

Knowledge Management in the Process of Trade Internationalization

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Annotation. Knowledge management in trade internationalization process is important. Different organizational skills and knowledge are necessary subject to particularity of a foreign country; their transfer among different foreign markets is ambiguous. Studies of scientific literature showed that knowledge management in trade internationalization process is the field not analyzed theoretically enough. In pointing out originality of theoretical survey and complexity of its analysis, studies of scientific literature elaborated in several directions. In trade internationalization process knowledge management, on the one hand, refers to strategic management (relating it to the conception of knowledge production and business intelligent), and, on the other hand, to approaches of international trade and economics (by stressing conditions for trade internationalization). Although these problematic fields and scientific arguments are often devalued by theoreticians supporting one or another approach, both approaches are important in revealing peculiarities of knowledge management in trade internationalization process.

Key words: trade internationalization, knowledge management, internationalization process, business intelligent.

INTRODUCTION

At present amalgamation of particular foreign markets that increases internationalization of different sectors of business, which fundamentally influences environment of the environment of retailing enterprises' activity. Large retailing enterprises have started prevailing in most channels of distribution of home markets in European countries. Retailing internationalization, the pace of which has particularly grown recently, is defined as amalgamation of particular trade channels and economic development globally. It manifests when retailing enterprises pursue their activity in two or more foreign countries. In other words, an international retailing enterprise distinguishes in the activity related to sales of goods in shops or to using other distribution forms in order to meet needs of customers in more than one country.

Scientific literature discloses an increased interest in the process of retailing internationalization, as well as variety of the aspects of this phenomenon being surveyed. Aspects of identification of an international activity are thoroughly analyzed; influence of the factors of macro and micro environment in foreign countries upon retailing enterprises that expand their activity is revealed, as well as the experience of particular companies in international markets is analyzed. However scientific works highlight the problem of the definition of retailing internationalization. In their works Brown and Burt (1992), Dawson (1993; 1994; 1998), Pellegrini

(1994), Akehurst and Alexander (1995; 1997), Gilbert (1999) and others emphasize the indeterminacy of the term of retailing internationalization. Thus a scientific problem – how in postmodern dynamic environment under the influence of different factors to present the conceptual approach to retailing internationalization by revealing conditions of trade activity internationalization and what role of knowledge management is in trade internationalization process relating it to business intelligent – emerges.

TRADE INTERNATIONALISATION FACTORS INFLUENCING IT

The term „retailing internationalization“ can seem to be clear enough, but it hides certain confusion. The following questions rise: Does internationalization involve only operations of a retailing organization or is provision in foreign markets also attributed to international activity? Should a company having established one shop in the market of a neighboring country be differentiated as distinct from a company having global strategies and functioning in different markets? Does a company possessing a lot of brands overpass the same process as a retailer functioning in foreign markets only with one brand?

Rudolph, Busch (2000) in emphasising features of internationalization process predicate that retailing differs from other business branches because:

- in some fields of retailing adjustment to expectations of customers changes subject to a region (e.g. sales of grocery when the assortment has to be adjusted to the needs of demand of local customers and several conceptions of sales are applied);
- building of large retailing enterprises requires large investments for premises, personnel and goods;
- expenses for storage and logistic operations are high due to wide and deep assortment of goods. In their turn, high costs condition greater complexity of goods amount;
- provision with goods and accounting for them is organized in a centralized way, whereas goods are sold in different countries on different currencies, thus finance planning is important;
- cooperation of employees is applied due to cultural differences. This contributes to development of managerial skills for managers of both shops and supermarkets.

The most important role of retailing when selling goods and providing services for an customer as well as the situation of retailing institutions as the last chain of goods distribution channel gives possibility to think that theories, based on traditional industry sectors, can be only partly valuable in the analysis of retailing internationalization.

According to Dawson (1993), international retailing is related to the operations, which are performed by

enterprises belonging to one company in more than one country.

Thus international trade enterprises do not transfer the conceptions into a new environment but only fulfill operations in new markets. Most frequently trade *internationalization* is understood as the transfer of retailing operations into a foreign market. A lot of researches confirm this aspect.

According to Pellegrini (1994), an international activity is based on infiltration into the market, so internationalization process is development of the operations being performed. The initial stage of this process is operations in home market, the second stage – fulfillment of international operations.

Alexander (1997) pointed out different conditions for the activity of retailers in foreign markets and presented the following definition of retailing internationalization: management of retailing operations in the markets that differ from each other in laws, economic development, social conditions, cultural environment and structure of retailing.

But Gilbert (1999) offers a bit wider and more complex definition by stating that retailing internationalization involves not only the transfer of shops into a foreign market but also the transfer of conceptions on retailing, managerial skills, technologies and even the function of buying. Thus retailing internationalization, according to Gilbert (1999), - is the process, during which a retailer transfers operations of retailing, its conception, managerial experience, technologies and / or the function of buying beyond the borders of a national market.

Here several most popular definitions on retailing internationalization are presented, but they reveal different approaches of scientists to the conception of internationalization process. This only proves complexity and intricacy of retailing internationalization process. Thus, according to Zitkiene (2003), it is possible to define retailing internationalization as the complex of retailing enterprises' actions involving adaptation of different forms and methods of trade activity as well as their management ways the markets of foreign countries by adjusting to their common and specific factors.

Thus internationalization process – is the change of enterprises' activity when they integrate both horizontally and vertically as well as conditions of the market and competitive pressure, on which international operations or internationalization of functional areas and strategic vision of a company, creating geocentric approach to international markets when operations are expanded globally, depend.

For retailing internationalization the selling of goods and services for foreign customers, transfer of management technologies or creation of international trade relations, due to which trade enterprises function in the international environment by crossing legal, economical, social, cultural and retailing structure borders, are characteristic. So a retailing enterprise functioning internationally has to consider changes of *environment*. Internationalization of trade activity is

complicated; it distinguishes in reaction to local culture, in diffused character of operations, in large amount of offered products and services, in large extent of network activity what requires great competence and effective knowledge management. Trade involves direct contacts with a customer what requires effective procedures and information systems of the research in order to be able a customer. Traders also offer a complicated combination of products and services in order to be able to meet different and changing needs and wishes of customers.

Different environment factors, computer technologies, growth of transport efficiency, free world trade, increase of income created the conditions for development of world market as well as influenced the growth of trade internationalization. Environment conditions influence not only organizational structure of trade enterprises but also development of their functioning and internationalization. Trade enterprises have their environment and are influenced by it. Alexander (1997) points out that retailing enterprises when discussing possibilities of their expansion into the markets of other countries have to consider a chosen region by basic factors: economical – political; socio-cultural; geographical.

The infrastructure, provided services and urbanization influence behavior of market participants as well as their success in geographical environment (Bergman, Maier, Tödling, 1993). In economic environment external relations with other market participants determine a role of a functioning person. Finally these persons work in already formed social-cultural environment. Local socio-cultural conditions can be favourable or not for certain technologies or ways of trade and provision of services. Technological environment is related to achievements of fundamental sciences, as well as to improvement of products, processes and materials – new achievements in the area of products and processes able to influence enterprises' activity. Dynamism of technological policy determines premises for development of business competitiveness. In a broad sense, technological environment integrates such interacting factors as scientific-technical, industrial, management and commercial knowledge and experience (Gradov et al., 2003).

Dynamism is characteristic for the discussed types of environment. According to Janszen (2000), external environment is not static, it constantly changes. Some people functioning in the market understand that they live in chaotic environment. Participation of enterprises in internationalization process enables them to get additional resources, especially to upgrade the level of information and knowledge, to diminish some uncertainties related to more and more unsettled environment. Thus, considering the environment, in some countries retailing internationalization process is conditioned by favourable (stimulating) environment, in others – by antagonistic (suppressive), consequently business risk and conditions for internationalization can be very unequal.

According to Fels (1999), implementation of new technologies create premises for retailing enterprises to focus on needs of the market, and contributes to the motion of information, goods and financial resources among companies situated in different countries. In addition, international

companies can faster and more effectively react to changes of environment disregarding different extend of turnover in particular subdivision in companies. Transportation costs decrease due to other factors such as communication, which in larger degree depend on progress in country's micro-economics. Applying innovations in retailing and choosing the type of a trade enterprise it is necessary to possess exclusive skills in distribution of goods as well as in management of an enterprise. When retailing enterprises form their supply of goods, it is important to effectively compete both in price and quality because by this it is possible to deserve the trust of foreign customers.

Nevertheless to create a profitable business in a foreign market can be not easier than in a home market, it can be even harder and more expensive. As well as in the home market, in a foreign market a businessperson has to create a long-term, growing and profitable commercial structure. On the one hand, it means that a businessperson has already got the answer to the question about language and cultural differences in a foreign country (i.e. he/she has chosen people from that country) and has chosen the candidates who would possess thorough knowledge about the culture, goals, policy, strategies, resources, research base and interpersonal relations of the parent company. On the other hand, managers of the parent company – able to think objectively and independent of geographical location – will control these people. These necessary requirements absolutely do not depend on whether the world or certain particular strategy is chosen; in addition, it is not so easy to acquire the skills in order to correspond them.

Trade internationalization not necessarily has to be developed only in large companies. Modern international integration should first of all be related to activity of companies and economical – social relations. By adjusting to fast shifting changes of customers' needs and following economic logic companies arrange the chain of value creation in different territories of the world. Transactions take place through borders of different states. International companies have to fulfill functions of organization, coordination, regulation, financing and control. By developing such companies transform the process of value creation for customers into an international phenomenon and become the main factor of globalization stimulation. It is possible to state that retailing internationalization is influenced by most internal and external factors of environment. But one of important factors is being focused to the transfer of some processes of business by effectively using and producing knowledge.

THE ROLE OF KNOWLEDGE IN RETAIL INTERNATIONALISATION.

Internationalization takes place because at certain companies managers strive to make decisions, which would increase transfer of capital, goods and knowledge in spite of states' borders.

Answering the question why enterprises internationalize their activity, main propellant would be

enterprise's wish to use and develop its knowledge, skills and resources so that long-term economic goals would be attained; enterprises internationalize if such strategy increases possibilities to achieve basic aims. Issues about why, where and how traders enter new markets have to be solved on the basis of researches on trade internationalization. The question how it takes place is very related to how knowledge is shared when a trade organization develops and enters new markets.

Knowledge is one of important premises of internationalization. Maier, Hadrich, Peinl (2005) assume that importance of knowledge for society and organization has been researched for a long time. Knowledge can be defined as skills, competences, experience and intellectual capital. Not work, raw materials or capital but knowledge is the very factor, which notably changes functions of production. Namely due to knowledge changes increase in social life, as well as in the work of social and business institutions.

According to Maier, Hadrich, Peinl (2005), *the term „knowledge“* is used widely and it is often related to data and information. Data are related to symbols, which define a person, a thing, an event or action. Data can be classified and supplemented, but no specific meaning is to be transferred. Data elements are digital, literal, sonic or visual. Most definitions relate information and data as close in their meaning. Authors distinguish implicit and explicit knowledge. Implicit knowledge is perceived in one's subconsciousness, it is hardly clearly understood, it appears from direct experience and it is transferred when communicating and sharing experience. Explicit knowledge is clearly expressed and can be transferred during meetings, expressed in mathematical formulas, models or documents. The process, during which implicit knowledge become clear, is called externalization, and when explicit knowledge becomes tacit/implicit - internalization. Differences between implicit and explicit knowledge determine different ways of knowledge management.

Thus the conception of knowledge helps to analyze actions of knowledge management in processes of trade internationalization as well.

Johanson and Vahlne model is one of the most frequently used internationalization foundations. The premise that a company does not have complete access to information and that internationalization is the process experience knowledge improvement is drawn. The model treats the process of firm's internationalization as the increase of interaction between knowledge development and "devotion" for a foreign market. In initial model of internationalization by Johanson and Vahlne market knowledge is used to explain knowledge about foreign markets. It also distinguishes that objective market knowledge is something what can be taught, and experience market knowledge is something what can be learnt only due to personal experience. In addition, generic knowledge and knowledge specific for the market are distinguished. Generic knowledge is defined as certain methods of marketing and common features of particular customer types. Knowledge specific for the market is defined as knowledge about features of specific markets and specific particular customers (Jonsson, 2006). Internationalization knowledge is defined as experience knowledge related to firm's skills and resources, expansion to new markets. In

addition, knowledge of experience in a foreign market is related to business knowledge, i.e. knowledge about customers, the market and competitors, as well as to institutional knowledge, i.e. knowledge about the authority, institutional foundations, legislation, norms and values.

Dawson (2006) states that in the process of trade internationalization knowledge can be classified in a lot of different ways when orienting to four type of knowledge: Experience knowledge is personal knowledge acquired through the experience of entering a new market. Routine knowledge is the knowledge about the routine of organization's activity and "know-how" specific for the firm. Conceptual knowledge. Systemic knowledge is coded knowledge that can be acquired at teaching institutions.

Internationalization of retailing company's activity means that it has established and has been developing certain position in one or several subsystems of the system of a foreign market. Internationalization of an activity is a process. It can be implemented by unequal ways and be of different stages. The position can be created in a quite new system of the market, or developed in the system, in which the company had already had an adequate position, or coordination and integration among company's positions in different systems is upgraded to a new qualitative level.

The component of knowledge management is also very important in the aspect of standardization on the one hand, differences of languages, supply possibilities, retailing structure, climate, legislation and cultural peculiarities (race, taboo, history, political self-awareness, religion, education) existing among states are so great that it is simply impossible to establish a simple and acceptable standard of trade strategic aids. On the other hand, there are no doubts that due to internationalization all participants wish to increase their business profit by means of standardization. Advantages are evident, for example, less price per product/service unit; less expenditure for work (inventory, administration, logistics); marketing costs (advertising, popularization, simpler maintenance and improvement of product quality, saved expenses for researches). In the aspect of standardization should be related to:

Standardization of trade activity/operations – maintenance of certain trade format and adjustment or standardization of activity processes in the markets of different countries.

Standardization of goods, products, construction – should be related to standardization of guarantees, technical maintenance, exploitation or consumption conditions.

Standardization of support – shows the extent of support mix/complex homogeneity or adaptation in different countries.

Standardized structure of distribution channels – is certain "philosophy" of distribution when choosing the same or similar type of a trade enterprise or an agent/intermediary in different countries.

Standardized pricing — when a retailer uses certain policy of pricing in the entire country

Standardized brand — when a retailer follows certain uniform policy of the brand in all countries.

In the process of trade internationalization the activity of enterprises is conditioned by three main sources of the competitive advantage of this enterprise related to the following: enterprise's property (property management), the place of the activity and internationalization of resources (among them non-material – such as competence, knowledge). Trade internationalization – is a complicated, developing process but not incoherent consequence of events. This process is important both in strategic level of particular corporations and of entire sector of trade. Process volumes, forms, functions, research character are changing, so it is rather hard to evaluate internationalization process.

Recently a greater attention is paid to evaluation of enterprise's activity. Foreign literature (Kennerley, Neely, 2003; Kaplan, Norton, 2005) presents statements „What gets measured, gets done“ or „You get what you measure“.

In foreign countries evaluation of trade activity performs a double function. First of all, it is used in the process of formulation of further strategy for trade internationalization. For effective planning it is very important to know the current situation. In addition, evaluation of activity is used in implementing a chosen strategy in the process of trade internationalization.

In this respect **business intelligent, which is related to knowledge management**, is very important (Sutherland et al., 2003; Kurtyka). Herschel, Jones (2005) point out that the concepts „business intelligent“ and „knowledge management“ are not identical. The information collected during the process of business intelligent is transferred into knowledge, and in most cases knowledge has priceless value in any organization.

Various authors differently treat the link between business intelligent and knowledge management. Herschel, Jones (2005) state that though processes of business intelligent and knowledge management are different, but the latter are a very important part of management of intellectual capital. McKnight (2002) assumes that knowledge is managed by using different technologies of business intelligent. It is possible to state that business intelligent is directly related to knowledge management because during the process of business intelligent information is transferred into knowledge. Knowledge management helps to use present skills of a trade enterprise, which are considered both in formulating of the strategy of trade internationalization and in the very internationalization process. Business intelligent is related to future perspective (strategy) when processed, easier understood information is used to attain competitive advantages in a foreign market.

Enterprises apply different ways to evaluate their activity. The most frequent areas of measurement/evaluation in the context of trade internationalization are, Dawson (2006):

1. Measurement of particular components in order to define internationalization process;
2. Measurement to explain the process;
3. Evaluation of internationalization

1. Measurement of particular components in order to define internationalization process. The process can be defined by the following components:

The retailer involved. The definition of the retailer involved allows answering the question “What?” not only in the sense of enterprise’s title but also in the meaning of the approach of people making decisions in internationalization activity. This component also can be treated in the sense of enterprise’s size, its organizational structure, its legal status and sales volumes.

The activity involved. The analysis of the activity involved answers the question “How?” Format of trade activity and formula of trade activity internationalization are essential aspects in measuring the activity involved. Some types of trade activity seem to be more appropriate in internationalization process than others. It is important evaluate/measure whether it is possible to change a type of trade activity into a formula of internationalization process. In this respect essential competences (it could be skills in customers’ service methods, provision (supply), organization, communication development) are related to the ability of an enterprise to adjust previous/analogous or adapted formula of the activity for a foreign market. An enterprise has to acquire these skills as competitive advantages when functioning within its local market before transferring them into a foreign market.

The location of the activity. The analysis of this component in defining the process allows answering the question “Where?” The location can be related to both a particular country and to the size of the market, development of the infrastructure, or to the sense of cluster’s activity, to everything what enables the analysis of market accessibility. There are firms, which are able to fast change their positions, i.e. to transit from local to world market. But usually this change takes place for years, when starting/choosing expansion to nearer markets.

The time of the activity answers the question “When?” the time can be treated directly (factual data) and indirectly (in the perspective) when a possible situation of an enterprise is being analyzed relating it to current circumstances. Let us suppose, a certain part of the occupied market can be in a preparatory stage of internationalization process or the loss experienced at present in the foreign market is the premise for further stage of outlet. The time can be evaluated as the degree of trader’s recognition in the market in respect of customers, or as dividends of investments related to internationalization process.

Business intelligent on these components, information interpretation and comparison allows identifying changes, intensity and specifics of internationalization process. It is possible: to compare the internationalization activity of one trade enterprise in different countries or cultures; to compare actions of several trade enterprises in one country or culture; to compare actions of several trade enterprises in different countries at a certain trade sector.

2. Measurement to explain the process

Explanation of internationalization process is related to answers to the question “Why?” and not only in the sense of stimulation of different activity in foreign markets but also in the meaning of the character/beginning of the activity at certain moment/period. In this respect business intelligent could be oriented to the search of the answers to the following questions: what constitutes sufficient conditions? what are the triggers to action? what constitute the discriminating success factors that underpin the decision to internationalize?

3. Evaluation of internationalization success

Insights in this context are related to the answer to the question “How effective/successful is/was the process?” Such evaluation is necessary for the analysis of internationalization results (outcomes). It is possible to distinguish several aspects of evaluation of internationalization success important for different stakeholders:

- Financial measures. Need for investments, their size, sources, dividends, typical measures are related to efficiency of enterprise’s activity.
- Knowledge transfer to other parts of the firm. Evaluation of knowledge (skills, competences, abilities) transfer is related to the increase of the level of enterprise’s resources when functioning in a foreign market.
- Stimulus to competition. Changes of competitiveness level when functioning in a respective sector and under the influence of greater or less competition.
- Improved quality of retail provision. The degree due to which satisfaction of customer’s needs improved as trade conditions changed

Business intelligent of the above-mentioned areas provide the information that is transferred into knowledge both about present trade internationalization processes and considering the future perspective. Modern business uses a large amount of data, but in an enterprise this information might remain unused if nobody is able to analyze it, to properly interpret and transfer it into necessary knowledge. Evaluation of internationalization process requires precise definition or explanation and comparison, understanding and interpretation of particular components of the process what requires certain organizational competences. On the other hand, already possessed (present) competences have to be applied in specific conditions. So it follows that the same particular enterprise will need different knowledge in internationalization process as well. It should be noted that the same social economical conditions in the same period can be differently interpreted by different traders (some will value this as the country of great risk, others – as moderate) and it will influence the choice of internationalization way/course/strategy.

CONCLUSIONS

Studies of scientific literature disclosed variety of definitions of retailing internationalization process. However, we think that under modern conditions of business it is purposeful to define trade internationalization as complex of actions of retailing enterprises, which contains adaptation of different forms, methods and management ways of trade activity in the market of foreign countries by adjusting to common and specific factors in them. In some countries

process of trade internationalization is influenced by favourable (stimulating) environment, and in others – antagonistic (suppressive), thus business risk and internationalization conditions can be very unequal. But it should be pointed out that one of important aspects is focused on some transfers of business processes by effectively using and producing as well as management.

When analyzing actions of knowledge management in processes of trade internationalization, objective knowledge of the market (something what it is possible to teach), knowledge of experience in the market (something what can be learnt due to one's personal experience) are distinguished. In addition, generic knowledge and knowledge specific for the market is distinguished. So it follows that knowledge in the process of trade internationalization can be classified by means of different ways by orienting to different types of knowledge. Component of knowledge management is also very important in the aspect of standardization when differences existing among states are so big that simply it is impossible to establish simple and acceptable standard of trade strategic aids. All participants wish to increase business profit by means of standardization due to internationalization.

Evaluation of trade activity in foreign markets is used in the process of formulation of further trade internationalization strategy. In this aspect the business intelligent during the process of which information is transferred into knowledge plays an important role. Knowledge management helps to use present skills and advantages of a trade enterprise. Business intelligent is related to future perspective (strategy) when processed and easier understood information is applied to attain competitive advantages in a foreign market.

In the context of trade internationalization the following evaluation areas are most frequently occurring: evaluation of particular components characterizing internationalization process, evaluation of reasons of internationalization process; evaluation of internationalization efficiency. Business intelligent of the above-mentioned evaluation areas allow accumulating, analyzing, interpreting, and applying information, which is transferred to knowledge both about present trade internationalization processes and considering the future.

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