



Innovation in e-commerce and its impact on International Business Strategies adapted by online retailers

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate how innovation in a constantly changing e-commerce environment is influencing business strategies applied by online retailers in order to expand into the global market. The evidence gathered in the literature review indicates that due to increased globalisation, technological advances and reduction of barriers in international trade an increased number of small and medium online retailers has been able to advertise and distribute their products abroad. The evidence also suggests that with an increased variety of choices online customers are more willing to purchase customised niche products that suit their individual taste and preferences. To get a better insight into the case the discussion part analyses techniques adapted by two online retailers who specialize in the production and distribution of niche products and specific business strategies used by those companies to expand their business internationally. The study found that advances in e-commerce provide several beneficial opportunities especially for small and medium enterprises. However, it also suggests that international growth of such business can be only achieved through networking and collaboration with other established online platforms, e-commerce agencies and large multinational technology companies. Ultimately the study indicates that the strategic selection of available e-commerce tools and partnerships based on individual company model has a direct impact on its performance and international growth.

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1. Introduction

As stated by (Hånell et al., 2019) new advances in digital technology and e-commerce have changed shift in strategy and structure of many businesses in international markets. This change has opened a wide range of new opportunities for small and medium-sized enterprises and allowed new entries to global markets. This shift is especially visible in the retail business. According to (Kemp, 2021) nearly 77% of internet users between the age of 16 to 64 is making an online purchase each month. With the outbreak of the COVID19 pandemic in 2020 e-commerce adoption rate increased by 4.5 % between the second and third quarters of the year. As described by (Hånell et al., 2019) e-commerce has opened new opportunities for small and medium enterprises for doing business abroad however as stated by the same author a lot of existing studies focus more on analysing large multi-national brands as opposed to small and medium enterprises. The purpose of this study is to examine how e-commerce can be effectively used to boost the sales performance of small and medium enterprises that specialise in niche products. Accordingly as stated by (Hånell et al., 2019) there is a large potential online for promotion and advertisement of small and medium enterprises however as discussed by the same author the growth of such business and international expansion is also limited by infrastructure possibilities in offshore markets as well as the establishment of local brand awareness. This study is attempting to examine those issues further and establish the possibilities for such enterprises to grow globally through the effective use of online tools. It is also going to discuss how market factors such as resources and competition shape the international strategies of online retailers. Due to the limitation of the theoretical framework about small and medium enterprises, it focuses more on analysing general strategies adopted by online retailers in order to achieve growth and at the same time examine the traditional marketing strategies and application of these methods to an online environment. By providing a theoretical framework about online marketing strategies used by online retailers and their correlation with customer needs the study is going to analyse the expectations and motivation of the new generation of online customers. Eventually, through analyses of recent e-commerce marketing techniques, this research is going to evaluate the extent to which personalised products and services have overtaken the mass economy and traditional methods of advertisement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Globalisation and Business Strategy

According to (Aydin and Savrul, 2014) Globalisation has been a process that gradually changed the world's economy over the past few decades. Due to increased integration between governments, business and societies many economic barriers associated with administration, trade and communication has declined which opened a new range of business opportunities for entrepreneurs across the world and encouraged them to expand internationally (Aydin and Savrul, 2014). As described by the same author the technological advances and fast-developing e-commerce system has simplified the international trading operations in terms of logistics, payments and marketplace. However as suggested by (Rugman and Collinson, 2012) the term Globalization refers to 'global commonality' in which residents of different countries would share the same preferences, tastes and value system. According to the same author, such perfect integration between the members of different countries cannot be achieved in the real International business environment and despite the on-going globalization trend; there is still a lot of barriers in international trade such as for instance government regulations. The same author suggests that regional strategy should be the main concern for companies that are willing to expand internationally. According to (Rugman and Collinson, 2012) companies are interested in International growth for many reasons. First, as stated by the author they try to diversify themselves in case of economic downfalls and uncertainties in their home country. The second motivator is a desire to tap into new lucrative markets such as for instance American market with a large population and high per capita income. Another motivator is according (Rugman and Collinson, 2012) an attempt to protect their home market as a response to increased competitors from abroad. As described by the same author some international companies are deciding to set up their operation in the home countries of their main competitors. This, according to (Rugman and Collinson, 2012) allows firms to respond more promptly and accurately to customers' needs and cut costs associated with legal regulations such as for instance 'tariff' and 'non-tariff' barriers, a good example of this are countries within European Union which allow its members' free trade of goods in oppose to exported goods from other countries. As stated by (Tolstoy et al., 2020) popularization of e-commerce has opened many opportunities for entrepreneurial activity mainly because of an: "increasing niche demand" and "service-based economy". This according to (Tolstoy et al., 2020) has been especially visible with a growing number of SMEs that are successfully trading their products internationally however as suggested by the same author it also requires the implementation of adequate business strategy. According to (Rugman and Collinson, 2012) companies that are attempting to enter an international market should consider factors such as: dealing with foreign consumers, employees and government regulations therefore their International strategy should be adjusted according to their mission, capabilities and resources. In addition, as suggested by the same author companies should consider adequate pricing strategy, supply chain and research competitors. (Edwards, 2014) and (Norwich University, 2017) distinguish four main types of International Business Strategies, these are International, Multi domestic, Transitional and Global. According to (Norwich University, 2017) International Business

Strategy refers to exporting goods produced in the home country to other countries abroad. It is usually adopted by small manufacturers that export their goods to larger companies abroad. It is the most common way of trading and as suggested by (Norwich University, 2017) it does not require much 'overhead' however it needs to be carefully considered in terms of logistics and compliance with international laws and regulations. Multi-domestic strategy is mainly adopted by businesses that choose to keep their headquarters in their home country and set additional headquarters called subsidiaries in a foreign country (Norwich University, 2017). As described in the same publication such subsidiaries are offering customers abroad a modified version of the product or service provided by a given company that better fits in their customs and cultural traits. As described by (Edwards, 2014) this type of strategy is mainly adopted by food and beverage companies. A global strategy is according to (Edwards, 2014) usually related to economies of scale and concerned with the distribution of the product to as many markets as possible at low cost. It is often used by large MNEs like software companies when only small adjustments such as language selection are made to a product. Finally, the transitional strategy is usually adopted by companies who decide to keep their headquarters and core production base in their home country but also invest their resources into production, manufacturing and setting up sales and promotion divisions in other countries of their operations (Norwich University, 2017). This strategy as suggested by (Edwards, 2014) is balancing local requirements with company efficiency and might be cost-effective as it requires a lot of investment in the development of resources on the new foreign market. In summary, the International Business Strategy needs to be carefully considered by any company that is willing to enter markets abroad however as suggested by (Norwich University, 2017) due to constantly changing business environments the above methods can be combined and adjusted according to individual requirements of the company. Despite the on-going globalisation trend across the world (Marr, 2020b) argues that due to a recent COVID 19 outbreak, Brexit and increased tension between U.S and China many companies have recently started to rethink their ways of sourcing and selling their products. In effect, many companies found that shifting their operation from global to more local can give them a guarantee that their business will not be disturbed by international affairs. Furthermore as stated by the same source many found that it is also beneficial for the environment.

2.2. Niche Marketing

According to (Gorazd Ocirk, 2018) Market Niche is a "(...) specialized market constellation, which protects a company against scale by satisfying unfulfilled demand and better catering to existing demand or creating new demand altogether". (Gorazd Ocirk, 2018) chapter1 p101

(Gorazd Ocirk, 2018) is examining further the concept of market niche from a Strategic Management perspective. According to the author, there are three main components of niche strategic management, these are market, resources and network relationship.

Market- according to (Gorazd Ocirk, 2018) market-based view in strategic management focus on product, consumer and geographical region. In addition, a company is able to achieve its competitive advantage by better understanding and satisfying those three segments. In summary, the company needs to define a gap in the market and demand for a certain product or service that can be delivered in a specific location.

Resources- as discussed by (Gorazd Ocvirk, 2018) resources turn the attention to the company itself in oppose to the market, however market-based view needs to be also considered as only through an understanding of the market requirements company is able to evaluate its resources and meet the customer demand for certain unique product or service.

Network Relationship- according to (Gorazd Ocvirk, 2018) this strategy focus on the relationship between the company and its environment. Accordingly, a company is able to succeed by evaluating the capabilities of different firms in its environment and adjusting them to its own strategy through mutual relationships.

In addition (Gorazd Ocvirk, 2018) states that 'market niche' is an effect of constant changes in the business environment that occur over time. According to the same author, these innovations are made in the natural process of creative destruction. (Gorazd Ocvirk, 2018) refers to the work of Joseph Schumpeter (1934) in "The theory of economic development" where those changes are described by the author as dynamic capabilities. As explained in the same publication specific innovation developments can completely change the way in which a certain economy or industry operates. According to Schumpeter (1934) :

"The opening up of new markets, foreign or domestic and the organizational development (...) illustrate the same process of industrial mutation (...) that incessantly revolutionizes the economic structure from within, incessantly destroying the old one, incessantly creating a new one." (Schumpeter (1994), p. 83) in (Gorazd Ocvirk, 2018) chapter 1 p105

Additionally (Gorazd Ocvirk, 2018) states that innovation and entrepreneurship play an important role in the process. He refers to another work of Schumpeter (2007), who states that the revolutionary changes in the economy are usually caused by the ability of people to recognise the value of already existing available resources and combine them in a way that allows the company to achieve competitive advantage. In summary niche marketing in an online environment is not only related to the new innovative products on the market but it is also concerned with a way of advertising and distribution of those products in an innovative manner to a specific target group.

2.3. Innovation

According to (Marr, 2020b) the COVID 19 outbreak has proved that innovation has a significant impact on business survival. This according to (Marr, 2020b) can be seen clearly in the transformation that took place in sectors like hospitality and events business during the pandemic. According to (Marr, 2020b) companies that businesses were thriving during the pandemic were those who reacted fast and provided expanded take-out abilities. Another example mentioned by the same author are companies that almost completely altered their activities to ensure survival during this difficult time, such as Formula 1 which shifted their typical operations into ventilators production. According to the same source, digital technology had the biggest impact in the time of pandemic; many businesses had to completely rethink their business model. In addition as described by (Marr, 2020b) some companies noted increased productivity while many employees started to work from home. Similarly, according to the same source a lot of industries has been completely transformed for example retail shops has begun to take advantage of digital interference in order to

deliver some traditional services in digital form; that lead to the creation of new forms of customer experiences like digital avatars to "try" on makeup and clothes.

2.4. Human-centric Brands

According to (Solomon, Søren Askegaard and Hogg, 2019) in the digital era, the human element of customers is manifesting itself in all aspects of e-commerce. As discussed by the same author in order to succeed in competitive online marketplace brands need to become less intimidating and more likeable, approachable, authentic and honest. In addition, customers should be treated more like friends and brands should attempt to become a part of their everyday lifestyle. In order to achieve that (Solomon, Søren Askegaard and Hogg, 2019) suggests that brands need to find a better way to connect with their customers on the human-to-human level and discover their customers' desires and anxieties. (Solomon, Søren Askegaard and Hogg, 2019) explains that with the growing popularity of digital technology and human attachment to smartphones and other mobile devices people become more and more anxious and naturally they are seeking more personalised and authentic experiences online. In addition the same author suggests that in order to better understand customer needs and expectations brands should include several methods in their strategies, such as social listening and empathic research.

2.5. Impact of Data on Business Strategy

According to (Marr, 2020b) data volume has grown significantly over the last few years and digital technology opens many new opportunities for companies to access it. Additionally as discussed by the same author a way in which companies protect and analyse their data about customers has a significant impact on their overall success. Accordingly (Marr, 2020a) a strategic goal of each company should be boosting data literacy, in other words, a way in which companies efficiently process, analyse and stream the data into an organisation. In addition (Marr, 2020a) identifies five key business strategies that allow companies to achieve this goal, these are:

- Nominating data advocates within the organisation. These according to (Marr, 2020a) should be individuals that can act as data leaders who can identify business units that do not take full advantage of efficient data usage.
- Providing the data-informed meetings that allow other people within the organisation to better understand the impact of data on business performance
- Determine the best system for data analyses for a specific organisation and evaluate the business sector that can benefit from it.
- Providing the correct training for employees about different ways of accessing data and their interpretation for specific business use. As stated by (Marr, 2020a) employees should be able to understand how the data was collected, what information can be received from it and evaluate the validity and reliability of the information.
- Identifying the main business units that will benefit from boosting data literacy and slowly adjusting data usage for all aspects of the business.

.In addition as described in (Watson et al., 2018) due to data-rich environments companies are able to more accurately measure results of advertising campaigns and include more

parameters in the analysis of new market opportunities. As described by the same author, big data exchange increase companies' abilities to expand internationally. Nevertheless as suggested in the same publication there are some reservations and complications related to the use of big data. According to (Watson et al., 2018) , an increasing number of online platforms users such as Amazon or Facebook is concerned with the way that their data might be used which can lead to harm to companies' brand value and profitability. Another unfavourable factor that might harm the relationship between big technology companies and other businesses is the power of dependency. As described in the same publication, international relationships might be destabilized if less dependent partners such as large infomediaries, two-sided platforms and other electronic marketplace places demonstrate opportunistic behaviours by controlling the volume of exchanged information.

2.6. E-commerce definition and statistics

According to (Eurostat, 2017) e-commerce refers to “trading of goods or services over computer networks such as the Internet” and it is usually associated with buying and selling over the Internet, or conducting any transaction involving the transfer of ownership or rights to use goods or services through a computer-mediated network. Arguably as stated by (Kakamanshadi and Totonchi, 2012) though popular, this definition is not comprehensive enough to capture recent developments in this new and revolutionary business phenomenon. According to the same publication, a more complete definition is: “ (...) the use of electronic communications and digital information processing technology in business transactions to create, transform, and redefine relationships for value creation between or among organizations, and between organizations and individuals.” (Kakamanshadi and Totonchi, 2012) p2

As reported by (Coppola, 2021) in recent years e-commerce has become an inseparable part of the global retail world. As well as many other industries retail has undergone a real transformation since the on-going digitalization of everyday activities. Customers from all over the world can now benefit from online transactions and the number of online buyers is increasing every year. As reported by (Coppola, 2021) an enormous amount of 1.92 billion people has made a purchase by using the Internet and in the same year, online sales reached over 3.5 trillion dollars. As of 2020 online marketplaces achieved the highest amount of online sales, the leading websites in terms of traffic include giants like Amazon which according to (Coppola, 2021) registered 5.2 billion visitors in June 2020. According to the same source, Amazon ranked third in the global competition behind Chinese competitors: Taobao and Tmall, both belonging to Alibaba Group a leading online commerce provider in Asia. As stated in (Coppola, 2021) one of the most visible trends in online sales worldwide is the growing popularity of mobile devices. The same report states that in 2019 over 60% of all retail websites visits were made via smartphones. Another significant impact on the popularisation of e-commerce has been caused by the COVID 19 outbreak as millions of people were forced to isolate themselves in their homes. According to (Coppola, 2021) In June 2020 global retail e-commerce traffic reached an impressive number of 22 billion monthly visits. As reported by the same source the highest demand during the pandemic has been for everyday items like groceries, clothing and technical devices. In summary, as stated by (Tolstoy et al., 2020) e-commerce has opened a wide variety of opportunities, especially for SMEs to grow internationally. Internet technology allows SME owners to tack into specific target groups and cut costs on physical resources. Additionally, through advances in digital technology SME owners are able to compete with big

multinational brands however as suggested by (Tolstoy et al., 2020) this cannot be done without partnership with other service providers such as payment options, deliveries or online platforms.

2.7. Change in customer behaviour influenced by digital technology

According to (Solomon, Søren Askegaard and Hogg, 2019) a study of customer behaviour is focused on analysing factors that influence the process of decision making in purchasing products. Additionally, the same authors describe the contemporary world as a consumer society that is influenced by consumer culture. In other words, most of the activities that people are involved in are linked to some form of market consumption. As stated by (Solomon, Søren Askegaard and Hogg, 2019)p.13 chapter 1" we use products to help us define our identities in different settings". In the same chapter, the authors explain this idea further and state that in the contemporary world:" We are all involved in a communication system through our consumption activities, whereby we communicate our roles and statuses" p.13 chapter 1. In addition, any customer can be classified by the marketers by demographics and descriptive characteristics such as age, income, gender and occupation; or psychographics which describe our lifestyle and personality. According to (Solomon, Søren Askegaard and Hogg, 2019) the digital world has created many "consumptions communities" where members of the group are sharing their views, opinions and recommendations about any aspect of life from healthy food to political views. Additionally, regardless of the size, purpose or shared values of the group, there is always a pressure that the products or services chosen by certain individuals need to meet with the group approval. Chapter nine (Solomon, Søren Askegaard and Hogg, 2019) further explore the impact of digital technology on customer motivation by analysing the relationship between groups and social media. Authors refer to a study conducted by Hoffman and Novak which suggest that social media popularity fulfils human need to achieve so-called higher-order goals: connect, create, consume and control. In other words, the connect goals are associated with the human desire to be a part of a selected social group and serve their collective self-esteem. The customer pursuit to create is influenced by the human need for autonomy and it is related to identity self-esteem, similarly to consume and control goals. As summarised by the same authors although different social media goals are motivated by different desires and preferences of each customer they all create the platform for each individual to create their 'ideal-self'. As pointed out by the authors very often products and other types of consumption are playing a significant role in this self-concept. According to (Rogers, 2016) there are five domains of marketing strategy that influence the transformation in digital selling; these are costumers, competition, data, innovation and value. As described by the same author with the adoption of new technologies customer behaviour in the digital world is constantly changing, therefore, it is essential for companies to understand the needs of their customers rather than defending their old business models. As stated by (Rogers, 2016) in many traditional outlooks on marketing customers were perceived as the target that companies were supposed to market to and persuade to buy. In addition, as explained by the same author the prevailing model of mass-market has been focused on mass production and mass communication. In other words, a product was created with an idea to serve as many customers as possible and the message about the product was communicated with the use of a relevant medium to persuade as many customers as possible at the same time.

Chapter two (Rogers, 2016) describes how the old model of Mass Production has been replaced with a new Customer Network Model (See Appendix D).

2.7.1. Customer role in a network

As described by (Rogers, 2016) a passive customer role that was originally left with the simple decision "to buy" or "not to buy" has been replaced with the network of customers who constantly interact with each other socially and influence each other decisions. As stated by the same author in the contemporary world future and potential customers are connected to a variety of digital platforms where they are able to interact, share opinions, broadcast, and innovate. Chapter two (Rogers, 2016) compares this idea to the eighteenth century network model, in the digital world according to the author customers are nodes linked together by different tools and platforms where they are able to interact constantly. Moreover as explained by the same author these methods of communication are in fact more effective than influenced by direct communication from the firm. (Rogers, 2016) the same chapter also redefines the role of the customer in a digital network. Additionally as described by the author customer is no longer a person who is purchasing the end product of the company, it can be any 'key constituency' that the firm serves or relies on; such as businesses purchasing professional services or donors and volunteers in non-profit organisations. Moreover as described by the author there is a wide range of interconnected bodies within the customer network that is critical to the business, these include business partners, investors, media, government regulators and employees. In addition as described by (Rogers, 2016) in order to achieve competitive advantage companies need to study the behaviour of the whole customer network and find new ways of engaging their customers as well as learn about their motivation and preferences. A similar view is shared by (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2017) who states that since increased mobility and connectivity in the digital world customers' views and trust about available products on the markets have significantly changed. As described by the same authors' many customers feel confused with advertising messages that are broadcasted to them through direct email or television advertisement. Additionally, many of them feel overwhelmed and intentionally choose to ignore the message. According to (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2017) a survey conducted by Nielsen in 2015 revealed that 83% of respondents rely more on friends and family opinions in making a purchase and 66% relies on reviews posted online by other users. This clearly indicates that in recent years a trend in society has significantly changed. In effect, as stressed by (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2017) companies need to realise that for many customers social circle of friends and family might be a more reliable source of information about the product than conventional methods of advertising which means that many companies may no longer have direct access to the customer. In addition (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2017) recommends that companies should carefully observe their customer journey and recognise the meaningful touchpoints along the path.

2.7.2. Social media influence

As described by (Marr, 2020b) due to the recent COVID19 outbreak the role of social media in e-commerce has significantly increased. According to the same author, people are seeking more personalised experiences online as well as a more authentic presence. In addition influencers' and micro influencers' role in e-marketing has increased even more as they became key people that engage with customers. According to (Kemp, 2021) there is currently around 4.20 billion social media users across the globe. This figure increased by

490 million between 2020 and 2021 which indicates a growth of 13% in a year. As reported by (Kemp, 2021) the total number of social media users has doubled since 2016 and it is predicted that this number will rise by 7% in the next year.

2.7.3 Digital Platforms

According to (Statista, n.d.) so-called customer-to-customer e-commerce has had significant growth in recent years. As described by the same source C2C e-commerce can be seen mostly on websites offering free advertisements auctions, forums, and websites dedicated to start-ups such as eBay, Etsy or Amazon. In addition, any entrepreneur is able to sell their product with minimal effort and strategy because the design of those websites provides a secure and convenient payment method mechanism. According to the same source since its launch in 1995 eBay has been one of the fastest-growing platforms that managed to double its revenue between 2008 and 2013. As stated by (Statista, n.d.) a number of companies have been developed through another intermediary platform called Etsy which allows entrepreneurs to sell handmade and vintage products. In addition, the growing popularity of online platforms contributed to the fact that a lot of small and medium-size companies use them as the main source of business operations, in fact as reported by (Shepherd, 2020) only 64% of small business has their own website. According to (Coppola, 2021) the leading online platform in terms of traffic worldwide is Amazon which noted over 5.2 billion visitors in June 2020 and world leaders in terms of gross merchandise worldwide are Taobao and Tmall both operated by Alibaba Group, a leading provider of online commerce in Asia. As discussed by (Rogers, 2016) the emergence of online platforms has significantly changed the way in which companies structure their business and approach their competitors. According to (Rogers, 2016) an example of this can be Airbnb, an online platform that allows private landlords to rent their properties or rooms within their own household. Since its foundation in 2007 Airbnb has managed to attract over 25 million travellers in over 190 countries around the world. As of 2014 companies has managed to overtake hospitality giants like Hilton or Intercontinental and achieved nearly \$4 billion in gross bookings (Rogers, 2016). As discussed by the same author most of the company success is based on the level of trust shared between two parties. This example shows how important in e-commerce is as an online platform and at the same time how the emergence of such platforms revolutionised the structure of business models in many sectors. In addition as explained by (Rogers, 2016) due to the growing popularisation of online platforms many companies had to rethink their entire business model; in the past competition was taking place between two companies with similar assets and defined industry boundaries. However, as stated by the same author in the digital age boundaries between industries are disappearing. In addition business owners have been establishing their position on the market through their own company performance as well as in partnership with their suppliers and sales channels which creates a mix of competition and collaboration in an online environment. As stated by (Rogers, 2016) online platforms have completely changed the dynamics related to competition and cooperation between businesses and industries. As stated by the same author marketplaces like Amazon bring together buyers and sellers' matchmaking services like Uber provide a platform for customers and drivers; media companies like Youtube bring together content creators, consumers and advertisers. In summary e-commerce business has become less of a competition between businesses that operate in the same sector and becomes more about creativity and cooperation across the industries.

2.8. Customer journey and new marketing funnel

According to (Brooks, 2017) the reason why many people actually decide to make a purchase is not always caused by necessity. As stated by the same author many people buy things that they do not actually need because successful companies understand well the process of the customer journey. In other words, they are able to identify key stages that customer needs to go through before making the purchase and they are able to attract customers' attention and guide them through the whole process. (Brooks, 2017) refers to the concept of the marketing funnel that was originally introduced by E.St.Elmo Lewis in 1898. The principle concept describes different stages that lead to a sale, these are attention, interest, desire, and conviction. The original idea has been modified through the years and as stated by (Brooks, 2017) very important stages of loyalty and advocacy for the brand have been an important addition to the funnel in recent years. The concept of a marketing funnel is further explored by (Rogers, 2016) who claims that the growing popularity of digital technology has reshaped the funnel over recent years. Although the original idea of awareness, consideration, preference, action, loyalty and advocacy has not been changed, the marketing tools and touchpoints need to be readjusted by online retailers in order to attract and retain their customers (See Appendix E). As explained by (Rogers, 2016) customer behaviour has changed dramatically since the so-called mass-market era where companies developed a variety of broadcast tools to influence the customer at each stage of the funnel. The idea of a new approach to the marketing funnel is further discussed by (Brooks, 2017) who identifies main changes in e-commerce strategy at each stage of the buying cycle, from raising the awareness about the product to the establishment of the company advocacy group.

Awareness

As described by (Brooks, 2017) it is a moment when a potential customer first discovers the product. For many decades awareness has been spread with the use of marketing tools like television advertising, radio broadcast or direct email. Although these methods are still very effective (Rogers, 2016) stressed that the message about the product is spread to a very broad mass audience. Furthermore as explained by the same author these methods can be easily replaced with less cost-effective tools that will target the specific audience. According to (Rogers, 2016) this includes the use of tools like for example search buzz blogs, online research, user reviews, social networks or online purchase apps. A similar view is shared by (Brooks, 2017) who states that in contemporary world-building awareness is concerned mostly with targeting the relevant audiences. According to the same author in recent years tools like search engine optimization, social media and paid search that brings visitors to the company website are among the most effective methods used by companies. Furthermore, according to (Brooks, 2017) in the initial stage of the customer journey, it is important to keep the sales talk to a minimum, as explained by the author tools like SEO are designed in order to subtly promote the product to the right audience. Another highly effective method discussed by (Brooks, 2017) is the so-called PPC (pay-per-click) advertising technique where advertisers are paid the fee each time their content is clicked by the internet user. As reported by (Chaffey, 2020 b) according to Global Web Index as of July 2020 an estimated 81% of internet users searched online for a product or service. According to (Chaffey, 2020 b) Google seems to dominate the search engine market with 93.87% of the market share. Furthermore as reported by the same source up to mid-2019 mobile devices searches has been the most popular source with 50.71% of searches in comparison to desktop search

dropping down to 45.53%. This indicates that more and more people are being connected 24/7 to their mobile devices which makes it easier for marketers to target the specific audience for their products. Furthermore as reported by (Chaffey, 2020a) the outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic has increased the use of mobile devices even more with an increased number of late-night searches; the report summary for Autumn 2020 states that over four-fifths of online time in the UK has been spent by users on their mobile devices. According to (Brooks, 2017) another strong channel for building awareness among customers is social media. As described by the author it is important for the marketers to identify which network is the most valuable for the product in order to capture the right audience. As stated in the same article social media platforms like Facebook are the most popular for content advertisement because they provide the audience for almost all sectors and interests. In addition more and more businesses are using this type of platform to directly target their audience by creating eye-catching content, this type of advertisement is also cost-effective and therefore very popular in oppose to paid ads on the same platforms. In addition as reported by (Kemp, 2021) internet users are becoming more proactive in creating content which proves the growing popularity of platforms like "Tik Tok". Another interesting fact mentioned by (Kemp, 2021) is a change in online search results in the past year. According to a report in 2020 people were more willing to research subjects like "how to do things" on platforms like "Youtube" rather than searching for a specific brand or product. This indicates that "how-to" videos might be a more suitable alternative to attract viewers' attention than actually telling people that the product is the best choice or solution for a specific problem. As stated in (Marr, 2020) global outbreak of the COVID 19 pandemic has also brought new trends in e-commerce. According to (Marr, 2020) people forced to stay in isolation are continuously looking for more interactive, authentic and personalised experiences online. In addition, these lead to the creation of many virtual events, podcasts and live stream shopping.

Consideration

As discussed by (Brooks, 2017) another important phase in the marketing funnel is a consideration, according to the author it is a stage in which marketers focus on targeting higher-intent audiences and turn awareness into purchase intent. As discussed by (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2017) many companies struggle with the conversion rate, for various reasons people are curious about the specific brand however there is a lack of commitment to make a purchase. Additionally as explained by the same authors there might be many possible failures that contribute to this situation, for example, customers might find that the price is too high, the shipping options are not convenient or they lack more detailed information about their desired products. In addition as discussed by (Brooks, 2017) it is an important stage in which marketers and business owners should analyse their audience and group them into specific categories. Accordingly as described by (Brooks, 2017) in contemporary e-commerce it is important to observe the behaviour of potential customers and create a remarketing list that will allow the design of new more personalised strategies for reaching the potential buyers. This according to (Brooks, 2017) can be done by the use of specific tools like for instance Google Analytics. As discussed by the same author new e-commerce tools open a range of possibilities for marketers and allow them to discover how many times their website has been screened by each user and which product has been the

most popular among the visitors. A strong understanding of customers that the company is trying to reach is also very important in selecting a personalised, unique strategy for each segment that will lead to a potential sale (Rogers, 2016). As discussed by the same author it is vital to access, engage, customise and collaborate with potential customers. In addition (Rogers, 2016) suggests that companies should become a source of valued content for their customers; they should make their offer adaptable to customers' needs and become a part of customers' conversation. A good example of this approach is discussed by (Brooks, 2017) who suggests email marketing as a way of reaching the existing leads. The same article states that a good way of reaching the potential customer can be for instance creating a campaign that encourages visitors to sign up to a specific website. In summary, as discussed by (Rogers, 2016) customer segmentation and analyses of their online behaviour allow companies to establish their "unique barriers to success" and adopt the "unique value proposition" for each segment.

Convention

As described by (Brooks, 2017) conversion is a very important process in the marketing funnel; it is a stage where buyers' consideration is turned into action. Additionally as described by the same author purchase is normally associated with conversion and it is also the most valuable one. However, there are other ways of conversion that target customers in the e-commerce world, these can be associated with campaigns like content downloads demos, upgrades or free trials. According to (ThemeGrill, 2018) web store design plays a significant role in the purchase process. Additionally (ThemeGrill, 2018) suggests that the especially the path to check out and payment options should be as clear and accessible as possible in order to boost the conversion rate. A similar view is shared by (Ryan, 2020) who in chapter three compares the company website to: "conversion engine for traffic". According to (Ryan, 2020) the website design should be done primarily with the conversion goals in mind. As suggested by (Ryan, 2020) conversion goals could be either a purchase or lead generation activities such as subscribing campaign to an online newsletter. The same author stresses that with the growing popularity of online apps and mobile devices it is also worth considering the specific design of a website as there is a significant difference between mobile and desktop website experience. Another interesting issue discussed by (Ryan, 2020) is the growing popularity of online apps and their positive impact on conversion rates. According to (Ryan, 2020) it has been reported by (Wurmser2019) that around 90% of smartphone time has been spent in apps. Furthermore, the same author states that in 2019 consumers worldwide downloaded over 204 billion apps. The same author suggests that there are a few reasons why mobile apps have a positive impact on conversion rates this include: opportunities for personalisation by allowing users to set their preferred way of communication, increased speed in comparison to traditional websites or faster access due to presence of an icon on a mobile screen. As stated by (Ryan, 2020) a strong social media presence is another way of boosting the conversion rates for the business. Although social media platforms are the main tool for raising awareness about the products (DeVries, 2020) predicts that in the near future platforms like Facebook or Instagram will become the main channels for online purchases similarly to big companies like Amazon.

Loyalty

Another important phase in the marketing funnel is according to (Brooks, 2017) loyalty; as stated by the author it consists of all the activities done by marketers in order to turn their customers into repeat buyers. As discussed by (Rogers, 2016) in the past this process was usually associated with loyalty programmes that allow customers to get rewarded for their attachment to a specific brand however according to the same author the new approach to e-commerce has opened a wide range of new possibilities for companies to make their customers feel appreciated and valued.

(Brooks, 2017) suggests that strategic use of a new software technology might be helpful in keeping track on customer cases and rewarding those who are repetitive buyers with a discount or free gift. Furthermore, the same author suggests that new technologies are providing a great opportunity for companies to run their upselling and cross-selling campaigns. (Brooks, 2017) refers to Amazon as a good example of such activities; each Amazon user gets instant product suggestions and recommendations based on their previous purchase. Furthermore, the same article suggests that many successful companies use email marketing and automation tools that allow them to create automated campaigns to notify each customer about new offers. Additionally as discussed by (Brooks, 2017) a loyalty phase plays also an important part in customer experience. According to (Brooks, 2017) many companies make a mistake by thinking that their role in the customer experience process is finished once they make a sale. The same author suggests that it is important to engage with customers after their purchase, even if they are not happy with the product. In addition (Brooks, 2017) stressed that customer service, communication and engagement are crucial for turning customers into repetitive buyers. A similar view is shared by (Rogers, 2016) who states that many businesses find social media a very helpful tool in providing effective customers service. Additionally, if a business is able to successfully answer customer concerns it can positively impress the whole network of online visitors. As an example (Rogers, 2016) refers to Citibank being able to resolve 36 % of customer enquiries on Twitter after building up its social media leadership team. Although as discussed by (Brooks, 2017) the traditional helplines are still very effective in resolving customer quires, more and more companies decide to use chatbots and live chat widgets that provide a quick answer to most basic customer problems and connect with the technical support only if the issue is more complex.

Advocacy

As described by (Brooks, 2017) it is a final phase in the marketing funnel where happy customers are becoming advocates for the brand and bring new leads for the company. According to (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2017) the ultimate goal of e-commerce is to drive customers from awareness to advocacy. As described by the same authors' happy customers may develop a strong loyalty to the brand and recommend it to others. In addition as discussed by (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2017) some advocates are spontaneously sharing their positive customer experience while others need to be prompted by either negative feedback of others or a query. As reported in (Brooks, 2017) 83% of customers admit that recommendations from friends and family have the biggest impact on their purchase and 76% of buyers value online reviews as much as personal recommendations. According to (Brooks, 2017) it is very important for any business to build a profile with positive reviews on

platforms like Google or Trustpilot. An interesting fact mentioned by the same author is that according to recent studies companies with 5-star reviews were less trusted by customers than brands with 3.5-3.7 marks. The same author also suggests that it is very important for a brand to be proactive with responses and to promptly answer any review even the negative one. Another way of promoting the brand through advocates is according to (Brooks, 2017) placement of testimonials, success stories and case studies on the company website. Another interesting strategy mentioned by the same author is the creation of so-called referral campaigns where each customer is rewarded with an incentive or discount for bringing new customers to the platform.

3. Methodology

The research aims to explore different strategies used by a medium-size business that specialises in niche products in order to build and maintain a strong relationship with its customers and expand internationally. It is also structured in order to examine how the growing popularity of e-commerce in everyday activities prompts its customers to look for more personalised products and services that suit their individual needs. Through analyses of different marketing tools used by companies chosen for the research, it investigates a change in customer behaviour influenced by e-commerce in oppose to traditional advertising methods used by large international organisations. In order to examine the above topics, the research used a qualitative method approach that combines primary data (semi-structured interviews) with secondary sources, both qualitative and quantitative (statistical data, online publications, journals, books and scholarly articles). In an attempt to analyse the issues a case study approach has been adopted. This chapter is going to further explain the data collection process and research methods used for the purpose of this research.

3.1 The Case Study Approach

As described in (Yin, 2009) every empirical research needs a specific design that links the collected data and analyses to the initial question of the study. For the purpose of this research a case study approach has been adopted. As described in (Yin, 2009) the purpose of using a case study for a research method might be applied for many reasons, such as contribution to our knowledge of different situations, individuals, organizations as well as social or political phenomena. According to the same author, it has been the main type of research used in sociology, business, education, psychology or political science. Additionally as described by (Yin, 2009) It has been a popular type of research in business and economy where the structure of a particular industry or region may be investigated. According to (Yin, 2009) the case study approach allows an investigator to gather and analyse information about the meaningful characteristics of "real-life events"- such as organizational and managerial process, international relations and "maturation of industries". Additionally as stated by (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014) this type of research is used in order to study a particular phenomenon in particular settings and is concerned with questions 'How ?' and 'Why ?'. According to the same authors the research questions may evolve in the progress of the research.

3.2 Data Collection Methods

According to (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014) case studies include many different data collection techniques which give the researcher a full advantage of gathering a large source of information. As explained by the same authors this technique allows the researcher to study the particular issue in-depth with consideration for each individual case and its context. As stated by (Campbell, 2015) interviews, observations and documents are the most common sources of information used in case study research.

3.2.1 Primary data

a) Interviews

As stated in (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014) interview is one of the most popular forms of data collection used in business and management research mostly because it allows understanding of the in-depth motivation for human behaviour. The same authors stress that formulation is an important part of this type of research and in order to achieve a wider picture of the researched industry, it is necessary to interview the stakeholders and gather their knowledge and opinions about researched areas. As discussed in (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014) this type of data collection is called 'an explanatory interview'. According to (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) although this method of gathering data is providing the researcher with a great amount of "straightforward factual information (Martyn Denscombe, 2010,p.173) " it also allows to investigate more complex topics.

b) Semi-structured Interviews

As described by (Jamshed, 2014) semi-structured interviews designed is based on a set of open-ended questions. According to the same author, those types of interviews are conducted only once with an individual or a group of respondents and usually cover the duration between 30 min to one hour. Additionally as stated by the same source the questions in that type of interview method are structured in a schematic order of topics that needs to be further explored by the interviewer. Furthermore, the questions consist of a set of core questions and many associated questions that are related to them. As stressed by (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) it is important to formulate the questions in a manner that will prompt the interviewee to engage with the subject which often involves questions that are directed at their subjective opinions and individual views. In addition as stated in (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) interviewer should demonstrate some level of knowledge about the area of research in order to elaborate with the interviewee and obtain maximum data on the subject. (Jamshed, 2014) suggests that in order to capture the data effectively those types of an interview should be recorded which prevents the researcher from losing the key points and allows the interviewer to focus on the content. Additionally as stated by the author the recording allows the researcher to generate the transcript. According to (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) the advantage of this type of interview is that it allows the interviewee to elaborate more about the questions, develop ideas about the point of interest and speak more widely about the subject. For the purpose of this research two semi-structured interviews has been conducted with business and marketing professionals. Both participants have been contacted via email and provided with the set of fifteen questions closely related to the subject of research. Both interviews were conducted by phone and lasted about 40 minutes. During interviews, both participants were prompt to elaborate around specific topics and encouraged to two way communication by additional questions. Interviews were registered on Google recording device and later transformed into transcript (See Appendix C).

c) Sampling Method

As described by (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) although it is acceptable to choose a random sampling technique for the interview data collection it is rather uncommon. Additionally as described by the same author the interviews tend to be conducted with a lower number of people than questionnaires therefore interview selection is based rather on non-probability sampling. In addition, an interviewee is deliberately selected based on their unique insight on a given subject and the position held. As stated in (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) for the purpose of non-probability sampling, often called purposive sampling the interviewee is selected depending on the judgment of the researcher in opposed to randomly selected members of the total population. For the purpose of this research, both interviewees were chosen based on the senior roles held in their companies and specialization that is closely related to the subject of the research. According to (Campbell, 2015) it is important for the researcher to identify the characteristics of the case to be examined and strategically select interviewees who can provide relevant insight on the case. In addition as the research mainly focus on strategies adopted by small and medium online enterprises in order to expand internationally two interviewees have been selected. The first interview has been conducted with Mr Bartosz Mocek, an Internet Marketing Specialist at Chocollissimo brand which specialises in the production and distribution of high-quality personalised chocolate gifts. Chocollissimo is based in Poland and since 2004 company has been operating in several European markets. The second interview has been conducted with Ms Silvia Stoica, a Business Development Manager at Georganics which is a UK based company that specialises in the production and distribution of environmentally friendly oral hygiene products. Since the foundation of the company in 2014, Georganics has managed to establish a strong presence in the UK and has been gradually expanding to European and American markets. Both companies are similar in size and follow into small and medium-size enterprise categories. Similarly, most of their distribution is made online.

d) Observation

According to (Smit and Onwuegbuzie, 2018) observation as a type of qualitative data source is one of the oldest and most fundamental methods. As described by the same author this approach is based on using one's senses in particular looking and listening in order to collect the data. Additionally, the same author refers to Alder and Adler (1994) who described observation as the "fundamental base of all research methods" among social and behavioural studies (p389). Furthermore, according to (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) one of the main advantages of observation as a data collecting technique is the fact that it draws direct evidence of the occurrences in opposed to interviewing which focus on interviewees' thoughts and opinions. As stated in (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) it is crucial to create an appropriate schedule for the observation technique. In addition, the same author stresses that the observation data is only beneficial for the overall research if its inclusion is based on a literature review. According to (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) the researcher should limit the schedule of observation to only the most significant and relevant topics which directly correspond with previously discussed theories. One of the main focuses of this study was to examine online marketing strategies used by interviewed companies therefore a selective observation method has been applied in order to analyse factors such as online presence in social media and individual web design. The collected data has been then analysed by

comparison with the latest statistics and trends gathered from other secondary online publications and academic journals.

3.2.2 Secondary data

According to (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) while using interview data it is necessary for the researcher to check if gathered information is corroborated by other people and sources. Therefore the same author advises that the triangulation method should be used in order to verify the content of an interview and observation with other documents and theories on the subject. In addition for the purpose of this research, a number of secondary data have been gathered in the form of books, journals, online publications and scholarly articles. As described by (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014) using secondary data in the research has many advantages. Firstly it provides an insight into the large representative samples and it also supplies a lot of information about individual cases and trends. Moreover as stated by the same author it issues the supporting documentation that allows a researcher to focus on further data analysis and interpretation.

3.3 Data analysing techniques

a) Data interpretation in qualitative research

According to (Gibbs, 2007) qualitative research is intended to describe and explain social phenomena by analysing them in a number of different ways. This can include analyses such as interactions or documents that provide a rich insight on a specific subject of study. (Chandra and Liang Shang, 2019) states that qualitative research is more concerned with questions "why" and "how" than "how much" or "to what extend" and it relies mostly on textual data rather than numerical evidence. According to the same author, there is no "one-off process" that allows a researcher to produce findings in qualitative work. As stated by (Chandra and Liang Shang, 2019) it is a constant process of "back and forth" comparison between findings and theories related to the subject of study. Although as described by many authors qualitative research is mainly concerned with textual data, (Yin, 2009) stress that statistical analyses offer some explicit criteria for interpreting study findings. Furthermore (Maxwell, 2010) states that numerical data is often used in qualitative research in order to give them: "(...) precision to statements about the frequency, amount, or type of particular phenomena" (Maxwell, 2010,p.4).In addition, the same author explains that the use of numerical data in this sense complements the qualitative data but it is not substituting for it therefore it does not categorise the overall research technique as 'mix method approach. Similarly, for the purpose of this study, some numerical data has been used in order to justify some patterns and variations and to support certain statements and concepts presented as textual data.

As stated in (Yin, 2016) a qualitative study is based on real-life events and occurrences, however, it is also important to incorporate the theories and concepts that will give meaning to empirical data collected by the researcher. As described by the same author the inclusion of abstract concepts and theories that relate to primary empirical data has a significant impact on research validity. (Yin, 2016) distinguish two main approaches into qualitative data analyses: inductive and deductive. According to (Trochim, 2020) deductive reasoning is based on presenting the theory about the specific subject which narrows it down to a hypothesis that can then be tested by observations which lead to justification of original

theories. In oppose to this method Inductive reasoning is moving from specific observations and patterns that lead to formulating tentative hypotheses which then lead to the development of some general conclusions and theories (Trochim, 2020). Although this study is taken a more inductive approach because of its open-ended and explanatory character it is also deductive at times when certain theories and hypotheses are being tested. As described by (Trochim, 2020) it is very common for social research to use both methods of reasoning in qualitative studies.

b) Triangulating evidence

According to (Yin, 2009) this type of data analysing technique is very important for most empirical studies. As described by the same author the purpose of triangulation is to determine if the data collected from multiply sources is lead to the same finding. In addition as stated by (Yin, 2009) the more convergence can be discovered in all findings produced by different sources of data the stronger the evidence.

c) Thematic Analyses

According to (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010) thematic analysis is an analytic approach and strategy used by researchers in order to synthesize the meaning of data. It is not a research method itself but rather an analytic process applied in case studies and many other methods (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010). As described by the same authors the main purpose of this technique is to manage and reduce a large number of data and to organize it in a way that allows its interpretation without losing its context. Through classification of data by use of textual coding and formulation of specific themes, this approach allows researchers to seek underlying patterns, interrelationships, theatrical frameworks or explanatory guidelines (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010). According to the same authors, this approach is based on a wide variety of data sources which may include textual data such as interview transcripts, journals or side documents as well as digital visual data. Reoccurring themes and passages are selected from data by the system of coding which according to (Mills, Durepos and Wiebe, 2010) might be done either deductively (based on specific topics that arise from theory derived categories, interview questions or the subject of the case) or inductively (this term refers to a process of building an exploratory descriptive analysis that emerges through cycling back through documents and constant comparison of patterns and themes against codes and categories). According to (Caulfield, 2019) thematic analysis technique is very often used in a variety of case studies concerned with people's stated opinions and assumptions about particular business phenomena or social context, therefore based on the nature of the study and variety of data collected it has been applied in this research.

d) Coding

According to (Gibbs, 2007) coding is: "(...) a way of indexing or categorizing the text in order to establish a framework of thematic ideas about it" (Gibbs, 2007,p.38). As stated by the same author it is a process of grouping the text or other data sources such as images or photographs and finding a correlation between them. In addition according to (Gibbs, 2007) this process allows the researcher to organise the data in a way that enables structured analysis. Similarly as explained by (Dudovski, 2019) a code in qualitative research can be a short phrase or single word that represents an idea or certain theme. According to the same

author, codes can be given to many non-quantifiable elements such as activities, events or behaviours. In addition according to (Dudovskiy, 2019) elements that can be coded may refer to topics such as strategies, practices, phenomena or tactics. (CESSDA, 2013) divides two basic approaches into coding qualitative data, which are concept-driven and data-driven. According to (CESSDA, 2013) concept-driven coding is based on approaching data with a system of codes and searching for ideas in the text; data-driven coding is structured by reviewing the text and searching for codes without previous conceptualisation. As stated by the same author both methods require in-depth analyses of collected data in order to identify passages of the text that share the same code. As described by (Dudovskiy, 2019) coding can be done either manually or by using data analysis software and in oppose to quantitative research there is no universal technique that can be applied in order to generate qualitative findings. Therefore, as stated by the same author critical and analytical thinking of the researcher plays a significant role in the process. Furthermore as stated by (Dudovskiy, 2019) no qualitative research can be repeated or present the same findings. For the purpose of this study, concept-driven coding has been applied. Firstly the 'elements to be coded' has been identified based on the research title, the main purpose of the study and research questions. Secondly, common themes that aroused from the previous phase has been grouped into subcategories, more specific individual codes, this type of technique is described by (Dudovskiy, 2019) as selective coding. For the purpose of this research, both interview transcripts have been exported into 'Quirkos', a qualitative data analysing system. Each subcategory has been highlighted with a specific colour and assigned to a certain phrase in the interview text that correlates with it, at this stage certain codes have been dismissed. After in-depth analyses of the data, the main three themes have been selected for further analyses in the discussion chapter (See Appendix A and B).

3.4 Reliability and Validity

As stated in (Adams, Khan and Raeside, 2014) the main problem in case study research is limited access to organisation data. Additionally, in order to gather a wier outlook on the researched issue a mixed data collection approach is often adopted, this includes a combination of observation secondary data such as online publications and interviews. As stated by (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) another important issue regarding the reliability of data collected for the purpose of this research is using an interview method as a primary source of data. In addition, (Martyn Denscombe, 2010) states that the impact of the interviewer and specific individual views of an interviewed person at the specific point in time might impact the overall objectivity and consistency of the research. The same author states that semi-structured interviews might be at times difficult to analyse as they produce so-called 'non-standard responses' which cannot be 'pre-coded' and might be difficult to analyse. Finally as described by (Caulfield, 2019) thematic analyses approach might be quite subjective at times because it relies mostly on researchers' judgment. In summary (Caulfield, 2019) stress that some pieces of data can be overlooked and some emphasized too much, therefore (Caulfield, 2019) suggests that it should be done with great consideration in order to avoid missing nuances in data.

4. Discussion

The study is qualitative in its nature therefore thematic analyses have been applied to best interpret the findings gathered from various sources of collected data. In addition, a pattern in meanings has been identified between interview transcripts, observational data and other scholarly publications. The role of this section is to describe the gathered evidence and analyse the three major themes and subthemes that emerged from the collected findings.

Theme 1: Globalisation vs Regional Differences

According to (Schu and Morschett, 2017) due to increased globalization and new opportunities in foreign markets Internationalization has been an ongoing trend for many years now. As described by (Schu and Morschett, 2017) selection of a specific country and a method of entering a new market is a strategic decision for a firm and needs to be carefully considered. As stated by (Powell, 2020) there are still significant differences between countries in distribution channels, business systems and legal regulations. In addition (Wach, 2014) classifies entry strategies that allow firms to successfully enter the international market into three categories. These are: exporting modes (direct, indirect and cooperative export), contractual modes (which include turnkey operations, franchising, licensing, contracting and subcontracting) and Investment modes (branches, joint venture subsidiaries and wholly-owned subsidiaries). Additionally as stated by (Schu and Morschett, 2017) although internet technology has been one of the main factors that influenced the internationalization of different companies there is very little empirical study that has been made on the foreign market selection of online retailers. As previously discussed in the methodology chapter for the purpose of this study two online retailers have been selected in order to investigate their International strategies on the global market. Based on the findings collected through semi-structured interviews each company has decided to choose a different approach in reaching their customers in the online environment. In addition, based on the interview findings Chocollissimo is an online retailer based in Poland where the company operates, manufactures and distribute its products since 2004. As described by the interviewee due to the seasonal nature of the business company employs between 51-200 people depending on the demand. According to the interview transcript, a company headquarters are based in Poland where all the production and distribution takes place. However according to (pitchbook.com, n.d.) Since its foundation in 2004 Chocollissimo has been operating as a Limited Liability Company registered as a subsidiary of Belgian Gudrun Group, a custom made chocolates producer and distributor that trades on international markets since 1974. As described by (Pressbooks, 2011) strategic alliances has become increasingly popular in recent years mostly because of benefits such as facilitation of market entry, risk and reward sharing, joint product development, technology development and better compliance with government regulations. As stated in the same publication such alliances are favourable for both parties in a case when both companies share the same strategic goals that diverge from their competitive goals and their individual market power is small in comparison to large industry leaders. On the other hand, according to (Pressbooks, 2011) there are also disadvantages of such alliances in a case where both parties may have differences in their business approach which leads to a lack of direct control over the firm. In addition, as stated by the second interviewee Geoorganics is a privately owned company registered in the UK. Since 2014 company has been expanding internationally and currently

employs around 50 people. Based on the interview findings since the beginning of its foundation Geoorganics has aspired to be a well established international brand. As stated in the same interview due to the company vision and strong mission statement most of its international operations is based on direct, indirect and cooperative export. According to (Gard, 2013) the main advantage of such a method of trade is its cost-effectiveness. As stated by the same author online retailers with an effective e-commerce website are able to successfully market and sell their products to any country in the world. Furthermore according to (Wach, 2014) using agents as intermediary companies which are trying to enter new foreign markets may overcome many difficulties concerned with language, culture and customer perception. However, according to (Wach, 2014) this type of trading is also associated with some risks such as high dependence on the foreign agent which might influence the profitability of the transaction; exporting through foreign distributors can lead to high transport costs and company inability to gain international experience. As stated by (Powell, 2020) although globalization has increased the opportunities for online retailers' significant differences still exist between national markets among many dimensions such as consumer taste and preferences or culture and value system. According to

the same author, it links directly to cultural arbitrage and strategic choice of foreign markets. In addition, both interviewees stated that selected members of marketing teams are performing in-depth market research before the company decides to expand to a new country. Based on the interview transcript in oppose to Geoorganics Chocollissimo has decided to run a separate marketing and administrative team in foreign countries of their operations, which according to the company Marketing Specialist is very costly, however, reduce their dependency on foreign agents and distributors.

Theme 2: Differentiation as a way of achieving competitive advantage

According to Porter Generic Strategies differentiation as a way in which a company can distinguish its product and operations on the market is a key element that contributes to company success and growth (Islami, Mustafa and Topuzovska Latkovikj, 2020). Thus differentiation is one of the key elements that emerged from the research. According (Islami, Mustafa and Topuzovska Latkovikj, 2020) a successful differentiation strategy allows a firm to gain customer loyalty and charge a higher price for its products. Based on the interview transcripts both firms identify themselves as providers of niche products and value their uniqueness as the main reason for their strong position on the market. Although the uniqueness of the offered product and identifying a gap in the market has a significant impact on company performance (Wang et al., 2019) stress that the differentiation in the online environment goes well beyond the physical attributes of the product. According to (Wang et al., 2019) a customer's subjective perspective on factors such as sales location or service quality is equally important. In addition, when asked about competitors and subjective opinions on company success strategy both respondents presented slightly different views. The interview conducted with a representative of Geoorganics finds that although there are a few competitors on the market that provide a similar product range, the company was able to recognise a need for the product early enough to establish its strong position. Additionally as stated by the interviewee the main factor that creates a company's competitive advantage is focusing on the quality of their products and care for their eco-friendly, sustainable and organic ingredients and packaging. The finding is consistent with (Statista, 2018) which reports that global market value for natural care and beauty products has positively increased in recent years and it is predicted to reach 54.5 billion dollars for the

year 2027 which is an increase of over 20 billion since 2018. Similar results are reported by (Ridder, 2021) who states that only in the UK the same product range generate 221 million British pounds in 2020 and this trend is predicted to grow even further in upcoming years. Additionally as reported by (Oral Health Foundation, 2018) customers in the United Kingdom spend on average £ 16.34 a month only on oral hygiene products. The above data indicate that Geoorganics has selectively focused on product unique tangible qualities that go in line with requirements of a specific target market which emerged globally in recent years. In contrast, according to a second interviewee that represented Chokolissimo there are not many competitors that provide a similar product because of a specific design of online sales and promotion model that was created in line with company capabilities and area of operations. The same interviewee stated that because of the strategic mixture of production design, logistics operations and marketing strategy that is specific to their company resources he is not able to name any competitor that operates in the same countries on the same scale. Accordingly, although the concept of personalised chocolate products is explored by some online retailers and their popularity varies depending on the country of operation they are not considered by the company as main competitors. The same interviewee stated that since the beginning Chokolissimo is closely collaborating with the business consulting company which has had a major impact on the company's strategic networking in all areas of their operations.

Another important aspect mentioned by (Wang et al., 2019) is concerned with commodity quality and pricing power. According to the same source commodity quality in the online environment is closely related to product presentation and accessibility, which is directly linked to the online store and company website. According to the same author in the online environment, the quality of goods can be measured by the presentation of assortment and easy website navigation; typically a greater variety of goods and in-depth product description leads to greater customer trust. Furthermore as stated by (Wang et al., 2019) security of a transaction is one of the key features that gives online retailers an advantage over competitors and influence their willingness to pay the premium. In addition, both interviewed companies presented a slightly different approach in the international strategy of their online stores' design and structure. A combined data based on company online stores observation and semi structures interviews indicates that choosing a country-specific domain may have a significant impact on product perception in each country of its operation. For instance, the Chokolissimo brand has created a separate domain for each country of its operations which is very convenient for buyers in terms of language and payment method. Accordingly while choosing a specific product on the Chocollissimo Czech website customers are presented with easy payment options such as 'PPL' whereas on Polish website customers are able to pay with 'Blik' which is the most popular online payment method in the country covered by the majority of Polish banks. A similar pattern can be observed with delivery options, this approach reduces company dependency on MNCs such as UPS or Paypal. In contrast, findings based on observation of Geoorganics online store with international domain indicate that although customers are presented with easy online methods and delivery options that are familiar to UK based customers, online shoppers from any other country will need to rely on big MNC's such as Paypal or Visa. Furthermore, the same customer will need to face a high delivery fee, based on the data collected from observation a shopper from Poland who wishes to buy a specific product on Geoorganics website will be faced with Standard Europe Delivery cost of £9.50 whereas the cost of delivery of the same product available on online natural cosmetics distributor web page called Eccoverde.pl (a part of Austrian group) is

priced at £4.57 and on Ecodrogeria.pl £2.99, additionally the same product on Polish intermediary can be purchased at competitive price in comparison with the original online store (see Appendix F). As stated by the representative of Geoorganics collaboration with established country-specific online retailers is the main marketing strategy in company international expansion.

As described by (Wang et al., 2019) online-offline integration is one of the important aspects of product differentiation that increase customer loyalty. In addition, as stated by the author incorporating brick and mortar shops into online sales positively influence customer loyalty and may lead to the generation of new potential sales leads. Although both interviewers confirmed that most of their income is generated through online sales both stated that they selectively choose their promoting campaigns in order to reach a specific customer and gain their loyalty. According to the interview transcript, Geoorganics is placing their advertising campaigns in shops like for example high-end Selfridges or other health and wellbeing brick and mortar retailers across the UK and Chocollissimo is reaching out to many well-established businesses in order to generate new sales leads. Although Chocollissimo's manager confirmed that they do occasionally take part in the trade shows, the company does not intend to place their product in any brick and mortar shop and is focused specifically on online distribution. Accordingly (Daniels, Radebaugh and Sullivan, 2015) states that technology has transformed international trade in a way that allows especially SME's distribution and promotion of their products and makes them compatible with well-known international brands. According to the same source some companies are building a virtual value chain, running export transactions, taking part in virtual trade shows and performing a number of sales and marketing activities purely online. Furthermore as stated by the same source improvement of technological buying and selling process and logistics operation are main factors that contribute to online business competitive advantage. This finding is consistent with both interviewees who stated that during the COVID-19 pandemic when people were not able to access brick and mortar retailers both online firms have noted a record number of sales. Furthermore, when asked about future investments both interviewees expressed the need for constant improvement of distribution channels and online marketing tools. Additionally, Geoorganics manager replied that they have recently started to collaborate with Amazon mainly because it will allow their company to ship products to the US and access more customers internationally. Although Chocollissimo representative stated that so far the company is not planning to expand further than Europe they are working closely with online marketing agencies in order to constantly improve the online sales experience for their customers as well as online distribution channels. Accordingly as previously discussed in the literature review online marketing and internet sales are closely related to the customer journey and successful identification of specific touchpoints that convert viewers into buyers. This subject was further discussed by an interviewee that represented the Chocollissimo brand. An Interviewee stated that he personally spends a lot of time in order to educate himself about attribution models in an online environment in order to improve company performance. According to the same interviewee tools such as 'Google Ads' and various marketing methods such as display advertising and positioning are all very connected to one another and the key challenge for the online brand is to recognize the certain touchpoints in the process that will lead online researcher into making a purchase. Similarly, Interviewee that represented Geoorganics

brand stated that although there is a lot of interest in their brand on social media platforms not many of them convert into actual sales. The same interviewee stated that in order to improve internet sales company directors are looking into closer collaboration with e-commerce agencies and so far they are focusing on alternative methods that will build their strong brand image in an online environment. Both Interviewees agreed that a strong brand image has a very big impact on building customer loyalty and company success. An Interviewee that represented Chocollissimo stated that every year they see a big increase in the number of people that are browsing the internet and search directly for their brand instead of phrases such as 'personalised chocolates' or 'gift ideas' Both Interviewees also agreed that strategic selection of their target markets and business partners is one of the key elements for achieving competitive advantage.

Theme 3: The importance of collaboration for international expansion

As described by (Rugman and Collinson, 2012) International Business is concerned with trading operations across borders in order to satisfy the needs of individuals and organisations, however, as pointed out by the same author around 80% of the international investments is made by large multinational enterprises (MNE's) that control global trade. Furthermore as described by (SENAT.me | MeP, 2017) over the last decade the place of banks and energy companies that used to dominate in the ranking of ten biggest (MNEs) in the world has been replaced by technology companies. According to (Burdeth, 2021) the most valuable global brands that took a primary role in international trade for 2021 has been so far directly linked to e-commerce. As stated in the same article companies like Amazon, Google, Apple, Microsoft, Alibaba, Tencent and Facebook are ranked as the highest in value. Only the bottom three places in the ranking belong to Visa, McDonald's and MasterCard which reported very little increase in value in comparison with technology companies for the same period of time. For instance, according to (Burdeth, 2021) Amazon which is a pioneer on the list has reported record growth in value by 64% between 2020/21 in comparison it has been only 2% for Visa and 4% for MasterCard for the same period. In addition as stated by (Watson et al., 2018) the successful marketing strategies adapted by online retailers need to combine elements of relational and digital approaches. As stated by the same author many online retailers have adopted the hybrid approach that includes both digital and traditional marketing methods. In addition according to (Watson et al., 2018) digital interaction with customers and channel partners occurs in a different environment than it is described in traditional relationship-marketing publications. According to (Watson et al., 2018) this approach includes more focusing on new methods of cooperation and exploration of new opportunities offered by digital platforms partners. Furthermore as stated by (Watson et al., 2018) the convenience and speed of digital channels may offer the ability of avoidance of sales people in the process. Accordingly, when asked about the traditional methods of marketing and whether they are still used and effective both companies shared a similar view. An interviewee who represented Goorganics brand stated that the company is trying to establish a strong brand image within the UK therefore they do appear on the trade shows and invest in traditional marketing campaigns. Nevertheless, in relation to international expansion, a relationship-building strategy is directed more on cooperation with various online platforms like Amazon or dedicated health and wellbeing online platforms specific to each country such as ecco-verde.pl. As stated by the same interviewee reaching out to online shops such as ecco-verde.pl has a significant impact on building a strong brand image in each country as most of these platforms is well established, recognised and trusted

by online shoppers in each specific country. Most of the operations are performed by a sales and marketing team based in the UK and because of the growing popularity of health and wellbeing platforms across the world, their main focus is the strategic selection of such retailers and the establishment of a good relationship. Additionally as described by the interviewee that represented Chocollissimo brand company main focus is targeted on online marketing and sales techniques. Accordingly as stated by the same interviewee the most important relations established by the firm are built with marketing platforms such as best.net which are responsible for integrating the product on the online market. As stated by the same interviewee such e-commerce platforms are responsible for company website and online shop design as well as other business to business operations. In addition, Chocollissimo is closely collaborating with a number of banks, payment technology companies and mobile network providers in order to reach their end consumers. Both interviewees stated that digital methods of marketing such as Social Media Marketing Platforms, Content Marketing, Search Engine Optimization, Affiliate Marketing and Mobile Marketing are the most effective ways of promoting their products. Similarly, both agreed on the importance of collaborations with companies like Google or Facebook. This finding is consistent with (Cochrane, 2016) who states that modern methods of digital marketing are allowing companies to embrace the human element of the process. Additionally, according to the same source, those online tools are not only guiding customers towards the product but also allow companies to learn about their target markets by collecting data about customers and generating feedback. Both respondents stressed the importance of search engine optimization and content marketing. Additionally, Chocollissimo has been listed in one of Google's promotional campaigns which stated that the use of Google marketing tools such as 'Google Ads' has been the main reason for the company's global expansion, (marketfinder.thinkwithgoogle.com, n.d.). In addition, both interviewees stated that the use of online marketing analytic tools has a significant impact on their business strategies. According to (Watson et al., 2018) through analyses of data from multiply sources companies are enabled to gain a better understanding of their competitors, foreign markets and new product opportunities.

5. Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to investigate how innovation in the e-commerce environment influenced business strategies adapted by online retailers in order to expand internationally. The evidence gathered in Literature Review indicates that recent advances in technology almost completely revolutionised customers' relation to purchasing goods and at the same time the entire business model of online retailers. It indicates that the growing popularity of social media platforms and customer attachment to mobile devices requires a completely new approach to distribution and marketing from online firms. The evidence strongly suggests that in recent years customers spend more time online and tend to look for more personalised products and services. According to research online customers are also more willing to purchase products from brands that they associate with individual lifestyle choices and have negative attitudes towards the traditional way of sales and advertisement which requires more focus on building human-centric brands from online firms. The collected data also indicates that innovation in e-commerce had a direct impact on reducing barriers associated with international trade and influenced the emergence of small and medium-sized enterprises. Based on collected evidence the research also indicates that through innovation in e-commerce the new approach to international business has changed the dynamics between brands and competitors. In addition, competition in service dominated online markets has become more concerned with the selection of partners and innovative business models than the actual physical attributes of the product. Qualitative analyses of data collected through semi-structured interviews reveal the importance of the strategic selection of new international markets and entry modes. In addition, the evidence collected through interviews suggests that contemporary online retailers are more willing to focus on the quality of their products and services than global expansion in opposed to large multinational brands which usually adopt a Global Strategy in order to achieve the economy of scale. Finally, the research reveals the importance of collaboration with large online platforms and multinational technology companies and co-dependency from one another. However, greater research with a larger sample size would improve the reliability of those findings.

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Appendices

Appendix A : Quirkos Report

Quirkos

Quirkos Report

This report was generated by Paulina Damuc for the following file:
C:/Users/HP/Desktop/Coding Sheet.qrk.

Source Summary

Title	Author	Length	Quotes #
Geoorganics	Paulina Damuc	10809	142
Chocollissimo	Paulina Damuc	10720	126

Quirks Summary

Quirk Title	Parent	Grandparent	Author	Total Codes
Cultural Arbitrage	Globalisation vs Regional Differences		Paulina Damuc	19
Distribution Channels	Globalisation vs Regional Differences		Paulina Damuc	20
Internationalisation	Globalisation vs Regional Differences		Paulina Damuc	29
Market Entry Strategy	Globalisation vs Regional Differences		Paulina Damuc	19
Globalisation vs Regional Differences			Paulina Damuc	
Product quality	Business Strategy	Differentiation as way of achieving competitive advantage	Paulina Damuc	19
Branding	Business Strategy	Differentiation as way of achieving competitive advantage	Paulina Damuc	38
Advertising Techniques	Business Strategy	Differentiation as way of achieving competitive advantage	Paulina Damuc	20

Product Accessibility	Business Strategy	Differentiation as way of achieving competitive advantage	Paulina Damuc	15
Business Strategy	Differentiation as way of achieving competitive advantage		Paulina Damuc	31
Differentiation as way of achieving competitive advantage			Paulina Damuc	
Data Driven Marketing	The importance of collaboration for international expansion		Paulina Damuc	24
Online Platforms	The importance of collaboration for international expansion		Paulina Damuc	10
Search Engines	The importance of collaboration for international expansion		Paulina Damuc	11
Regional Marketing	The importance of collaboration for international expansion		Paulina Damuc	13
The importance of collaboration for international expansion			Paulina Damuc	
TOTAL NUMBER OF CODES	268			
TOTAL NUMBER OF QUIRKS	16			

Properties Summary Quirks

Canvas - Primary

Globalisation vs Regional Differe...	
(no description)	
Cultural Arbitrage 19	
(no description)	
Distribution Channels 20	
(no description)	
Internationalisation 29	
(no description)	
Market Entry Strategy 19	
(no description)	
Diffrentiation as way of achievin...	
(no description)	
Business Strategy 31 (123)	
(no description)	
Product quality 19	
(no description)	
Branding 38	
(no description)	
Advertising Techniques 20	
(no description)	
Product Accessibility 15	
(no description)	
The importance of collaboration...	
(no description)	
Data Driven Marketing 24	
(no description)	
Online Platforms 10	
(no description)	
Search Engines 11	
(no description)	
Regional Marketing 13	
(no description)	

Appendix B: Coding sheet

Georganics

Could you please provide some information about the company, i.e. the year of its establishment, main inspiration for the company's establishment, size, number of employees, management structure, a brief description of the target market and customer profile, major competitors?

We are a private limited company based in England. Company was founded in 2014 by two directors Italian and Belgian and it is now employing around 50 people. We first appeared at the farmers market in 2014. Our company strives to provide oral hygiene products for its customers that are sustainable and eco-friendly, zero waste and plastic free. Other similar companies that provide zero waste and environmentally friendly oral hygiene products are: the humble, the toothbrush.com and hydrophil.com

Comment [1]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [2]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [3]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [4]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [5]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

In which countries does the company operate and is the product also available in stationary stores?

We started our distribution in UK in the beginning with Royal Mail and our courier here and abroad is UPS, we have recently started to work with Amazon as we try to target American markets. Our products are available mostly online however we try to collaborate with number of brick and mortar health specialised shops in UK. We mainly operate in UK, Europe and US.

Comment [6]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [7]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [8]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [9]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [10]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [11]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [12]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc

Comment [13]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [14]: Distribution Channel by Paulina Damuc

I understand that the company is based in UK but also provides sales in other countries. Which other countries (after UK) are generating most sales and income for Georganics?

What according to you is the cause of growing popularity of your product in those regions?

Mostly in UK and Europe but we have noticed a massive growth on American market recently. We are mainly looking at the markets in which customers share similar values and are attracted to organic products.

Comment [15]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [16]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [17]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [18]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

How does the company decide about introducing its products to a specific foreign market or investing in marketing campaigns in different countries? (For ex. Does your company use tools like Global Market Finder or Google Analytics) ?

We have a dedicated marketing team that research customers and business partners abroad. We have noticed a very big growth in online sales during the first lockdown caused by corona virus. We also put a lot of attention in selection of our partners not only distributors but also suppliers in order to make sure that all our products are made in eco-friendly way which is in line with our mission statement. For example, we have recently stopped working with Chinese supplier of our bamboo toothbrushes because of carbon emission and we have replaced it with Swiss supplier of beech wood. Similarly we have replaced a Chinese dental floss supplier with reliable one from Italy.

Which country is the company planning to expand to and why?

We see the big potential for our brand in US and we are planning to establish a strong position on American market. We are striving to be a globally recognised brand but so far we put most attention on our existing customers in European countries. Our production is made in UK and for the time being we prefer to work with European countries in order to make sure that the way in which we distribute our products to suppliers abroad is not too harmful for the environment.

How important do you think it is to involve local specialists who are familiar with the language and culture of a given country in promoting Georganics products internationally?

As we collaborate with many different distributors that are already familiar with a specific country we mostly rely on them in terms of translating and advertising our products in a region. We have a very strong presence on the French and Italian market therefore these are the only two languages for which we have decided to produce a country specific labels in native languages.

What has been the main obstacle to sales so far when introducing the product to new market in another country? Were these barriers related to logistics, forms of payment or legal barriers?

Comment [19]: Cultural/Arbitrage I
Paulina Damuc

Comment [20]: Market Entry Strate
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [21]: Market Entry Strate
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [22]: Business Strategy b
Paulina Damuc

Comment [23]: Branding by Paulin
Damuc

Comment [24]: Distribution Chann
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [25]: Internationalisation
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [26]: Product quality by
Paulina Damuc

Comment [27]: Cultural/Arbitrage I
Paulina Damuc

Comment [28]: Business Strategy b
Paulina Damuc

Comment [29]: Branding by Paulin
Damuc

Comment [30]: Internationalisation
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [31]: Branding by Paulin
Damuc

Comment [32]: Product quality by
Paulina Damuc

Comment [33]: Business Strategy b
Paulina Damuc

Comment [34]: Cultural/Arbitrage I
Paulina Damuc

Comment [35]: Distribution Chann
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [36]: Business Strategy b
Paulina Damuc

Comment [37]: Search Engines by
Paulina Damuc

Comment [38]: Distribution Chann
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [39]: Internationalisation
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [40]: Advertising
Techniques by Paulina Damuc

Comment [41]: Product Accessibilit
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [42]: Market Entry Strate
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [43]: Product quality by
Paulina Damuc

Comment [44]: Product Accessibilit
by Paulina Damuc

Comment [45]: Cultural/Arbitrage I
Paulina Damuc

Comment [46]: Branding by Paulin
Damuc

We have our own production house in UK and due to strategic selection of our business partners we do not have many problems with distribution. We are a niche, premium brand and so far we have a lot of request from many European countries asking for collaboration. However we do check our partners carefully and make sure that their company ethos is similar to ours for instance in a way of stocking the product. If we are not satisfied with their standards we refuse collaboration.

Is your customer profile similar in different European countries? Which European country has the most competitors that are providing similar services?

We are trying to attract customers that are passionate about environmentally friendly organic products and so far we see strong demand in UK, Italy and France across Europe. There has been an increasing demand for sustainable environmentally friendly products in recent years therefore we do have a few competitors across all markets of our operations however we try to be a leader in our field. We take part in many trade shows in UK like for instance "Earth Project" with Selfridges that gathered the leading environmentally friendly brands available on UK market.

Are most of your marketing campaigns conducted online or does the company still use more traditional marketing methods (if so which ones)?

Apart from online marketing tools and campaigns we try to be present on the number of trade shows and events where we can familiarise customers with our products and our brand. For example our director travelled to US to take part in very prestigious trade show in LA. We have also placed a temporary pop up store in Selfridges. We do try to invest a lot in online marketing tools and we are very selective with choice of our online distributors. For instance we are collaborating with platforms like 'LoveLula' which is well established and valued online platform that specialises in distribution of sustainable and organic beauty products.

What type of e-marketing is the most effective in attracting new customers for Georganics and why? (e.g. advertising in search engines, display advertising, mobile advertising, positioning and optimization of websites, content marketing) ?

All sources are important for generating new sales however as we sell in many different

Comment [47]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [48]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [49]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc

Comment [50]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc

Comment [51]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [52]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [53]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [54]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [55]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [56]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [57]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [58]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc

Comment [59]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [60]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [61]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [62]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [63]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [64]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [65]: Advertising by Paulina Damuc

Comment [66]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [67]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [68]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [69]: Advertising by Paulina Damuc

Comment [70]: Data Driven by Paulina Damuc

Comment [71]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [72]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc

Comment [73]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [74]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [75]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc

Comment [76]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc

Comment [77]: Advertising by Paulina Damuc

Comment [78]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [79]: Online Platforms by Paulina Damuc

countries we are making sure that our distributors are carefully selected. We make sure that they have strong marketing agenda in a specific country of its operations and collaborate with minimum hundred stores. We are happy to collaborate with distributors in a specific country that are well known among customers and those with strong marketing presence in any given country. We check for their strategy first and different ways in which they can promote our brand.

Are the most effective marketing operations used by Georganics also the most expensive for the company?

We are trying to cooperate with closely with country specific distributors. Our marketing team is dedicated to look after a specific region of our operations and to cooperate with local distributors. We are currently looking for ecommerce agency that will increase our online sales and we are planning to spend around 3000 pound a month on such collaboration.

Which social media platforms are used by Georganics and which one of them attracts the biggest number of customers?

We are focusing on strong online presence which is very important for us as, it provides direct contact with our end customers. We are trying to be present on all well-known social media platforms, currently our Instagram account generate over eighty thousand followers and our Facebook account attracted over five thousand likes. We try to be very active on both platforms where customers may find direct link to our shop, customer testimonials and reviews, press releases, information about recent promotions and trade shows as well as video reviews made by bloggers and influencers. Although both accounts attracted a large number of viewers we are would like to see more sales conversions generated from that source.

How important for the company growth is networking?

We are generating a lot of sales through partnerships with online distributors in other countries. For example, we have been generating a lot of sales in Poland in the last three years because of cooperation with Polish distributor. We are selling around the world and

- Comment [80]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [81]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [82]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [83]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [84]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [85]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [86]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [87]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [88]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [89]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [90]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [91]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [92]: Advertising by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [93]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [94]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [95]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [96]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [97]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [98]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [99]: Advertising by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [100]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [101]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [102]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [103]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [104]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [105]: Online Platforms by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [106]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [107]: Advertising by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [108]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [109]: Advertising by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [110]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [111]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [112]: Online Platforms by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [113]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [114]: Online Platforms by Paulina Damuc

recently started to sell through Amazon therefore we are planning to cooperate with ecommerce agency that will help our company to optimize our profit worldwide for now we mostly rely on our company marketing team. For the time being around 35% of our sales is generated from direct online sales, 50% from UK and European market with bigger amount in UK and 15% from American market which we are planning to improve in incoming years.

Comment [1.15]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.16]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.17]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.18]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.19]: Online Platforms by Paulina Damuc

How important for Georganics is the design of company website? What are the key elements in website design that give your company competitive advantage?

Comment [1.20]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.21]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.22]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Our website is specially designed in order to attract and engage with customers. We try to make buying process as easy as possible and present our products with detailed descriptions. We provide a wide variety of choice and products that are suitable for each individual needs, we try to target as many customers as possible by offering products in different price range. I think the design is very important we try to make it very transparent and easy to browse. Our website is also designed in order to educate our customers about our company ethos and the importance of choosing environmentally friendly products. We generate a lot of sales through our online store not only end customers but also by engaging new business partners.

Comment [1.23]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.24]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.25]: Advertising Techniques by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.26]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.27]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Which methods are used by Georganics in order to communicate with your customers? How is the company generating customer feedback? Is there any specific marketing strategy that helps your company to retain existing customer base?

Comment [1.28]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.29]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.30]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.31]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Feedback from our end customers is extremely important for us. We usually generate it through social media platforms and our website. We do have an enquiry section on our website where customers can contact us directly with a feedback or in case they have experienced any issue with their order. We try to engage with social media customers by running different promotional campaigns, for instance by using #georganics our customers can be featured on our Instagram account. Also, our subscribers can benefit from a number of discounts and promotions.

Comment [1.32]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.33]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.34]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.35]: Advertising Techniques by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.36]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.37]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.38]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.39]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.40]: Online Platforms by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.41]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [1.42]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Chocollissimo

Could you please provide some information about the company, such as: the year of its establishment, main inspiration for the company's establishment, size, number of employees, management structure, a brief description of the target market, customer profile, and competitors?

We are a private limited company that was founded in 2004. We offer high quality personalised chocolate gifts for any occasion. Our company is divided into different sections like HR, marketing (which is the biggest one), delivery. Each country has its own marketing division depending on how strong is our presence on the specific market, so far the strongest is Polish and German. In other countries of operations it's usually one or two people that deals with marketing side of our operation. We employ many occasional workers especially in the warehouse as our company sales a lot of occasional products. In total company employs between 50 to 150 employees. Because of our unique business model I am not able to name any competitor that would operate in the same sector at the same scale. I would probably say some online giftshops but then again our business model is very different from their strategy so we do not really consider those online shops as competitors even though they are offering similar product. In relation to competitors just to name a few it is Mont Blanc and Carmello, they do offer similar products but I would say that we also see competitors among gift shops, companies that are offering specific personalised prints, labels etc.

P: what about logistic side and production?

Everything is located and produced in Poland and we distribute it from here to the rest of Europe. The first headquarters of the company has been based in Poland. We do occasionally use outside supplier that provides us with a specific types of forms for our products.

In which countries does the company operate and is the product also available in brick and mortar stores?

Comment [143]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [144]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [145]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [146]: Business Strategy Paulina Damuc

Comment [147]: Cultural Arbitrage Paulina Damuc

Comment [148]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [149]: Business Strategy Paulina Damuc

Comment [150]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [151]: Business Strategy Paulina Damuc

Comment [152]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [153]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [154]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [155]: Business Strategy Paulina Damuc

Comment [156]: Distribution channels by Paulina Damuc

We are operating mostly in Europe: Poland, Belgium, Germany, UK, France, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary. Our product is not available in any brick and mortar shops. All sales are made online and through direct B2B contact.

Comment [157]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [158]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc

Comment [159]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [160]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [161]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [162]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc

Which other countries (after Poland) are generating most sales and income for Chocollissimo? What according to you is the cause of growing popularity of your product in those regions?

Comment [163]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [164]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [165]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

I would say that it's Germany, I think it is a similar market. We have a big demand for our products in this region and a strong marketing team in place.

How does the company decide about introducing its products to a specific foreign market or investing in marketing campaigns in different countries?

Our marketing team is assessing the investment risk and verifies the market with market research tools. We are not interested in expanding into further destinations at the moment because we offer food product and we are not currently able to deliver it at the highest quality to further locations in the world. We did try in the past and for the time being it is too cost effective and risky for our brand.

Comment [166]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [167]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc

Comment [168]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc

Comment [169]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [170]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [171]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

What countries are the company planning to expand to and why?

Currently, we are not planning any major expansion to any country; we want to focus on the development of our existing stores. If we do decide to expand in the future we want to focus only on nearby European countries in order to deliver the best quality to our customers.

Comment [172]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [173]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc

Comment [174]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

How important do you think it is to involve local specialists who are familiar with the language and culture of a given country in promoting your products internationally?

In my opinion, it is not necessary, it all depends on our business model, but the costs of running teams abroad are quite a problem. Currently we employ around two or three people in each country abroad but I think we could achieve the same results by hiring specialists in Poland with almost the same skills except that they are not natives.

Comment [175]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc

Comment [176]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [177]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [178]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [179]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

What has been the main obstacle in sales while introducing your products to new market in another country? Were these barriers related to logistics, forms of payment or some legal barriers?

The most common barrier that appears is the linguistic one, the rest of mentioned issues are already managed quite well.

Comment [180]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [181]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [182]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Is your customer profile similar in different European countries? Which European country has the most competitors that are providing similar services?

Comment [183]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [184]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [185]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

We have the biggest number of competitors in Belgium and Germany. Our customer profile is very similar across Europe.

Comment [186]: Business Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [187]: Advertising Techniques by Paulina Damuc

Comment [188]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [189]: Distribution Channels by Paulina Damuc

Comment [190]: Cultural Arbitrage by Paulina Damuc

Comment [191]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [192]: Advertising Techniques by Paulina Damuc

Comment [193]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Comment [194]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [195]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc

Comment [196]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

What type of e-marketing is the most effective in attracting new customers for Chocollissimo and why?

We use all available marketing tools such as: advertising in search engines, display advertising, mobile advertising, positioning, optimization of websites and content marketing. It differs in each country depending on the budget. In my opinion, positioning, store

optimization and product advertising are the best ways of marketing for our brand. I also think that a strong business model and marketing strategy is very important for our company success. When we first started in 2004 our business model was built through cooperation with other company that help us to commercialize our brand. I have to admit that this collaboration as well as partnership with e-commerce agencies had big impact on our company performance.

Are the most effective marketing operations used by Chocollissimo also the most expensive for the company?

As mentioned before I do think that positioning, store optimization and product advertising are the best ways of marketing and those are also the most expensive ways of advertisement. I actually think that 'Google Adds' is the most expensive but all this tools are very connected with each other, it is all related to attribution models and different ways and strategies used by our company in order to recognize certain touch points in customer journey. As I am dealing directly with this sector of marketing in our company I spend a lot of time in order to educate myself about attribution models in online environment in order to improve our sales and overall performance of our brand. However I do believe that building the strong brand image through mixture of marketing operations has a big impact on company success. For example we have been on the market for many years now and we have noticed that during Christmas and holiday season many customers are searching directly for our brand rather than phrases like 'gift ideas' or 'personalized chocolates' it proofs that gradual, strategic building of company image and branding has a significant impact on company performance.

Which social media platforms are used by Chocollissimo and which one of them attracts the biggest number of customers?

We are present on the most popular social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram however our presence on each platform differs depending on the country, we do not have an extensive team in each country that could look after it. For example, our Polish Instagram account generated over twelve thousand followers similarly to Romanian account whereas French account only around five hundred.

How important for the company growth is online networking?

- Comment [197]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [198]: Advertising Techniques by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [199]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [200]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [201]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [202]: Distribution channels by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [203]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [204]: Online Platforms by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [205]: Business Strategy
- Comment [206]: Market Entry
- Comment [207]: Business Strategy
- Comment [208]: Data Driven
- Comment [209]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [210]: Advertising
- Comment [211]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [212]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [213]: Data Driven
- Comment [214]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [215]: Data Driven
- Comment [216]: Advertising
- Comment [217]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [218]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [219]: Business Strategy
- Comment [220]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [221]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [222]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [223]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [224]: Data Driven
- Comment [225]: Advertising
- Comment [226]: Branding by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [227]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [228]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [229]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [230]: Online Platforms by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [231]: Product Accessibility by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [232]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc
- Comment [233]: Internationalisation by Paulina Damuc

Networking is a very important part of our company strategy. As mentioned before we are cooperating with e-commerce agencies that have a major impact on our performance. They are specialised in sourcing new clients and partner with other companies that introduce our brand to public. For example we have partnered with companies like: Orange, Visa, City Bank, Credit Agricole Bank, Bank Pekao, Deutsche Bank, Raiffeisen Bank and many other companies in banking sector and mobile broadband providers. We are running a number of promotional offers and discounts targeted especially at their customers. We have been also featured in Google promotional clips that educate online business owners about benefits of using Google tools such as 'Google Ads' and 'Google Analytics' about different ways of reaching new customers and expanding into new countries.

How important for Chocollissimo is the design of company website? What are the key elements in website design that give your company competitive advantage?

The design on website is a very important for company performance. We make sure that all products are displayed in a neat way with detail description that website is easy to navigate and shopping process is convenient for customers. As we provide customized product communication has a major impact in converting enquiries into sales. We also make sure that there is enough options available for our customers to design their gift and a process is user friendly and enjoyable. As we have a separate domain for each country we make sure that there is enough choice in terms of payment method and that they are favorable methods used by customers in a specific country.

Which methods are used by Chocollissimo in order to communicate with your customers? How is the company generating customer feedback? Is there any specific marketing strategy that helps your company to retain existing customer base?

We do have a specific marketing team which is constantly looking up for new ways for our company to improve our customer experience. These also include generating feedback from our customers. Our strong brand image is very important to us and as mentioned before we do a lot of B2B sales therefore we try to reach out to most of our customers personally and generate feedback. We also collaborate with internet platforms such as 'Opineo' which gather customers' opinions about shops, products and brands.

Comment [234]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [235]: Business Strategy Paulina Damuc

Comment [236]: Business Strategy Paulina Damuc

Comment [237]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [238]: Advertising Techniques by Paulina Damuc

Comment [239]: Advertising Techniques by Paulina Damuc

Comment [240]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [241]: Business Strategy Paulina Damuc

Comment [242]: Regional Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [243]: Market Entry Strategy by Paulina Damuc

Comment [244]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [245]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [246]: Advertising

Comment [247]: Online Platforms

Comment [248]: Search Engines by Paulina Damuc

Comment [249]: Data Driven Marketing by Paulina Damuc

Comment [250]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [251]: Distribution

Comment [252]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [253]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [254]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [255]: Distribution

Comment [256]: Cultural Arbitrage

Comment [257]: Regional Marketing

Comment [258]: Internationalisation

Comment [259]: Product Accessibility

Comment [260]: Data Driven Marketing

Comment [261]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [262]: Regional Marketing

Comment [263]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [264]: Branding by Paulina Damuc

Comment [265]: Advertising

Comment [266]: Product quality by Paulina Damuc

Comment [267]: Online Platforms

Comment [268]: Data Driven Marketing

Appendix C: Interview transcripts

Interviewee: Paulina Damuc

Interviewer: Mr Bartosz Mocek, Internet Marketing Specialist

Date of Interview: 02/12/2020

Interview Setting: Interview was conducted by phone

List of Acronyms: BM=Bartosz Mocek, IN= Interviewer

[Begin Transcript 00:00:12]

IN: Could you please provide some information about the company, such as the year of its establishment, the main inspiration for the company's establishment, size, number of employees, management structure, a brief description of the target market, customer profile, and competitors?

BN: We are a private limited company that was founded in 2004. We offer high-quality personalised chocolate gifts for any occasion. Our company is divided into different sections like HR, marketing (which is the biggest one), delivery. Each country has its own marketing division depending on how strong is our presence in the specific market, so far the strongest is Polish and German in other countries of operations it's usually one or two people that deals with the marketing side of our operation. We employ many occasional workers especially in the warehouse as our company sells a lot of occasional products. In total company employes between 50 to 150 employees. Because of our unique business model, I am not able to name any competitor that would operate in the same sector at the same scale. I would probably say some online giftshops but then again our business model is very different from their strategy so we do not really consider those online shops as competitors even though they are offering similar products. In relation to competitors just to name a few it is Mont Blanc and Carmello, they do offer similar products but I would say that we also see competitors among gift shops, companies that are offering specific personalised prints, labels etc.

IN: what about the logistic side and production?

BN: Everything is located and produced in Poland and we distribute it from here to the rest of Europe. The first headquarters of the company has been based in Poland. We do occasionally use an outside supplier that provides us with a specific type of form for our products.

IN: In which countries does the company operate and is the product also available in brick and mortar stores?

BN: We are operating mostly in Europe: Poland, Belgium, Germany, UK, France, Lithuania, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania and Hungary. Our product is not available in any brick and mortar shops. All sales are made online and through direct B2B contact.

IN: Which other countries (after Poland) are generating the most sales and income for Chokolissimo? What according to you is the cause of the growing popularity of your product in those regions?

BN: I would say that it's Germany, I think it is a similar market. We have a big demand for our products in this region and a strong marketing team in place.

IN: How does the company decide about introducing its products to a specific foreign market or investing in marketing campaigns in different countries?

BN: Our marketing team is assessing the investment risk and verifies the market with market research tools. We are not interested in expanding into further destinations at the moment because we offer food products and we are not currently able to deliver it at the highest quality to further locations in the world. We did try in the past and for the time being, it is too cost-effective and risky for our brand.

IN: What country is the company planning to expand to and why?

BN: Currently, we are not planning any major expansion to any country; we want to focus on the development of our existing stores. If we do decide to expand in the future we want to focus only on nearby European countries in order to deliver the best quality to our customers.

IN: How important do you think it is to involve local specialists who are familiar with the language and culture of a given country in promoting your products internationally?

BN: In my opinion, it is not necessary, it all depends on our business model, but the costs of running teams abroad are quite a problem. Currently, we employ around two or three people in each country abroad but I think we could achieve the same results by hiring specialists in Poland with almost the same skills except that they are not natives.

IN: What has been the main obstacle in sales while introducing your products to a new market in another country? Were these barriers related to logistics, forms of payment or some legal barriers?

BN: The most common barrier that appears is the linguistic one, the rest of mentioned issues are already managed quite well.

IN: Is your customer profile similar in different European countries? Which European country has the most competitors that are providing similar services?

BN: We have the biggest number of competitors in Belgium and Germany. Our customer profile is very similar across Europe.

IN: Are most of your marketing campaigns conducted online or does the company still use traditional marketing methods (if so which ones)?

BN: In the past, we took part in some trade shows however currently most of our marketing campaigns and operations are conducted online. In the past, our marketing team has been spending more time in order to search for new opportunities and business clients. At the moment we are cooperating with two e-commerce agencies in Poland that specialise in sourcing new business opportunities and forms of collaboration for our brand. Almost all our operations are run online.

IN: What type of e-marketing is the most effective in attracting new customers for Chocollissimo and why?

BN: We use all available marketing tools such as advertising in search engines, display advertising, mobile advertising, positioning, optimization of websites and content marketing. It differs in each country depending on the budget. In my opinion, positioning, store optimization and product advertising are the best ways of marketing for our brand. I also think that a strong business model and marketing strategy is very important for our company's success. When we first started in 2004 our business model was built through cooperation with other companies that help us to commercialise our brand. I have to admit that this collaboration as well as the partnership with e-commerce agencies had a big impact on our company performance.

IN: Are the most effective marketing operations used by Chocollissimo also the most expensive for the company?

BN: As mentioned before I do think that positioning, store optimization and product advertising are the best ways of marketing and those are also the most expensive ways of advertising. I actually think that 'Google Adds' is the most expensive but all these tools are very connected with each other, it is all related to attribution models and different ways and strategies used by our company in order to recognise certain touchpoints in the customer journey. As I am dealing directly with this sector of marketing in our company I spend a lot of time in order to educate myself about attribution models in the online environment in order to improve our sales and the overall performance of our brand. However, I do believe that building a strong brand image through a mixture of marketing operations has a big impact on company success. For example, we have been on the market for many years now and we have noticed that during Christmas and holiday season many customers are searching directly for our brand rather than phrases like 'gift ideas' or 'personalised chocolates' it proves that gradual, strategic building of company image and branding has a significant impact on company performance.

IN: Which social media platforms are used by Chocollissimo and which one of them attracts the biggest number of customers?

BN: We are present on the most popular social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram however our presence on each platform differs depending on the country, we do not have an extensive team in each country that could look after it. For example, our Polish Instagram account generated over twelve thousand followers similarly to the Romanian account whereas the French account only around five hundred.

IN: How important for the company growth is online networking?

BN: Networking is a very important part of our company strategy. As mentioned before we are cooperating with e-commerce agencies that have a major impact on our performance. They are specialised in sourcing new clients and partner with other companies that introduce our brand to the public. For example, we have partnered with companies like Orange, Visa, City Bank, Credit Agricole Bank, Bank Pekao, Deutsche Bank, Raiffeisen Bank and many other companies in the banking sector and mobile broadband providers. We are running a number of promotional offers and discounts targeted especially at their customers. We have been also featured in Google promotional clips that educate online business owners about the benefits of using Google tools such as 'Google Ads' and 'Google Analytics' about different ways of reaching new customers and expanding into new countries.

IN: How important for Chocollissimo is the design of the company website? What are the key elements in website design that give your company a competitive advantage?

BN: The design of the website is very important for company performance. We make sure that all products are displayed in a neat way with detailed descriptions that the website is easy to navigate and the shopping process is convenient for customers. As we provide customised product communication has a major impact in converting enquiries into sales. We also make sure that there are enough options available for our customers to design their gifts and the process is user friendly and enjoyable. As we have a separate domain for each country we make sure that there is enough choice in terms of payment method and that they are favourable methods used by customers in a specific country.

IN: Which methods are used by Chocollissimo in order to communicate with your customers? How is the company generating customer feedback? Is there any specific marketing strategy that helps your company to retain its existing customer base?

BN: We do have a specific marketing team which are constantly looking up for new ways for our company to improve our customer experience. These also include generating feedback from our customers. Our strong brand image is very important to us and as mentioned before we do a lot of B2B sales therefore we try to reach out to most of our customers personally and generate feedback. We also collaborate with internet platforms such as 'Opineo' which gather customers' opinions about shops, products and brands.

[End Transcript 00:40:12]

Interviewer: Paulina Damuc
Interviewee: Ms Silivia Stoica
Interview Setting: Telephone Conversation
List of Acronyms: ST=Silvia Stoica, IN=Interviewer
Date of the Interview: 12/12/2020

[Begin Transcript 00:0:12]

IN: Could you please provide some information about the company, i.e. the year of its establishment, the main inspiration for the company's establishment, size, number of employees, management structure, a brief description of the target market and customer profile, major competitors?

ST: We are a private limited company based in England. The company was founded in 2014 by two directors Italian and Belgian and it is now employing around 50 people. We first appeared at the farmers market in 2014. Our company strives to provide oral hygiene products for its customers that are sustainable and eco-friendly, zero waste and plastic-free. Other similar companies that provide zero waste and environmentally friendly oral hygiene products are: the humble, the toothbrush.com and hydrophil.com

IN: In which countries does the company operate and is the product also available in brick and mortar stores?

ST: We started our distribution in the UK at the beginning with Royal Mail and our courier here and abroad is UPS, we have recently started to work with Amazon as we try to target American markets. Our products are available mostly online however we try to collaborate with a number of brick and mortar health specialised shops in the UK. We mainly operate in the UK, Europe and US.

IN: I understand that the company is based in the UK but also provides sales in other countries. Which other countries (after the UK) are generating the most sales and income for Georganics?

What according to you is the cause of the growing popularity of your product in those regions?

ST: Mostly in UK and Europe but we have noticed a massive growth in the American market recently. We are mainly looking at the markets in which customers share similar values and are attracted to organic products.

IN: How does the company decide about introducing its products to a specific foreign market or investing in marketing campaigns in different countries? (For ex. Does your company use tools like Global Market Finder or Google Analytics) ?

ST: We have a dedicated marketing team that research customers and business partners abroad. We have noticed a very big growth in online sales during the first lockdown caused by the coronavirus. We also put a lot of attention in the selection of our partners not only distributors but also suppliers in order to make sure that all our products are made in an eco-friendly way which is in line with our mission statement. For example, we have recently stopped working with a Chinese supplier of our bamboo toothbrushes because of carbon

emission and we have replaced it with a Swiss supplier of beech wood. Similarly, we have replaced a Chinese dental floss supplier with a reliable one from Italy.

IN: Which country is the company planning to expand to and why?

ST: We see the big potential for our brand in the US and we are planning to establish a strong position on the American market. We are striving to be a globally recognised brand but so far we put most attention on our existing customers in European countries. Our production is made in the UK and for the time being, we prefer to work with European countries in order to make sure that the way in which we distribute our products to suppliers abroad is not too harmful to the environment.

IN: How important do you think it is to involve local specialists who are familiar with the language and culture of a given country in promoting Georganics products internationally?

As we collaborate with many different distributors that are already familiar with a specific country we mostly rely on them in terms of translating and advertising our products in a region. We have a very strong presence in the French and Italian markets therefore these are the only two languages for which we have decided to produce country-specific labels in native languages.

ST: What has been the main obstacle to sales so far when introducing the product to a new market in another country? Were these barriers related to logistics, forms of payment or legal barriers?

ST: We have our own production house in the UK and due to the strategic selection of our business partners we do not have any problems with distribution. We are a niche, premium brand and so far we have a lot of requests from many European countries asking for collaboration. However, we do check our partners carefully and make sure that their company ethos is similar to ours for instance in a way of stocking the product. If we are not satisfied with their standards we refuse collaboration.

IN: Is your customer profile similar in different European countries? Which European country has the most competitors that are providing similar services?

ST: We are trying to attract customers that are passionate about environmentally friendly organic products and so far we see strong demand in UK, Italy and France across Europe. There has been an increasing demand for sustainable environmentally friendly products in recent years therefore we do have a few competitors across all markets of our operations however we try to be a leader in our field. We take part in many trade shows in the UK like for instance "Earth Project" with Selfridges that gathered the leading environmentally friendly brands available on the UK market.

IN: Are most of your marketing campaigns conducted online or does the company still use more traditional marketing methods (if so which ones)?

ST: Apart from online marketing tools and campaigns we try to be present at a number of trade shows and events where we can familiarise customers with our products and our brand. For example, our director travelled to the US to take part in a very prestigious trade show in LA; we have also placed a temporary pop up store in Selfridges. We do try to invest a lot in online marketing tools and we are very selective with the choice of our online distributors. For instance, we are collaborating with platforms like 'LoveLula' which is well

established and valued online platform that specialises in the distribution of sustainable and organic beauty products.

IN: What type of e-marketing is the most effective in attracting new customers for Georganics and why? (e.g. advertising in search engines, display advertising, mobile advertising, positioning and optimization of websites, content marketing) ?

ST: All sources are important for generating new sales however as we sell in many different countries we are making sure that our distributors are carefully selected. We make sure that they have strong marketing agenda in a specific country of its operations and collaborate with minimum hundred stores. We are happy to collaborate with distributors in a specific country that are well known among customers and those with a strong marketing presence in any given country. We check for their strategy first and different ways in which they can promote our brand.

IN: Are the most effective marketing operations used by Georganics also the most expensive for the company?

ST: We are trying to cooperate closely with country-specific distributors. Our marketing team is dedicated to look after a specific region of our operations and to cooperate with local distributors. We are currently looking for ecommerce agency that will increase our online sales and we are planning to spend around 3000 pound a month on such collaboration.

IN: Which social media platforms are used by Georganics and which one of them attracts the biggest number of customers?

ST: We are focusing on strong online presence which is very important for us as, it provides direct contact with our end customers. We are trying to be present on all well-known social media platforms, currently our Instagram account generate over eighty thousand followers and our Facebook account attracted over five thousand likes. We try to be very active on both platforms where customers may find direct link to our shop, customer testimonials and reviews, press releases, information about recent promotions and trade shows as well as video reviews made by bloggers and influencers. Although both accounts attracted a large number of viewers we are would like to see more sales conversions generated from that source.

IN: How important for the company growth is networking?

ST: We are generating a lot of sales through partnerships with online distributors in other countries. For example, we have been generating a lot of sales in Poland in the last three years because of cooperation with 'Ecco-Verde', Polish distributor. We are selling our products around the world and recently started cooperate with Amazon therefore we are planning to employ a specific e-commerce agency that will help our company to optimize our profit worldwide, for now we mostly rely on our company marketing team. For the time being around 35% of our sales is generated from direct online sales, 50% from UK and European market with bigger amount in UK and 15% from American market which we are planning to improve in incoming years.

IN: How important for Georganics is the design of the company website? What are the key elements in website design that give your company a competitive advantage?

ST: Our website is specially designed in order to attract and engage with customers. We try to make the buying process as easy as possible and present our products with detailed descriptions. We provide a wide variety of choices and products that are suitable for each individual needs, we try to target as many customers as possible by offering products in different price ranges. I think the design is very important we try to make it very transparent and easy to browse. Our website is also designed in order to educate our customers about our company ethos and the importance of choosing environmentally friendly products. We generate a lot of sales through our online store not only end customers but also by engaging new business partners.

IN: Which methods are used by Georganics in order to communicate with your customers? How is the company generating customer feedback? Is there any specific marketing strategy that helps your company to retain its existing customer base?

ST: Feedback from our end customers is extremely important for us. We usually generate it through social media platforms and our website. We do have an enquiry section on our website where customers can contact us directly with feedback or in case they have experienced any issue with their order. We try to engage with social media customers by running different promotional campaigns, for instance by using #geoorganics our customers can be featured on our Instagram account. Also, our subscribers can benefit from a number of discounts and promotions.

[End Transcript 00:45:12]

✉ **Silvia Stoica** (silvia@georganics.com)

Fri, 27 Nov 2020 10:31

To: you [Details](#) ▼

Hi Paulina,

Thank you for your email it is lovely to e-meet you! I had a quick look at the questions in your attachment and I would like to discuss some of them over the phone because I simply do not have the time to answer in writing. If this works for you, let's arrange a call sometime next week.

Kindly let me know your thoughts on the above?

Many thanks and best wishes for a wonderful weekend ahead!

Silvia

—

Silvia Stoica
UK Business Development Manager

Georganics Ltd

Website: [georganics.com](https://www.georganics.com) | Tel: 08007076068 ext. 13

Address: Unit 3-4 Hooklands Farm Barns, Lewes Road, Haywards Heath, RH17 7NG

Company n. 9308142 | VAT 200 4265 67



RE: Dissertation



✉ **Paulina Damuc** (pdamuc@aol.co.uk)

Wed, 2 Dec 2020 7:47

To: **bartosz.mocek** [Details](#) ▼

Świetnie,

Dziękuję za odpowiedź. Kiedy byłby najlepszy moment na taką rozmowę? Czy mogłabym zadzwonić dziś około 14-15?

Pozdrawiam,

Paulina

On Tuesday, 1 December 2020 Bartosz Mocek <bartosz.mocek@chocolissimo.com> wrote:

Pani Paulino,

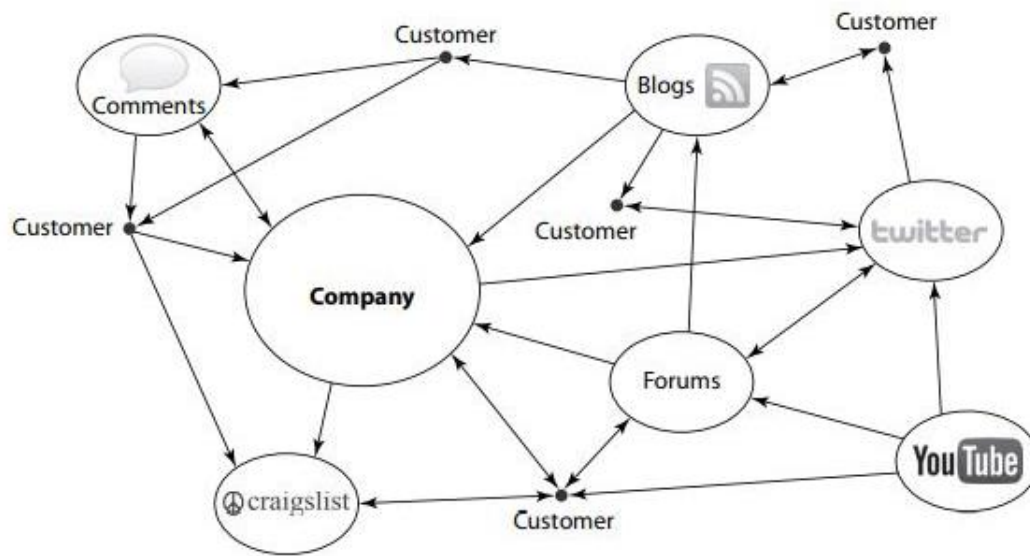
Dobry plan tak na pewno będzie szybciej 😊 607 770 087

Pozdrawiam

Bartosz Mocek
Specjalista ds. marketingu internetowego

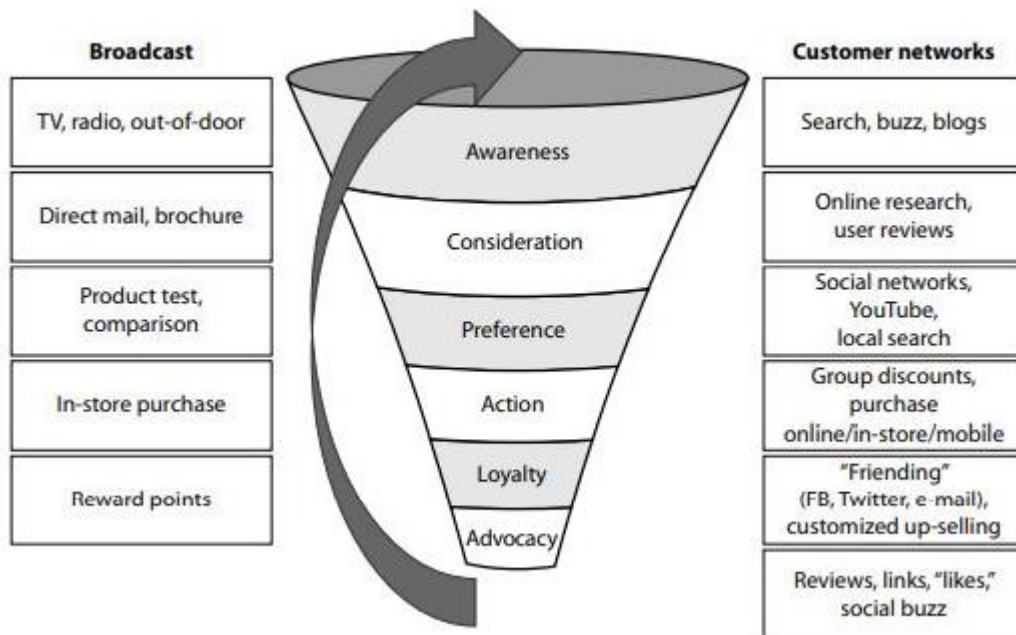
Tel. +48 61 102 37 20

Appendix D: Customer Network Model



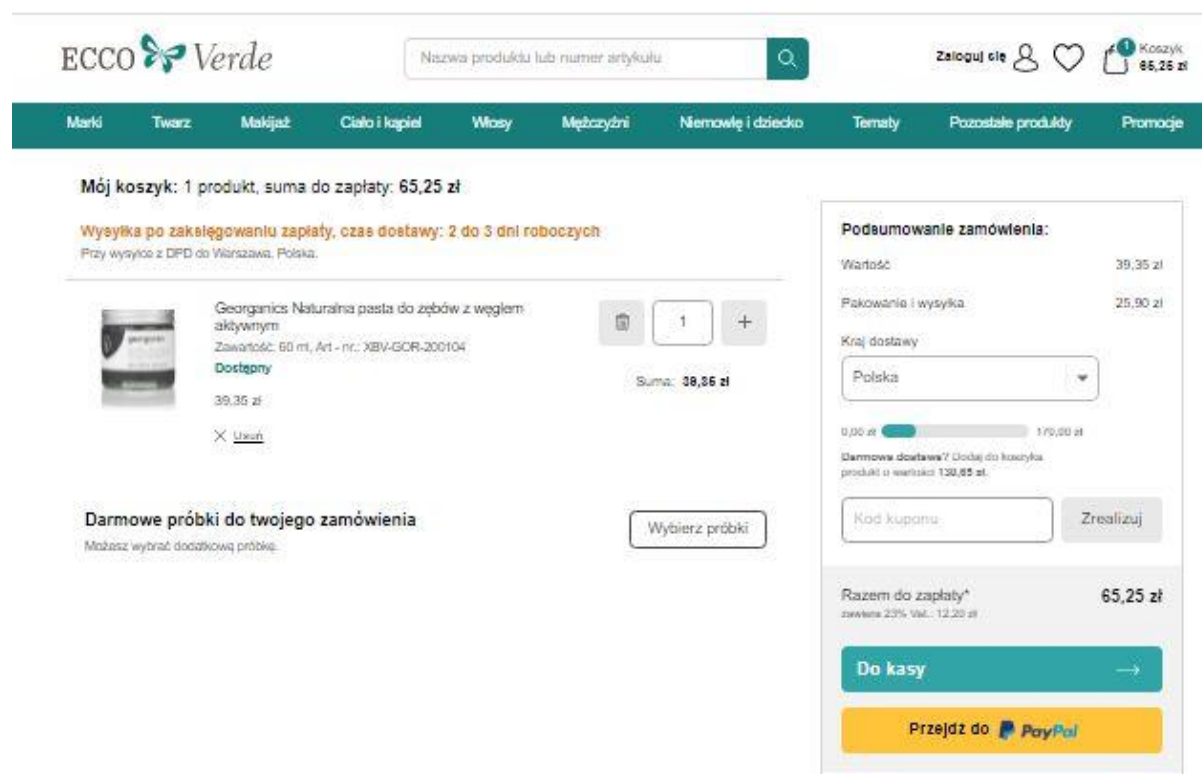
Rogers, D.L. (2016). *The digital transformation playbook : rethink your business for the digital age*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Appendix E: New Marketing Funnel



Rogers, D.L. (2016). *The digital transformation playbook : rethink your business for the digital age*. New York: Columbia University Press.

Appendix F: Observation data



ECCO Verde

Nazwa produktu lub numer artykułu

Zaloguj się

Koszyk 65,25 zł

Marki Twarz Makijaż Ciało i kąpiel Włosy Męczyźni Niemowlę i dziecko Tematy Pozostałe produkty Promocje

Mój koszyk: 1 produkt, suma do zapłaty: 65,25 zł

Wysyłka po zaksięgowaniu zapłaty, czas dostawy: 2 do 3 dni roboczych
Przy wysyłce z DPD do Warszawy, Polska.

Georganics Naturalna pasta do zębów z węglem aktywnym
Zawartość: 60 ml, Art - nr.: XBV-GOR-200104
Dostępny
39,35 zł

Suma: **38,35 zł**

Darmowe próbki do twojego zamówienia
Możesz wybrać dodatkową próbkę.

Wybierz próbki

Podsumowanie zamówienia:

Wartość 39,35 zł
Pakowanie i wysyłka 25,90 zł

Kraj dostawy: Polska

0,00 zł 170,00 zł

Darmowa dostawa? Udoj do koszyka produkt o wartości 130,05 zł.

Kod kuponu Zrealizuj

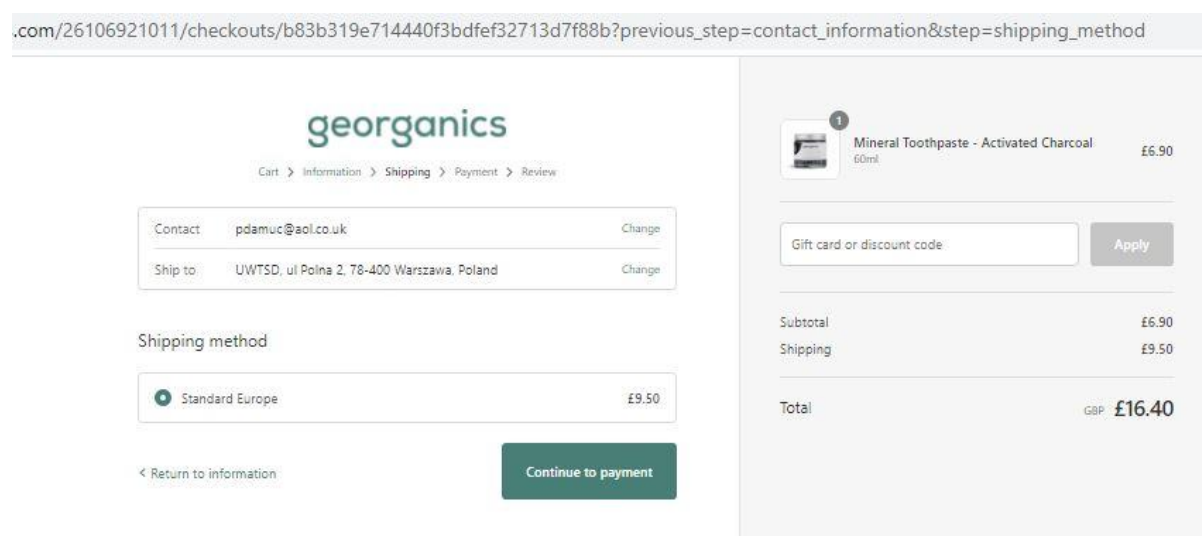
Razem do zapłaty* 65,25 zł
zawiera 23% Vat., 12,20 zł

Do kasy

Przejdź do **PayPal**

Ecco Verde.pl (n.d.). *Naturalna pasta do zębów z węglem aktywnym 60 ml*. [online] Ecco Verde sklep internetowy. Available at: <https://www.ecco-verde.pl/georganics/naturalna-pasta-do-zebow-z-weglem-aktywnym> [Accessed 23 Mar. 2022].

.com/26106921011/checkouts/b83b319e714440f3bdfef32713d7f88b?previous_step=contact_information&step=shipping_method



georganics

Cart > Information > Shipping > Payment > Review

Contact pdamuc@aol.co.uk Change

Ship to UWTSO, ul Polna 2, 78-400 Warszawa, Poland Change

Shipping method

Standard Europe £9.50

< Return to information **Continue to payment**

Mineral Toothpaste - Activated Charcoal 60ml £6.90

Gift card or discount code Apply

Subtotal £6.90
Shipping £9.50

Total GBP **£16.40**

Georganics (n.d.). *Purchase Mineral Toothpaste - Activated Charcoal*. [online] uk.georganics.com. Available at:

https://uk.georganics.com/26106921011/checkouts/b83b319e714440f3bdfef32713d7f88b?previous_step=contact_information&step=shipping_method [Accessed 23 Mar. 2022].

ekodrogeria.pl/koszyk

Twój koszyk (1)

PRODUKT	CENA	IŁOŚĆ	WARTOŚĆ
 GEORGANICS Georganics, Mineralna pasta do zębów w słoiku Activated Charcoal, 60ml	37,99zł	1	37,99zł

ekodrogeria.pl/koszyk

Podsumowanie

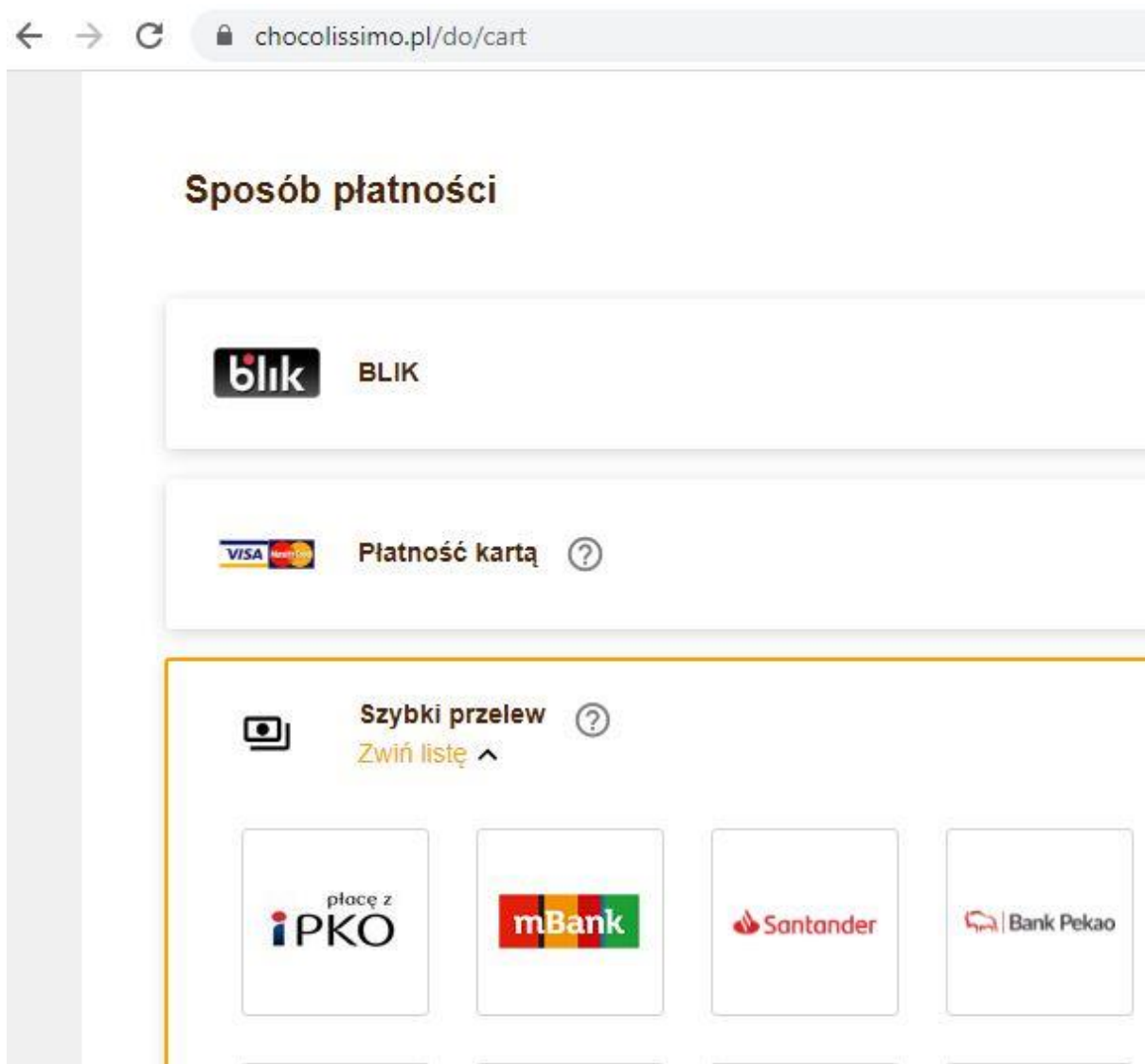
Produkty w koszyku	37,99zł
Dostawa	12,99zł

Razem: 50,98zł

DALEJ

Masz prawo do odstąpienia od umowy w terminie 14 dni.
Koszt zwrotu zamówienia ponosi kupujący. [Regulamin](#)

Ekodrogeria.pl (n.d.). Koszyk - wybierz formę dostawy i płatności | Sklep ekoDrogeria. [online] Ekodrogeria.pl. Available at: <https://ekodrogeria.pl/koszyk> [Accessed 23 Mar. 2022].



Chocolissimo.pl (n.d.). *Czekoladowe prezenty ☆ personalizowane czekolady*. [online] chocolissimo.pl. Available at: <https://chocolissimo.pl/do/cart> [Accessed 23 Mar. 2022].

