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CHALLENGES FACING E-COMMERCE IN LEBANON

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Abstract: this article about the current e-commerce in Lebanon aims. E-commerce plays an active role in a world where competition is high and local markets are limited, and this is because we are in a world that is undergoing rapid transformations in the area of e-commerce.

Аннотация: в статье рассматривается состояние текущей электронной коммерции в Ливане. Рассматривается роль электронной коммерции в мире и быстрые преобразования в этой области.

There is no doubt that the spread of e-commerce is rising in the world. The corporate-customer e-commerce sector (B2C-Business to Customer) reported profits between \$400 billion and \$600 billion in 2010 and is estimated to be worth between \$700 billion and \$950 billion by 2015. In Lebanon, the e-commerce sector is still in its infancy. The founders and supporters of e-commerce projects have had many difficulties in building and launching their startups [1].

Lebanon's e-commerce market continues to suffer from a range of challenges that also apply to the entire Arab world: a lack of electronic payment gateways, and a lack of confidence in online payments. Lebanese prefer to buy at local stores. In the world of e-commerce, this phenomenon is self-evident given the challenges faced by e-commerce stores. One of the first online stores in Lebanon, "Umbrella" Mizalla.com, which was launched in 2011 and received extensive media coverage, but returned and closed less than a year later. Today most online stores target more specialized markets.

It is noteworthy that stores that specialize in the sale of electronic tools are the most popular today, and it is not considered especially in Lebanon, as electronics are the leading global market in the world of e-commerce, and make up

24 % of all e-commerce sites in the world. Clothing and accessories sites are also becoming increasingly popular, just like the recently launched Eezmeez website that sells t-shirts with jokes in the popular Lebanese dialect, and the local design site, Lebelik. On the other hand, the sites of daily deals are more successful, perhaps because the Lebanese love good deals and the establishment of these projects does not involve any logistical difficulties. Joe Napt (later Living Social) was the first to enter the market, followed by a group of imitators including Makhsoum, GoSawa and ScoopCity, some of whom have spread to Dubai and other cities [2].

Fast deal platforms or Flash Sales are also progressing slowly. After MarkaVIP was the first to open the market, a group of competitors emerged on a smaller level such as Mistile and Natasawak. Some well-known local stores have also been overwhelmed in building their online business sites, but so far none have seen remarkable success. Finally, classified advertising sites were the first form of e-commerce and continue to be successful. In fact, many Lebanese may think that classified advertising sites are so-called e-commerce.

Challenges facing e-commerce in Lebanon:

1. Preference for products that are not on the Internet many in Lebanon do not trust "electronic" products, i.e. those sold on the Internet, unless they are available on well-known websites and brands that can take responsibility, or a company that mentions a real address for which the customer can contact them in the event of an ything. "Since the launch of our website, we have received a lot of requests from potential customers asking us to show them samples of products before they decide to buy them, which is decreasing with the logic of e-commerce," commented Ezmeez, co-founder of Ezmeez.

2. Payment options only two banks in Lebanon provide an online payment gateway: The Lebanese Credit Bank and Bank Audi. The Lebanese Credit Bank is the first to offer a credit card for online payments, but has not marketed this service much. Bank Audi has organized a widespread advertising campaign and has acquired most of the transactions.

3. The lack of incentives is an important element in Lebanon's e-commerce sector, namely, incentives that attract e-customers. Most e-commerce stores do not offer products that are diverse and different from what customers can find in the non-electronic market.

E-commerce was growing before the Corona pandemic, but the pandemic gave it a strong boost and an unexpected acceleration, with retail sales increasing at a steady pace and gaining a wider market share than traditional sales channels. U.S. sales increased by 14.8% in April 2020, while sales in Europe by mail or the Internet increased by 30 %. It has also been shown that older consumers rely more on electronic channels for their purchases, while retailers are considering investing in the digital economy to keep up with consumer behavioral trends.

The Corona pandemic has boosted the growth of e-commerce. Despite the sharp contraction in economic sectors, remote retail sales are increasing. The motives are clear and are related to the restrictions imposed by the Corona virus

on consumer and social behavior patterns. Spacing has become a virus-specific feature that stimulates consumption supported by additional trillions pumped by central banks around the world.

This development is linked to a very large market. The global e-commerce volume exceeds \$29 trillion, according to the latest report of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). The report indicates that sales volume in 2019 increased by 11.5 % over 2018, and its ratio to GDP is 33 %. America is ranked first in e-commerce sales. The volume of online purchases amounted to \$8.9 trillion, or 46 percent of U.S. GDP. In contrast, South Korea is ranked first in terms of this trade in gdp of 84%, followed by Japan with 61%.

The size of this market is very wide. The number of online buyers or shoppers in the world's 20 largest economies reached 1.19 billion in 2019. China alone holds first place with 600 million shoppers, followed by America with 189 million. So, e-commerce was growing even before the Corona pandemic. For example, companies such as Amazon, Alibaba and others working in the field have made their way to become an essential part of consumer diaries around the world. But earlier this year, these companies received a major boost from the epidemic. The need to facilitate social spacing has created a strong incentive for companies wishing to move towards cheaper and more consumer-targeted sales channels. Both sides quickly adapted to the pandemic and the results began to appear at a steady pace 10 months ago. From this point on, the OECD points to a far-reaching impact that may appear on the pattern of Consuming. The likely fact that a large part of the demand will shift to the digital system temporarily is possible, but to what extent and within what limit can such a shift become permanent? For example, in 2002-2003, the SARS pandemic, which had a significant impact on China's digital retail ization, emerged. Responding to this pandemic, specifically in 2004, JD.com has shifted from traditional to online sales and is now one of the world's largest online retailers. The crisis itself provided a broad consumer base for Alibaba's taobab subsidiary, which was launched in 2003 [3].

There are many examples of these transformations that may now take place. For example, older consumers, who have begun to deal through e-commerce as a means of promoting physical spacing, may adhere to this newly acquired routine. It has been shown that the older, the largest share of the increase in online purchases through mobile credit cards from 10 million Japanese (the 1960s segment increased its operations from 15.4 % in January to 21.9 % in March 2020), and those who in the 1970s (from 10.9 % to 16.4 %).

Moving to online sales requires a significant investment. Many companies that boosted their participation in e-commerce during the Corona crisis have an incentive to take advantage of the associated infrastructure and skills they acquired during the crisis. This is the case of large traders who have invested in their sales and distribution infrastructure in the digital field. For example, by April 12, 2020, Amazon's grocery branch increased online demand by more

than 60 % to meet additional demand, as well as expanding pick-up services from about 80 stores to more than 150 stores. This also applies to small traders who during the crisis had to make larger investments to acquire infrastructure to provide online services. They may decide to turn these tools and experiences into long-term assets.

E-commerce plays an active role in a world where competition is high and local markets are limited, and this is because we are in a world that is undergoing rapid transformations in the era of e-commerce, it has revolutionized the real world trade, and this is the result of the tremendous development of the Internet, which has reshaped the new global economy and thus the Internet is the mainstay of the e-commerce infrastructure because it brings together all the stages necessary to complete trade transactions from the supply of goods and services, as well as price negotiations and the conclusion of electronic contracts as well as e-money payment mechanisms, thus becoming the site of an organization is the first interface through which it tries to attract its customers around the world, thus answering the organization that wants to do business on the Internet to take into account all the quality standards in the creation of websites.

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