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THE ROLE OF E-COMMERCE IN GLOBAL SCM PRACTICE

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Abstract

The article focuses on finding directions for improving the efficiency of Supply Chain Management (SCM) in the face of instability of the world economy and growing uncertainty of international markets. As one of the possible ways to solve it, it is proposed to use the opportunities of the global network in the form of the development of Internet trade. Characteristics of indicators of the Internet trade development is given, the comparative analysis of Internet trade country differences is carried out. The role of Internet commerce in improving SCM is determined, the conclusion is made about the need for a comprehensive assessment of its impact on SCM.

Keywords

Crisis – Efficiency – SCM – Technological Innovation – E-Commerce

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Introduction

Global financial and economic crisis, continued stagnation in a number of leading countries, increased competition on international markets force company management to pay attention to the problem of increasing the efficiency of control mechanism of the most important aspects of business, including SCM. For TNC, the actual problem is loss of control over supplies, which results in financial costs increase, delivery delays, followed by the breach of contractual obligations.

In 1982, K. Oliver coined the term "Supply Chain Management" to describe the supply process, which involves planning and controlling the various stages of the reproduction cycle in order to effectively meet consumer demand. The functional definition of SCM is given by the European Logistics Association which, among other things, includes the formation of functional strategies, the implementation of supporting functions. R. Stock and D. M. Lambert consider SCM as integration of key business processes of the company. D. Bowersox and D. Kloss interpreted SCM as a strategic supply management activity. M. Christopher expanded the term SCM, describing it as a new business concept.

Experts of such professional communities as Council of SCM Professionals, CSCMP, Supply Chain Management Association, SCMA, participants of the Global Supply Chain forum, etc. contribute to the development of SCM, in particular to the development of econometric models. At the same time, the current situation in the world economy encourages business to search for new opportunities to improve the efficiency of SCM.

Today, new opportunities in promotion of products and services to international markets are the Internet technologies on the basis of which the Internet trade develops – it has been successfully competing with traditional trade in terms of sales volumes, the range of products, rate of consumer expansion, the influence of advertising etc. E-Commerce is an integral part of rapidly growing "digital business", which, according to Gartner's precise definition, is a new business model, scalable globally for the whole world through the use of IT, the Internet¹. Business Internet activity is beginning to play a leading role in reforming key aspects of the company's operations. Of great practical importance are new opportunities to optimize the production function, reduce costs, improve logistics, ensure the transparency of commodity and financial flows at every stage of the value-added process. Commercial activity on the Internet has its specifics, which manifests itself in the ability to build and integrate complex production and supply chain, the scope of consumer penetration, high-speed of trade operations, the lack of temporal and territorial restrictions, application of new technologies, service and delivery of goods, etc. At the same time, the development of e-Commerce is connected not only with the optimization of operational processes, but also with the modernization of the whole management system, logistics, electronic payment systems, investment in the sector.

Metodology

To solve this task, it is necessary to identify indicators of the Internet trade development, which will require the application of methods for comparing and summarizing information on world practice of using digital technologies by businesses, governments and households, as well as conducting a comparative analysis of data at the national and international levels.

¹ Top 10 Strategic Technology Trends for 2020 (2019). Available at: <https://www.gartner.com/en>
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As per available estimates, in the global economy the contribution of scientific and technological progress to gross domestic product growth is estimated to be between 75 and 100 per cent in developed countries, and the share of the digital sector is steadily increasing. The SCM product distribution strategy should take into account that in modern conditions, the General pattern is that consumer baskets of different countries include not only information goods and services purchased on the Internet, but also other product groups, the number and diversity of which is constantly growing.

According to Statista survey of the digital market, the annual volume of spending on Internet purchases in 2017 reached USD 1.5 trillion. In 2018, global e-Commerce market in consumer goods sector grew by 16%, and an average check grew by 7% reaching USD 833 (Figure 1).

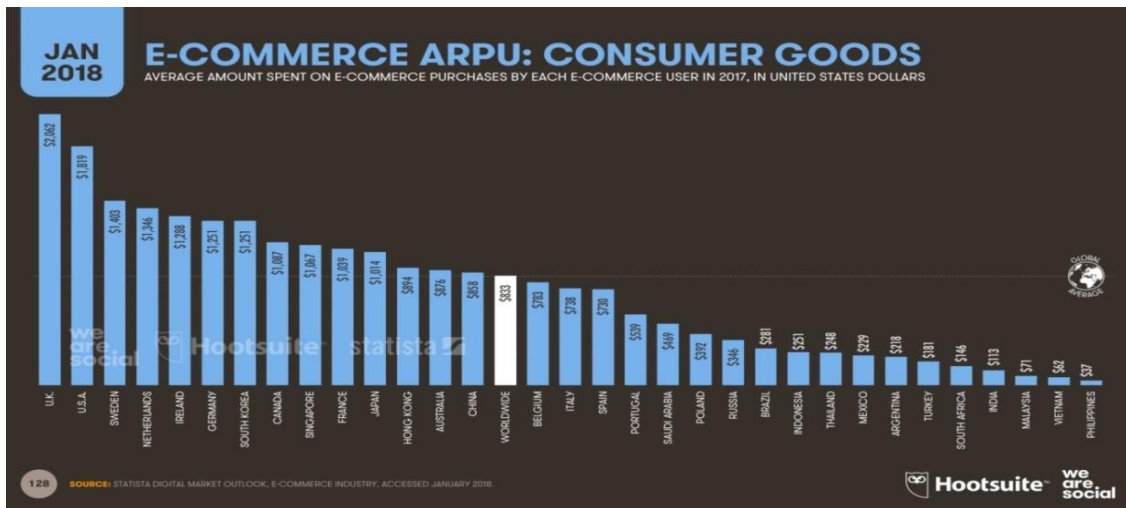


Figure 1
Global average buyer's check in online stores²

The number of people using the Internet to purchase goods has increased by 8% – about 1.8 billion people worldwide shop online, and business cannot ignore this. In addition, if the calculation includes data on travel expenses, digital content and mobile applications, the global volume of the e-Commerce market will approach USD 2 trillion. Monitoring this market and its assessment should be integrated into the overall management concept and organizational strategies of SCM. The growth of consumer activity is directly related to the possibility of access to the Internet. In 2018, the number of Internet users in the world reached 4.021 billion people, which is 7% more compared to the same period last year (Figure 2).

One of the most important indicators of the development of online commerce as an essential element of global supply chains is the volume of investment in this area. So, in 2018, the total investment in Internet trading worldwide amounted to USD 56.9 billion. For comparison, according to EWDN estimates, Chinese online trading attracted USD 30.7 billion last year, and the US online market – USD 11.9 billion³.

² Investors have invested in Russian e-commerce record amount (2019). Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/technology_and_media/25/06/2019/5d11f6309a7947bf953b0fe6

³ Investors have invested in Russian e-commerce record amount (2019). Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/technology_and_media/25/06/2019/5d11f6309a7947bf953b0fe6

The role of state institutions is very important for the development of e-Commerce. In order for the government to control the constantly increasing volumes of goods sold through e-Commerce, it is necessary to single it out into a separate type of trade and determine effective measures for its regulation. Currently, the legislation regulating cross-border Internet trade is only being formed. The first international conference on cross-border electronic Commerce was held in Beijing by the world customs organization (WCO) on 9-10 February 2018. Its main goal was to create within the framework of the WCO and WTO common international standards that would streamline the processes of cross-border e-Commerce taking into account its risks at each stage. A joint Declaration was adopted aimed at developing a single set of rules and regulations governing Internet trade⁴.

The WCO Europe Region Heads of Customs Conference was held in April 2018, which also paid special attention to the problems of the e-Commerce development.



Figure 2
Number of Internet users in the world⁵

A comparative analysis of the e-Commerce development in particular countries in the context of solving the problem of improving the efficiency of SCM has revealed certain features of this process. Its General regularities are manifested in the fact that, as a rule, the beginning of the creation of a new business sector is complex and contradictory, as often there are no necessary conditions for its formation. At this time, investment growth is not yet accompanied by an increase in business efficiency. The situation of the new sector is unsustainable. But in the transition to the growth stage, when investments not only pay off, but also bring profit, it not only begins to take a strong position, but also integrates into the business model of the company, and becomes necessary for maintaining its competitiveness. At the stage of relative stability and maturity, the processes of organizational and technological modernization are activated.

⁴ The First Global Cross-Border E-Commerce Conference: World Customs Organization (2018). Available at: URL: <http://www.wcoomd.org/en/media/newsroom/2018/february/first-global-crossborderecommerce-conference-takes-off.aspx>

⁵ Investors have invested in Russian e-commerce record amount (2019). Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/technology_and_media/25/06/2019/5d11f6309a7947bf953b0fe6

In solving the problem of determining the configuration of the distribution network it is important for SCM to take into account the continuing uneven development of the Internet by country and region. Despite the fact that about 45% of all Internet users (households and businesses) make online purchases, the level of penetration of online shopping differs significantly by country. It is still low in Central Africa and South Asia, but these regions show high growth rates of Internet audience. Thus, the number of Internet users in Africa in 2018 increased by 20 % compared to 2017. In Mali, for example, the number of people with Internet access has increased almost 6-fold. Online audiences in Benin, Sierra Leone, Niger and Mozambique have doubled in the past year (Figure 3)⁶. At the same time, the share of participation of Asian companies in investment flows and global supply chains is constantly growing; trade and economic ties of Asian countries at the regional level are deepening. Intensification of trade cooperation is carried out on the basis of bilateral and multilateral free trade agreements, the number of which reached 249 in 2017⁷. SCM needs to take into account the rapid development of cross-border e-Commerce in the region when planning to optimize logistics costs by ensuring accurate coordination of supply distribution. If earlier, when integrating into global chains, proximity to economic centers was important, today, thanks to Internet technologies, it does not matter.

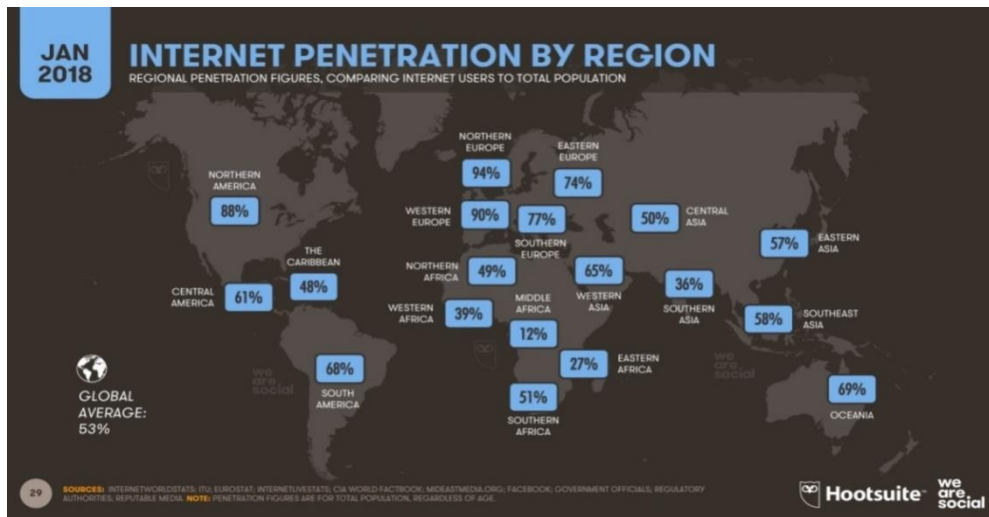


Figure 3
Distribution of Internet penetration by regions of the world

Developing countries such as India (24%), South Korea and Indonesia (over 20%) are also expected to grow at relatively high rates. The key drivers of growth in these regions are demographics and the rapid penetration of mobile Internet. The growing demand for e-Commerce services, due to the increase in consumer activity of the population, is observed in Latin America. The market has more than 54 million net users, potential and real buyers, in addition to 17% of the Hispanic population living in the United States⁸.

⁶ Internet 2017-2018 in the world and in Russia: statistics and trends (2018). Available at: <https://www.web-canape.ru/business/internet-2017-2018-v-mire-i-v-rossii-statistika-i-trendy//>

⁷ A. V. Kuznetsov, Russia and Anglo-Saxon globalism. Monograph (Moscow: KnoRus, 2019).

⁸ D. William, Understanding current global trends in e Commerce localization. Available at: <https://www.ecommerceworldwide.com/expert-insights/expert-10.08.2017/insights/understanding-the-current-global-ecommerce-localisation-trends/>

SCM in European companies also includes in their strategies a factor-based information Internet space, which reflects the integration of all processes in the supply chain in the form of General information about consumer requests, inventories, transportation, etc. the Development of e-Commerce in the EU countries is in line with the global trends of this process, but also has its own specifics.

It should be noted that traditionally the leading European countries have a well-developed industry and a less developed service sector (especially Germany). During the 1960s and 1970s, the developed countries of Europe pursued a policy of strict state regulation, especially in relation to the service sector, increased public spending on social programs. The 80's and 90's that followed showed a decrease in productivity growth, an increase in unemployment and, accordingly, a decrease in the ability of the economy to innovate. And for the wide dissemination of innovations requires a high flexibility of the business. In addition, the high costs of job cuts, the closure of companies, their transfer beyond national borders, prevented the economies of European countries from quickly adapting to new conditions.

At the same time, today e-Commerce in the EU is developing very dynamically, every year reducing their market share of traditional trade in international markets. At the end of 2018, the EU's GDP was EUR18.7 trillion. The share of e-Commerce was equal to 2.45%, but by 2020 it is expected to increase almost three-fold. The number of jobs created by European e-Commerce enterprises is estimated at approximately 2.5 million people annually. According to Ecommerce Europe, the annual number of parcels sent to customers is USD 4 billion. The estimated number of functioning websites representing e-Commerce companies is 715,000⁹. As has already been noted, the key factor in the development of e-Commerce is the population's access to the Internet. In Europe, this share was 75%, which brings it closer to the average share of Internet penetration in the European Union, where 77.1% of the population has access to the Internet. Table 1 characterizes the level of Internet availability in European countries: Scandinavian countries have the highest share of network coverage¹⁰.

Country	Internet access	Population with Internet access in million people
Europe	75,0%	564
European Union	77,1%	396,4
Top 12	92,1%	244
Iceland	96,5%	0,3
Norway	96,1%	4,9
Holland	96,1%	16,2
Denmark	96,0%	5,4
Sweden	95,4%	9,2

Table 1

Comparative characteristics of Internet access (on the example of European countries)¹¹

⁹ E-commerce Report: Global 2019 (2019). Available at: <https://www.statista.com/study/42335/e-commerce-report>

¹⁰ United Kingdom B2C E-commerce Report 2016 Consumer Barometer Survey (2017). Available at: <https://www.ecommerce-europe.eu/>

¹¹ United Kingdom B2C E-commerce Report 2016 Consumer Barometer Survey (2017). Available at: <https://www.ecommerce-europe.eu/>

The main subjects of the European e-Commerce market are such countries as Germany, Great Britain and France: their combined share is more than 60%. Germany still has great potential to expand online trading outside of its country. According to experts, its annual growth rate reaches 25%, and its turnover can reach 100 billion euros by 2020.

In 2015, the Ecommerce Europe Association conducted a survey on "Barriers to growth" among 25,000 European online stores, its results showed that the desire of online sellers to enter the international market is constrained by numerous barriers, such as legal uncertainty, country differences in tax and payment systems, high prices in logistics, etc. At the same time, almost half of the companies – 46% – note the problems associated with the regulatory framework. Burdensome for online sellers are the existing almost three dozen rules relating to data protection and privacy.

Almost half of the Internet companies represented in international markets note that the existing problems in logistics and distribution of goods in other countries often present a difficult barrier for them, while almost 15% of them cannot afford to enter the international market due to excessive transport costs. At the moment, there is no integrated European system of delivery of goods that would satisfy the needs of all participants in the e-Commerce market. Customs administration in international trade is burdensome for all participants of Internet trade. In most European countries, the duty-free threshold is very low, which creates barriers for small and medium-sized businesses, as well as significantly increases the final price for the consumer.

Difficulties related to the tax sphere arise due to the set of tax rates in the EU (more than 70) and a significant difference in countries between the minimum VAT rate (Luxembourg – 15%) and the maximum (Sweden and Denmark – 25%). In addition, for small and medium-sized businesses, complex VAT registration in various systems of EU member States is a serious obstacle to the development of e-Commerce.

The extension of the country of destination principle in the concept of international taxation to all goods sold over the Internet implies that VAT should not be levied in the country in which the goods were produced, but in the country in which they will be sold, that is, this tax is levied on imports and not on exports, which could encourage fair competition in the market. In addition to the existing legal and tax barriers to entering the international market in the format of online stores, companies are experiencing difficulties with online payments. Moreover, despite the fact that the EU in 2013 adopted the Directive on consumer rights-Consumer Rights Directive-it failed to solve a number of pressing problems, and, first and foremost, those concerning the legal aspects of trade transactions.

According to a study commissioned by BEASystems in 2015, more than half of European companies (54%) have already introduced web services. However, their wider spread is hindered, first of all, by concerns about the safety of their use - this is what stops 48% of European companies¹². However, while one in five of the European CIOs surveyed is not satisfied with the results of the new technologies, 59% of them admitted that there are visible positive results of such implementation, among which they noted: establishing closer ties with customers and partners, improving efficiency, faster and cheaper services, etc.

¹² E-Commerce market (2018). Available at: <https://dcenter.hse.ru/data/2017/03/10/1169536647/2016.pdf>

Small businesses fall significantly behind the large ones in the use of Internet technologies. So, in the UK, for example, 56% of them even "did not think about the benefits of the Network". At the same time, of the well-known large firms, 77% use Internet technology, 71% publish an email address and 53% have a website. In 2017, UK online sales totaled USD 93.89 billion, with 12.1% of purchases coming from tablets, 16.5% from smartphones, 71.4% from desktop computers, with 33% of online sales occurring after 6 pm. Most Britons use PayPal, debit and credit cards to pay for goods online¹³.

In the next report of e-retail SalesIndex of the British analytical company IMRG5 (conducted jointly with Capgemini), it is noted that in 2018, the volume of purchases made by British citizens via the Internet amounted to 50% of the total volume in the country, and expenses - more than \$ 2000 per person per year. According to the company data, electronics and clothing show the biggest growth in sales in the network. This is partly proved by the recent reporting of Asos, a clothing retailer.

In the context of the crisis, more and more consumers are beginning to compare the prices of online retailers and traditional trade, so the role of e-Commerce in the economy of European countries continues to grow. Asos (like Amazon in the US) has recently faced the challenge of traditional retailers starting to make more use of online trading methods and tools. Since the prices on the sites can be easily compared, the competition among European online stores is primarily on the price parameter. In addition, competition between resources is beneficial to consumers, as it stimulates companies to innovate, which in turn contributes to the efficiency of SCM.

Results

The insight into the role of online commerce in the global practice of SCM has shown that, despite the persistence of numerous barriers to the development of cross-border internet trading, most companies are actively expanding their presence in the markets of other countries, and this reduces total costs and improves the company's revenue dynamics. This sector of the economy shows continuous positive growth, both in individual countries and in the world as a whole. According to industry experts, Internet trade in intangible goods (digital content, e-tickets, hotel reservations, etc.) can give a significant increase in the near future – up to 20-25% per year, which are not always taken into account by market experts in the total volume of Internet sales¹⁴. This is also due to the fact that at the moment there is no single international practice of assessing and accounting for indicators of the volume of the e-Commerce market¹⁵. It should be noted that in almost all European countries there is a tangible transformation of Internet consumption - it becomes more mobile due to the spread of various applications on mobile devices, thanks to which restrictions on the place and time of operations are eliminated. As a result, consumer activity moves online, the volume of purchases in the web space gradually decreases, giving way to applications and social networks. This is important information for companies that need to take into account the speed of technological innovations and their role in the transformation of business processes, including SCM.

¹³Top 10 e-commerce markets in the world (2019). Available at: http://www.akit.ru/top10_ecommarket/

¹⁴ Investors have invested in Russian e-commerce record amount (2019). Available at: https://www.rbc.ru/technology_and_media/25/06/2019/5d11f6309a7947bf953b0fe6

¹⁵ Statistics of Internet trade in the countries of the world (2019). Available at: <https://www.shopolog.ru/metodichka/analytics/statistika-internet-torgovli-v-stranakh-mira/>

It should be emphasized that not only for developed countries, but also for developing economies, strong drivers of growth in national and international business in the near future may be the active global spread of mobile Internet and the growth of online purchasing activity of the population. In 2019, e-Commerce continues to develop at a high pace, but this process can not be called linear, since access to the opportunities offered by the global network is unevenly distributed. This indicates a high potential for the development of this segment and creates good opportunities for business to improve the efficiency of SCM.

Conclusion

In the context of slowing business activity, reducing commodity flows between countries – in the report of UNCTAD 2019, there is a noticeable decrease in the growth rate of world imports in 2018 compared to 2017 from 4.8 to 3.1, and exports – from 4.1 to 2.5¹⁶, the growth of imbalances in the reproductive processes, the use of opportunities of new formats of trade and economic cooperation is very important for business. In this case, we are talking about new information and communication technologies in the form of a global network, in particular, its segment of Internet Commerce. Today, online trading has become the most dynamic sector of e-Commerce, as acquired special practical value, fulfilling not only an important function of providing government, business and households of material and immaterial goods, but also the changing quality of international cooperation in the course of commercial activities, accelerating the formation and spread of global supply chains. Its development allows companies to more effectively solve the problems of strategic and operational planning of supply chains in terms of optimizing the production cycle, reducing inventory, choosing the optimal route of supply, controlling logistics costs, improving the level of service, etc.

To determine the extent and significance of the impact of Internet technologies on the effectiveness of SCM, it is necessary to develop criteria for its comprehensive assessment, as well as to have generally accepted and unambiguous methods, which are not available today. In addition, the international nature of e-Commerce, and the need to regulate it, requires the development of a common terminology for all countries and the introduction of international rules and standards in this area. The issues of development of the General legal framework for its management remain relevant. This leads to distortion of the assessment of the sector due to the lack of uniform approach to its statistics, clear regulations, which reduces the effectiveness of regulation of this sphere with the participation of all countries involved.

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