

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY USE PATTERNS: EVIDENCE FROM ALBANIAN ENTREPRENEURS

Kozeta Sevrani, University of Tirana
Klodiana Gorica, University of Tirana
Dorina Kripa, University of Tirana
Edlira Luci, University of Tirana
Erjon Zoto, University of Tirana

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the level of IT usage by companies in the Albanian commercial centers. The paper provides an discussion of the relevant literature on the importance of adapting information technology (IT) by entrepreneurships in a given country. Specific application to some specific businesses are provided. The paper examines large firms because of their increasing presence in the economy, their vital role in rural development and their importance to the country's economic, social and general welfare. The paper identifies the main reasons for entrepreneurships use of IT. The paper identifies an important issue considering growth trends of the domestic market and relationships with other non-Albanian companies, that have already applied IT solutions. The paper identifies efficiency and effectiveness levels of Albanian companies and the impact of customer demands for service quality.

JEL: M15; O32

KEYWORDS: IT, entrepreneurship, marketing, commercial center

INTRODUCTION

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is an important part of society and an integral part of the international business world. Forrester Research predicted that ICT transactions worth \$6.8 trillion were likely worldwide in 2007. Nevertheless, large segments of the international trade world do not use the Internet. This is certainly to change. This paper examines to Albanian entrepreneurs. The paper conducts a survey of how the internet has improved their business operations, processes, financial systems, etc. The number of native enterprises that use ICT for daily tasks is growing at an exponential rate. These trends signify this is not a casual or a short-term phenomenon. The goal of this paper is to provide feedback to Albanian entrepreneurs on the use of IT by Albanian businesses. Though there is a large amount of literature regarding this and similar topics worldwide, this is not the case for Albania. This paper is the first known attempt to address specific issues related to Albania.

In the following section, we discuss the literature related to the topics in question. Section 3 introduces the data selected and research methodology used, while Section 4 gives a more detailed analysis and interpretation of the data. Section 5 provides concluding comments and further implications of the study.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Berthorn, Pitt and Warson (1996) stated that most companies worldwide could not estimate properly the huge potential that the World Wide Web offered as a alternate marketing tool. While internet usage was increasing exponentially, its effect over the marketing process and overall economic activity was as yet unknown. On the other hand, Lichtenthal and Eliaz (2003) argue that IT usage, especially internet usage, would help firms create certain traffic for their products and services, thus building their name in the online environment.

Companies and their managerial staff can find themselves in the same situation today if they do not properly promote themselves online. Kloesch (1995) noted that online firms need to promote their business in the traditional media. Entrepreneurs should not assume customers will see their online products and then choose them. Instead, Kloesch stressed the importance of promoting themselves in a broad range of distributed daily media. Ranchlod and Tinson (2009) provide some important insights concerning the online application of traditional promotion principles. A strategy, that includes distribution of products and services to a large number of potential clients, did not have the same success when applied on the Internet.

Kotler (2009) sustains that companies need a huge amount of information in order to fulfill the needs of their customers. He further concludes that IT usage improves the process of data collection and therefore has a considerable impact on customer-oriented entrepreneurship worldwide. In addition, Zimmerman (2003) identifies an important correlation between the database and the efficiency observed in the delivery process of several companies. Thus, he concludes that online services and online sales in general shall benefit from gaining access to the databases mentioned above.

Entrepreneurs can use the Internet to enhance their operations internationally, or to work in an efficient manner to help them in their development of international e-Commerce strategies. The digital age offers significant opportunities to both consumers and businesses. In fact, the Internet or even ICT services, provides access to a worldwide market for companies of all sizes. It is hard to avoid reading any business magazine without a discussion of how the Internet has influenced business outcomes and processes. It is widely accepted that Internet usage is a competitive necessity for survival of firms, as shown in Figure 1.

To paraphrase a well-known saying: big firms are not like small firms; they have more money. Big size alone offers some protection against the effects of bad decisions that are not available to small firms. Small firms must take advantage of their ability to move quickly and firmly establish their presence in an international e-Commerce business before larger firms close this window of opportunity.

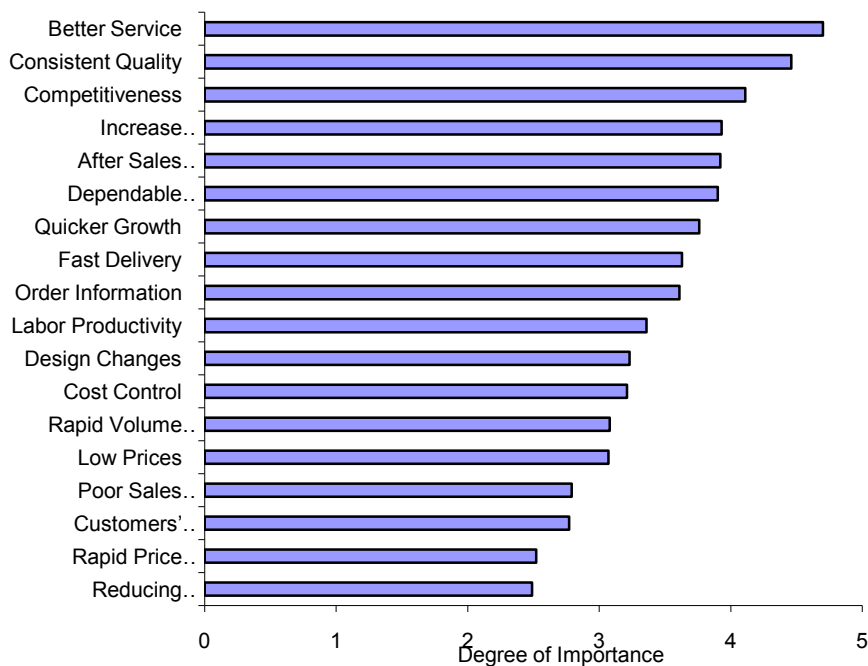
DATA AND METHODOLOGY

This paper provides a discussion and interaction between a detailed literature review, on the importance of adapting the information technology by entrepreneurship in a given country, and a specific application by some entrepreneurship. The methodology consists of using both questionnaires and analyzing the problem through a case study, which examines large businesses in Albania. The survey instrument is presented in the appendix to the paper.

Albanian commercial centers were selected for examination in this study. They involve a new business idea, they include several businesses in their operating area and their approach to technological development is at a high level. They also include international brands which involves interaction with foreign staffs that work at top managerial levels. Thus, these businesses have complex structures. This case does not consider small and medium size companies. We developed a questionnaire consisting of four sections as follows: I) a general overview of the company II) identifies the way companies use internet services, III) shows how companies' staff and management apply marketing strategies and concepts over the internet and IV) provides information about the IT solutions used by the companies

In this research, we collect data from Albanian entrepreneurship classified as commercial centers. The data collected includes general information regarding ICT use patterns in the businesses. We analyzed over 100 companies. Only 78% of the sample interviewed responded including more than 150 persons. These persons belonged to the managerial staff of the companies. The authors conducted the survey during a 2-month period in 2009.

Figure 1: Reasons for E-commerce Use



This figure shows reasons why businesses choose to do business through IT. The main reason seems to be related to quality improvement of services offered, accompanied by a considerable level of consistence and of course the necessity for competitiveness in a growing market.

RESULTS

The survey results are presented in Table 1. The results are presented separately for each section of the survey.

Section 1: Type of Business and Performance

This section reports the results questions regarding the type of businesses and performance. Just under 88% of the companies have been in business for more than one year and nearly 68% of them were run locally, mostly in Tirana. More than half of the companies use up-to-date technologies and this increased the sales and quality for their products and services. About 96% of the companies have a website, 80% of whom have not had difficulties with spending for internet and online services.

The enterprises focused mainly on marketing the most necessary products/services, facilitating the way a company fulfills customer needs. The biggest share of products are related to household appliances (34%) and supermarkets (32%). Following are clothing stores and accessories, both with an 8% share. Some 18% of the products/services share are in the other category.

Regarding technological development, almost 72% of the companies state that they are entirely concerned with the newest trends in technology, which includes working with up-to-date software, offering digital services and up-to-date equipment. Their main priority is being familiar with technological innovations,

especially regarding IT. Other companies were not particularly interested in these developments. The main reason for this lack of interest is that they already have a certain share in the market, they have loyal customers. Perhaps more importantly, they do not want to change their traditional way of doing business, including face to face communication with customers. Managers admit that IT helps the business in a considerable way.

Table 1: The Survey Data

Nr	Question	Respondents
	<u>Section I</u>	
1	What Type of Products/Services does your Business offer?	
	Household	54
	Supermarkets	50
	Clothing	12
	Accessories	12
	Alternative	28
2	How long has your Company been operating?	
	Less than a year	6
	A year	12
	More than a year	138
3	Does your Business run locally? If so, would you consider expanding in a National Level?	
	Yes	106
	No	50
4	How familiar are you with the Latest Technological Developments?	
	Not interested	12
	Sufficiently	32
	Entirely familiar	112
5	Did the Application of IT contribute to the Quality of Products/Services?	
	No Influence at all	0
	Sufficiently	32
	Yes, with a strong Impact	124
6	How much did IT contribute to the Sales Level?	
	Minor Increase	18
	Major Increase	138
	<u>Section II</u>	
7	Does your Company have an official Website?	
	Yes	6
	No	150
8	Did the Internet Service require High Expenses?	
	Yes	32
	No	124
9	Did you do some Research over the Ability or Willingness of your potential Customers towards using the Internet for Information, Help or Retrieval?	
	No Research	32
	A previous Study was adapted	80
	Yes, we did our own Research	44
10	In what Language is your official Website available?	
	Albanian	74
	English	52
	Other	30
11	Do you have any Unusual or Special Products that Customers are not familiar? If so, does publishing on Internet help you on this Issue?	
	Yes, most of our Products/Services are such	18
	Just a few Items	18
	No, our Products are easily reachable	120
	<u>Section III</u>	
12	What is the average Number of Customers arriving at your Commercial Center daily?	
	Less than 500	44
	500-1500	12
	More than 1500	100
13	How much does a Customer spend daily on average at your Commercial Center?	
	Less than \$15	12
	\$15-\$25	62
	More than \$25	82
14	Which of the following are the main Purposes you achieve through the Internet Service?	
	Advertising	48
	Information over Products or Services	46
	Building sustainable Relationship with the Customers for the Future	16
	Comments and Feedback	20
	Recruiting new Employees	10
	Online Sales of Products and Services	10
	Observing the Sales Trend	6
15	What is the Share of Online Sales regarding Total Sales?	
	Less than 10%	88
	10%-50%	24

Nr	Question	Respondents
	More than 50%	44
16	Did you consider the Option of turning your Business to an Online one?	
	No, because it is not profitable for my Business Type	18
	No, because the whole Service Idea would get lost	118
	Yes, because it is Cost-Minimizing	4
	Yes, because the Future will bring Electronic Markets only	16
17	What is the average Period of Time when your Company fulfills the Online Orders?	
	Less than a Day	70
	Less than a Week	68
	More than a Week	18
18	Does your Company offer Online Assistance to the Customers?	
	Yes:	88
	<i>Price Catalogs</i>	28
	<i>Guarantees</i>	28
	<i>Special Offers</i>	28
	<i>Other</i>	4
	No	68
	<u>Section IV</u>	
19	How many of your Employees have good Computer Skills?	
	Less than 30%	24
	30%-50%	8
	More than 50%	46
	100%	78
20	Which Communication Medium do you use mostly with your Suppliers?	
	Telephone/Fax	52
	Email	52
	Face-to-face Communication	52
21	Explain how did implementing IT Equipments (such as Alarm Systems, Survey Systems or Fire Alarm Systems) contribute in the Business Activities.	
	Positively	156
	Negatively	0
22	Does your Company have a Database with the proper Information over Products (Prices, Serial Number, Inventories etc.)?	
	Yes:	156
	<i>ISID</i>	30
	<i>FINANCA 5</i>	46
	<i>ACCESS</i>	28
	<i>GOLD</i>	36
	<i>WINSTORE</i>	16
	No	0
23	What part of the Annual Revenues goes for the R&D Process in your Company?	
	None	44
	1- 3%	88
	More than 3%	24
24	Research is mainly focused in:	
	Improving the Quality of existing Products and Services	70
	Creating new Products and Services	86
	Other	0

This table shows the survey results. The sample consisted of 156 high-level Albanian commercial center managers. The results shown indicate the number of respondents in each category. Each of the questions sum to 156 responses. The survey was conducted during 2009.

Applying IT helped the Albanian businesses be effective and efficient. Almost 80% of the interviewed sample acknowledged this, adding that it has rapidly raised the quality of their products and services. Through the internet, managers have a bigger chance to understand customers' needs, how services should be offered and to whom. Interestingly, 88% of respondents stated that changes in business activities resulting from IT solutions, had a positive impact on sales. Service and support before and after purchase have become easier and more comfortable for customers. Other respondents stated that the impact was of no importance. They think their business is strong enough to ignore technology, especially in the sales sector.

Section 2: Internet Use as the Innovative Element of Communications Strategy

This section reports results of questions regarding internet use, as the innovative element of communications technology. About 96% of the companies have an official website, 80% of whom have not had difficulties with spending for internet and online services. Only 20% of the managers stated that their companies have not conducted research regarding customers' ability or willingness to use the internet. The websites are mostly available in the native language. Generally, the products of these centers are easily reachable.

While the majority of companies have their official website, few offer online sales. Almost 96% of the companies used the website as a marketing tool. The website also helped in recruiting new people and in sharing information and getting feedback. The rest of them did not have a website, since they do not apply online sales. They also want to advertise, recruit people, and communicate with their customers in a direct way, not using online services. Most internet services required affordable expenses. Only around 20% of the companies obtaining funding when they decided to spend for additional internet services. They are using these services and, as time passes, there will likely be major benefits from this decision.

Customers can use the internet service to find products, get help, or obtain additional information about companies. Nearly 28% of the commercial centers have done some preliminary research regarding this issue. Companies representing 20% of the total did not do any research at all. The majority of the companies adapted some already available research study, which turned out to be very helpful. As their managers indicate, towards a higher quantity and quality of sales.

Official company websites are generally available in several languages. The most frequent is Albanian, chosen because the majority of customers are Albanian. Slightly more than one third of the firms, have an English website, trying to expand to an international level. The rest of the companies use Italian and Greek languages to attract customers, since their main activity frequently occurs in these countries.

Customers are aware of most products offered in commercial centers. The products are easily reachable and do not need internet publication. The majority of this type of businesses focuses in well-known products and on improving their image rather than selling unknown products. However, nearly a quarter of the sample has such products. Managers believe that customers prefer this type of product and it will have a positive impact on the company's image and profits. The internet is a big help for the promotion of these products.

Section 3: Marketing Techniques and their Application on the Internet

This section focuses on questions about marketing technique, principles, strategies and their application on the internet. The centers had nearly 1,500 visitors per day spending on average more than \$25. This implies significant revenues for the centers. At the same time, companies invest only 1-3% of total revenues for Research & Development (R&D) towards creating new products and improving existing ones. The main purpose of company websites for the customers was availability of information about products, services and the advertisements they showed. Online sales have a small share, less than 10% spread through a few centers. Online businesses are far from reality for the Albanian environment based on the results found here. However, distribution of online orders and online assistance have reached a satisfactory level. Since commercial centers are a new business idea in Albania, they are attractive to customers. Many centers established recently do not have a large number of customers. Customers are willing to spend on average less than \$15 per day in nearly 8% of the commercial centers they visit. Moreover, 40% of the total customers spend between \$15 and \$25 per day.

Sample companies mainly use their websites for promoting products and sharing information about products and services, representing respectively 31% and 30% of the total. Nearly 13% of all firms use their websites to receive feedback regarding their activity and products. About 10% of these companies use their websites to build sustainable customer relationships. The later results are impressive, considering that part of the companies use their website to recruit new employees, for online sales or to observe the sales trend is even smaller.

Most of the companies achieve online sales at a level below 10% of total sales. This shows there is still much to do for these centers to not only advertise their products online, but also to sell online. Interestingly, 16% of the companies achieve a sales level between 10% and 50% of total sales through online services. The other companies are capable of achieving an even higher level of online sales, because of the international level of their activities and their large market share.

Around 76% of the companies indicated they would not be able to move their entire sales operations online. The main reason is the unique service idea that makes them famous, would get lost. Nearly 12% of company managers see this kind of transformation as non-profitable but 2% of them think doing so would reduce their costs. The remaining managers say that digitalization in recent years would be positive if applied in the commercial centers. Therefore, it would completely avoid face-to-face communication between customers and clerks or entrepreneurs and clerks.

With regard to sending preordered products to online customers; it seems that the companies are generally in line with customer expectations. Companies fulfill around 45% of total orders in one day and another 45% within one week. This quick response encourages customers to buy other products. The remaining orders, fulfilled in more than one week, are commonly because of large distances or incorrect destination addresses. All the companies aim to stay in touch with their customers helping them make the best choice purchase. For them, a client that is satisfied with the delivery speed means one or more future sales.

Several companies offer online assistance to customers. Nearly 44% of them have done it and offer this service mainly for product guarantees, special offers and price catalogs. This assistance can bring the companies nearer to their customers.

Section 4: IT Solutions Utilized

Next, we identify IT solutions used in the commercial centers. Their staff had very good computer skills, using databases like Finance 5, Isid, Gold, Access, Winstore etc. In order to communicate with their suppliers, the staff uses telephone, fax, e-mail or simply face-to-face conversations. Other examples related to IT equipments are alarm systems, survey systems, and fire alarm systems.

The survey then inquired about Managers opinion of staff computer skills. In almost 50% of the cases, managers indicated their staff had very good computer skills. Thirty percent of managers answered that more than 50% of their staff had sufficient computer skills. The results showed that employers are very interested in having a qualified staff for their work teams.

There was a small difference between such mediums used to contact suppliers. Firms used telephone, email, or face-to-face conversations. Companies and their staff used online communication often, but not much more than the other mediums. Face to face conversation is still important for many managers, because it is seen as the most infallible way to share ideas, experience, requirements etc.

Managers seemed to be sensible toward implementing IT equipment, and were convinced that such equipment, apart from computers and software, have a positive impact on business activity. The alarm

systems have contributed to increasing safety; meanwhile survey systems resulted in efficient employee supervision and customer communication.

All the commercial centers have a database with information needed for each product or service they sell. This shows they follow each other and know how to behave in a competitive market. The most common database software Finance 5, mainly due to ease of use. Isid, Gold and Winstore are other software used. MS Access is the software used by only 10% of the companies, since it is not appropriate for many.

In 28% of the cases, companies use no money for R&D processes. Nearly 56%, spend less than 3% of their revenues for R&D. The remaining managers, knowing that this process is very profitable for current and future periods, are willing to spend more than 35% of revenues for R&D. It is important to invest now in order to gain more profits in the future. The research focused mainly in creating new products, denoted by 55% of the total sample interviewed. The remaining part focuses research towards improving the quality of existing products.

CONCLUDING COMMENTS

The survey results indicate a majority of entrepreneurs are aware of the need for adapting to the digital world. The Internet has had a pervasive effect throughout the business world in commercial centers. Entrepreneurs are rushing to the Internet to reach new markets. While companies use e-commerce for advertising, business-to-consumer and business-to-business transactions, entrepreneurs encounter several challenges. We conclude that there are both opportunities and challenges, posed by the use of ICT services.

Findings from this research indicate that IT services are growing at such a rapid rate in Albania that many opportunities will exist for commercial centers in the near future. There is always room for new innovative ideas and products for commercial centers, we feel that low barriers to entry and increasing levels of competition will drive prices and profits down, making it increasingly difficult to survive.

Overall the results of this study lead to the following conclusions. The small differences that Albanian Entrepreneurships and Commercial Centre demonstrate result in a bigger difference related to using IT. Brand new companies entering the market try to have a competitive advantage by benefiting from the IT solutions they apply to their everyday activities. They try to earn a bigger market share by using IT as a strategic marketing tool. Meanwhile, other companies try to keep up with the latest IT developments.

The commercial centers are branches of bigger centers which helped them apply their technology. Their staff had good computer skills, including with database software like Finance 5, Isid, Gold, Access, Win store etc. In order to communicate with their suppliers, the staff uses mediums like telephone, fax, e-mail or face-to-face conversations. Other examples related to IT equipment are alarm systems, survey systems, fire alarm systems that have had a significantly positive impact on business activity.

The managers of these centers noted that their companies spend 1-3% of revenues for Research & Development. This suggests they should move to using up-to-date technologies. On the other hand, the Albanian customers are not ready heavy IT usage. Thus, a balancing act is necessary.

REFERENCES

Ackoff, R. L. (1999). "Re-creating the Corporation." New York: Oxford University Press.

B. Elango, Illinois State University J. Donald Jones, Baruch College (2002) “Boon or Bane. Impact of Tthe Digital Age On Small Business Exporting,” *The Entrepreneurial Executive, Volume 7, The Entrepreneurial Executive, Volume 5, 2000*

B. Elango, Illinois State University J. Donald Jones, Baruch College (2008) “Impact of Internet on Small Business: A Survey of Entrepreneurs. Definitions – Potential sources of financing”, Jean-Christophe de Tauzia,

Business Week e.biz (1999). “Data mine: Small businesses take the e-plunge,”
<http://www.businessweek.com/ebiz/9906/dm0629.htm>, June 29.

Central Bank of Albania (2008) “Annual Report”

COM (2007) “A single market for 21st century Europe,” 724 final

Donahue, S. & Girard, K. (2000). “Crash and learn: A field manual for e-business survival.” *Business 2.0*, July 11, 169-177.

European Capital Markets Institute (2001) “A Comparison of SMEs in Europe and in the USA”

European Commission (2003) “Enterprise and Industry – SME definition,” Online, Europe: European Commission, From: http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/enterprise_policy/sme_definition/index_en.htm, [Accessed 31 Oct. 2008]

IFC (2004) “Factoring in Albania. Market Assessment” Southeast Europe Enterprise Development, May
Kirchhoff (1994) “Small Business Critical Perspectives on Business and Management”

INSTAT “Business Register 2007”

Koelsch (1995) “The infomedia revolution: how it is changing our world and your life.” Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson.

Kotler, P. (2009), *Marketing Management*, Prentice Hall

Kristin Hallberg (2000) “A Market-Oriented Strategy for Small and Medium Scale Enterprises”, Discussion Paper 40, International Finance Corporation

Lichtenthal, J., & Eliaz, S. (2003) “Internet integration in business marketing tactics.” *Industrial Marketing Management*, 32, 3-13.

Porter, M. (1999) “The net won’t transform everything,” *ZDNet Interactive Week*

Ranchlod, A, Zhou, F., &Tinson (2009) Factors influencing marketing effectiveness on the web. *Information resources management journal*, 4, 4-12

Storey, D. J. (1994) “Understanding the Small Business Sector,” International Thomson Business Press, London

Todd A. Finkle, University of Akron, Ravi Krovi, University of Akron, Paramjit S. Kahai, University of Akron, Ken Dunning, University of Akron, B. S. Vijayaraman, University of Akron (2000) “Impact of E-

Commerce On Entrepreneurs And Small Businesses: Opportunities, Challenges, And Strategies”, *The Entrepreneurial Executive, Volume 5*,

World Bank (2003) “Albania - Access to Credit”

Zimmerman J. (2003) “Marketing on the Internet”

<http://www.sba.gov/services/contractingopportunities/sizestandardsttopics/faqs/index.html> [Accessed 06 November 2008]

www.legjisionishqiptar.gov.al/ligj8957 (The law for the definition of the SMEs) [Accessed 06 November 2008]

<http://www.unece.org/indust/sme/ece-sme.htm> [Accessed 27 October 2008]

ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/charter/docs/charter_en.pdf - [Accessed 18 November 2008]

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/enterprise_policy/charter/index_en.htm [Accessed 18 November 2008]

http://www.mete.gov.al/doc/20070713105552_programi_sme.zip [Accessed 07 October 2008]

http://ec.europa.eu/enterprise/entrepreneurship/docs/sba_consultation_report_final.pdf [Accessed 14 November 2008]

APPENDIX

Appendix A: Survey Questionnaire

Section I

1. **What type of products/services does your business offer?**
2. **How long has your company been operating?**
 - a. Less than a year
 - b. A year
 - c. More than a year
3. **Does your business run locally? If so, would you consider expanding in a national level?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No
4. **How familiar are you with the latest technological developments? (software, digital services, up-to-date equipments)**
 - a. Not interested
 - b. Sufficiently
 - c. Entirely familiar
5. **Did the application of IT contribute to the quality of products/services?**
 - a. No influence at all
 - b. Sufficiently
 - c. Yes, with a strong impact
6. **How much did it contribute to the sales level?**
 - a. Minor increase
 - b. Major increase

Section II

1. **Does your company have an official website?**
 - a. Yes
 - b. No

2. Did the internet service require high expenses?

- a. Yes, it required high expenses
- b. No, it required affordable expenses

3. Did you do some research over the ability or willingness of your potential customers towards using the internet for information, help or retrieval?

- a. No research
- b. A previous study was adapted, according to our needs
- c. Yes, we did our own research

4. In what language is your official website available?

- a. Albanian
- b. English
- c. Other _____

5. Do you have any unusual or special products that customers are not familiar? If so, does publishing on internet help you on this issue?

- a. Yes, most of our products services are unusual
- b. Just a few items are such unusual
- c. No, our products are easily reachable

Section III

1. What is the average number of customers arriving at your commercial center every day?

- a. Less than 500
- b. 500-1500
- c. More than 1500

2. How much does a customer spend daily on average at your commercial center?

- a. Less than \$15
- b. \$15-\$25
- c. More than \$25

3. Which of the following are the main purposes you achieve through the internet service?

- Advertising
- Information over products or services
- Building sustainable relationship with the customers for the future
- Comments and feedback
- Recruiting new employees
- Online sales of products and services
- Observing the sales trend

Other _____

4. What is the share of online sales regarding total sales?

- a. Less than 10%
- b. 10%-50%
- c. More than 50%

5. Did you consider the option of turning your business to an online one?

- a. No, because it is not profitable for my business type
- b. No, because the whole service idea would get lost
- c. Yes, because it is cost-minimizing
- d. Yes, because the future will bring electronic markets only

6. What is the average period of time when your company fulfills the online orders?

- a. Less than a day
- b. Less than a week
- c. More than a week

7. Does your company offer online assistance to the customers?

- a. Yes
 - If yes, regarding:*
 - Price catalogs
 - Guarantees
 - Special offers
 - Other
- b. No

Section IV

1. How many of your employees have good computer skills?

- a. Less than 30%
- b. 30%-50%
- c. More than 50%
- d. 100%

2. Which communication medium do you use mostly with your suppliers?

- a. Telephone/fax
- b. Email
- c. Face-to-face communication

3. Explain how did implementing IT equipments (such as alarm systems, survey systems or fire alarm systems) contribute in the business activities.

4. Does your company have a database with the proper information over products (prices, serial number, inventories etc.)?

- a. Yes: Name the program: _____
- b. No

5. What part of the annual revenues goes for the R&D process in your company?

- a. None
- b. 1 - 3%
- c. More than 3%

6. Research is mainly focused in:

- a. Improving the quality of existing products and services
- b. Creating new products and services
- c. Other _____

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The authors would like to thank the anonymous reviewers for their grateful comments, thus resulting in a considerable change and significant improvement in the quality of this paper.

BIOGRAPHY

Dr. Kozeta Sevrani is an Associate Professor of Informatics in the Faculty of Economy, at the University of Tirana. She can be contacted at Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana, 15 Elbasani St., Tirana, Albania. Email: kozeta.sevrani@unitir.edu.al

Dr. Klodiana Gorica is a professor of Marketing in the Faculty of Economy, at the University of Tirana. She can be contacted at Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana, 15 Elbasani St., Tirana, Albania. Email: klodiana.gorica@unitir.edu.al

Dr. Dorina Kripa is a professor of Finance in the Faculty of Economy, at the University of Tirana. She can be contacted at Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana, 15 Elbasani St., Tirana, Albania. Email: dorina.kripa@unitir.edu.al

Dr. Edlira Luci is a professor of Finance in the Faculty of Economy, at the University of Tirana. She can be contacted at Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana, 15 Elbasani St., Tirana, Albania. Email: dorina.kripa@unitir.edu.al

Erjon Zoto is a lecturer of Informatics in the Faculty of Economy, at the University of Tirana. He can be contacted at Faculty of Economy, University of Tirana, 15 Elbasani St., Tirana, Albania. Email: erjon.zoto@unitir.edu.al