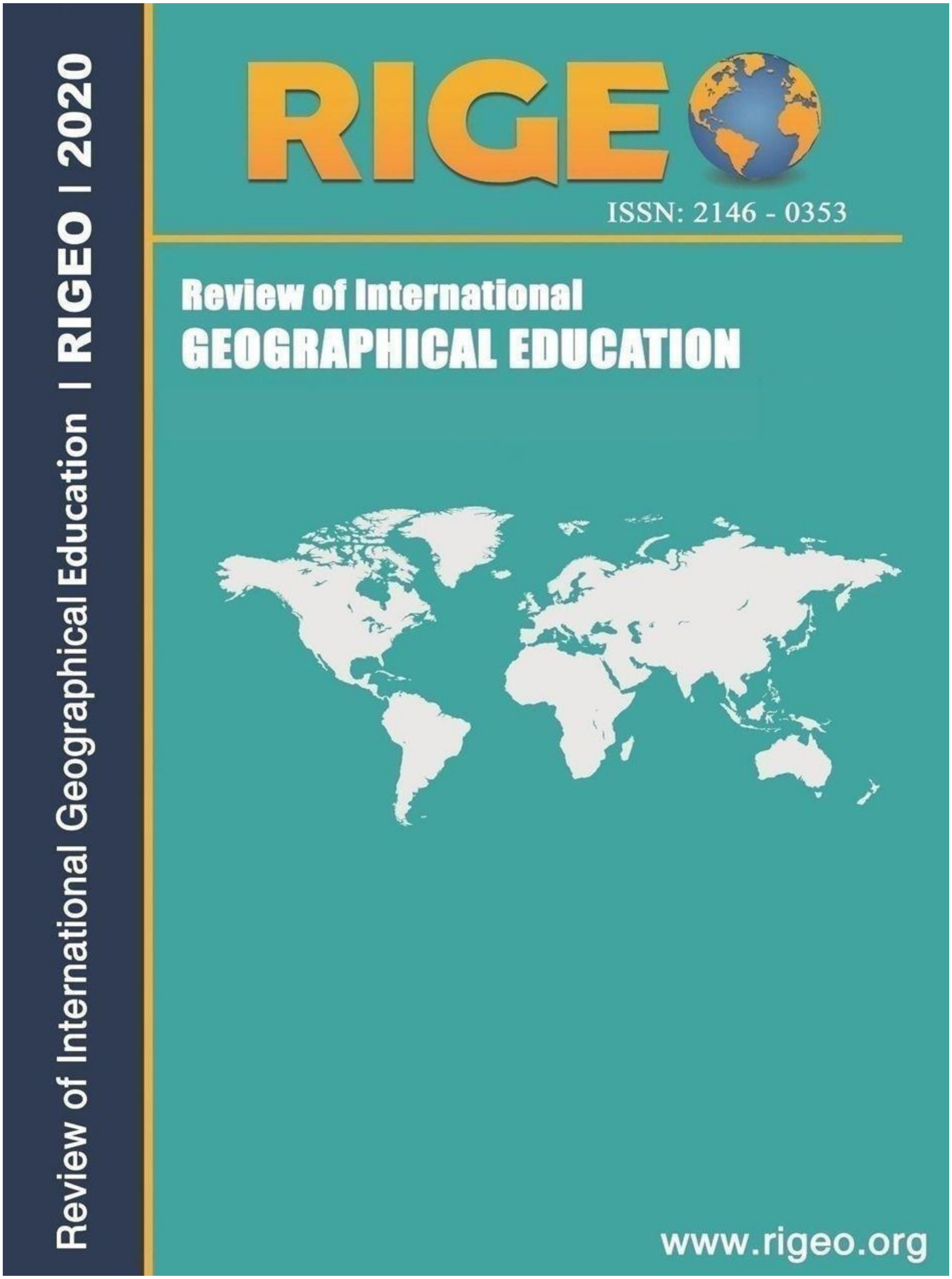
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The Dynamics of Competitiveness in Electronic Commerce

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Abstract

The internet is rapidly transforming the nature of business and the global economy. This new medium can propel electronic commerce on a global scale with no barriers or borders. Consequently, organizations have begun to develop comprehensive electronic commerce strategies. The great potential rewards, including lower operating costs, a new distribution channel, and the potential to enhance productivity, are driving the development of innovative electronic commerce applications, particularly on the World Wide Web. New business alliances are forming as organizations race to participate in the immense revenue opportunities that the web offers. These electronic commerce opportunities have developed rapidly, seemingly overnight, and have changed the face of the way many businesses are running. However, managers are faced with having to make difficult and strategic business decisions based on their lesser knowledge of this new terrain. These decisions involve the transformation of the value chain to gain a sustainable competitive advantage in a global marketplace. Our goal is to investigate the dynamics of this new age of electronic commerce, driven by the influence of the internet.

Keywords: Competitiveness, Electronic Commerce, marketplaces, legal, trade.

1. Definition and Scope of Electronic Commerce

Electronic commerce appears to be a concept that is difficult to pin down in a few words. On the Internet, various definitions of electronic commerce can be found. In fact, as large as the number of countries, individuals, and corporations involved, the definitions of electronic commerce are varied. In an attempt to come up with a concrete definition, a number of conceptual orientations of e-commerce have been put together. At the global level, electronic commerce will be understood as any production, distribution, marketing, sale, or delivery of goods and services—such as information, entertainment, and financial services—by electronic means. At the interfirm or B2B level, electronic commerce is defined as the use of inter-organizational and intra-organizational information systems to complete transactions, including both sales and purchasing transactions. Furthermore, at the business level or B2C level, electronic commerce will be viewed as the sales, transfer, and exchange of goods and services between business organizations and individual consumers.

Finally, at the individual or personalized e-commerce level, electronic commerce is the unreliable and highly dynamic process of preparing and completing an online transaction through the Internet. The e-commerce transaction is a simple function of ordering goods or services, submitting the necessary inquiry, authorization, and payment. A critical analysis of these definitions exposes the difficulty in grasping the whole concept; it leads to the identification of an ensemble of e-commerce transactions. Of all these definitions put together in a combinatorial fashion, we obtain the e-commerce transaction architecture. While outlining the different characteristics that an electronic commerce transaction may incorporate, this concept becomes oriented to a novel and essential vision focusing on the machinery of e-commerce transactions that generate profits and receive advances. What is evidenced is the enormous space for research and investigation in which this concept can participate, accompanied by the broad impact of the different developed e-commerce structures on improvements in trade, communication, and customer care.

1.2. Key Features and Components

Businesses compete in electronic channels offering most of the same types of elements as in other environments; that is, businesses offer goods and services, and these are promoted, priced, and served before and after sale. However, the Internet and its electronic transaction processing can bring some unique properties into play that, if properly managed, can affect the overall competitive position of businesses offering their goods and services in this manner. 1.2.1 Digitalized Products or Services: First, a common feature, though not ubiquitously used, is that the goods and information provided are digital goods. That is, these materials can be converted from physical to virtual goods. Further, the production of virtual goods or their enhancement is highly scalable. Moving from a document distribution environment to a product where the client has visualization and search capabilities increases product usability, and therefore potential demand. Providing products that can be reconfigured easily, that is, produced to order, reduces inventory risks. Providing a variety of options that allow product personalization or differentiation is another feature, as is providing services along with the product. While these features can be managed in non-Internet settings, the managerial flexibility and speed of change for virtual goods are typically higher.

2. The Evolution of Electronic Commerce

Electronic commerce, or e-commerce, is still in its formative years. It is developing rapidly, and the market for its products and services is growing even more rapidly. That being said, it becomes an increasingly dynamic competitive arena. From the roots of operating e-commerce to simply placing orders over electronic data links, the scope of electronic commerce has grown and been refined. Each such step in the evolution of e-commerce has corresponded to a change in its role in business, and the opportunities and pressures it presents. In this section, I will record the development of e-commerce as a field of business, laying the foundations for subsequent discussions of how competition shapes, and is shaped by, the development and deployment of e-commerce strategies.

The availability of electronic computer systems has led to significant changes in services offered by commercial and government organizations, and to great advances in the productivity of many areas of industry. It has become taken for granted over the last two decades that most business activities, from payroll processing to generating customer accounts, from tracking deliveries to monitoring the state of offshore petrochemical drilling installations, would be impossible without the aid of computer-based information technology systems. What has changed more recently is that the cost, performance, availability, and versatility of communications systems have improved to the point that, in many situations, it has become practical to establish electronic links between the computer systems of different firms, to exchange information electronically, and to take advantage of the benefits of e-commerce.

2.1. Historical Development

In the beginning of the last decade of the 20th century, there were only a few academic articles that pertained to the new developments. The so-called "information superhighway" had not been built. Given prior experience, the initial developments favored what had been developed previously as EDI systems of electronic commerce. Basically, this was the electronic exchange of data between different organizations to resolve situations such as invoices and store orders between sellers and buyers. The difference was that the new technology allowed the development of very large systems, which were called "broadcasting negotiations". With the remote interaction of multiple users, either buyers or sellers, through the Internet, these were considered successes of electronic commerce. The "mid-90s", popularly thought of as dating from around 1993, represents essentially the second attempt at e-business. This time, however, the situation is very different. The vast intrinsic potential of the heterogeneous commercial community in the United States was again planned for "desktop e-commerce". Additionally, this time there was no policy goal to achieve. Action runs in essentially uncharted economic terrain. Washington heralded its intentions to avoid any intrusiveness at least for the time being, and the business in general runs on an essentially libertarian model. Advances in electronic commerce are now routinely a news story in the financial press. Indeed, the arrival on the business scene of electronic commerce technology has the capacity to fundamentally change many of the physical and social constraints that have hitherto been restricted to the ways in which buyer and seller supplies reach their destinations.

2.2. Technological Advancements

Technological advancements in electronic commerce are dictating the rate of growth opportunities for global commercial activities. Increased ability to easily connect processes, internal and external systems, trading partners, suppliers, and customers in a friction-free logistics system, or for interfacing, promoting, and selling products and businesses to consumers, promises new trade, marketing, and bargaining strategies and relationships. Enterprise managers working in highly automated virtual organizations with mass customizing interactive marketing techniques will have the opportunity to understand, react, and model customer behaviors, profiles, and guess the lifetime purchasing activities in unwired markets. Electronic commerce potential has seen most industries facing either increasing population traffic in channel retailing, services and support agent replacements, mass customization operations, cost-effective competitive global marketing examinations, or end-user authority and system interface knowledge building. The disillusion is the similar rapid market and information technology changes that are transforming businesses and consumer market segments today. What market structures and activities will develop, reform, and reorganize with commercialized e-commerce business models built on dynamic real-world competitive landscapes? How will such business strategies influence e-commerce potential? And, to provide goods and services at profits that sustain the business, how will the profit chain market structure configurations align with the financial markets gathering and disseminating information?

3. Key Players in the Electronic Commerce Ecosystem

In the physical world, the primary players in the commercial sector are the buyers, the sellers, and the retail brokers. These three sets of stakeholders have, in turn, come to rely upon each other in important and complex ways that often have also driven the optimization of economic goods, the formation of distribution channels, the specialization of economic functions, and the explication of certain minimum standards among them all. We expect that the electronic commercial sector will operate in analogous ways, too. In this section, we identify the various stakeholders whom we believe are involved in and/or will drive electronic commerce in the Internet era. These stakeholders will represent multiple domains, including the service providers, the interexchange carriers, the local exchange carriers, and the local access network operators, equipment manufacturers, directory services providers, system integrators, and financial clearinghouses.

We also believe that the organizations which provide information and knowledge to the web are part of the commercial sector, because the management of the information and knowledge is closely linked to the development of many e-commerce markets. Our perspective extends to the regulatory, legislative, and tax agencies that have a formal administrative role with respect to each of those stakeholders. This set of stakeholders will be particularly important during the years as individual states and other countries modify and harmonize their regulations to permit the implementation of laws for international and electronic commerce.

3.1. E-commerce Platforms and Marketplaces

In electronic commerce, the platform refers to websites, apps, or platforms designed to help electronic businesses generate demand, conduct transactions, provide services, and other relevant activities for consumers in various fields. Choosing the right e-commerce platform is a crucial decision that can significantly determine the online shop's success. Generally speaking, such an operation can produce direct transactions in the company's space; besides, it can also be a brand marketing event that attracts traffic. This paper mainly discusses the platform's shopping features. Moreover, we regard the B2C and C2C models and similar platforms as the objects of appraisal because the features are implied in these platforms above all.

The following are examples. First, one platform differs from another. One acts as an agent for the transaction and charges a lower commission from shopping, while the other has its operations center and acts as the direct merchant of the transaction, having a higher commission rate. Second, one is an online sales platform for retail, while another sells daily necessities and other food items. Third, one is an online platform for commercial demand. Unlike others, it searches using commercial keywords, releases demand information, and provides designated quotations, complete business documents, and electronic reviews. Stored data facilitate the management of core members. Because these sites are built from the perspective of the specific needs of the vertical segments, their databases are more valuable, and similar purchasing groups can obtain intelligence from one of the platforms.

3.2. Online Retailers and Brands

There are many companies that started their lives as pure retail destinations, but which are now investing heavily in radical changes to their business and decreasing in importance relative to companies that have started in the online environment. The development of online services by existing retailers is not going to save them from radical changes in the short term. Their future depends on investment and the development of new retail systems in the very near future. Significant increases in consumers with internet involvement will provide rapid market expansion possibilities, and by combining this with creative ideas of brand and marketing management, there will be opportunities for replacement or substitution that are not possible within the physical world.

One inevitable (and already evident) trend is the persistence and increase in the brands sold that are owned by the e-retailers. By acquiring these brands, retailers are in a position where they build marketplaces around the branded products they own. In the fashion area, smaller brands have fallen out of fashion. Larger, retailer-owned fashionable brands have increased in importance online. E-retailers are building their own vertically integrated marketplaces containing their own brands. The e-retailer is not a traditional retail proposition; greater value is created through providing searchable access to aggregate markets.

4. Competitive Strategies in Electronic Commerce

This chapter reviews the impact of information technology on the competitiveness of small businesses in a globalized virtual marketplace. Competitive strategies are akin to the central nervous system when the enterprise addresses external buyers and suppliers in a dynamic operational environment. While the level of technology implementation is not an issue, the strategic process through which a competitive posture has been achieved or maintained is of paramount importance. The notion of emerging, non-traditional partnership chains among suppliers, as well as among intermediary and final buyers, is addressed. Their role in the strategic planning process involved in conducting multiple tasks and relations with business associates in different countries is examined. Finally, an overview of the main dimensions changing a transaction approach to a relationship-based management utilizing improved digital communications is highlighted.

The wave of interest in the evolution of electronic commerce as both technology and business support systems has seen an increasing number of studies exploring the links between the electronic markets and the strategies implemented by the enterprises using them. The consensus which seems to emerge is that the use of the Internet as a commerce medium represents an important tool for businesses to compete more efficiently, more cost-effectively, and more consistently both at the national and international levels. What seems also to emerge is that the ability to compete is directly related to the level of effective strategic positioning.

4.1. Price Competition

In our general model, we made no assumptions about the type of competition. We start now with the case of price competition. And, as elsewhere in industrial organization, the quantity of coverage of the literature that has price competition as a basis is overwhelming. We thus can limit ourselves to a very few results with emphasis on those most related to the general effect of computer and Internet use on competition. Our results are also consistent with those in the price competition literature.

We find a significant contradiction in the models of price competition and learning by doing as the basis of economies of scale. In price competition, the price is restricted to equal better-off costs. Then, the lower the price, the better for the consumers. The better the costs, the better for the sellers. So, the producers that both learn by doing and are the ones that offer the prices in the neighborhood of the better-off costs.

4.2. Product Differentiation

Given the enormous flexibility in new product design and implementation that e-commerce affords, businesses may be tempted to develop a custom product offering for every customer that comes along. The problem with this, of course, is the commitment to make anything and serve anyone that happens to walk through the virtual storefront door. It makes the development of a strategic marketing plan that will guide development and exploitation while at the same time managing uncertainty in e-markets almost impossible. The general reason that price and product differentiation are critical aspects of business e-commerce strategy and marketing planning is that they indicate which tracks in our decision timeline will most likely produce a profitable venture. The proof of this assertion can be found in the relationship of operating costs and revenues across several ranges of production quantity. For this illustration, we project a few possible concave models.

The model projecting unit variable costs and price of delivery on the technology curve tells us the following: the likelihood of making a profit from an e-commerce venture is primarily induced by technology - the cheapest cost of products and their implementing mechanism. If we must make a warning about the misleading properties of these models, they do not properly portray competition. Specifically, the models ignore the dynamics of competition in the soft market environment that is e-commerce. Moreover, these investment cost features of e-commerce unit variable costs mistakenly suggest that once constructed, an e-commerce website's costs behave as normal operating costs. This is consistent with recent business and takeover analysis findings concerning the attractiveness of unit production costs in the decision-making process. Yet for e-commerce, finding the best technology that fits the strategic market position a firm has chosen is not going to immediately make one a successful e-commerce vendor.

5. Technological Innovations Driving Competitiveness

Another major force propelling e-commerce is the proliferation of software that is intelligent, contextually sensitive, and enables businesses to strategically manage complex relationships with stakeholders. Software that manages complex relationships between buyers and sellers, sometimes within the containment of a virtual community, is an inherent element of C-commerce. Software decreases transaction costs and thereby capitalizes on the advantages of reaching large segments of the market. Such software can be found in applications and derivatives of interactive databases, intelligent agents, and client-server computing. A new example of popular software that enables businesses to selectively target groups of stakeholders with messages of their choice.

Data warehousing is another catalyst of C-commerce. These systems make available huge databases of information to businesses. When combined with the right enabling software and electronic communications, stakeholders can potentially have access to full information transparency. Data warehousing and transparency can also be combined into a new interactive technology called transparent data warehousing, which would allow certain stakeholders to view real-time corporate performance on demand via a password. Access to full information is an underlying economic condition of perfect competition, where buyers and sellers have perfect mobility and act as price takers. Imperfect information is a characteristic of many markets, where sellers are price makers. The imprecise interaction between buyers and sellers in these markets often results in transactions that are neither cleaned nor cleared, eventually increasing the transaction costs of these imperfections. The accessibility of information via data warehousing, combined with the right enabling software, reduces the transaction costs associated with information imperfections through a platform that is more efficient and effective. Management and operational information, economic and financial forecasts, marketing and sales reports, customer profiles, and all the essential data that a business needs, together with real-time market data and financial information, can easily be assembled and made accessible to any person. It is considered important that the stakeholders should reach this information. One way to do this would be to include the feature early in the design process, rather than as an afterthought.

5.1. Big Data and Analytics

The challenge for large enterprises is how to collect, process, and analyze it. Big data and analytics go well beyond traditional data management, analysis, and reporting systems. Ideally, large corporations are able to use big data to iteratively customize services and product offerings, and target customer segments more effectively. In terms of e-commerce and consequently e-competition strategy implications, big data technologies have the potential to improve a business's performance, refine its business model, support the company's operations, and its competitive strategy. When data suggests a process may be executing inefficiently, organizations may be able to analyze the causes of inefficiency and determine how to improve the process. Of all the technical developments that have impacted marketing, big data and analytics have been the most significant. With so much customer detailed data at their fingertips, advertisers are able to frequently obtain huge amounts of information about individuals. Key competitive advantages of the advanced usage of big data capabilities include the ability to transform the raw material of unstructured big data into high-value knowledge, and knowledge that is useful for the long term. The opportunities to create new sources of value represent the most important element of what big data can provide. Companies are using big data to analyze more and more data to give them the ability to make better decisions, a capability that has the potential to transform the way decisions are made across an organization.

5.2. Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning

Artificial intelligence and its most advanced part, machine learning, are offering a compelling range of enhancement opportunities for the mediating abilities of e-commerce platforms, be they business-to-consumer, consumer-to-consumer, or business-to-business mechanisms. The ownership of proprietary data has become widely recognized as the prime source of transient economic advantages. Numerous companies and each of the GAFAM giants have conspicuously understood the importance of increasing their data-sharing joint ventures to develop official data-sharing partnerships with new startups in their quest for novelty and diversification. Furthermore, companies that are suppliers of data but are not providers of AI or machine learning are creating opportunities for a variety of predictive services from economic entities. For example, one company competes with another, offering instant car insurance quotes, a service that depends on online information about the user's profile and car usage, as well as the traditional driving behavior of the insured driver.

6. Regulatory Environment and Its Impact on Competitiveness

The legal and regulatory framework that is evolving around e-commerce is not only important for the e-commerce stakeholders, but is also playing a significant role in the development of e-commerce activities in a country. Without a clear policy, adequate infrastructure, and regulatory intervention, the building of an information society and the realization of the promise of e-commerce are unlikely to be achieved. This is why concern for a legal and regulatory environment arises. It is necessary to investigate how the regulatory environment influences and affects the competitiveness of e-commerce.

The business community sees the establishment of an unambiguous and predictable legal foundation as a crucial first step for e-commerce. It is a concern for many businesses that a specific legal framework for e-commerce be made available and that obstructive national regulatory barriers be avoided. However, the lack of internationally accepted principles or rules is frustrating for many business operators. It is hardly surprising when many businesses take a wait-and-see attitude on things such as standard security measures and encryption. They are awaiting guidance from their governments about what the latter may or may not consider acceptable.

6.1. Data Privacy and Security Regulations

There are general expectations that consumers perceive the risk of losing control over their personal information, with some exceptions to the type of information. Websites have become more consumer-sensitive by incorporating privacy statements. Several studies have confirmed that the initial fear of misuse of personal information is related to how the Internet and privacy are framed, which affects the recognition of risks. The experience of the Internet, in particular, how the message is framed, influences how risk is managed by the framing of the privacy act. The content of what can be shared is more important than the restriction on the technology of the website to protect the user. It is well documented that privacy policies meet user online expectations and directly affect their willingness to provide information to personal websites. It has been found that consumers who give their personal data to the Internet value basic privacy policies, which include the company's privacy policy, the preventive capacity against credit card fraud, the confirmation of security certificates, and the brand names of prestigious websites. This is consistent with the approach that suggests that companies adhere to such privacy policies. Cyber marketers' standard practices implicitly contribute to online transaction security by requiring personal information at the lowest possible level. Respect for the innate desire of individuals to provide personal clearance solutions must be vigilant because, over time, simply expressed practices will encourage consumers to disclose more personal information. Industry standards that specify these implicit practices will build consumer confidence. This will lead to achieving a level of comfort for consumers complying simply with the expressed practices, and online privacy is calibrated to increase consumer confidence and improve their certainty and security. With content quickly accessed by search engines, in the future, insurance companies may argue about general and special conditions. With privacy-related statements on individual sites, security providers will benefit partially. If any data that can be linked to the place of the transaction is consulted, the activity of the e-demon or giver can offer costless opportunities.

6.2. Antitrust Laws and Competition Policies

Antitrust laws and competition policies are indispensable adjuncts to a generally laissez-faire posture on the part of governments. This is particularly true when the market power of buyers and sellers extends over global networks and the duration of that market power can be very short. The dynamics of the competitive transaction economy are that network effects can be designed in apparently but are instantaneously dependent on the perceived expectations of the participants. As those agreements are estopped, the nature and extent of the actual network are continuously being formed. They are de facto in status. Yet no such thing as de facto networks exists outside of the primarily legal characteristics of de jure ascriptions. Therefore, no effective antitrust stance is available except through ensuring that those de facto networks support market results that are incompatible with monopolistic behavior.

Moreover, those results are very wide and inclusive of many that are very desirable in the interest of innovation, price systems, economic performance, prices, output, and trade. Competition policies, therefore, are not the antitrust laws of the 19th-century competitive marketplace. Rather, they are the very subtle and sophisticated set of legal and economic relationships that sculpt the de jure decision. They form the legal infrastructure that governs what should be the market's outcome in a very dynamic economy. It is an approach to market solutions that should be supported by all those of us in favor of market-oriented solutions and opposed by all those of us who are tempted by the security of managed market solutions. In reality, what we are supporting are decisions made through legal structures that ensure that what should be done by the market's self-correction is in fact done by the participants in those markets.

7. Globalization and International Competitiveness

Globalization implies eliminating national frontiers in line with the development of free market mechanisms. These shifts have led to theoretically based assertions that firms become transnational or even global. Since national conditions mean that global activities are undertaken mainly by companies that are highly developed and originate from major developed countries, competition is unfairly structured. In these assertions, physical movement is the yardstick against which all transnational and international business activities are judged. It is noticeable, however, that electronically mediated global activities are attracting increasing attention where the advantages of location substitutions, reduced international transport costs to near zero, and minimizing tariffs are emphasized.

In applications of this general concept to electronic commerce, competitive advantages are similarly highlighted. But selecting and discussing exemplifying cases exclusively from among major companies lightens the impact of such caveats for the more general competitiveness of SMEs, thereby undermining the concept of a level playing field. In these terms, the implications of globalization for electronic commerce buy-side and sell-side businesses are examined and illustrated.

7.1. Cross-Border E-commerce

Growth in cross-border trade (imports and exports) apparently has outstripped that of the national economy in recent years. Foreign direct investment exemplifies the globalization of business organization and aspects of the economy, and its growth has been even faster. Inward investment was the major link by which foreign trade was affected by the national competitiveness of a country or the government actions that affected the business environment. Unhindered e-commerce allows businesses to trade directly with any customer, thus making trade affected by the business environment anywhere. A government can tax any business or transaction, but halting e-commerce requires very complex rules and compliance enforcement.

The 'globalization' critics who claim their influence derives from the street are really overwhelmed by the technical possibility of allowing businesses' e-commerce direct access everywhere. Apart from vandalism, which governments can investigate and punish, and industrial action of limited coercive success, they have no effective means of control. The encouragement of e-commerce notwithstanding, governments have been successful in regulating through taxation. There is large-scale fraud in air travel and mail order purchases of duty-free alcohol and tobacco, and gifts completely escape the net. The incentive created by this substantial tax revenue loss is driving the government customs organizations to embrace e-commerce to find and treat everyone, including small businesses and casual shoppers, who import. They are forcing courier businesses to become a functional partner in this strategy by requiring them to provide advance data on each and every package that will cross the border before it is lifted off the end of the conveyor and loaded into the van. Coordination of the independent actions in each country is being handled by the World Customs Organization. It is more an essential necessity than goal congruence. The customs organization that fails to keep up will find that the e-commerce explosion has injured it fatally, not enhanced the survival chances of its guiding civil servants.

7.2. Market Entry Strategies

Guideline 1: There is a need for entry strategies that will allocate limited resources wisely and better exploit market opportunities. This work provides practical strategies for small and large firms seeking to enter global electronic markets. It suggests that companies that develop these skills will be in a unique position to take advantage of such new forms of trading and lead in shaping global electronic markets.

1.1 Global Market Entry of Electronic Commerce: Globalization and advances in information and communication technologies have contributed many new trading opportunities. Many of these trading opportunities are a function of advances in technology and consumer preferences. However, participating in global commerce increases the uncertainty of the trading process, and opening the marketplace could discourage potential buyers from purchasing without costing a firm. Large firms operating in several markets have unique capabilities and exploitative advantages that may allow them to develop transactional advantages from these unique capabilities. Small firms may lack this diversity, and it should therefore be extremely difficult for small firms to survive in these markets. The world of electronic commerce and associated less costly trading relationships could easily allow small, flexible firms to compete in global commerce and gain greater market access.

8. Challenges and Opportunities for Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Summary

This chapter seeks to explore the value of Traditional Business Districts (TBDs) in the Information Age by focusing on e-commerce spatial considerations. It discusses the development of e-commerce and its progress among small and medium manufacturing and service-based companies in the United States, as well as the utilization of e-commerce in the field of trade affairs. Relevant organizations should begin working on a joint effort to identify and coordinate efforts to assist small and medium manufacturers in using electronic commerce. They should also work jointly through the Manufacturing Technology Program to implement the approved plans. These plans should both define and measure the impact of electronic commerce on manufacturers. Further use of websites as electronic commerce tools should be encouraged.

Monitor the progress companies are making in using their websites to enhance their business development. Incorporate a brief report on the convergence of biotechnology and e-commerce. The findings of the report should be incorporated into the approach to customer research related to e-commerce. Relevant authorities should direct the Manufacturing Technology Program to expand its development and implementation of educational materials on electronic data interchange and electronic commerce service businesses through university and commercial training. Funding for these courses should be expanded to account for the additional demand placed on the program by recent legislation. Relevant organizations should evaluate the establishment and operation of a roundtable on electronic commerce among small and medium-sized service businesses.

8.1. Access to Market and Resources

This section analyzes the electronic marketplace similarly to the marketplace in the physical world. The resources implicit in the functions of production, bargaining, and the informational signals that set rules, shape strategy, and coordinate actions are implicit in a geographic marketplace. We can consider electronic commerce in a similar vein, but its properties can also be characterized by the means of interconnection and the control invoked by actions that restrict said connection. This initial aspect of interfacing with the electronic marketplace is our first facet of competitiveness. The enterprise has to consider its market, size, and characteristics. This is the essence of consumer demand and its environment, which in turn is the range of competitive interactions. This, in a standard production function, gives demand signals both upon the demander for his resource deployment and upon the market. Certainly, our electronic commerce is not immune from this essential feature of the market. What we are implying is that the existence of such a standard building block of the neoclassical model is fundamental in the environment of telecommunications networks, and this is the access provider aspect of our analysis.

8.2. Competing with Larger Players

Large firms, particularly in industries such as electronic commerce that have worldwide reach, have certain advantages over smaller companies that may not be possible to surmount. They have more resources, for one thing. They also tend to have better integration between the steps in the new product development process, and it has been suggested that the relative slowness of small companies in moving through the new product development process may sometimes be a deterrent for larger companies to work with them. The speed of change is such that the more agile small organizations can sometimes outpace the larger ones, and companies are aware of the often rapid rise of smaller competitors. The challenge then is not only to outmaneuver any competitors but also to do it for an extended period, using the advantage that the conceivable size of their revenue lines gives. Then, once the market situation becomes more secure, the larger company needs to be able to keep up with a faster-changing environment, or end up being outmaneuvered by others who also move more quickly. So, the larger company needs to stretch the organization's ability in terms of both strategic speed and influence if it is to thrive in tomorrow's electronic commerce market.

9. Consumer Behavior and Its Influence on Competitiveness

The behavior of consumers does not begin when they step into a virtual shop but takes place at least in part on the way there. This type of behavior is becoming more interesting for electronic commerce providers through the use of mobile commerce in the broader sense. In combination with the consumer's location, the consumers' profiles and individual preferences for selected goods and services are known. And there is another aspect: control over whom they want to have access to them and vice versa. Assortments tailored toward them are managed by the shoppers themselves and not by the retailers. Product research is performed while in the location of the product itself. Shoppers determine which communications and offers are allowed and at what time and place. With this, electronic markets might become an extension of the classical definition of a real market. The separation in the terms "place," "time," "creation," and "intervention of the customer" is becoming irrelevant. Markets might adapt to physical and digital characteristics of products. Integrated service value will be a better differentiator than product per se. In fact, with enough profiling, the consumer could receive lists of both profiled sellers and sellers can see what they want.

9.1. Online Shopping Trends

There has been a growing trend in electronic commerce over the past several years to automate customer access to products on a standard catalog basis. This is commonly referred to as an electronic storefront or online retailing. This trend towards a retailing model with many businesses funneling into the consumer in a standardized way potentially has a large impact on competitiveness and antitrust policy. In this section, we take up the issue of ethics, but only after surveying certain trends and restrictions on these trends in online shopping.

Firms that sell products online must confront a number of issues strange to traditional retailing. Consumers often insist upon a low variant design, flexibility in buyer/seller communication, an extensive and uncluttered viewing capacity, and easy modes of comparison shopping to facilitate product differentiation. To meet this demanding and sometimes conflicting list of demands, retailers are being pressed to adopt certain business design strategies in designing their online shopping environments. At the present time, most online shopping environments have evolved into a strip mall sensibility. Each business has selected a preferred location on the browser path of a personal computer. A business locator index simplifies consumer searches for a specific firm.

9.2. Brand Loyalty and Trust

Brand loyalty is a function specifically realized by the availability of the e-channel and the capacity of the web brand as a means of effectively and economically consuming the time taken in finding appropriate products and services. It could be this unique characteristic of web-based brand supplies that will keep them in niche markets, but still playing a limited role. On the other hand, many brands - one click will continue to dominate the offering and finding of both private and public commodities. Viewing brand loyalty as primarily allied with decreasing search, consumer rationality is no longer dependent on traditional measures of brand. Therefore, in the e-commerce era, brand exists in how consumers learn and utilize technologies rather than in the physical products and services they represent. Trust is at the heart of the issue of online commerce. The more consumers know about costs and time in dealing with the venture equilibria, the more they trust what is being offered. Risk aversion, sociability, and reputation characterizations help explain trust in dealing - both online and within the confines of institutions where transaction forms are written on - and offline with the object of providing some future sense of the ethical and economic conduct of the purchase. The purchase itself, by reducing search, entails the costly process of trust building. Whatever the level of governance towards decentralization implies investment in trust retreats, and the failure to increase efficiency usually leads to the trust problem.

10. Social Media and Marketing Strategies

In this age of technology, e-commerce marketing strategies are critical in business. Promotion through initiatives such as social media advertising will assist in increasing traffic, leads, and sales. To be successful in the constantly evolving digital environment of social media, firms must be entirely committed and available in real-time. The varied use of social platforms has significantly increased and has thus created an advanced form of electronic commerce. Email remains a powerful tool to engage targeted audiences. The exposure to a large number of potential audiences benefits the company by widening its coverage to sell services or products. Through social media, visual messages can be rapidly and cheaply transferred between consumers. Consequently, the company will enhance its market situation by offering a remarkable consumer experience, which will lead to good customer satisfaction.

The penetration of newer media services has significantly affected both consumers' and suppliers' behaviors. Consumers tend to be much more digitally astute. Moreover, customers have greater expectations about what local web retailers should provide them in terms of products and services. Firms must realize that satisfied customers will talk to other consumers about the products and services offered by web-based retailers. This form of favorable word-of-mouth can significantly help to boost sales revenues. But this means that the firm must present an acceptable amount of customer service. Not all retailers, though, are doing well in this aspect, particularly outside of America and Europe, where the number of web shoppers is modest.

10.1. Influencer Marketing

The increasing use of social media channels and the ever-changing tastes and trends make a powerful tool such as influencer marketing a necessity for brands. As a result, new business models and different ways of conducting e-commerce are being developed. The advertising sector is a stage where classic advertising campaigns are less attended. Changing customer behavior and marketing strategies of brands go hand in hand. In this context, influencer marketing, which creates digital power and produces viral works on a segment basis, comes into play. The trends that we generally take into account, such as the phenomenon of viral works and how quickly a product or service is presented to the target audience, are of great importance for brands. This situation gives rise to effective results with reduced-cost communication strategies. Information about influencers and how they make money is presented. Along with how graphics are used to measure the effect, these earnings are evaluated from a professional point of view.

Influencers, who have become the digital visionaries of social media, do not just represent themselves. They sometimes become a digital phenomenon by launching a great brand on a journey. Reflecting our visions today with the person or persons who are followers, creating a stronger audience should be considered a celebrity or an important characteristic of the leading person. As the needs of the audience increase and become stronger, influencer marketing, which organizes e-commerce efforts, is an extremely important tool for brands. They are characterized by a range of services, from being health, travel, and innovation influencers to revealing the number of social events and their capacity to successfully carry out certain attitudes or regulate the behavior of society at this level. Congratulations on the virtues and effects that they inspire, as they are also able to shape practices. The benefits and effects that they inspire are referred to as the commercialization of influence when they engage in economic activities as a result of these virtues. The commercialization of influence is intended to refer to embodied expressions of solidarity and social responsibility. Especially if this solidarity plays a role in transforming the sphere of free carbon emissions, naturally, when it creates permanent values and meaningful experiences and guides these actions, the branding processes they have completed will meet concrete and subjective ethical criteria. Because the influencer relations that arise in the influencer marketing business are generally used to serve and receive products and services.

10.2. User-Generated Content

Commercially run websites have attempted to leverage user-generated content to improve the site's appeal. The auction site is fueled by commercial and private sellers listing at auction or selling at fixed prices. While the actual action for goods and services must be personally performed by the buyer and seller in the physical world, much of the value of such transactions that occurs after an auction bid or a purchase depends less on site seller-related investment and more on buyer-related investment. Buyer-related investment comes in the form of star ratings and comments about what occurred or may yet occur after the purchase, comments on reserve price and high-priced timepieces bids, and questions directed to the buyer. These private comments between users include both the seller's interactions with potential buyers and actual buyer/seller transactions. Over time, the existence of a large commercial volume of users who post bids, purchases, star ratings, and user comments from each seller generates incentives for additional sellers to list items in an auction or a purchase, because the other users who could read the same star ratings and auction currencies could encounter new buyers who believe that they are likely to receive what they were promised.

11. Supply Chain Management and Logistics in E-commerce

Development of information systems and communication technologies has created a new business model – electronic commerce. This text concentrates on the description of the process of purchasing in electronic commerce. The theoretical part is directed to increasing understanding of how investments in the development of electronic commerce influence the competitiveness of a company. One quantitatively directed model of competitiveness based on a resource policy approach in e-commerce is suggested and tested on the real data of 53 companies operating in Lithuania.

Electronic commerce has grown rapidly and has become a prevailing trend emerging from the global economy. E-commerce, through the guidance of information systems and communication technology, entails the process of improving supply chain and relationship management. Utilizing a variety of e-commerce, firms desire to achieve a quantity of profitable firms. However, applications of e-commerce are still immature, and many firms, particularly small and medium-sized enterprises, lack the capacity to take advantage of its potential. The research gap is that the relationship between e-commerce and firm competitiveness is not established empirically. If e-commerce is the enabler of supply chain management and logistics, then it is of interest to understand the impact of e-commerce on competitiveness. Therefore, the study aims to develop the relationship between e-commerce, with a specific focus on e-commerce investments, and competitiveness, and to determine the contributions of e-commerce usage and resources to a firm's competitive advantage. The proposed research model, based on the resource-based view and path analysis, is used to assess the determinants of e-commerce and firm competitiveness. The proposed research model is empirically validated with data from 417 companies. The findings suggest that e-commerce investments and resources play different, but complementary roles in determining firm competitiveness, with e-commerce investments enhancing both e-commerce usage and resources, which, in turn, contribute to firm competitiveness.

These implications provide firm leaders who are interested in e-commerce and competitiveness with insights into their different roles.

Competing in e-commerce requires leveraging information technology across a range of business processes. Enterprise resource planning, customer relationship management, and supply chain management are frequently identified as ways in which firms can use information systems to achieve success and profitability. Also important, as a subset of supply chain management, are logistics processes that focus on the acquisition and receipt of raw materials and assets into a firm. This text provides an overview of e-commerce and the three common information systems applications driving e-commerce participation. It also provides a detailed discussion of the interrelation between e-commerce and different processes within an organization that represent the operational work conducted around goods acquisition and assets arrival. Organizations must continue to focus heavily on process improvement and efficiency initiatives while reducing costs. In such an environment, it is difficult for managers to effectively determine how to participate in e-commerce to accomplish maximum benefit if they do not understand the relationships between e-commerce and supply chain management/logistics.

11.1. Inventory Management

In the e-commerce environment, where items are bought and sold not just in centralized electronic marketplaces but also in auctions, ad-hoc email interactions, and automated markets that are open 24 hours a day, much research must be directed towards discovering both what inventory management controls can still be applied to preserve some rationality in the markets, as well as how market mechanisms can devolve inventory deployment away from the centralized planning function. In many traditional settings, inventory management has always been difficult to achieve, since inventory by definition trades a future potential cost of lost deals against the holding cost and risk of excess inventory. Certainly, many management teams have seen the obverse for excess inventory—161 years later, the only thing that is worth more today both in the investment world and in asset management is cash.

Certainly, the demand for controlling inventory in uncertain demand in electronic commerce settings is high, especially since electronic commerce ought to be an even more persuasive reason for inventory control than the economic order or production quantity models developed by inventory management. Most research on inventory management begins trading over two thousand years ago in an agricultural field by developing back-ordering and reservation price models that could respond slowly over six or nine months for new crop seasons to begin; this interesting connection does not detract from the fundamental need for a system to signal when back-orders were being placed, and to facilitate this management strategy with the mechanism of a reservation price.

11.2. Last-Mile Delivery

To successfully accomplish a delivery, each package is passed through different parties. All of them are interested in ensuring that their part of the operation is completed correctly, so collectively they make the whole process reliable. Today, except in remote areas, only the last mile is not almost always attributed to a single carrier. Other organizations are buyers of outsourced services from the operator, even the one that has assigned the final delivery. These organizations carry a number of specialized operators serving the same region, without centralized management, which makes the process inefficient. These same organizations that hire these services are unable to decide the most appropriate carrier for their particular circumstances. The prerogative is delegated to the seller who is limited by his contract for delivery in contrast to the entire market. So, the buyer has no actual participation in shipping the products and loses out due to inadequacies different from those with their preferences.

The management of last-mile delivery is a problem used as a case study in the practice of Operations Research. It can focus on the management of information about deliveries that are occurring. However, this issue becomes less interesting because it is easy to decide among pre-determined options. Another possible focus is to limit as much as possible the number of outsourced contributions to last-mile delivery. The management of deliveries is a complex problem because it considers several random variables that are concentrated in a simple point: time and place of origin, nature, and delivery addresses. Furthermore, the demand for this service is uncertain and may be concentrated in a small part of the area. Companies that attempt to centralize the handling face complexity in allocating the demand for goods from different suppliers. With online reservation systems, it can create a demand for good employees.

12. Sustainability and Corporate Social Responsibility in E-commerce

The activity of companies in e-commerce has negative feedback both in the field of natural resources and in the area of social impacts. Regarding the environmental issue, a transformation of the company's interventions is difficult due to the paradigmatic conflict between sustainability and shareholder value. On the social issue, sustainability and corporate social responsibility are certainly the general framework in which company strategies should fit. The company strategies in digital markets are generally driven by competition and consumer trust and confidence. Therefore, company philanthropy and community sponsorship are the main socially oriented practices exerted by e-commerce. Market-reported data confirm that the social and environmental performance of companies in digital markets is relatively low; thus, we continue in this chapter. In Western economies, the way of generating profit is increasingly linked with the way of generating social and environmental value. A value chain approach is advisable, and thus, value chain operations have to be redesigned considering the company's social and environmental responsibilities. The aim is to create sustainable value, i.e., to create long-term value by decreasing the use of natural resources, by increasing utility for the stakeholders, and by supporting the economic development and welfare of the communities. This makes the company accountable not only for the economic consequences of its managerial actions and choices but also for the social and environmental ones. The actions and choices affect the strategic positioning, operations, governance, as well as the internal and external communications of the company. The resulting responsibility is based on expectations and legitimacy, performances, and disclosure.

12.1. Green Initiatives and Eco-Friendly Practices

Green issues are a primary focus of the public's attention today. People are more conscious of their environment and the side effects of their day-to-day activities on the situation. Efforts in the form of bi-weekly recycling events, changes in diet to vegetarian lifestyles, or reuse of carry-out bags symbolize the level of concern of people in different communities. Global warming is a growing concern. The message that industry leaders are, or should be, more concerned with global warming was particularly poignant. This is nowhere more visible than in today's Information Technology (IT) and telecommunication industries, where energy is required to produce services while emitting varying levels of carbon footprint: laptop PCs and desktop monitors generating over 700 kg of carbon dioxide emissions per year were ranked in the "Not Ecologically Sustainable" category. From an industry perspective, the "most dominant" concern about global warming was the increased emergence of government regulations and the ensuing rapid adoption of modifications consumers could create to the products offered by the companies to be more favorable to environmentally friendly initiatives and the conditions of accountability.

Promoted the release of the Second Energy Star specification for computer systems. Perhaps through the threat of governmental intervention or through the allocation of substantial public relations funds to address consumer potential concerns, businesses that are both traditionally thought of as sustainable and those that are corporate stalwarts allocate significant amounts of resources to develop operational procedures that allow them to report themselves as green actors in the name of goodwill and reputation management. As the advent of electronic commerce introduced virtuality, or the ability to achieve status through perceptions, businesses, during their formation, identified the opportunity to build new organizations that embrace the values of revealing the financial structure of their operations through a declaration of goodwill. These businesses identified that the capacity to attract customers to their virtual store would be directly influenced by the quality, credibility, and accountability to strategic customers who are known for their discernment of the precise activities businesses must undertake to appear as willing collaborators with government regulatory agencies.

12.2. Ethical Sourcing

One of the components of managing the supply chain is purchasing ethically sourced goods. Ethical sourcing is the promotion of working conditions that are good for employees and society in general. The organizations that encourage fair labor force standards strike various agreements, such as banning child or forced labor and abuse, with their suppliers. Some global firms have responded to complaints about employment policies in developing countries, and in particular in the suppliers' factories. There was a case of a supplier in the IT industry that employed 400 people, and it was pressured to find out how the organization could work better. In fact, the urgent issue was that the employees were not happy with their food, so they were not worth the wages received. The workers found it unacceptable to receive only one chicken dish on some of the working days. The company did not want to reduce its profit by increasing the number of dish choices because this would increase the number of required cooks, and the employees were not qualified to cook.

13. Future Trends and Emerging Technologies

The advent of agent technology on the Internet will revolutionize both commerce and society in ways not yet completely understood. However, the potential is great, and worldwide organizations and web pages are already available to enable new technology at great speed. Electronic commerce and especially new types of Internet commerce are increasing tendencies that push towards the creation of agent-based systems. Electronic commerce characteristics require autonomous, reactive, proactive, adaptable, and sociable agents with negotiation capabilities to interact and act on behalf of their owners.

Another important effect of the creation of personal agents will be the reduction of price disparities between individuals or even MNCs and emerging economies' Internet-connected companies. The ease of organizing personal agents will make it simpler for these companies to do business. Assuming that some form of order in these negotiations will exist, significant multiplier effects could be created. Industries could emerge in these economies that currently do not exist or have declined in the advanced Western countries. In this context, though personal agents could be viewed as simple forms of artificial life, agents could perform actions on behalf of the electronic entity for basic survival needs. They would have to maintain certain levels of functionality and capabilities in order to act at all.

13.1. Voice Commerce

Voice commerce is emerging as the prominent sensory mode of the Internet voice interface, enhancing the spectrum of business opportunities for online marketers. The first instance of a vCommerce prototype was reported in February 1996, where the technology allows an interactive voice-over-IP shopping center. Web-related shopping, customer self-service, and electronic banking set the stage for placing the paradigm of the telephone-based multitiered secure electronic commerce system. Telephone-based electronic commerce has, as one dimension, high traction and queue-line wait costs. Whereas email customer service has also arisen to mediate the same service cost issues via text-based dialogue. With the advent of multi-purpose wireless telephone, various customer services and information concierge functions have further facilitated this correspondence management of the queue-line.

With a voice interface, the model of interaction that personal email has provided to facilitate service, consumer CRM, and increase customer intimacy via automation is enhanced, allowing newly created customer services to provide efficient express-lane transaction functions. This chapter provides an evaluation of the land rush of new business opportunities in voice commerce and estimates the strength of the social, economic, and regulatory forces that are operating in this economic domain. Motivation stems from the potential legislative, external investment, internal capitalization, and operational challenges the voice commerce constructs. Voice commerce substantially extends the construct of strategic alliances and business partnerships. Recognizing that voice commerce is a sounding corridor or feedback channel rather than a standalone industry also helps in understanding the broader role it plays in shaping electronic markets and relations.

13.2. Augmented Reality Shopping Experiences

Augmented Reality (AR) recreates the physical world by superimposing digital objects on a desired real-world target that the user views. Our reality then becomes augmented, extended, modified, or otherwise manipulated. AR is an advanced method and discipline of computer graphics, visualization, and modeling that brings the rich interactive graphic interface of physical navigation and exploration of space. Thanks to the advances made in AR over the past few years, it has become feasible to implement AR on hardware that is practical and affordable to ordinary consumers. The combination of this practical AR and suitable client-side processing, with supporting data and networks, has begun to create an AR revolution on a global basis. The impact of the technology industry has been substantial. Interest in AR has quickly spread to a range of applications and market segments that include defense and security, healthcare, commercial entertainment productions, smart shopping, and improved shopping experiences.

AR can help solve the problem of bridging the physical shopping experience and the virtual world interface, which has been a challenge facing companies with a retail presence that want to support customer needs for ready access to the rich set of all shopping choices. Before the development of digital capabilities, it has been expensive and often impossible for physical stores to match corresponding product information delivered to the fingertips of consumers by sitting at home browsing. Such firsthand customer experience can be achieved by addressing not only the limitations of current pricing, inventory management, and other operational procedures, distribution capabilities, and network infrastructure, but also addressing AR display issues. This hands-on customer interaction at a physical store gave businesses unique advantages, as well as a fantastic opportunity to win customers with personalized, value-added customer care.

Conclusion and Implications for the Future

This chapter has presented an analysis of the dynamics of competitiveness in electronic commerce. The growth of the Internet and the development of electronic commerce as a practical means of conducting business have been described. It is shown that these developments have profound implications for the nature of business and, in particular, the creation and maintenance of competitive advantage. A model that conceptualizes the dynamics of competitiveness in electronic commerce is presented. It illustrates the processes that must be managed in order to generate competitive advantage through effective deployment of electronic commerce.

We have emphasized that the emergent stage of the evolution of technologies for electronic commerce will lead to changes in what constitutes competitive advantage. These changes will be a direct consequence of some of the benefits that electronic commerce has to offer. These anticipated shifts, which will represent both threats and opportunities, result from the potential reduction in transaction costs, the possible more rapid appreciation of the benefits that arise when information is shared, and the potential for redistribution of power as a result of disintermediation and the ability to price more flexibly.

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