The internet and international marketing

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Abstract

Purpose – This paper aims to provide a link between the concepts of internationalization and internetalization, since both have become an e-business.

Design/methodology/approach – This study extends a model developed by Buttriss and Wilkinson which offers a starting-point for classifying elements and identifying interactions in the internationalization process in global marketing. The objective has been achieved through the comparison between the Buttriss and Wilkinson model and a suggested model by the researcher.

Findings – The adoption of internationalization provides excellent opportunities in international marketing activities. It is suggested that e-business is made up of many elements, such as business intelligence, supply chain management, customer relationship management, and enterprise resource planning. All of these existed in electronic form prior to the web but to a limited degree of penetration and below the level of sophistication that is prevailing today.

Originality/value – This paper fulfils and identifies resources needed and offers new thought to individuals in the field of management and probably IT.

Keywords International marketing, Internet, Electronic commerce

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Albaum *et al.* (1994) defined internationalization as the successive development in a firm's international engagement in terms of the geographical spreading in markets, products and operations forms, and the changes in management philosophy and organizational behavior from the beginning of the process to the current situation. According to Sawhney and Kaplan (2000) electronic commerce (e-commerce) is a means of business activities conducted using electronic data transmission over the internet and the world wide web. In fact e-commerce is much broader and encompasses many more business activities than just web shopping. The business world is changing rapidly which is expected to accelerate future e-commerce development.

E-commerce involves business communications and transmissions over networks and through computers, specifically the buying and selling of goods and services, and the transfer of funds through digital communications. Hoffman *et al.* (2000) and, by Jin and Robey (1999) e-commerce is multifaceted and complex. Depending on how it is applied, e-commerce has the potential to increase revenue by creating new markets for old and new products, creating a wealth of information selected products and establishing new service delivery channels to better serve and interact with customers. Hutt and Speh (2004) illustrated how transaction management aspect of electronic-commerce can also enable firms to reduce operating cost by enabling better coordination in the sales, production, and distribution process or better supply management and to consolidate operations and reduce overhead.

Bodapati and Iacobucci (2000) examined the value driven by customer demand and business imperatives, the digital economy are becoming truly global. The explosion of

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internet usage heralds the dawning of a new world of e-commerce. After growing rapidly through the mid-1990, the commercial online services have now been overtaken by the internet as the primary online marketing channel. Kotler and Armstrong (2001), discussed how users can send e-mail exchange views, shop for products, and access news, food recipes, and business information. The internet itself is free, although individual users usually pay a commercial access fee to provider.

For establishing business, Dekimpe *et al.* (2001) reported that the internet can be used as an advertising channel, as public relation tools, as a means for running a contest or sales promotion, and as support for the personal selling efforts. Internet commerce strategies have been reassessed and expenditure drastically cut as business markets have become more pessimistic about the internet's potential to deliver lasting benefits and firms are unsure of appropriate strategies for successful implementation.

Schneider reported that most companies use the terms e-commerce and electronic business interchangeably. The three main elements of e-commerce includes:

(1) consumer shopping on the web, often called business-to-consumer or (B2C);

(2) transactions conducted between businesses on the web often called business-to-business (or B2B); and

(3) the transactions and business processes those companies, governments, and other organizations undertake on the internet to support selling and purchasing activities.

One of the most important categories is business-to-business. Business markets consist of all organizations that purchase goods and services to use in the creation of their own goods and services. Generally business markets consist of fewer but larger customers than consumer markets and are involved in purchases of significantly large amount having complex economic, technical, and financial consideration (Flores, 2000).

Huang *et al.* (2001) considered firms are interested in e-commerce because, quite simply, it can help business and improve profits. For example, advertising done well on the web can get even a small firm's promotional message out to potential customers in every country in the world. Wurster and Evans (1999), specifically considered how firm can use e-commerce, too, to reach narrow market segments that are geographically scattered. A business can reduce the cost of handling sales inquiries, providing price quotes, and determining product availability by using electronics commerce in its sales support and order taking processes.

Just as e-commerce increases sales opportunities for the seller, it increases purchasing opportunities for the buyer. Elberse (1996) outlined that, e-commerce provides buyers with a wider range of choices than traditional commerce, because buyers can consider many different products and services from a wider variety of sellers. This wide variety is available for consumers to evaluate 24 hours a day. Some buyers prefer a great deal of information in deciding on a purchase; others prefer less. E-commerce provides buyers with an easy way to customize the level of detail in the information they obtain about a prospective purchase. Instead of waiting days for the mail to bring a catalog or product specification sheet, or even minutes for a fax transmission, buyers can have instant access to detailed information on the web. Some products, such as soft-ware, audio clips, or images, can even be delivered through the internet, which reduces the time buyers must wait to begin enjoying their purchases (Novak and Hoffman, 2000).

Bakos (1997) showed how the benefits of e-commerce extend to the general welfare of society. Electronic payments of tax refunds, public retirement, and welfare support cost less to issue and arrive securely and quickly when transmitted over the internet. Furthermore, electronic payments can be easier to audit and monitor than payments made by check, providing protection against fraud and theft losses. To the extent then e-commerce enables people to work from home, we all benefit from the reduction in commuter-caused traffic and pollution.

Bauer *et al.* (1999) argued that, expectations of the internet had been so over hyped that the reality was bound to disappoint. The danger now, especially in a much less confident financial and geopolitical climate, is that sentiment swings too far the other way and the internet's significance is underestimated.

Bloch and Catfolis (2001) explored the believe that the internet and the digital revolution more generally, will have wide-ranging impacts on marketing as well as on many other aspects of society and business. However, organizational change and development is influenced by diverse units and actors both inside the organization and that lie at the social and economic periphery – the communities, organizations and institutions that frame human activity, which act as resources that both constrain and enable the way ahead. Bellman and Rosister (2001) explored that, e-commerce systems and applications are not a single defining technology but rather a number of technologies that can be configured in a variety of ways and may differ in organizational contexts. Importantly, technology has a socially constructed component.

It is also worth pausing to consider some of the inhibitors to e-commerce. For some markets, particularly where the target customers are likely to be technology shy. Typical inhibitors are: security fears, technology not user friendly, internet access still limited, inertia of habitual conventional shopping and purchasing, and entrenched interest for example, distributors who may be bypassed (Chaffy *et al.*, 2000). While e-commerce has components similar to other technologies, it has also inter-organizational elements which distinguish it from other innovations.

Although security is a major barrier to e-commerce, the internet has these significant inhibitors; it is worth remembering that it can help remove inhibitors to companies considering overseas export.

Enablers for e-commerce include the rapid adoption of the internet and world wide web standards and the availability of off-shelf products for creating an e-commerce facility. We may think that internetalization is the process of a firm committing resources to internet commerce and internet mediated transactions, including communication and coordination on internal and external relations (Wilkinson *et al.*, 2000).

This research seeks to develop a model that captures the interaction between the firm and its network relationships and behavior. The study is based on a model developed by Buttriss and Wilkinson (1999) study. It is suggested that the process of Internationalization, a firm's incremental commitment to international markets is a good metaphor for a firm's gradual and commitment to internet enabled commerce – the process of internetalization, and this guides this research.

Specific insights from the research to-date

The internet is already valued by a large minority of the population as an information source, but it competes with other channels and has to offer clear benefits. Convenience is a key benefit for adopters; the development of recommendation systems and other agents will increase the internet's perceived utility and use for such people (Ariely, 1999).

Hammond *et al.* (1999) found that, as the internet matures we can expect it to become somewhat more entertainment-orientated in order to attract a broader user base. This will increase its revenue potential.

Berthon *et al.* (1999) illustrated how brand equity can, at least to some extent, be reinforced through online communities. Although brand loyalty may not be higher in online markets, where brand loyalty is increased, high-market share brands benefit most. Brands are especially important for new adopters. This partially supports the view that online retailer choice is mostly a low-involvement process (Ilfeld and Winer, 1998).

The internet is emerging as a significant advertising medium, although more slowly than the enthusiasts predicted. Most of the advertising revenue is captured by the biggest sites (AOL, MSN, Yahoo!, etc.), leaving the business plans of most "niche" advertising-funded dotcoms in tatters.

Silk *et al.* found that as advertising medium, the internet can be used in many ways – e.g. mass/targeted, push/pull, local/national/global. It now includes a wide range of formats, with many alternatives to traditional banner ads and e-mail, probably the fastest-growing part of internet advertising. Click-through rates are low and falling, but underestimate the total consumer response. Barwise and Strong's (1997) visions are that relevance and permission are becoming increasingly important.

Gershoff and West (1995) noted that, the internet would lead to "frictionless" markets have so far proved wide of the mark. There is evidence that it has somewhat increased competition and reduced prices in some markets, but the impact on both price levels and price dispersion has been small.

Hagel (1999) proposed that, economies of scale will continue to be extremely important. In addition to physical (e.g. fulfillment) and network externality reasons, even for pure information products the larger players will have more scope for bundling and versioning.

Kaplan and Fournier suggested that, online markets and auctions have had limited impact on consumer (B2C, C2C) markets despite the success of a few businesses, notably eBay. But they are developing fast in B2B markets.

The expected "disintermediation" as existing intermediaries are replaced by direct communications between primary suppliers and consumers has not happened. Instead, the initial evidence is that, as predicted by Carr, when intermediaries disappear they are replaced by new web-based cybermediaries.

Chircu and Kauffman (1999) draw the attention that, there is also evidence that bricks-and-mortar intermediaries who have successfully combined online technology with their existing assets (a "bricks and clicks" strategy) have gained competitive advantage. Anderson (2000) explored that, at this stage, there is little empirical research on the impact of the internet on marketing strategy. There is wide agreement that firms should prepare for the new economy in stages and that full preparation requires a transformation going well beyond marketing. Also, Hanson noticed that, there is still no consensus on the long-term impact on strategy, nor on viable business models. At this stage, most successful business use of the internet has been as a supplement to existing activities rather than as a way of generating significant direct revenue. As early *HBR* article by Quelch and Klein (1996) on how the internet may revolutionize global marketing has not been followed up by large-scale empirical research. Given the inherently global nature of the internet, this represents an opportunity.

Internationalization

Internet commerce is has grown dramatically in recent years as business organizations have realized its unlimited potential and the various possibilities for growth and development. It is used for coordination between the purchasing operations of a company and its suppliers, the logistics planners in a company and the transportation companies that warehouse and move its products, the sales organizations and the wholesalers or retailers that sell its products and the customer service and maintenance operations and the company's final customers.

Internationalization, as applied to a business firm can involve the interaction of environmental forces and managerial behavior as well as the main effects of each on itself in a global marketplace. When a company considers internationalization it should do so within a contingency framework, that is companies with different tasks operating in different environments will be operating in different ways.

The internationalization is an outcome of the interplay seen as resulting from various factors in the home country market, the prospective host country market, the global environment and characteristics of individual firm.

Empirical evidence indicates that as companies increase their level of international involvement there is a tendency for them to change the methods by which they serve foreign markets. There is also a tendency for its offering to foreign markets to become deeper and more diverse either through the expansion within an existing product line, a new product line or by changing the whole product concept, or some combination (Welsh *et al.*, 1997).

As the internet grows and evolves, more and more companies have become involved in e-business. E-business refers to using the internet to conduct such as sales, purchasing, communication, inventory management, customer service, submitting orders, and checking the status of orders. Examples of e-business also include buying directly from suppliers via a web site and online auctions of products and services. Today internet-based e-commerce is steadily replacing electronic data interchange (EDI) systems. EDI systems allow two companies to electronically conduct business transactions with each other, but they require special computer software and hardware and are typically much more expensive. Initially economic perspectives were predominant as corporate growth; new market opportunities, internalization and vertical integration were seen as being the main driving forces for internationalization. Another way that e-business is affecting supply chain management results from companies buying directly from supplier over the internet. This new marketing channel requires different approaches for getting products from suppliers (Gaither and Frazier, 2002).

Chircu and Kauffman (2000) suggested that, e-commerce transactions are an extension of EDI, which has been conducted for many years between larger companies and their suppliers. The internet offers a lower-cost, more flexible approach that will extend the use of electronic purchasing to many more companies and individuals.

The concept of e-commerce as stated earlier means the application of communication and information sharing tools among trading partners to the pursuit of business objectives. Better information and greater selection, combined with lower operating costs for many internet businesses may, in turn drive reduction in prices or improvements in quality. This part of e-commerce has been well established particularly using (EDI). Even large companies that use (EDI) often did not realize the full potential savings because many of their business partners did not use it. EDI or web server may be necessary for many organizations to tie together their own complex business processes and or to permit integration with suppliers and customers. Ansari *et al.* (2000) explore that, those organizations that move to create leaner, more streamlined IT and organizational structures, and met the challenge of reworking and redefining traditional work processes will succeed.

EDI is a generic term that refers to the exchange of data between businesses in digital form. The most obvious benefit of EDI is that consistent standards mean the data do not need to be rekeyed by the receiving business. Clearly, the exchange is facilitated if the businesses exchanging information agree on a common format for data interchange. This is not as easy as it may seem since most businesses store their data in proprietary format. Some manufacturers use EDI with suppliers and buyers to drive down costs in the digital channel. Costs are saved in coordination of the value of chain by allowing for just-in-time delivery of parts and reduced inventories. Some online e-retailers and offline retailers do not even hold inventory, saving considerably on financing costs. The internet has put a new face on EDI with the advent of open standards and interoperable systems. First, the expensive networks have been replaced by the internet at tremendous cost savings. Second, the same desktop computer can be used to interface with multiple suppliers. Third, networks of suppliers and buyers are more easily able to exchange data using a web-based interface (Strauss and Frost, 2001).

Several measurements have been proposed to measure the individual firm's degree of internationalization. In general, the degree has been measured by quantitative indicators, such as the number of countries in which the firm is doing business, characteristics like foreign earnings, sales turnover, assets, and the number of employees engaged in foreign activities, and so on. The firm's degree of internationalization can also be described by qualitative indicators. Behavioral characteristics like top management international orientation, the degree of foreign experience are very appealing, despite the problems involves.

A foreign marketing orientation necessitates that the firm should know as much as it can about its customers competitors, and the business environment in which it compete. The intent of this type of effort though is to learn about the market, its players and the directions the market is taking.

Most countries lament that too few of their companies participate in foreign trade. This keeps the country from earning sufficient foreign exchange to pay for needed imports. Many governments sponsor aggressive export promotion programs to get their companies to export. These programs require a deep understanding of how companies become internationalized.

For an initial move into the international market, the full range of entry modes may be considered. The choice of a particular entry mode will also depend on the size of the market and its growth potential. Once operations are established in a number of foreign markets, the focus often shifts away from foreign opportunity assessment to local market development in each country. This shift might be prompted by the need to respond to local competitors or the desire to more effectively penetrate the local market. Planning and strategy assume a market by market focus.

From the above discussion it can be seen that the new technologies not only assist in enhancing international marketing programmes, but can also be used very effectively to increase the international "component" of all marketing activities (Table I).

Table I.
Pedagogic outcomes in international marketing

Technology	Level of international marketing understanding
Audio/video-conference	Awareness + knowledge and understanding + immersion/interaction
See you see me (CUCME)	Awareness + knowledge and understanding + immersion/interaction
CD Rom	Awareness + knowledge and understanding
www based materials	Awareness + knowledge and understanding
Web boards	Knowledge and understanding + immersion/interaction
E-mail	Knowledge and understanding + immersion/interaction
News groups	Knowledge and understanding + immersion/interaction
Internet relay chat (IRC)	Knowledge and understanding + immersion/interaction
Electronic information sharing/transfer	Awareness + knowledge and understanding + immersion/interaction

Source: JimBell *et al.* (2001)

Towards an internetalization process model

Electronic marketing reaches far beyond the web. First there are many e-marketing technologies such as those used in customer relationship management, supply chain management and EDI that predate the web. Second, there are non-web internet services such as e-mail and newsgroup that provide fruitful avenues for marketing. Third, there is more than one web. Fourth, there are offline electronic date-collection devices. The following formula is simply a graphical representation of important e-business components (Strauss and Frost, 2001):

$$EB = EC + BI + CRM + SCM + ERP$$

That is, e-business is e-commerce plus business intelligence, customer relationship management, supply chain management, and enterprise resource planning.

The central driver of internationalization is the level of managerial commitment. This commitment will grow gradually from an awareness of international potential to the adaptation of international business as a strategic business direction. It will be influenced by the information, experience, and perception management, which in turn as shaped by motivations, concerns, and the activities of change agents. Management's commitment and its view of the capabilities of the firm will then trigger various international business activities, which can range from indirect exporting and importing to more direct involvement in the global market. Eventually, the firm may then expand further through measure such as joint ventures, strategic alliances, or foreign direct investment (Czinkota *et al.*, 2002).

The internet makes e-commerce affordable to even the smallest home office. Companies of all sizes can now communicate with each other electronically, through the public internet, networks for company use only internets or for use by a company and its business partners (extranets), and private value-added networks. Companies are quickly moving to utilize the expanded opportunities created by the internet. The internet has the potential to further reduce procurement costs. Large companies benefit from lower transmission costs versus private networks. The internet also opens the door to doing business electronically with new suppliers and with small and medium-sized supplier who formerly communicated only via fax or phone. The internet reduces processing costs and opens up new sales opportunities from potential buyers that post requests for bids on the internet.

Material costs, companies commitments, government support cultural and environmental attractiveness to do business in the foreign markets all are variables encouraging internationalization. Figure 1 shows Buttress and Wilkinson Model, which this research intent to expand.

The e-commerce is viewed as one of those rear cases where changing needs and new technologies come together to revolutionaries the way in which business is conducted. It enables companies to be more efficient and flexible in their internal operations, to work more closely with their suppliers, and to be more responsive to the needs and expectations of their geographical location and to sell to global market.

The central drivers of internetalization are the level is the level of managerial commitment. This commitment will grow gradually from an awareness of international potential to the adaptation of international business as a strategic business direction. It will

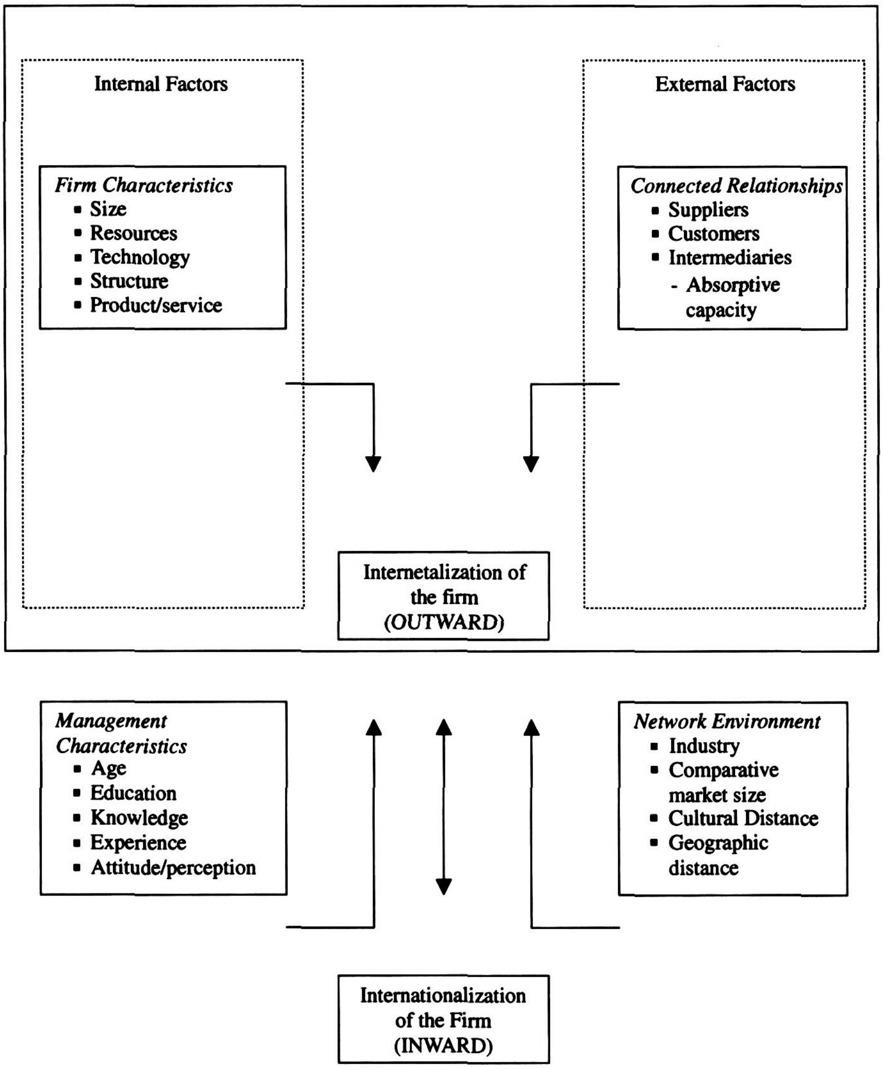

Figure 1. Internationalization process model

be influenced by the information, experience, and perception of management, which in turn is shaped by motivations, concerns, and the activities of change agents. Management's commitment and its view of the capabilities of the firm will then trigger various international business activities, which can range from indirect exporting and importing to more direct involvement in the global market. Eventually, the firm may then expand further through measures such as joint ventures, strategic alliances, or foreign direct investment. All of the activities, processes, and factors involved in the overall process of going international are linked to each other. Figure 2 is the study suggested model.

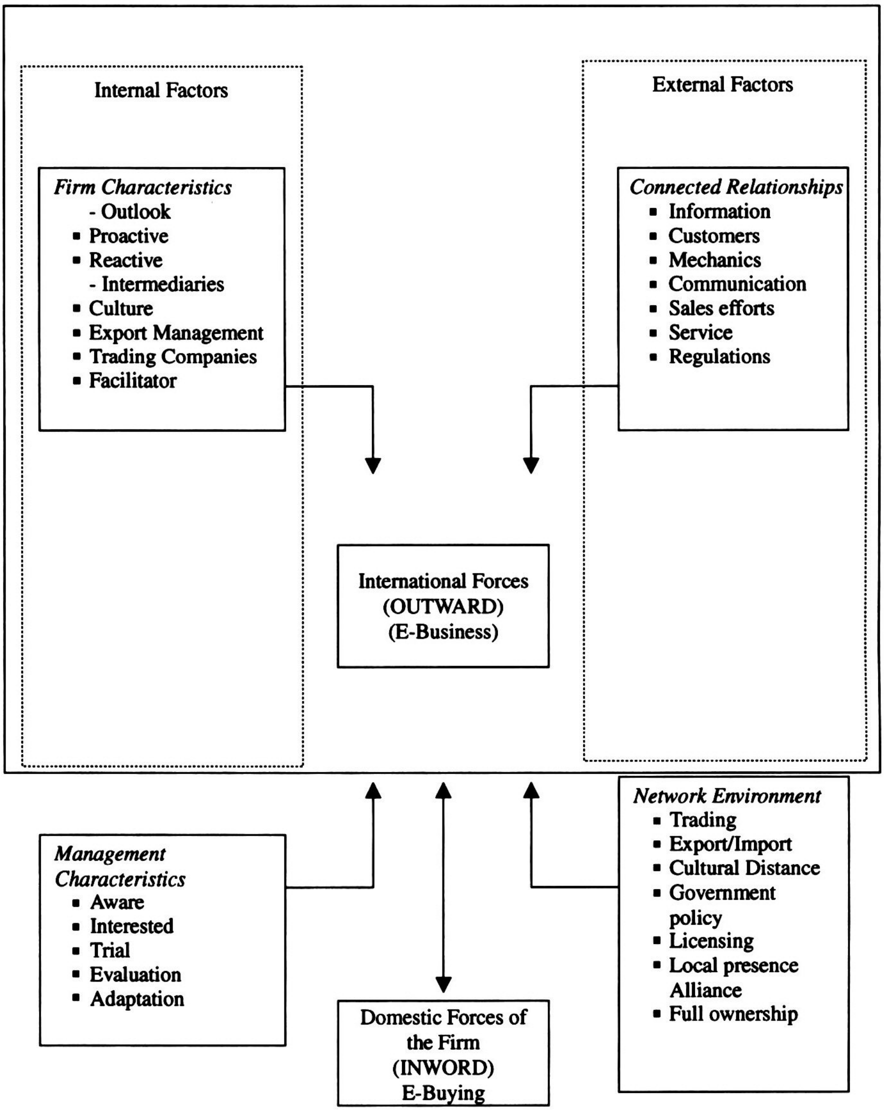

Figure 2.
Internetalization process model

Conclusion

Firms do not become experienced in international business overnight, but rather progress gradually through internationalization process. The process is triggered by different motivations to go global. An innovative development of organization internet commerce initiatives requires innovation within the firm and its network. Firms that are primarily stimulated by proactive motivations are more likely to enter international business and succeed.

The web has begun to change the nature of the relationship between the business marketer and his customer. International marketing opportunities including export opportunities are the major reason for the existence of some companies whose operations are truly global in nature. Brick and mortar firms have adopted a conservative approach to investment in e-enabling for implementation an operational success. Interpretation of internetalization in terms of internationalization should prove productive and provide a better understanding of the challenges by those charged with implementing e-commerce and will confronts as an organization commits resources to becoming an e-business gradually.

Internationalization and internetalization should not be used in isolation. In addition national infrastructure issue such as the technical capacity, cultural distance, and government policy has also been shown to influence the uptake of diffusion of e-commerce systems.

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