Chapter 5.9
The Impact of E-Commerce Customer Relationship Management in Business-to-Consumer E-Commerce

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ABSTRACT

The growth of business-to-consumer (B2C) e-commerce has gained a lot of attention among SMEs. Most B2C firms are turning their attention on how to retain new customers and are left in a situation to compete with larger firms. This paper aims to examine the impact of E-Commerce Customer Relationship Management (ECCRM) in a small business firm that engages in B2C e-commerce. Drawing upon the theories of customer relationship management, e-commerce, trust and loyalty, we develop an integrated framework of ECCRM model to illustrate the impact of the hard and soft factors that reflect the level of transactional and relational components of communication thereby impacting the customers shopping time lifecycle experiences. We develop a number of hypotheses to facilitate testing of the framework via an exploratory case study. We then discuss the findings of the integrated framework leading to theoretical and practical implications of this study and directions for future research.

INTRODUCTION AND MOTIVATION

Today's networked economy is information and knowledge intensive. It is characterized by evolving global marketplaces coupled with business processes and sophisticated work environments. Competitive economic capabilities and success factors are now more centered on knowledge than ever. In order to remain effectively integrated in the global economy, a country's priorities should include education and training to increase the skill sets of their workforce.

Higher education (post secondary education) has been attempting to provide training to an

ever increasing audience, to ensure that their graduates have the necessary knowledge and skills for the networked economy and generally prepare them for lifelong learning. To meet these challenges, educational institutions have concurrently aimed on expanding access, improving internal efficiency, and promoting the quality of teaching and learning (Haddad & Jurich, 2002). Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is used by many educational institutions to increase the quality of teaching and learning in a cost effective manner (Means and Olson, 1995). In this networked economy higher education graduates are expected to be versatile in a world of communications that includes email, Intranet, Internet, and the world-wide web, and be able to apply higher cognitive skills (analyzing, summarizing and synthesizing information) in order to engage in creative and critical thinking (Vogel and Klassen, 2001). It has also been argued that higher education should incorporate proven pedagogical strategies such as group work, cooperative learning, peer teaching, idea sharing and reflection (Ramsden, 1992 in Lockyer, et al., 2001). ICTs have been found useful in facilitating these strategies (Lockyer, et al., 2001) and their implementation has become an indispensable part of educational reform (Law, 2004 in Sabaliauskas and Pukelis, 2004).

The potential benefits of ICTs in education have been extensively researched. The benefits of integrating ICT in the teaching/learning process has been found to be layered, multifaceted, and comprehensive as shown in Table 1.

ICT integrated benefits of wider access, quality processes, facilitated delivery, and enriched learning and teaching experiences come with challenges. Such challenges are more accentuated for a low income country (LIC). There are major obstacles to ICT integration in schools and the wider community in LICs (IDRC, 1995) and there are economic, technological, and educational (contextual) factors that constrain the potential impact of ICT integrated education programs in LICs (Kozma & Wagner, 2005).

Cross sectional studies point out common challenges faced by LICs, however, there are specific factors that are different between countries. Thus there is a general need to identify and understand the specific contextual factors higher education faces in LICs. There is a dearth of academic research on the challenges faced by higher education when integrating ICT. In this study we attempt to recognize these challenges. In particular, we study the challenges faced by Addis Ababa University (AAU), a large public institution in Ethiopia, and bring the insights of context specific manifest difficulty as experienced there. The goals of this study as well as the questions that we asked to delve these inquisitions are presented in Exhibit A.

We have selected African continent as the backdrop of this study primarily because of the large concentrations of LICs. The selection of Ethiopia is congruent with our best ability to conduct detailed on-site research. We select AAU in Ethiopia because of the following reasons:

- AAU is the Flagship University of Ethiopia (ranked 32 in African Continent[1]), located at the capital city of Addis Ababa, and likely mirrors the concerns and intents of the LIC with minimum time delay.
- AAU is the most comprehensive university in Ethiopia, and likely offers the greatest heterogeneity in terms of opportunities of ICT integration and multiplicity of challenges.
- AAU is one of the forerunners among Ethiopian universities attempting ICT integration in their teaching-learning processes.
- AAU has 8 campuses and has the single largest enrolment among all the universities in Ethiopia. It thus represents the single largest group of providers in higher education, embracing the changes, and facing the myriad challenges of ICT integration in Ethiopia.

The rest of the paper is organized in the following manner: Section 2 lists and explains our basic assumptions of the study, and Section 3 provides