Determinants of Sophistication of Exporters’ Corporate Websites in Transition Environment.

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Introduction

The role of the Internet in the internationalisation of businesses, with respect to export operations in particular, has attracted the interest of many researchers for quite some time now (Morgan-Thomas, Jones & Ji, 2008). Many researchers have emphasised the role the Internet can play in providing businesses with new models of business activity, diffusing knowledge and information, and the distribution of goods and services (Etemad and Wright, 1999; Freed and Derfler, 1999; Gilmore and Pine, 2000; Slater, 2000; OECD, 2001; Weilla and Vitale, 2001; Clarke, 2008). Much of the focus has been placed on the opportunities the Internet opens up with regard to the internationalisation of small and medium-sized enterprises, permitting them to carry out global operations via their websites (Poon and Jevons, 1997; Samiee, 1998; Hamill, 1999). The relatively low cost of international expansion was one of the issues most often discussed by scholars, as well as the easy access to the world wide web of all businesses regardless of their location or size, the decreased costs of marketing communication, the possibilities for benchmarking product and service prices internationally (which resulted in greater standardisation of prices and increased competitiveness in various market sectors), and shortening of the delay in information exchange (Loane et al 2007).

However, research on the application of the Internet in business operations lacked empirical data pertaining to the determinants influencing the use of Internet tools in the development of international operations. Most of the research available focused on the analysis of businesses owing their success almost exclusively to online presences, such as Amazon, Google or Futuremark, a producer of software benchmarking the graphics performance of PCs (Arenius, Sasi, Gabrielsson 2006). What was missing, was consolidated and comprehensive data relating to analysis of the determinants of implementation of Internet-based solutions by SMEs from different market sectors carrying out export operations (Loane et al. 2007).

There is very little in-depth research pertaining to the consequences of the historical coincidence of the commencement of the transformation process and the diffusion of ICT technology, including the Internet at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries, with the Internet being one of the crucial issues.

How did these changes influence business operations as a whole and the international operations in particular, of newly established companies in countries undergoing transformation from communism to a market economy system? Firstly, private businesses set up immediately after systemic change, in the same time began operating in a new age of computer and Internet domination. Contrary to their counterparts in highly developed countries, they had no deep-rooted business experiences s and habits of operating in the pre-Internet age, hence were much more open to the adoption of new technologies, and also for the purpose of expanding their business internationally. But they were too weak in terms of technological and organisational capabilities to compete with the new generation of the high-tech start-ups in developed countries, although there were a number of companies based in Central and Eastern Europe which saw spectacular successes domestically or regionally.

On the other hand, the ITC revolution, and the diffusion of the Internet technologies, played a crucial role in the development of the export operations of smaller firms originating from the Central and Eastern European region. Export, or more broadly speaking international operations, ceased to be a business option available only to large enterprises. Today, exporters with little experience and expertise can easily undertake export sales which are usually carried out incidentally, without the company having a clear-cut development strategy. In effect, we can observe similar trends in the field of transactions effected abroad to those observable on the domestic market: a vast majority of newly established business are geared towards running a low turnover, operating primarily in the small business sector. The occurrence of a considerable number of marginal exporters is also linked with the regional integration which results in a gradual disappearance of the differences in operations carried out on the domestic and international markets.

Empirical research conducted on the entire population of domestic exporters in the years 1993-2003 (Cieslik and Kaciak, 2010) confirmed the existence of marginal, micro-exporters .It turned out that the vast majority of exporters did not surpass a marginal turnover level. For the purpose

of the analysis the researchers assumed an indicative upper limit of export sales of PLN 80,000 (USD 23,000), which did not allow businesses to generate a revenue above the country’s average, even given the high profitability of export sales. Apparently, over 61% of 158,300 companies which carried out export operations more or less frequently in the years 1993-2003 did not exceed the defined ‘upper limit’ of annual export sales set at USD 23,000. In 2003, the last year before Poland’s accession to the European Union, 46% of all exporting businesses were marginal micro-exporters.

This paper presents a summary of a survey of Polish exporters’ websites, conducted as part of the “International Entrepreneurship in Poland” research project aimed at filling the gaps in both areas: use of Internet and the internationalization of SMEs. The objective of the survey was to determine the relationship between the characteristics of the export operations and the sophistication of websites of Polish exporters from different sectors with the largest input in Polish overall exports. At the same time, we analysed the firm characteristics which might affect the use of websites by the exporters from the “catching-up” economy.

Research hypotheses tested.

One of the most prominent theories discussed in literature concerning the dissemination and adoption of new innovations is the theory of technology diffusion originated from Schumpeter’s theory of economic development (Schumpeter, 1934). The theory assumes that technological innovations are diffused in the business environment but are not all adopted at the same time, nor to the same extent (Brown, 1981). The determinants of the pace and scope of adoption of a given innovation can be grouped into two types: technological determinants and organisational determinants (Ordanini, 2006). The technological determinants include parameters such as the complexity of the given technology, its cost, social acceptance, communication capacity, etc.

The organisational determinants generally include the size of the company, its age, experience in operating on the given market or use of the given technology, the commitment of the management, the technical skills of the management, etc. (Haugh and Robson, 2005). Other determinants identified in literature include the size of the market on which the company is present, and the costs of innovative change in the company (Ordanini, 2006).

Haugh and Robson (Haugh and Robson, 2005) drawing on the theory of diffusion, conducted a survey on a sample of 1,347 companies based in Scotland and the north of England. Their research results demonstrated that the speed of ICT diffusion is faster in larger than smaller companies; however no evidence was found to support the thesis that diffusion takes place quicker in younger companies than those with longer experience. The research also confirmed that ICT diffusion takes place faster in companies in the growth stage than companies in the stability or decline stages. The diffusion of ICT takes place faster in export businesses and businesses offering innovations previously unknown to either the company or the sector. The research evidenced that the basic ICT functions are implemented first, and the more complex functions are adopted once resource growth is marked (Haugh and Robson, 2005), which could support the thesis that the primary determinant of a slower pace of ICT innovation diffusion and a lower degree of technology sophistication among SMEs are more limited resources available to these businesses.

This paper presents five hypotheses put forth in connection with the diffusion theory (Brown, 1981), and is based on the results obtained on the ICT adoption level by Scottish and British companies (Haugh and Robson, 2005), where the first hypothesis assumes the existence of a positive relationship between how long the business has existed and the sophistication of its website. With respect to each hypothesis we analyse the potential impact of exporters’ operations in the course of economy transition.

**H1. There exists a positive relationship between a business’s age and the sophistication of its corporate website.**

A hypothesis on the relationship between a business’s age and the sophistication of adoption of Internet and computer technology has been put forth by Chen and Williams, based on an analysis of literature with the assumption that there exist certain premises to support the claim that there is a positive correlation between business’s age and the degree of adoption of new information technology (Chen and Williams, 1993). Hypothesis 1 narrows down the claim to a part of ITC, namely corporate websites. This hypothesis was formulated based on the results of research suggesting that an increase of business knowledge and skills is conducive to a growth of financial and knowledge recourses, which may potentially heighten the opportunities of a business to improve the functionality of their corporate websites (Haugh and Robson, 2005). Young businesses (with a short market existence) have less free resources that may be earmarked for investments, plus have less experience and weaker marketing skills. This results in their first investments being made in very basic Internet technology, and only with time can those businesses afford more extensive investments in Internet solutions (Haugh and Robson, 2005).

Another factor which may affect the pace of ICT adoption are export operations. The Internet is considered to be one of the core tools in the internationalisation of enterprises (Dou, Nielsen and Tan, 2002; Arenius, Sasi & Gabrielson, 2006). The conclusions of the research conducted by Bayo-Moriones et al. (Bayo-Moriones and Lera-Lopez, 2007) demonstrating that carrying on export operations increases the probability of application of more sophisticated functions of websites, plus the results of Haugh and Robson’s (Haugh and Robson, 2005) research

which evidence that export companies are quicker to adopt ICT innovations and that older companies use ICT in their activities more extensively, both provided the grounds for formulating another hypothesis assuming the existence of a positive relationship between the extent of export experience and the sophistication of exporters’ websites. In view of the research results demonstrating that there exists a positive correlation between the extent of experience and the pace of ICT adoption (Haugh and Robson, 2005) one might assume that the experience gained in the course of export operations influences the willingness of the company to take advantage of the profit generated on the application of Internet technology.

**H2. Businesses with longer export experience have more sophisticated corporate websites than businesses with a short history in exports.**

Apart from exports, another factor potentially influencing the pace of adoption and the application of the more sophisticated ICT may be the pace at which a given business develops its export operations.

According to the findings of Mitra (Mitra, 2005), the determinant affecting the differences between businesses with medium and high financial liquidity as regards Internet technology investments is not the degree of liquidity itself, but higher expectations for the future (hence the more aggressive profile of the planned development). The research conducted by Moon and Jain (Moon and Jain, 2007), demonstrates that the “born global” type companies which become international very quickly, to a great extent find the sophistication of their websites to be a crucial determinant of their competitive advantage over other businesses operating internationally. In connection with the foregoing, and in reference to the claims put forth by Haugh and Robson (Haugh and Robson, 2005) on the faster pace of ICT adoption by growing businesses as compared to stagnating or declining businesses, the hypothesis claiming that companies with a faster internationalisation pace have more sophisticated corporate websites has been formulated.

**H3. Businesses with a more aggressive international development profile (faster pace of internationalisation defined as the time span between the launch of activity and the commencement of export operations) have more sophisticated corporate websites than businesses with a slower pace of internationalisation.**

Another factor which may crucially affect the pace of innovation adoption is the turnover generated by the business. As per the findings referred to above, if we assume that the interpretation as to the main factor limiting the accessibility of the more sophisticated functions of new technologies is the amount of resources a given company has, it could be expected that a higher turnover ought to translate into companies having more sophisticated corporate websites. This is the reason why another research hypothesis on the existence of a relationship between company turnover and the sophistication of a corporate website was formulated.

**H4. Businesses with higher turnover are more willing to create more sophisticated corporate websites than businesses with lower turnover.**

Another factor which may affect the pace of ICT adoption might be the sophistication of a company’s products or services. Businesses offering more sophisticated products adopt ICT solutions faster (Haugh and Robson, 2005), which is why the hypothesis was tested that assumes companies from sectors which demonstrate a generally higher technological sophistication, in view of their higher technical competence and higher risk involved, will be more inclined to make their websites more functional (higher knowledge resources and a greater willingness to invest these resources).

**H5. Businesses from highly technological sectors have more sophisticated websites than businesses where little technology is used.**

All the above hypotheses were tested in research entailing questionnaires on the sophistication of websites.

### Research Method

The primary instrument applied in the research was a questionnaire developed for the purposes of the “International Entrepreneurship in Poland” project, surveying the sophistication of websites based on the questionnaires used in the research conducted by Dou et al. (Dou, Nielsen & Tan, 2002) and Winklhofer and collaborators (2007).

Dou and collaborators (2002) defined six variables describing the communicative aspect of Internet portals: 1) presence of instruments building company credibility (e.g. display of ISO certificates, customer recommendations), 2) domain type (own domain, international domain, etc), 3) product information, 4) language options, 5) optional personalisation, 6) contact details. They also identified six variables affecting the transactional aspect of websites: a) product information, b) price, c) distribution details (e.g. where the product can be purchased), d) purchase assistance (e.g. information about any applicable taxes, fees, transport, order streamlining solutions, etc), e) support (e.g. information on product technical parameters, manuals, assembly, etc), f) extranet. The coefficients were processed into a set of dichotomous variables (0/1, i.e. does not exist/exists) comprising the Communication Index – CI and the Transactional Index – IT. The maximum possible levels of both indices were 6 and the minimum levels – zero. In our survey a similar approach was applied, assuming the creation of a synthetic index of website sophistication. Some of the variables put forth by Dou et al. were also used.

The other instrument applied in the course of developing their questionnaire was the questionnaire used in the research of Winklhofer et al. (2007), which features a number of questions aimed at determining the existence on the website of several elements of sophistication in
Data selection

The research was based on two sets of data: data retrieved from exporters’ database developed for the purpose of the research project referred to as the FIDC-ACCA database, to be used in a larger research project, and the data collected via the questionnaire surveying the exporters’ websites. As the data from the database were collected in the years 1993-2003 and 2004-2006 and the website research was conducted in 2009, there existed a historical dependence between the two sets. The data from the exporters’ database identifying the parameters of businesses were treated as independent variables and the data retrieved from the website survey were treated as dependent variables.

Figure 1. Model of data dependency in the research of exporters’ websites (own study).

Given the set of data from the Exporters’ Database, hypotheses H1, H3, H4 and H5 could be tested through an analysis of data pertaining to sector sophistication (high technology – HT, medium technology – MT, low technology – LT), age (the date of foundation), years of experience in exporting (commencement date of export operations), internationalisation profile (the difference in time between the date of company foundation and the date of commencement of export operations – the shorter the time the faster the pace of internationalisation) and the data pertaining to website sophistication. Although there was a 3-year temporal difference between the data from the exporters’ database and the data from the website research, this had no impact on the quality of the research as the variables selected to test hypotheses H1, H2 and H3 could only grow over time (a company duration which was 3 years in 2006 would automatically increase to 6 years in 2009), but the growth took place pro rata in all of the listed variables. The variable used to test hypothesis H5 or the sophistication of the sector in which the business was operating in did not change (otherwise the business would have to be excluded from the research). Also, the winding up of a business would result in its exclusion from the research, hence this had no impact on the results obtained with respect to these variables.

In the case of the variable needed to test hypothesis H4, i.e. turnover, despite the limitation of there being no updated data on turnover – having assumed that the results will be verified additionally in supplementary research – the researchers decided to test hypothesis H4 anyway.

The survey was conducted on the corporate websites of companies from two market sectors identified with the Polish Classification of Business Activities (PKD) (2007) as: 29.5, 36.1. Table 1 presents the number of businesses from each of the sectors identified with the PKD number covered in the research.

Table 1. A list of the sectors covered in the research conducted via a questionnaire on the sophistication of corporate websites.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PKD</th>
<th>NAME</th>
<th>SOPHISTICATION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF BUSINESSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>Other special purpose</td>
<td>HT *</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>machinery</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>Furniture production sector</td>
<td>LT *</td>
<td>624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2,663 businesses</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


The choice of sectors was made on the basis of the share of these sectors in national exports. The researchers selected sectors which represented extreme levels of technology sophistication (LT, HT) and marked considerable shares in global exports. The share of domestic businesses, i.e. those without any foreign capital in the given sector, was another important parameter in the
selection of businesses for the research. To this end, the researchers determined the share of the domestic businesses in export operations of the given sector according to the PKD classification and then the share of the given sector in overall Polish export, which resulted in indirectly determining the share of domestic businesses in overall Polish exports. Table 2 presents both the basic data and the computation formula.

Table 2. The selection of sectors to be covered by the research on the basis of the share of domestic businesses in overall Polish exports (own study based on GUS [Central Statistical Office] data).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector identification number as per PKD 2007</th>
<th>Share of PKD in export % (A)</th>
<th>Share of domestic businesses in exports of the in Polish exports % (B)</th>
<th>Share of domestic businesses in Polish export % (A*B/100)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>36.1</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>37.09</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29.5</td>
<td>0.45</td>
<td>50.60</td>
<td>0.23</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research results

The research was conducted by two pollsters who surveyed a total of 843 website addresses. The data collected by the pollsters were pooled and served as the basis for computation of the Website Sophistication Index (WSI), separately for the Polish and English language versions (if applicable) of the corporate websites. These indices were then compared with the data on the examined businesses according to five categories: sector, turnover, exporting experience in years and internationalisation profile.

The research confirmed the existence of a difference between the sophistication of corporate websites from the high and low technology sectors: the examined sector HT (PKD 29.5) marked considerably higher sophistication indices of websites, both with respect to the Polish language versions and the foreign language versions than the low technology sector (PKD 36.1). Thus, hypothesis H5 was confirmed.

The hypothesis assuming that website sophistication depends on the amount of turnover could not be confirmed based on the data from the years 1993-2006 and the data from the 2009 website analysis. There is no statistically valid difference within the examined sectors in the sophistication of corporate websites depending on turnover in 2006. However, hypothesis H4 cannot definitely be rejected on the basis of the results of this research in view of the absence of data on turnover for the year 2009. These hypotheses require further research to be confirmed or rejected.

When analysing the data for both sectors at the same time, one can draw the conclusion that there exists a slight yet statistically valid correlation between the level of website sophistication index for Polish language websites, and the foreign language versions of the websites simultaneously. The longer businesses exist, the more sophisticated their websites become whether as regards their Polish and foreign language versions. Thus, hypothesis H1 was tentatively confirmed. The confirmation of hypothesis H1 may confirm the existence of a model of a gradual increase in sophistication of corporate websites depending on the growth of experience and resources, which would comply with the models of gradual development of the extension of website functionalities put forth by Kosiur (1997) and the models discussed by Loane et al. (2007).

When testing hypothesis H2, one can put forth a claim on the basis of the results obtained that there exists a slight yet statistically valid correlation between exporting history and the degree of its corporate website sophistication, with respect to both the Polish and foreign language versions. Businesses with longer experience in export operations have more sophisticated corporate websites, both in Polish and a foreign language, than businesses which have been running export activities for a shorter period. This confirms hypothesis H2.

When analysing the data for both sectors, one can draw the conclusion that a correlation exists also between the pace of internationalisation (measured as the time span between the date of business foundation and the date of commencement of export operations), and the degree of website sophistication (Polish and English language versions of the website). This would invalidate hypothesis H3, assuming the existence of a correlation between fast commencement of export operations and investments made to increase the functionality of corporate websites. It could instead suggest that the key factor affecting website sophistication is overall export experience, and not a selected exports profile (e.g. fast internationalisation). This could be deemed to confirm the resource-related model.

Table 3 presents the data which served as the basis for the conclusions confirming hypotheses H1 and H2 and rejecting hypothesis H3.

Table 3. Correlations between the website sophistication index for Polish and foreign versions of corporate websites and the age of the business, export experience and the pace of internationalisation.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Businesses’ parameters (based on data from exporters’ database 1993-2006)</th>
<th>Website sophistication index for the Polish</th>
<th>Website sophistication index for the foreign</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Website sophistication index for the Polish</td>
<td>Website sophistication index for the foreign</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Apart from a pooled analysis encompassing both sectors, separate analyses of each business were also conducted. When analysing each sector separately, one can identify a difference in the results justifying the adoption of two different models of website development in the given sectors. An analysis of data conducted only for businesses from the furniture production sector (PKD 36.1), demonstrates that there exists a slight but statistically valid correlation between the age of a business and the degree of website sophistication, with respect to the Polish and foreign language versions – similarly to the correlation between export experience and website sophistication. However, a correlation between the degree of website sophistication and the pace of internationalisation does not exist, which could mean that businesses from the furniture sector may to a certain extent apply the resource-based model of corporate website development, and the degree of sophistication is connected more with their experience in business and exports than with the pace at which the given business entered international markets. Table 4 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 4. Correlations between the website sophistication index for Polish and foreign versions of corporate websites and the age of the business, export experience and the pace of internationalisation with respect to businesses from the furniture production sector (PKD 36.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Website sophistication index for Polish language version of the website</th>
<th>Website sophistication index for foreign language version of the website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business’s age</td>
<td>0.157**</td>
<td>0.166**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export experience</td>
<td>0.184**</td>
<td>0.175**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace of internationalisation</td>
<td>0.034</td>
<td>0.056</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

An analysis of data conducted only for businesses from the ‘other special purpose machinery’ sector (PKD 29.5) demonstrates that there exists a slight, but statistically valid correlation solely between the export experience and the degree of website sophistication with respect to the Polish and foreign language versions. This could confirm the thesis on the application of another model of website development where investments in the development of Internet portals depend on export experience, but does not depend on the age of the business nor its pace of internationalisation. Table 5 presents the results of this analysis.

Table 5. Correlations between the website sophistication index for Polish and foreign versions of corporate websites and the age of the business, their exporting experience and the pace of internationalisation with respect to companies from the ‘other special purpose machinery’ sector (PKD 29.5)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parameters</th>
<th>Website sophistication index for Polish language version of the website</th>
<th>Website sophistication index for foreign language version of the website</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Business’s age</td>
<td>0.063</td>
<td>0.106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Export experience</td>
<td>0.149*</td>
<td>0.145*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pace of internationalisation</td>
<td>-0.019</td>
<td>0.038</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Other results and research proposals

The research demonstrated that there exist slight but statistically valid (p<0.01) dependencies between the sophistication of websites, both with respect to Polish language versions and foreign language versions, and the target export countries which are EU member states. The relationship gains statistical validity in reference to Polish websites with respect to the data of 2003, and in the case of English language versions of the corporate websites the index has been growing fast since 2004 to eventually become statistically valid (p<0.01). When interpreting these results one could make an assumption that businesses with more sophisticated corporate websites in Polish in 2009 were those businesses which had begun exporting to the
European Union member states even before Poland’s accession to the EU. As concerns foreign language versions of websites, this relationship is only observed after Poland’s accession to the EU in 2004. The relationship diminishes with respect to the number of target non-European countries (until 2005 – in 2006 its starts rising again), which might be interpreted to mean that businesses with more sophisticated websites in 2009 were those which temporarily moved their exports to European Union member states up until 2005. This would confirm the research results demonstrating that the Internet is a stimulant of the development of exports to highly developed countries, rather than countries with low economic development (Saban i Rau, 2005; Clarke, 2008).

This research proposal would be further confirmed with other research results demonstrating the existence of a distinctive difference in the technology sophistication of sectors in correlations between the degree of sophistication of Polish and English corporate websites, and the number of target export EU countries and non-EU countries. The difference referred to above is very distinctive with respect to the high technology sector of the ‘other special purpose machinery’ production sector (PKD 29.5), and considerably weaker in the case of the low technology sector of furniture production (PKD 36.1).

In the case of high technology companies, the relationship between the number of EU countries where these companies exported to in 2003, and the degree of sophistication of their corporate websites in 2009, is of no significant relevance with respect to Polish websites and with respect to foreign language versions of these websites which, although statistically valid, (p<0.05), is very weak (r=0.17). After 2004, the validity and the strength of the correlation between the number of EU countries which high technology businesses exported their goods to in 2006 and the degree of website sophistication with respect to the Polish and English language versions of these websites in 2009 drastically increases (up to r=0.33), where the validity level is high (p<0.01).

Conclusions

The research demonstrated that there exists quite a strong relationship between the sophistication of corporate websites and the age of the business, its exporting experience, and the sector in which the business operates. Therefore, the assumptions that the core factor restricting the full application by SMEs of the power of Internet solutions is business knowledge and the export knowledge necessary to create highly functional solutions, have indeed been confirmed. The next step that should be taken would be to confirm in particular the research results pertaining to the connection between the size of the business and the sophistication of its website. This would confirm that businesses follow the gradual, resource-related model of the development of Internet use in business operations. The implications of the discovery made in the course of this research are quite serious. Should further research demonstrate the existence of a real dependence between the extent of a business’s experience and the amount of resources and the degree of sophistication of the Internet solutions they employ, at least two conclusions would be drawn: firstly, the “Organization 2.0” revolution connected with the unleashing of social media potential would not limit the advantage of large businesses over small businesses. The Internet is not a tool which allows significant diminishing of the resource barrier that separates large and small businesses. Restrictions such as “hard” marketing, advertising and communications costs are replaced with different restrictions such as the necessity to adopt a complex technology and learn how to apply it in solving business problems and communicating with partners and customers. This also suggests serious implications for the policy of supporting SMEs in Poland. The Internet is a tool of crucial importance in assisting the development of export relations with highly developed countries. Policy pertaining to export promotion ought to be focused on abolishing business and technology knowledge barriers inhibiting SMEs from taking advantage of the potential offered by the Internet to a sufficiently large extent.

References


