

THE PRESENT AND FUTURE PROSPECTS OF E-COMMERCE IN CYPRUS

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Abstract

The work describes the current situation and future potential of e-commerce in Cyprus from a consumer perspective. It analyses the current condition of the e-purchase rate conducted by Cypriots and how that rate can be developed in the future. Within this work the researchers have obtained characteristics of Cypriots who either purchase or do not purchase from the Internet by giving a petition on gender, occupation and age. The research was then taken one stage further by analysing the underlying reasons that prevented or enforced Cypriots to make an online purchase. Lastly, the researchers examined certain case studies that might enforce Cypriots to purchase from the Internet. This has helped to define the possible constraints that Cypriots might face when conducting an Internet purchase, as well as obtaining solutions as to how to overcome those constraints.

Research Highlights

Through the various data gathered for the purposes of this research, a number of results are evident. There is a remarkable sample (34%) in the Cypriot community who have accepted the Internet as a mode by which to facilitate their electronic purchases. Cypriots between the ages of 21-25 and 26-30 constitute the core of online buyers with males showing a greater confidence toward online purchasing. Next, the research indicates that the majority of e-buyers and non e-buyers have access to a PC and Internet connection. Further, research has highlighted five constraints that prevent a proportion (64%) of Cypriots from making purchases via the Internet. These are:

- 1) Non e-buyers (76%) are unfamiliar or not educated by the state of Cyprus concerning Internet and e-commerce procedures.
- 2) 76% of the sample indicates that non e-buyers do not know which e-companies are credit-worthy to make online Internet purchases from.
- 3) 83% of the sample have not yet decided to purchase from the Internet.
- 4) 75% of the sample do not trust the companies that operate in the cyber market, due to their fear of corruption and deception by electronic

companies.

- 5) 78% of the sample do not trust the security of the Internet, because of fear of attack on their personal funds and private information, in addition to the fear of a virus attack.

Finally, the results show that the e-buyer rate should increase to 55% as long as the interested parties make certain contributions in terms of transaction safety, i.e., public awareness of the company's existence, the creation of a company web site, education on matters of purchasing and transacting with local and foreign companies, and the creation of a legal system that will aim to protect consumer rights in cases of fraud and deception.

Introduction

E-commerce Framework

E-commerce (EC) is a new and upgraded version of traditional commerce where the processes of buying, selling and exchanging products or services are conducted through a connection to the Internet. Kalakota and Whinston (1997)¹ defined E-commerce from these perspectives: From a communications perspective, EC is the delivery of goods, services, information or payments over computer networks or by any other electronic means; From a business process perspective, EC is the application of technology toward the automation of business transactions and work flow; From a services perspective, EC is a tool that addresses the desire of firms, consumers and management to cut service costs while improving the quality of goods and increasing the speed of service delivery; From an online perspective, EC provides the capability of buying and selling products and information on the Internet and other online services, (King, David, Lee, Warkentin and Chung, 2002, p. 4).²

Background

Related Work and Research Reports of the Proposed Subject Area

This research has revealed four pieces of related work which are summarised below:

- The first one is a thesis dissertation that focuses on the business perspective of e-commerce. The purpose of the project is to investigate the importance of the e-commerce idea in the business community. In a further step, the work, discusses different global companies that have adopted e-commerce. Similarly, the work provides research findings targeted at various local companies. It aims to define whether Cypriot companies are aware of e-commerce and if they have applied it in their business activities, (Zubair, 2000).³

- The second one is a research report conducted on behalf of the Bank of Cyprus. The purpose of this report is to define whether it is beneficial for the Bank of Cyprus to offer an Internet Visa to users and new customers. For this purpose, this report tried to define the Cypriot user's activities and usage of Internet, as well as to distinguish the number of those who do or do not buy from the Internet, (Bank of Cyprus, 25 November 2001).⁴
- The third one is a research report conducted on behalf of the Ministry of Finance in Cyprus. The purpose of this report is to present a clear picture of the use of e-commerce by both local companies and buyers. However, to obtain results, the researchers used a different approach from their previous work. They concentrated on a combination of business and users' perspectives. That is, their focal point was to determine how well prepared Cypriot companies are to offer their products or services to the user. Also, the report defines the impact of the Cypriot user for both Internet and e-commerce. In addition, a helpful indicator used to check the relation of Internet and Cypriot user has been the number of connections introduced from 1999 to 2002. This information has helped to characterise the popularity and dynamics of the Cypriot user, (Ministry of Finance, 2002).⁵
- A research report conducted on behalf of the Cyprus Information Technology Company Association (CITCA) in cooperation with the Department of Statistics and Research of the Government of Cyprus, aims to obtain results for both business and consumers' perspectives. Concerning the business perspective the results describe the progress and development of local companies in the area of Information Technology. In contrast, to the consumers' perspective, the results indicate the Cypriot consumer relation and buying rate via the Internet, (Cyprus Information Technology Companies Association, 2002).⁶

Methodology

Purpose

The purpose of the research was:

- To investigate the level of acceptance of e-commerce in the Cypriot community.
- To find whether Cypriots buy or do not buy from the Internet. This is an effort to determine whether there are opportunities to invest in e-commerce.
- To examine the characteristics of Cypriots who either purchase or do not purchase from the Internet.
- To investigate what encourages or discourages Cypriots from purchasing electronically.

Research Approach

The information presented here is derived mainly through research conducted during the period December 2002 to June 2003. In order to accomplish the purpose of the research, the researchers used the following methods:

Verification of Target population and Sampling units.

The target population is divided into two sampling units:

- Students from a Tertiary Education Institution
- Employees/Workers from diverse work fields

The selected sampling units have been split into various categories:

Tertiary Education Institute

- i) Undergraduates
- ii) Post-graduates (MBA)

Employees/Workers

- i) Private Sector
- ii) Public Sector
- iii) Semi-public Sector
- iv) Entrepreneur Sector

The researchers have selected the above sampling units, for the following reasons:

Youth: Based on the reviews from past-related literatures, the majority of the population utilising the Internet are youths whose ages range from 17-41. Thus, the researchers decided that it would be more appropriate to focus on young respondents who would facilitate the extraction of meaningful, interesting and specific results.

Convenience: The decision was taken to involve the two proposed sampling units (tertiary students and employees) in the research because they were considered the most conveniently accessible, and available to facilitate this research. The familiarity with both current tertiary school and the companies proposed enabled the researchers to complete their study easily and within a short period of time.

Representative: The researchers have centralised their research on the above sampling units, which are communal to all people from diverse geographical areas. The Result forms a representative target for the population of Cyprus as a whole.

Survey Questionnaire

The researchers designed a questionnaire and distributed it to 216 respondents. The target population was divided into two sampling units, where 108

questionnaires were distributed to college students and another 108 questionnaires were distributed to employees with diverse work backgrounds.

Methods Used to Execute the Sampling Units

The method chosen to select respondents to complete the questionnaires was the "Simple Random Sample without replacement, in which every individual had the same chances of being selected as everyone else. The selection of a particular individual did not affect the chances of any person who had been selected", (Berenson and Levine, 1998, p. 14).⁷

Results

Based on the research findings, 34% of the total sample (216) made online purchases, whereas 66% did not, meaning that one in three people actually buy from the Internet.

Table 1: Do Cypriots purchase from the Internet: Vs Sample (216)?

Response	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	73	34%
No	143	66%
Total	216	100%

Cypriots Who Do Not Purchase from the Internet (Non E-buyers)

This group of people accounts for two-thirds of the total sample. They appear in both genders, although it is the females who make the difference, since 70 out of 90 do not make purchases compared to males of 73 out of 126.

Table 2: Do Cypriots purchase from the Internet Vs Gender?

Sex Type	Yes	No	Total
Males	53	73	126
Females	20	70	90

Non e-buyers do not gather in one particular age group since we can locate them in all ages ranging from 17–51+. The highlighted areas fall between the ages 21–25 when most do not buy from the internet. Translated into real numbers, this totals 67 out of 216 respondents who did not make an online purchase in this particular age group.

Table 3: Do Cypriots purchase from the Internet Vs Age?

Age	Yes	No
17 – 20	4	23
21 – 25	33	67
26 – 30	23	28
31 – 40	11	17
	2	7
51+	0	1
Total	73	143

In the societal area, non e-buyers can be located in both target samples (educational and business sector). It can be observed that a remarkable number of students hesitate to make online purchases, compared to employees.

Table 4: Do Cypriots purchase from the Internet:
Employees Vs College Students?

Sample	Yes	No	Total
Employees	42	66	108
College students	31	77	108

Further, a substantial number of non e-buyers are equipped with a PC and have access to the Internet. As can be seen in Table 5, approximately 85% of non e-buyers have access to a PC and Internet. Cost is not a main barrier in obtaining a computer and Internet connection. The main reason cited for not owning a PC and Internet connection is “no need to use it”.

Table 5: Do Cypriots have access to a PC and connection to the Internet:
Those who purchase Vs Those who do not purchase from the Internet?

Sample	Yes	No	Total
Those who Purchase	74	0	74
Those who do not Purchase	120	22	142

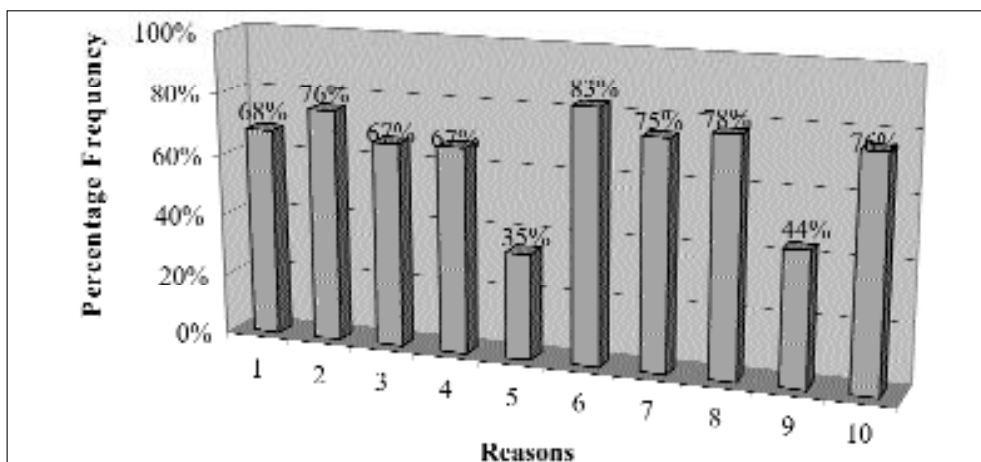
Moreover, we can observe that non e-buyer knowledge can range between varying standards. That is, there are citizens who are well aware of e-commerce, but they still do not purchase.

Table 6: What is the level of knowledge amongst Cypriots about Electronic Purchasing: Those who purchase Vs Those who do not purchase from the Internet?

Level of Knowledge	e-Buyers	Non e-buyers
Very Good	37	14
Good	26	37
Average	7	32
Little	2	37
None	0	24
Total	72	144

In the main focus of the paper, which is to define possible reasons or obstacles that might prevent non e-buyers from purchasing from the Internet, this research discovered ten factors that constitute the vital reasons which prevent Cypriots from purchasing via the Internet:

Figure 1: What are the reasons that prevent Cypriots from purchasing via the Internet?



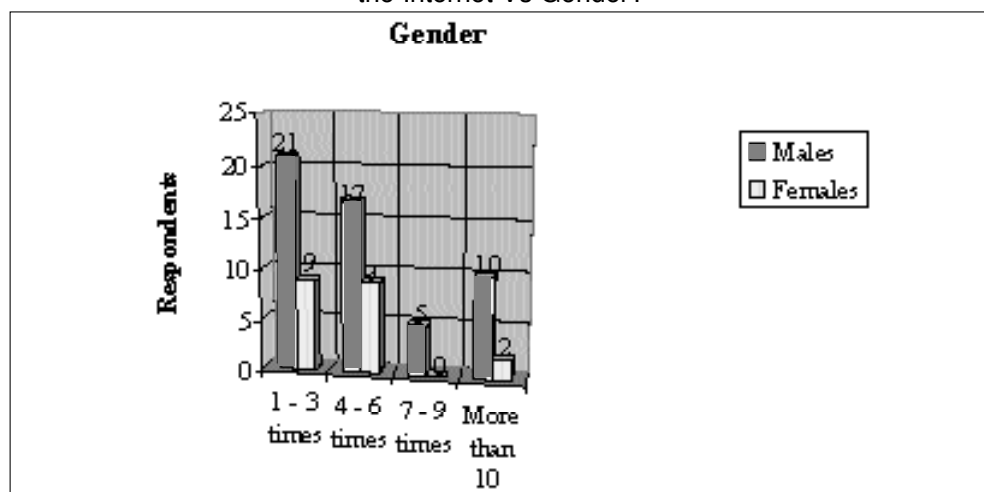
- 1) Inadequate influence from Banks to convince Cypriot clients about the security of their personal information and funds. This shows that banks are failing to convince their customers adequately with regard to the security of their personal funds and information. Cypriots do not, therefore, feel confident to make online transactions.

- 2) Lack of information and education from the state of Cyprus. This illustrates that Cypriots have neither been educated by the public schools about e-commerce, nor have they been informed by the public authorities about the methods of conducting an electronic transaction and how to protect themselves from cyber crime.
- 3) Lack of e-commerce education within Tertiary schools. Students are thus reluctant to make an electronic transaction, since the tertiary schools have not educated them in this area.
- 4) Non-attractive electronic advertisements. Electronic advertising does not seem to convey attractive and convincing enough images to entice Cypriots to make online purchases.
- 5) Lack of Financial resources which depict the Cypriots as not having the financial capability to purchase from the Internet.
- 6) Cypriots have not reached a clear decision as to whether they might purchase. It is assumed that this is an effect of the impact of the various reasons outlined in Figure 1.
- 7) Cypriots do not trust the companies that operate in the cyber market. The implication here is that Cypriots hesitate to make e-purchases due to their fear of being corrupted and deceived by electronic companies (Christoforou, 2003).⁸
- 8) Cypriots do not trust the security of the Internet. The reasons why Cypriots hesitate to enter into the cyber world are fears of attack on their personal funds and private information, and virus attacks.
- 9) Cypriots are discouraged to purchase online, because they have been affected negatively by rumours held by other users who have encountered bad experiences with e-transactions (Christoforou, 2003).
- 10) Lack of awareness of credible e-companies. This statement signifies that Cypriots do not know which e-companies are credit-worthy to undertake online purchases. Thus, they prefer not to take risks and make their purchases from local stores in the traditional way.

Cypriots Who Purchase from the Internet (E-buyers)

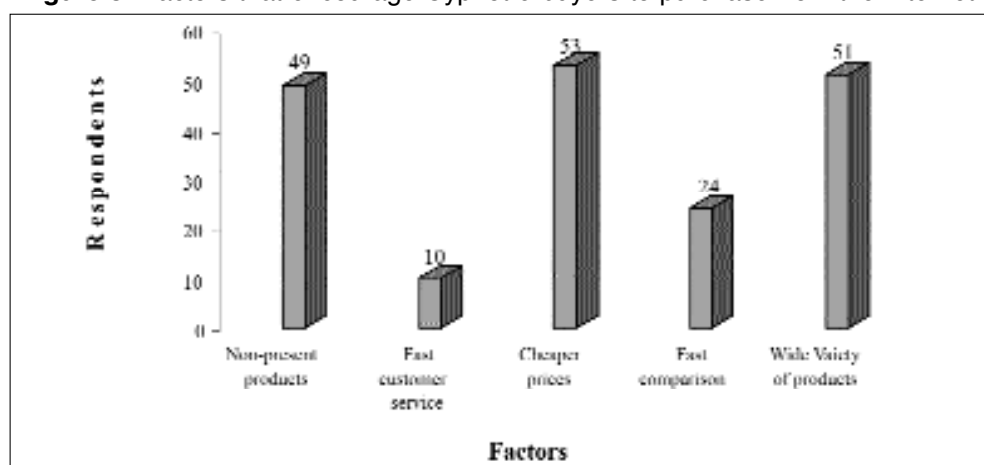
This group accounts for one-third of the sample. The majority are males (53:73) and constitute the bulk of users who make online purchases, compared to females (see Table 2). Similarly, we can observe from Figure 2 that males undertake more e-purchases within a year, compared to females. Next, as indicated in Table 3, the majority of e-buyers who purchase from the Internet are between 17-50 years old, with young people within the 21-25 and 26-30 age groups being the potential e-buyers. All e-buyers have access to a PC and Internet connection (Table 5). E-buyers are well informed about e-commerce (Table 6), meaning that they know where to buy from and how to take precautions against fraud. On-line purchases are made by both target samples (employees and students), with the number of employees surpassing students in terms of making purchases (see Table 4).

Figure 2: How often Cypriot e-buyers purchase annually from the Internet Vs Gender?



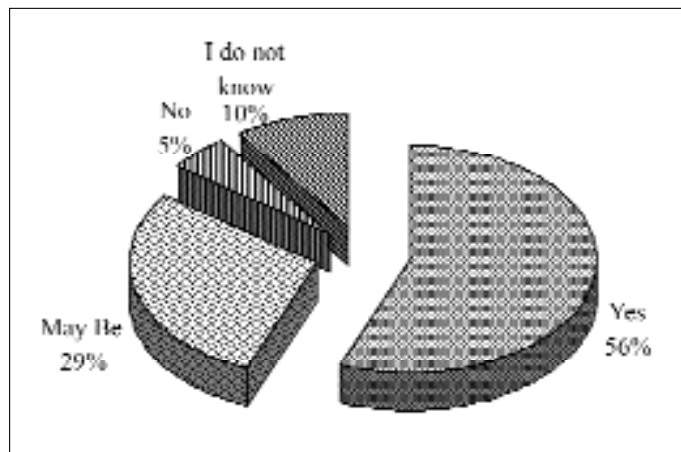
Furthermore, the survey found that Cypriots are encouraged to purchase mostly because: they discover products that are not available for sale in the Cypriot market; the prices of products are less expensive via the Internet compared to the local stores in Cyprus; they find a wider variety of products to choose from. In the next category covering 'low response rate', Cypriots are encouraged to purchase from the Internet because: Products or services can be acquired faster compared to the traditional way; the opportunity is available to compare a product's strengths, prices and specifications instantly.

Figure 3: Factors that encourage Cypriot e-buyers to purchase from the Internet.



The researchers continued to examine the e-buyer's future performance. At this juncture the researchers wanted to assess the actual percentage rate of Cypriot e-buyers who might continue to make purchases from the Internet. This information would assist them to compute the future potential of e-commerce in Cyprus. Thus, the percentage rate of e-buyers who may continue to purchase online is precisely 56%, whereas 5% state that they may cease to make further online purchases. Following on, there are 29% who may purchase from the Internet and 10% who are still undecided.

Figure 4: Will Cypriot e-buyers continue at the same rate to purchase from the Internet?



Response	Respondents	Percentage
Yes	41	56%
May be	21	29%
No	4	5%
I do not know	7	10%
Total	73	100%

Based on the above results, it seems that there is a large proportion who will continue to purchase from the Internet, whereas one-third could purchase from the Internet.

Looking at the above results, the researchers now take their investigation one step further and aim to project the electronic purchasing rate in Cyprus. In other

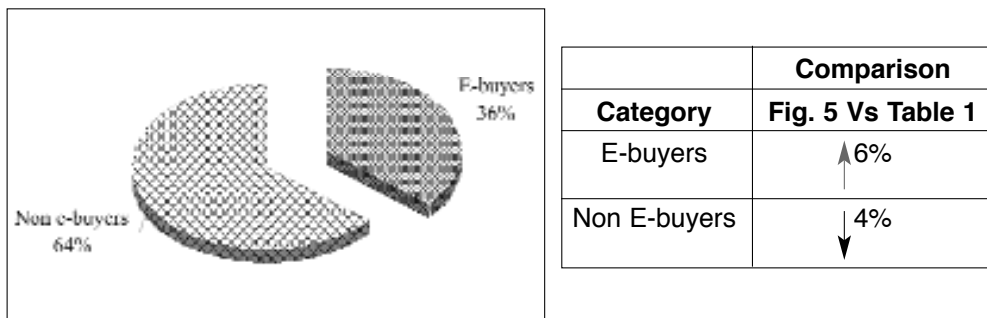
words, based on the current findings, the researchers will project whether there might be an increase or decrease in electronic purchasing in the future. In their projections, the researchers are not taking into consideration the possible external or internal factors which might affect the decision of the Cypriots. They assume that current circumstances prevail in both the local and foreign area. This indicates that the e-buyer's opinion should not change, rather it should remain constant based on the research results, without bearing in mind socio-economic fluctuations i.e., unemployment, war impacts, inflation and pc viruses. This is because it would be difficult to speculate precisely on the future prospects of e-commerce activity in Cyprus. Further, the researchers have taken into account only the positive response from Figure 4. This information outlines the exact percentage of Cypriots who would continue to purchase from the Internet. The reason for this is that it gives accurate and specific outcomes concerning the potentials of e-purchasing in Cyprus. Lastly, the researchers have calculated cross-percentage tabulation between the positive response of Figure 4 and four case comments held by Cypriots who do not purchase from the Internet:

Case 1

Case 1, projects the future e-purchasing rate in the Cypriot community, by taking into consideration the number of Cypriot non e-buyers who may purchase from the Internet, if they accept the offer to purchase products and services from the store's web site. The projection also calculates the Cypriot e-buyers who will continue to purchase from the Internet in the future. As a result, the outcome gives the total number of Cypriots who may, or may not, purchase, from the Internet.

Therefore, research has discovered that 36% may purchase, whereas 64% may not purchase from the Internet.

Figure 5: The condition of the purchasing rate, if Cypriots accept the offer to purchase products and services from the store's Web Site. It also calculates the e-buyers who may continue to purchase from the Internet.

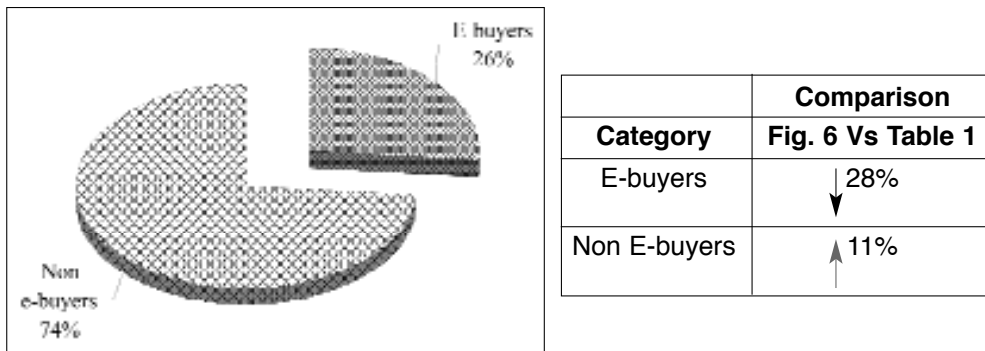


Further, if we compare the findings of Figure 5 with the findings of Table 1, we can observe that there may be an increase of 6% on e-buyers, whereas non e-buyers may decrease by 4%. The increase regarding the e-buyer's rate does not seem encouraging enough for local companies to launch an e-business operation. This is because there are two-thirds of the sample that might not change their minds and decide to buy from the Internet.

Case 2

Case 2, projects the future e-purchasing rate in the Cypriot community, by taking into consideration the number of Cypriot non e-buyers who may purchase from the Internet, if they change their minds and decide to make online purchases. Also, the projection includes the Cypriot e-buyers who will continue to purchase from the Internet in the future. As a result, the outcome gives the total number of Cypriots who may purchase, or may not purchase, from the Internet. This research, therefore, has determined that 26% may purchase, whereas 74% may not purchase from the Internet.

Figure 6: The condition of the e-purchase rate in Cyprus, if non e-buyers purchase from the Internet in the Future. It also calculates the e-buyers who will continue to purchase from the Internet.



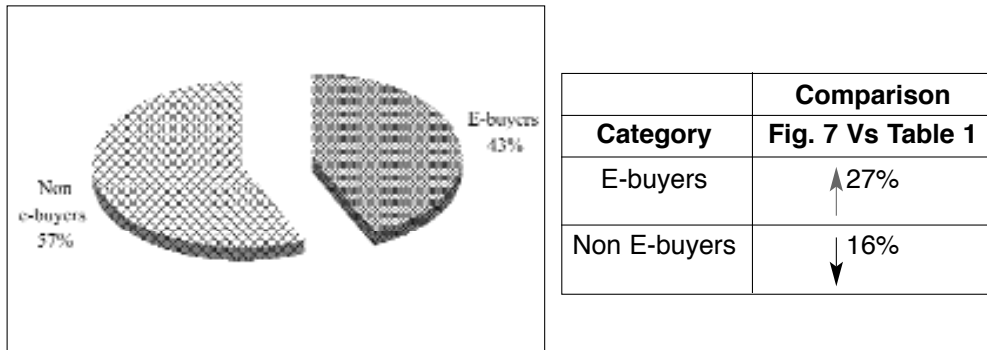
Further, if we compare the findings of Figure 6 with the findings of Table 1, we can observe that there may be a decrease of 28% on e-buyers, whereas non e-buyers may increase by 11%. This means that in the near future either a proportion of the e-buyer rate may cease to purchase from the internet, or the non e-buyers might change their minds and decide to purchase from the Internet.

Case 3

Case 3, projects the future e-purchasing rate in the Cypriot community, by taking into consideration the number of Cypriot non e-buyers who might purchase from the

Internet, if they choose to accept the offer held by companies to purchase those products whose prices are lower by 10-20%. Also, the projection counts the Cypriot e-buyers who will continue to purchase from the Internet in the future. As a result, the outcome gives the total number of Cypriots who may purchase, or may not, purchase from the Internet.

Figure 7: The condition of the e-purchase rate in Cyprus, if Cypriots accept the offer to purchase those products whose prices are lower by 10-20%. It also calculates the e-buyers who might continue to purchase from the Internet.

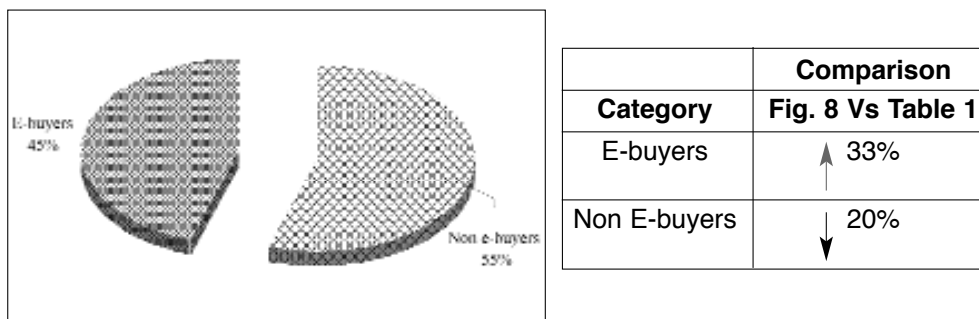


This research has, therefore, ascertained that 43% may purchase, whereas 57% may not purchase from the Internet. Further, if we compare the findings of Figure 7 with the findings of Table 1, we can observe that there may be an increase of 27% on e-buyers, whereas the non e-buyers may decrease by 16%. This seems to be an encouraging sign for companies to start lowering the prices on their products, since by doing so they might increase the possibility of attracting more e-customers, in addition to increasing their profit margins. Arguably, products or services that are in an antagonistic environment and highly priced might perform better if companies reduced their prices and endeavoured to attract an increase in their number of e-customers.

Case 4

Case 4, projects the future e-purchasing rate in the Cypriot community, by taking into consideration the number of Cypriot non e-buyers who may purchase from the Internet when the reasons mentioned in Figure 1, are overcome. The projection also counts the Cypriot e-buyers who will continue to purchase from the Internet in the future. As a result, the outcome gives the total number of Cypriots who may purchase, or may not purchase, from the Internet.

Figure 8: The condition of the e-purchase rate in Cyprus, if the obstacles mentioned in Figure 1 are overcome. It also calculates the e-buyers who may continue to purchase from the Internet.



The research has, therefore, uncovered that 45% may purchase, whereas 55% may not purchase from the Internet. This implies that almost one in every two people may purchase from the Internet as Case 4 is applied. Further, if we compare the findings of Figure 8 with the findings of Table 1, we can observe that there might be an increase of 33% on e-buyers, whereas the non e-buyers might decrease by 20%.

The outcome is that interested parties (state of Cyprus, companies, tertiary schools), have a significant role to play in supporting, facilitating and motivating the Cypriots to purchase from the Internet. This is an effort to elevate e-commerce activity in the Cypriot community together with raising awareness and an attractiveness of local companies in the cyber global arena.

Discussion

Based on current findings the researchers conclude that there is a remarkable 34% sample, (Table 1) in the Cypriot community who have accepted Internet as a mode by which to make their electronic purchases. This equates to one-third, i.e., one in every three people purchase from the Internet. This is both a significant and an encouraging sign for businesses, which could profit by such investment, to consider introducing electronic transactions into the Cypriot community. Similarly, there is evidence from this research that e-commerce activity in Cyprus is increasing annually. The researchers have, in fact, made a comparison between the current research findings and two related research reports, such as:

- “Bank of Cyprus research which was conducted in year 2001”⁹ indicated that 18% of the population made e-purchases. This equates to one-fifth, which

denotes that one in every five people made purchases from the Internet.

- "CITCA (Cyprus Information Technology Company Association) research which was conducted in year 2002"¹⁰ indicated that 12% of the population made e-purchases. This equates to one-tenth, which shows that one in every ten people made purchases from the Internet.

Thus, if we compare the 34% (Table 1) with the above two findings, we conclude that year-by-year, there is an increase in the number of Cypriot e-buyers.

Furthermore, the research outcome enabled the researchers to conclude that younger people dominate electronic purchases in Cyprus and that Cypriots between the ages of 21-25 and 26-30 constitute the core online buyers (see Table 3). Within this outcome, employees account for the largest portion of those who make purchases (see Table 4). Similarly, highlighted e-buyers are males (see Table 2) who display a greater confidence in online purchasing from both college students and employees' target areas. In contrast, females indicate a negative to moderate level of acceptance for e-purchase. The researchers assume that this is due to a lack of interest to utilise the Internet as a mode of purchasing. This can be confirmed in Figure 2 where it shows that males purchase more frequently than females within a year. Specifically on all frequency levels, we can observe that males buy more often than females within a year. Next, the research indicates that the majority of e-buyers and non e-buyers have access to a PC and Internet connection, which means that the Cypriot community has the fundamental tools in order for e-commerce to grow and develop.

The analysis subsequently highlighted ten good reasons why Cypriot non e-buyers do not purchase from the Internet. Among these ten oppositions there are five reasons that stand out prominently from the others. Of primary importance, the majority of Cypriot non e-buyers (76%) are unfamiliar or not educated by the state of Cyprus concerning Internet and e-commerce procedures. This drives Cypriots to distrust e-companies and the Internet (see Figure 1), due to fear of the unknown, deception and corruption of personal information and private funds. As a consequence this affects the Cypriots' decision as to whether they might purchase from the Internet, since 83% of the sample are still indecisive about making electronic transactions (see Figure 1). On the other hand, research indicates that local companies have done little to motivate Cypriots to purchase electronically. This is borne out by 76% of the sample who indicate that they do not know which e-companies are credit-worthy to make online purchases from. The researchers assume that local companies have not taken seriously the importance of e-business. There are opportunities for high returns on investment using e-business transactions because there are no financial obstacles preventing Internet purchasing as 65% (see Figure 1) of the sample have indicated.

From the opposing view, Cypriot e-buyers prefer to shop online because the cyber-market offers the opportunity for them to seek out products which are unavailable in Cyprus as well as being more competitively priced to those in local stores. The cyber-market is also preferred because it offers a wider range of products to the Cypriot community, allowing a much greater freedom of choice (see Figure 3).

In addition, with regard to the future condition of e-commerce in Cyprus, it can be pointed out that the interested parties: the state of Cyprus, the tertiary educational schools, and the companies, do have a vital role to play in developing an electronic market. As shown in Case 2, the rate of e-purchases may decrease if no involvement is signified by the interested parties. Based on the findings in Case 2, we may actually experience a decrease of 28%. This means that a substantial number of Cypriots who purchase at the present time may cease to make e-purchases and this could drive the future of e-commerce towards its demise. In contrast, as interested parties imply their attention to invest in this new era of commerce, we can expect growth of e-commerce activity in Cyprus. This can be confirmed in Figure 1, points 1, 2, 3 and 4, where Cypriots expressed how inactive the interested parties are to improve e-commerce activity in Cyprus.

Subsequently, in Cases 1, 3 and 4, we have observed that as companies use different approaches to embrace Cypriots, we can experience positive correspondence. As a consequence, companies must think about what customers want or need and how it can be provided. This can be verified from Figure 1, where 76% (point 10) do not purchase, because they are unaware of which e-companies are credit-worthy to purchase from.

Another important observation is that Cypriots it seems will actually accept the Internet as a new way to shop. This is substantiated in Cases 3 and 4, where the increase in e-buyers is strong compared to Table 1. This indicates that as Cypriots are given motives such as security, e-company awareness, information and education from the interested parties (state of Cyprus and tertiary schools) plus the reassurance of reliable credibility, the future of e-commerce in Cyprus should produce a healthy growth.

Recommendations

The researchers have made comments below including recommendations in areas where there is a need for further research and immediate implementation to support the development of e-commerce in Cyprus:

State of Cyprus

The State of Cyprus must primarily implement the following aspects:

- To support those companies interested in developing e-commerce operation. The support could be in the form of education in subjects of e-commerce operation and regulation, as well as providing finance to boost companies to start an e-business operation.
- To create trustee standards for companies who wish to establish an e-business operation. This could encourage the customers to trust local companies for e-purchase transactions, and ensure that e-transactions are legally binding.
- To employ teachers with background knowledge and experience in e-commerce, in order to help students to understand and use e-commerce in their lives.
- To create a specialised governmental department that could deal with e-commerce developments. This could serve as a means to control, inform and educate citizens with the support of other governmental ministries and the EU.
- To create a modern and technologically advanced infrastructure in the Cypriot market, to form a link between Europe and the Middle East in terms of e-purchasing.
- To create a specialised court that could handle cases exclusively for cyber crime. The aim of the court would be to speed the process of customer complaints or compensate anyone deceived by a fraudulent e-company.

Local Companies

The local factor has not, however, been investigated. Notwithstanding this, and in order to give a clear picture of the possible deficiencies that prevail in the private sector, the researchers recommend the following points based on customers' opinions:

- Develop a web presence in the cyber market. The research outcome in the conclusion section illustrates that return on investment will be profitable.
- Become involved in the 'e-minder project'.¹¹ This project provides support to companies in terms of education and training to help implement e-commerce activities.
- Create awareness of the company's name in the local and global area through the media. Similarly, establish the EEA trustee seal, thus entrusting the confidence of customers to transact with companies.
- Concentrate on marketing tactics to provide customer satisfaction in terms of price, quality and credibility.

Institutions of Higher Learning

Based on the findings in Figure 1, the researchers believe that tertiary schools have a core role to play in preparing candidates to trade on the Internet, both for personal and business purposes. Therefore, the following points are recommended:

- Introduce IT and E-commerce courses, to facilitate candidates' awareness and knowledge of e-commerce applications.

- Employ lecturers with background knowledge and experience in e-commerce, so as to provide accurate, relevant and specific knowledge concerning the area of e-commerce.
- Offer seminars to students by researchers specialised in the field of e-commerce, to provide the additional education and practical skills required for today's e-commerce market.

Notes

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