Factors Contributing to Success in B2B E-Marketplaces

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INTRODUCTION

The globalization of economic activity and the emergence of the Internet have led to the appearance of a new model of business-to-business (B2B) known as the electronic B2B market or e-marketplace which facilitates the establishment of marketing relationships between buyers and sellers. When e-marketplaces first emerged, it was expected that they would improve the effectiveness and efficiency of inter-firm business, radically changing traditional procurement strategies, and restructuring the firms themselves, their supply chains, and the industries they belong to. After this phase of euphoria, however, which lasted into the second half of the year 2000, many international e-marketplaces have failed, and their effectiveness in general has been called into question. For these new e-marketplaces to be viable, clients have to perceive them as effective and efficient.

One of the first objectives in the present chapter will be to review the conceptual definition of e-marketplaces, to clarify what are the principal motivations for the participation of buyers and sellers, and to describe the different types of the e-marketplaces and their trading mechanisms. Other objective explores and identifies key underlying dimensions in service quality provided by an e-marketplace to its user. Finally, the main antecedents of customer loyalty are reviewed and identified, a model that provides insight into the relationships between these antecedents in the context of B2B e-marketplaces is proposed and those factors the users consider of most importance for their loyalty to be gained and maintained are identified.

UNDERSTANDING B2B E-MARKETPLACE: DEFINING AND CHARACTERIZING B2B E-MARKETPLACE

An e-marketplace is "a form of doing business that uses Internet technology to bring together multiple vendor and customer firms at a single Web site or platform (see Figure 1), that provides a variety of mechanisms enabling the parties to straightforwardly conduct their business transactions, that is led by a third party who is either neutral and unconnected to the exchange that is to take place, or one of the two parties involved (buyers or sellers), and that offers several value-added services that improve the relationships between buyers and sellers" (Janita & Miranda, 2013).

The e-marketplaces can be classified according to their transactional content as vertical or horizontal (Barrat & Rosdahl, 2002). Vertical e-marketplaces offer goods and services directly related to the production process of a specific industrial sector, for example *OneAero* (for the aviation industry) or *Chemical1.com* (for the chemical industry). Horizontal e-marketplaces offer indirect goods and services common to all industrial sectors, and necessary although not strategic to firms' activities in different sectors of

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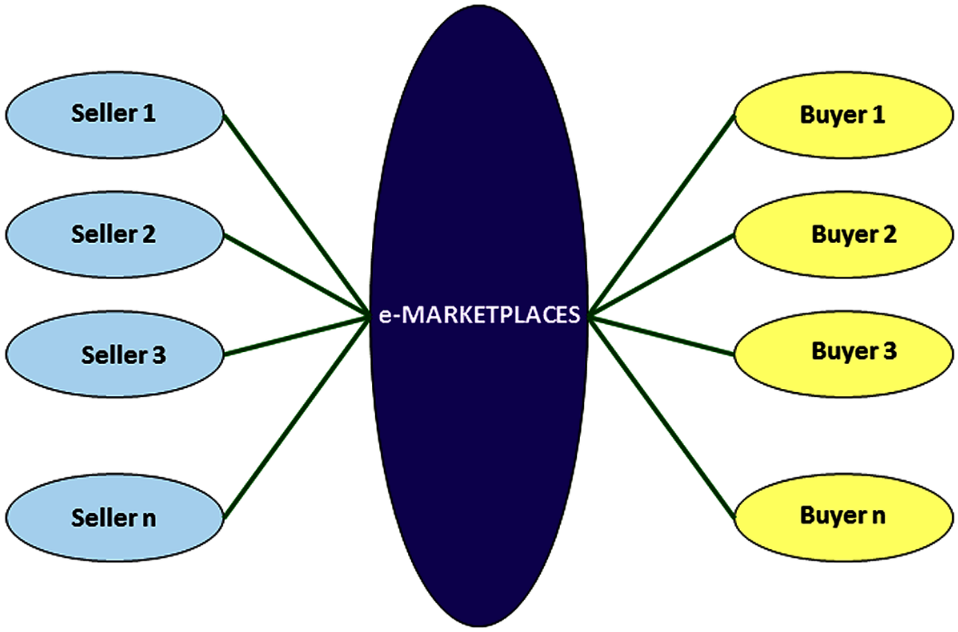
Figure 1. E-Marketplaces



industrial activity (Popovic, 2002), for example *Eventoplus.com* (it offers services and products related to events) or *Adquira* (it offers indirect goods and services such as: office supplies, cleaning and safety services, etc.).

A second classification of e-marketplaces is in terms of ownership (Kaplan & Sawhney, 2000; Ordanini & Pol, 2001). Partial or consortia e-marketplaces are those created and run by one of the participants (buyer or seller), for example *Obralia* (building and construction industry, created by buyers). Impartial e-markets are those created and run by a neutral third party uninvolved in the exchanges that take place, for example *Mundoacero* (acero industry).

One can distinguish two types of market mechanism—static or systematic, and dynamic or unsystematic (Kaplan & Sawhney, 2000). Static mechanisms are characterized by prices having been negotiated prior to the exchange, and dynamic mechanisms by prices being negotiated at the time of the exchange. The main static mechanisms are the catalogue aggregation model and the buyer aggregation model. Examples of catalogue aggregation model includes *PlasticNet.com* (plastic industry) and *EcoSpainB2B* (food and beverage industry). The main dynamic mechanisms are the call for quotations model, the auction model, and real-time exchanges model. An example of marketplaces than use the call for quotations is *Mercatrans* (for the transportation industry), the auction model is used by *Aquanima* (for the multiples sectors) and real-time exchages is used by *Agromaquinaria* (for the agriculture sector).

CONCEPTUALIZATION OF E-SERVICE QUALITY AND DIMENSIONS

One finds the first definition of e-service quality (e-SQ) in Zeithaml et al. (2000, p.11): "e-SQ can be defined as the extent to which a website facilitates efficient and effective shopping, purchasing, and delivery of products and services." Academic interest has been mainly directed to measuring the quality of e-services. Indeed, the quality of e-services has become a key factor in differentiating the services offered and in building a competitive advantage (Santos, 2003).

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