj razvoj EDI-ja in interneta. Zmanjšajo se stroški zbiranja, obdelave, shranjevanja in posredovanja informacij. Nekatere študije kažejo, da zamenjava papirne poslovne dokumentacije z elektronsko zmanjšuje stroške papirne dokumentacije za 90 %. E-trgovina omogoča zmanjšanje zalog, spodbuja koncept »virtualnega popisa« in dobavne verige na »just-in-time«. Nastaja nova paradigma vodenja trženja v sistemu digitalne ekonomije, znana kot Consumer Relationship Management - CRM.

Ob koncu 20. stoletja so bile napovedi, da bo v nekaj letih e-trgovina v maloprodaji (tj. model B2C) prevladala. Profesor Evans je podvomil v te napovedi in poudaril: Napovedovalci so pozabili na primere iz zgodovine, le deset let prej, ko so katalogi postali vse bolj priljubljeni in so mnogi strokovnjaki menili, da bodo potrošniki zapustil trgovino in se odločili za bolj priročno naročanje po pošti ali po telefonu, kar bo maloprodajo temeljito spremenilo. Pa vendar je prodaja po pošti po svetu precej pod 10 % celotne prodaje na drobno. Kupci še vedno raje hodijo v trgovino, se z roko dotaknejo izdelkov, pomerijo obleke, nosijo domov, kar so kupili. Ne bodimo presenečeni, če bo tudi e-trgovina (predvsem v razmerju trgovina-potrošnik / B2C) doživela podobno usodo: bo pomemben del tržišča - vendar le del.

Raziskave Forrester Researcha iz leta 2001 so pokazale, da je model e-trgovine B2B v poskusni fazi in da jih bo leta 2015 več kot 10 %, da pa bo model e-trgovine B2C rastel po progresivni stopnji. Napovedi se niso uresničile. Delež spletne prodaje na drobno (B2C) predstavlja dva do tri odstotke celotne prodaje na drobno, medtem ko transakcije prek EDI-ja in interneta v razmerju podjetje-podjetje (B2B) beležijo hitrejšo rast. Ne glede na navedene ocene EU (High-level Group, Forrester Research in Jupiter Communication Group) jih lahko strnemo v ugotovitev: »E-trgovina je postala norma, a njena rast v zelo bližnji prihodnosti ne bo drugačna kot eksplozivna.« Michael E. Porter, ki je sodeloval v razpravi, je dejal: »Ni vprašanje, ali uporabljati internetno tehnologijo - podjetja nimajo druge izbire, če želijo ostati konkurenčna - ampak kako jo uporabljati. Internetna tehnologija zagotavlja boljše možnosti za podjetja v smislu prepoznavnejšega strateškega pozicioniranja, kot je bilo mogoče s prejšnjo informacijsko tehnologijo. Internet ne more biti sam po sebi konkurenčna prednost. Uspešna pa bodo tista podjetja, ki uporabljajo internet kot dodatek k tradicionalnim metodam konkurenčnosti, in ne tista, ki vzpostavijo svoje internetne dejavnosti zunaj rednega poslovanja. To je dobra novica za že delujoča podjetja, ki so pogosto v

najboljšem položaju, da združijo internetno in tradicionalno poslovanje na način, ki podpira obstojeće konkurenčne prednosti. Daleč od tega, da bi bila strategija manj pomembna, internet omogoča strategiji pomembniju vlogu, kot jo je kdaj koli imela.»

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