

E-commerce has quite a short history and initially its meaning was marginal. Nowadays, however, e-commerce is recognized as one of the most dynamic and important sectors of the economies of many countries, including Poland. The pace at which the Polish e-commerce has been developing is calculated to be approximately 15-20% per year. In 2014 the total e-commerce sales value reached the level of 26 billion zloty, and is expected to exceed 31 billion zloty in 2015. According to various sources, the number of online retailers in Poland is estimated to be at the level of 15-20 thousand. Currently, more than half of Polish citizens (54%) are buying goods or services online, which is 9 percentage points more than in 2014. According to the research carried out by Gemius, the main reason behind the fact that Poles buy online is the convenience of twenty-four-hour access to stores, lower prices, greater assortment selection than in brick-and-mortar stores and the ease of comparing different offers available on the market. Marketing aspects seem to be very significant. However, it must be stressed that logistics aspects such as a convenient form of delivery and return of the goods purchased are also taken into account by customers.

Transactions carried out at a distance not only provide benefits for customers but also require some effort from them. From the customer's perspective, lower prices and convenient ways of buying products have to be juxtaposed with the lack of immediate access to the product and the risk of receiving a product that does not meet the customer's expectations or even not receiving the product at all. From the seller's perspective, a quick and relatively cheap way of getting access to a wide group of customers is usually correlated with a need to face severe competition and a risk of the customers' disapproval of the offer. On the other hand, suppliers of on-line retailers getting access to new distribution channels have to accept lower margins. Each of the abovementioned market entities (customers, on-line retailers, suppliers) has to assess the benefits of its decisions and, by doing so, find the most suitable value for itself.

The existing body of literature on e-commerce is primarily devoted to explaining the essence of e-commerce, e-customer characteristics and e-marketing concepts. It provides a little insight into the area of value creation. Moreover, the authors focus on relationships between firms operating in the Internet environment to create a value. The theoretical considerations as well as the research carried out are very fragmented, which is manifested in analyzing value creation from an individual market participant's point of view. A reaction to this need is a concept of value networks that can be defined as spontaneous combinations of actors interacting to co-produce service offerings, exchange them, and co-create value. The value network includes not only companies but also customers.

The need, increasingly highlighted in the literature, for a holistic approach in investigating the problem of value creation is not reflected in the research area. Research on value networks is extremely rare. That is the main reason for the author of the project to deeply investigate this specific area of knowledge. As a result, a model of value network creation will be developed. In particular, two aspects of value creation will be taken into account, namely: logistics and marketing.

What has to be highlighted is that the model will be based on a multi-level approach to value-network creation in e-commerce. The main idea of the multi-level approach is based on an assumption that full understanding of a given problem requires viewing it from different perspectives (levels). Supporters of the multi-level approach argue that it allows a broader and multidimensional analysis of research problems compared to the limited capabilities of an analysis on a single level. The multi-level approach allows to analyze, for instance, a company from the point of view of: individual employers, departments, the entire company, sectors, etc. The concept of nesting can serve as strong support for the multi-level analysis. According to this concept, factors on higher levels influence the functioning of entities on lower levels.

The research conducted within the project will consist of three stages: literature studies, empirical research, modeling and analysis. The empirical research will consist of two parts. In the first part qualitative research in the form of the Focus Group Interview will be conducted. The second part is planned to include quantitative research by the Computer-Assisted Web Interview. The results of the empirical studies will be used in order to formulate a model reflecting the structure and mechanism of value network creation in e-commerce in terms of logistics and marketing at the level of individual members creating the network and at the level of the whole network.