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MODERN FORMS OF COOPERATION OF TRADING ENTERPRISES IN POLAND AND OVER THE WORLD IN THE LIGHT OF T.L. FRIEDMAN'S FLAT WORLD CONCEPTION

Summary. The main point of the thesis is an analysis of modern ways of managing business activity in Poland and over the world, based on cooperation and mutual connections, omitting competition, as one of significant terms of market economy. The reference to considerations of the thesis are examples of well-known companies and enterprises operating in traditional way, as well as using Internet channel and functioning only on the Internet. The examples used in order to illustrate these targets are: QXL Poland and Allegro, eBay Inc., Li&Fung, Wal-Mart and others. The main terms, characteristic for discussed issue include: outsourcing, insourcing, offshoring, uploading and in-forming.

Keywords: enterprise, outsourcing, offshoring, Internet

NOWOCZESNE FORMY WSPÓŁPRACY PRZEDSIĘBIORSTW HANDLOWYCH W POLSCE I NA ŚWIECIE W ŚWIETLE KONCEPCJI PŁASKIEGO ŚWIATA T. L. FRIEDMANA

Streszczenie. Celem głównym pracy jest analiza nowoczesnych metod prowadzenia działalności gospodarczej w Polsce i na świecie, opierających się na współpracy i wzajemnych powiązaniach, z pominięciem konkurencji, jako jednego z istotnych pojęć gospodarki rynkowej. Punktem odniesienia dla rozważań pracy będą przykłady znanych firm i przedsiębiorstw prowadzących działalność gospodarczą w sposób tradycyjny, jak również z wykorzystaniem kanału internetowego oraz funkcjonujących tylko w Internecie: QXL Poland i Allegro, eBay Inc., Dell, Li&Fung, Wal-Mart i inne. Do najważniejszych pojęć, charakterystycznych dla omawianej problematyki, zaliczają się: outsourcing, insourcing, offshoring, homesourcing,

uploading, in-forming. Metodami i technikami badawczymi wykorzystanymi w pracy są między innymi: study case, badania porównawcze przedsiębiorstw, badania statystyczne, analiza rzeczywistości ekonomicznej.

Słowa kluczowe: przedsiębiorstwo, outsourcing, offshoring, Internet

1. Introduction

Outsourcing and offshoring as two of ten forces flattening the world in the light of Th. L. Friedman's conception are considered as characteristic phenomena of 1990s and record lasting accumulation trend. The number of companies and enterprises, both Polish and foreign ones, which decide on using outsourcing and offshoring in their business models increases around 20 – 30 per cent annually. This deputing of different services to external domestic and foreign companies is currently identified with companies' and enterprises' aiming at activity perfection which is determined by concentration on main targets and ideas of the company's activity and deputing other tasks with lasting realization term and high costs to own external companies.

The principal aim of the thesis is an attempt to point out methods of conducting market activity in Poland and over the world, which has become one of the main flattening forces and are dependent on collaboration and cooperation. Outsourcing and offshoring are two of ten forces in Th. L. Friedman's conception which foster innovativeness of enterprises, both traditional and operating on the Internet and are necessary for their functioning on broad scale.

Nowadays the aim of every company and enterprise concentrates on issues concerning: efficiency and rationalization of activity, reduction of costs, profitability of production, trade and service activity, maintaining leading position on the market, etc. Most of these aims and determinants – if not all of them – are nowadays possible to achieve mainly thanks to cooperation of previously competing enterprises in the field of outsourcing and offshoring. Phenomena of outsourcing and offshoring concern more and more enterprises and the demand for new localizations is fulfilled by rising supply. These aspects and circumstances, among others have disposed the author to wider analysis of outsourcing and offshoring as two modern forms of cooperation.

2. The conception of flat world and its determinants

In the old times the opinion that the world is flat, which everyone believed in predominated. However later came up the people who decided to deny this belief. Despite their successful persuasion, today it turned out that the world really is flat. (Whitney, Bloch 2007).

The flatness of the world can be identified with an allegory of many occurrences, which take place in different dimensions of people's and organizations' environment. We deal with the flat world when some processes and phenomena, which seemed so distant and impossible to achieve, mostly because of barriers: of time, geographical, lexical, language, cultural, profitability, etc., now are for the asking. Thanks to hi-tech used in interpersonal contacts, the force and the power of the flat world reached primarily those countries, companies, subjects and units which: surrendered to its will, became involved in its creation, use the knowledge, abilities and possibilities in its creation and are ready to go only forward.

Globalization and advanced digital innovations, which commit not only countries but also enterprises, companies and people in different business actions and enable communication from any place in the world, can be listed as aspects which affect further development of the Flat World. For Friedman (2005) the Flat World seeks its source in chronologically differentiated historical events, gaining somewhat the form of different clues, remarks, interdictions or laws. The first group of factors dates back to the end of 1980s, while the second group is based on more current phenomena. Among the forces that have flattened the world, we can list, according to Th. L. Friedman:

1. Date of the ninth November 1989, which symbolizes The Fall of The Berlin Wall,
2. The development of the *World Wide Web* (WWW) and internet browsers, the pop of the speculative bubble,
3. The rise and integration of software which provides the ability to manage workflow, making the faster than ever before flow of work between companies and continents possible,
4. Uploading, meaning publicizing custom transmissions: files, pictures and other materials and spreading their content on the global scale omitting any traditional organizations and official institutions (GNU/Linux, social network services: Facebook, Nasza Klasa, Wikibooks,¹ Wiktionary,² Wikinews,³ Wkipedia, blogging),

¹ Wikibooks – websites containing digital textbooks and user's manuals.

² Wiktionary – websites containing dictionaries and thesauruses.

³ Wikinews – webpage containing news that is edited by the users themselves.

5. Outsourcing, meaning deputing a part of production with realization that, for various subjective or objective reasons could be unprofitable, to other domestic subjects,
6. Offshoring, meaning moving whole factories abroad, where the same product, in the same way is produced, using only cheaper work power, subsidized energy and lower costs of insurance or lower taxes,
7. Supply – chaining; using the chain of supply – a level cooperation between suppliers, sellers and customers in order to: create surplus value, meaning supplying an enterprise and unification of standards and facilitating global cooperation,
8. Insourcing relied on synchronization of global chain of supply for different companies, both big and small ones (UPS,⁴ FedEx),
9. In-forming, being a notion concerning a unit, relied on the possibility of building individual information, knowledge and entertainment supply chain (internet search engines: Google, Yahoo!, MSN Search; devices like: TiVo,⁵ iPod and others),
10. Steroids, meaning some new technologies, which contribute to strengthening other forces that flatten the world.

From the point of view of modern forms of cooperation between countries, enterprises and units, both in Poland and all over the world, the significant meaning are possessed by those processes and phenomena that: foster further development of economic, social and political life, lead to reduction of costs and/or increase in efficiency of production and create a new surplus value. The significant meaning is also held by: economic development and change in the corporation's structure, as the modern organization has become a complex web of mutual enterprises which uses resources from all over the world. The flat world is characterized by enormous communication easiness, powered by the technology and a vast geographical spread of team members or companies (Whiteley, Bloch 2007). In the Flat World modern enterprises and companies with global range create bonds, govern and manage the team of people hundreds of kilometers away.

3. Outsourcing as one of the forces that flatten the world and a new form of cooperation between competing enterprises

The origins of outsourcing date back to 1960s. The business conception of this flattening force has formed already in 1920s, when in 1923, Henry Ford's⁶ famous statement went down

⁴ UPS, United Parcel Service is a courier company known all over the world.

⁵ TiVo – a device which allows a user to become an „editor” of television programme, meaning recording digitally favourite programmes and watching them omitting unwanted commercials.

⁶ Henry Ford (1863 – 1973) – was an industrialist, the founder of the Ford Motor Company. In 1896 he built his first car prototype; three years later he became co-founder of Detroit Automobile Company, transformed into Cadillac Motor Company.

in history: If there's something we can't do more efficiently, cheaper and better than our competition, there is no sense doing it and we should employ someone to do the better work for us (Henry Ford 2010).

The usage of outsourcing is connected to necessity of making an important decision: make or buy. The main point of outsourcing is concentrating of an enterprise on its own, base proficiencies, while all other processes which do not constitute the enterprise's specialization, can be deputed to other enterprises or companies, for which these proficiencies are their base proficiencies.⁷

Outsourcing and its different forms is used by both enterprises that operate in traditional way⁸ and companies that deal with Internet trade activity. The industrial structure of companies that use outsourcing services is also differentiated. These companies most frequently operate in: logistic, metallurgical, IT, accommodation, banking, transportation branches (table 1).

Table 1

Examples of Polish and foreign companies operating traditionally and on the Internet and using outsourcing or its related forms in their business models

Name of the company	Selected actions and services that subject to outsourcing
Amazon	Hosting service, online payment
eBay Inc.	Online payment, online stores' service, advertising, promotion
Huta Batory Huta Łabędy	IT services
Huta im. Tadeusza Sedzimir	IT services, resource, finances and costs management and management supporting systems
KGHM Polska Miedz SA	Clearing services
QXL Poland/Allegro	Stores' logistic service, hosting, service's Server, online payment, shopping using mobile phone, advertising, etc.
US Steel Kosice	Duty-free shops' service, warehousing strategic resources, security of property, installation and service of energetic devices, forklift trucks service, renovation services, social services
Urząd Miasta Katowice (Katowice City Hall)	Hosting of: City Hall's online service, publishing City Hall's Public Information Bulletins and Public Information Bulletins of city units controlled by Katowice City Hall, public procurements announcements of Katowice City Hall and units controlled by Katowice City Hall publishing system
Wydawnictwa Szkolne i Pedagogiczne	DTP services (Desktop publishing)

Source: Own study based on: Postrach (2010), Smierciak, Zawistowski (2009), Wikipedia.pl (2010).

⁷ Concerning specialist services which can be bought by enterprises within outsourcing such fields can be listed: advertisement agencies services and Public Relations, outlets research, logistic services, property security, IT services, staff training, taxes and accounting.

⁸ Managing economic activity without using the Internet, in the *real world*.

Well-known examples of internet companies that use outsourcing are: QXL Poland, eBay Inc., Amazon, as well as numerous internet shops. The latter use outsourcing mainly to establish new stores, using complex e-commerce solutions created by other companies. As A. Mezynski reports (2010), the main suppliers of such solutions for Polish online stores are: Soteshop, KQS.store, iStore.pl, osCommerce, Shoper.pl, Otwarte24.pl, Home.pl, Business Shop and IAI-Shop.com.

Concerning issues related to providing outsourcing services for internet companies, the most popular and biggest auction service in Poland – Allegro.pl, governed and coordinated by QXL Poland – a company from Poznan which is a property of South-African collective investment scheme – Naspers, seems to be an important example. Allegro.pl, as well as other domestic and foreign auction services (Swistak.pl, Aukcjusz.pl, AukcjeFM.pl, Kiermasz.pl, eBay.com and eBid.com group services, DelCampe and others), unlike online shops and other „non-internet” companies that use outsourcing services, do not own rights to any of selling products and the main source of income of those companies are: payments for giving a position in this huge virtual market to all sellers⁹ and commissions for selling products. Managing auction service and other foreign services, connected to Allegro,¹⁰ QXL uses outsourcing services in:

- Analysis of users’ behaviors (Kozak 2002),
- Transferring and storing informational resources,
- Supplying hardware infrastructure,
- Online payment service,
- Marketing internet search engines services,
- Organization, planning, monitoring and reporting emissions of web banners on websites,
- Effective solutions in interactive marketing and relationship marketing,
- Preparation and execution of advertising campaigns in traditional media, on the Internet and by mobile phones,
- Organization of security system in online transactions that are made through the service,
- Provision of dedicated line services,
- Organization and preparation of nationwide events.

Outsourcing as one of the forces that flatten the world makes previously competing enterprises begin to cooperate, making their activity profile dependent on activity profile of other companies. Outsourcing in the sphere of traditional trade and e-commerce is an activity model characteristic for Globalization 3.0, used in almost every branch and sectors of market.

⁹ Both individual sellers and stores and other companies that sell their products or services by Allegro.pl.

¹⁰ Auction services in East-Central Europe: in Belarus, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Kazakhstan, Russia, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Ukraine and Hungary, belonging to QXL Poland.

Especially fast development of outsourcing services is observed on the Internet, and it is clearly visible in companies and services which are most of all a place for trade offers: previously mentioned auction services, advertising services and Internet stores.

4. Usage of offshoring and related forms in trading enterprises' functioning

The process of globalization, connected with technology development and drop of transportation and communication prices, stated by K. Rybinski (2007) as „the death of distance”, resulted in development of outsourcing as well as offshoring,¹¹ being a critical factor of business environment shaping. According to M. Krynicki (2006) offshoring is the brightest manifestation of global shift in production activity, leading to international division of work in the region of services providing.

The definition of offshoring is connected with the ability to isolate and move non-production functions of a company or production and services that can be produced or manufactured remotely to any country, lowering the costs or increasing quality. Offshoring can be used in different branches and sectors, from building services and production processes to research – development activity, marketing or consultative and legal services. The examples of companies that use offshoring and its related forms in their business models are: Li&Fung,¹² Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.,¹³ Reebok, Adidas, Nike or Volkswagen (table 2).

Table 2

Examples of Polish and foreign companies that conduct traditional activity and use offshoring and its related forms in their business models

Name of the company	Selected activities and services that are subordinate to offshoring	Activities and own services
Adidas	Production, logistics	Research – development tasks
British Petroleum	Marketing, transportation, petroleum and gas production	No information
General Electric	Call centers, logistics services, leasing services	No information
Li&Fung	Production, packing, marking, logistics	Supply export, distribution, selling, marketing
Nokia	Management and administration of operational activities, software for teamwork, technical support	Research – development tasks, selling network, marketing
Puma	Production, logistics	Project tasks, marketing

¹¹ Also called captive offshoring.

¹² Li&Fung is an enterprise founded in 1906 in China, specializing in complete organization of supply on the global scale.

¹³ Wal-Mart Stores Inc. is an American network of supermarkets founded in 1962 by Sam Walton.

cont. table 2

Reebok	Production, logistics	Research – development tasks, selling, marketing
Unilever	Purchase, production and supplying of printed materials	No information
Volkswagen	Accounting, staff, cleaning works	Production, research, selling network, marketing
Wal-Mart	Production, supplying, logistics	Selling, marketing

Source: Own study on the basis of: Smierciak, Zawistowski (2009), Wikipedia.pl (2010).

The examples of foreign companies that act according to offshoring in Poland are (Ciesielska 2009):

- In contact centers, whose functioning condition includes gaining employees with foreign languages: Stream International,¹⁴ KRUK,¹⁵ Operator Telekomunikacyjny Dialog, Lukas Bank and Agencja Handlowa ITP,¹⁶
- In Research and Development, employing qualified work power with specialized skills: Plivia,¹⁷ Avon, Delphi.¹⁸

In the sphere of common services centers, which take business functions over from international corporations and emerge in places where low costs of work occur in connection with productivity and work quality: KPMG,¹⁹ Philips, Thompson. Offshoring activities in traditional companies²⁰ concern mainly such forms of activity as: production, logistics, accounting, technical support and data archiving. For example, Chinese company Li&Fung is not the owner of any factory, while it coordinates network consisting 8300 suppliers operated by over seventy supply offices located in over forty countries. It deals with supply export, distribution and retailing, ensuring employment for over two million people in supply network. It does not employ any production employee (Fung, Fung, Wind 2008).

The company Li&Fung using its knowledge about clothing market deposes production and distribution processes at all times to only the company which is prepared to fulfill

¹⁴ Stream International belongs to the group of global leaders in granting technical support for electronic and IT technology producers and communication. It specializes in providing highest quality customer service and technical service for computer, electronic and telecommunication hardware users. Consortium founded in 1990s in the United States. It owns 50 contact center departments in 22 countries in North America, Europe, Asia and Africa.

¹⁵ Capital group KRUK is the branch leader and key player both in the field of debt collection and purchase and sale of receivables.

¹⁶ ITP operates in selective cosmetics distribution branch.

¹⁷ Pliva is a Croatian pharmaceutical enterprise with headquarters in Zagreb.

¹⁸ Delphi is leading global supplier of electronic solutions and system technologies for motoring sector. The combine has invested over \$280 million in Poland, both in production and in research and development. It employs over four thousand people in four production facilities and modern Technical Center in Cracow.

¹⁹ KPMG is one of the biggest companies providing so called professional services (audit, tax consulting and market advisory services). KPMG employs 140 000 people in global network in 146 countries, including 1200 people in Poland.

²⁰ Operating „in real”, not on the Internet.

customers' expectations in the best way. Harmonization of such process network is only one of the ways to stimulate company' growth. Besides, it deals with: designing supply chain, cooperation with factories in different regions, dividing processes into parts, deputing them to different companies in different localizations and then managing scattered processes (Chan Kim, Mauborgne 2008).

The phenomenon of offshoring, although still in development phase, is most bright sign of global shift in production activity, leading to new international division of work in the sphere of providing services (Krynicky 2006). Development perspectives of offshoring and other forms of cooperation are not unrestricted, though. In the case of many services, closeness of receivers, interacting with them or trust are more important than their potential advantages (Krynicky 2006).

The challenge that countries which move services abroad face is the one of restricting social and technical adjustable costs to minimum and making sure that the people affected directly by negative effects of offshoring transition period is as mild as possible and adjusting processes as successful as possible.

5. The economic analysis of outsourcing and offshoring usage in business activity of companies and enterprises

The economic analysis concerning the usage of outsourcing and offshoring requires an answer to question: "make or buy?" which should be supported by solid analysis of factors that could affect the financial outcome of an enterprise. According to A. Koliński (2010), the decision of maintaining own production („make”), or deputing this process outside („buy”) is dependent on production capacity and relies on few basic costs categories: fixed,²¹ variable,²² unit,²³ transaction.²⁴ Pursuant to this assumption following such possibilities should be concerned:

²¹ Fixed costs are costs that do not change with the changes in production quantity in the short term. In the long term, all costs are variable.

²² Variable costs are costs that change with the changes in production quantity in the short term: when production increases, variable costs will increase as well; when production decreases, variable costs will decrease as well.

²³ Unit costs (average) are costs of a produced unit. We distinguish: unit fixed costs, unit variable costs and unit gross costs.

²⁴ Transaction costs are costs that emerge from cooperation of many economic subjects. They can be divided into groups: gathering information costs (necessary to check if given good is available on the market, who offers the best conditions, etc. These are typical costs of market research and agreements planning), marketing and contract signing costs (necessary to ensure a transaction), control costs (born for assuring that the other side has ensured contract conditions. These can be marketing costs, control costs, process and outcome monitoring costs, corruption and opportunism caused losses insurance). Source: Transaction cost (2010).

- Having free production capacities; in this situation own production is more profitable when variable costs of own production are lower than other enterprise production's buying costs,
- Hold-up of own production capacities; in the situation of own production's hold-up outsourcing and offshoring is more profitable when costs of buying other enterprise's production including other enterprise's fixed costs are lower than gross costs of own production,
- Possibility of development of own production capacities; in this situation making a decision of own or other enterprise's production is more complicated and the "make or buy" analysis relies its assumptions on decision threshold:

$$\text{Decision threshold} = \frac{K_{sw} - K_{so}}{K_{zo} - K_{zw}}$$

where:

K_{sw} – own production fixed costs,

K_{so} – outsourcing and offshoring fixed costs,

K_{zw} – own production variable costs,

K_{zo} – outsourcing i offshoring variable costs.

If prepared prognosis plan higher demand than the value of threshold decision, the more profitable solution is development of production capacities and own production. In an opposite situation the purchase of products is more profitable.

Most frequently outsourcing and offshoring allow decreasing of fixed costs, assuming that the price for outsourcing and offshoring services the companies and enterprises must pay is higher than acquired unit variable costs. Therefore reducing the costs is connected with the „buy" option. It results mainly from the fact that the fixed costs contain:

- Costs directly connected with production which can be deputed to external subjects by outsourcing or offshoring,
- Common costs that have been accounted,

Therefore fixed costs count as the first group of costs which that undergo reduction, because liquidation of production means liquidation of fixed costs and this reduction is treated as decision cost (Postrach 2010)

If buying or production fixed costs are the same and no savings in analyzed costs after deputing production to external companies occur, the choice is made by comparing the price with unit variable costs. The upper limit of profitability for buying options is then set

by decision costs (significant) which are unit variable costs (offered price cannot be higher than these costs). Fixed costs which do not undergo reduction are non-decision costs (not significant) as any decision made by a company does not influence their level (Postrach 2010). If the suggested price for a service is lower than production's unit variable costs in turn, entrepreneurs in their economic account should refer to the "buy" option no matter what the size of the order is.

The problem of choice occurs when fixed costs for "make" option are higher and unit variable costs lower than those for counter option, meaning suggested price is higher than unit variable costs of production on one's own. It means that commissioning production or tasks to other companies we gain savings on fixed costs, but higher variable costs.

Comparative profit calculus of own production and purchase costs is one of many criteria of outsourcing and offshoring estimation analysis. Other tools that support making a decision of outsourcing and offshoring is SWOT²⁵ analysis, Porter Five Forces Analysis,²⁶ or quality analyses. Outsourcing and offshoring analysis based on costs shows some regularity: at the beginning of economic activity when an enterprise shows low sales level, lack of capital, lack of stable development perspective, outsourcing and offshoring of many fields of enterprise's activity is not only profitable but also recommended solution. However, with sales development, expansion into new markets, strengthening the brand, companies should verify shaped structure of economic activity and business process realization with usage of outsourcing and offshoring (Kolinski 2010).

The remarkable influence on outsourcing and offshoring of business processes development and their production have also transaction costs, as they determine the level of usage of these solutions by enterprises and companies. Transaction costs are not so much connected with production and service processes effectiveness as with measures taken to gain and maintain cooperation with suppliers, quality verification and supplying products and services in satisfying for clients' expectations way. Enterprises and companies should then aim not so much at limiting transaction costs themselves as limiting total costs of enterprise's functioning (Daniel, Kodwani, Datta 2009).

²⁵ SWOT analysis is an analysis of strong and weak points, as well as chances and risks.

²⁶ Porter five Forces Analysis is an analysis of five factors shaping attractiveness of an enterprise for current and future investors, based on following components: suppliers' influence force and possibility to pressurize sector's enterprises, buyers' influence force and possibility to pressurize sector's enterprises, fighting intensity inside the sector, threat of appearance of new producers and threat of appearance of substitutes. Development possibilities and sector's attractiveness are lower when the suppliers' and buyers' pressure on the sector is higher, when the possibilities of entering the market for the new producers or appearance of substitutes are higher and when the competition between producers in the sector is higher.

We have to assume that in the situation of using outsourcing or offshoring transaction costs are definitely higher than in the moment when enterprise decides on internal realization of defined process. Validity of introducing both processes is determined by whether total costs associated with separation of specific process, including all expenses associated with providing services or supplying products are lower in the moment than in the moment when an organization would execute them on its own. Transaction costs associated with outsourcing and offshoring, in most cases possess the variable, not constant character. It is important for enterprises because as a result of changes in global environment, relatively fast reduction of born costs in the moment of external demand reduction is possible (Ciesielska 2009).

6. Abstract

In currently lasting outsourcing and offshoring development wave, originated in XXI century, dynamic introduction of more complicated business processes, based on the knowledge and concerning disciplines like: research and development, medicine, law, accounting, as well as highly complicated services which supply companies' and enterprises' clients with high surplus value emerged. This third wave of outsourcing and offshoring is connected with the necessity of seeking human resources which possess both useful skills and ability to join them into one specialization by some enterprises and companies.

However, as far as success and achievement connected with implementation of outsourcing and offshoring brings significant reduction of functioning costs for companies and enterprises, failure of implementation of analyzed processes is connected with possibility of high financial risk, especially in the context of using offshoring, concerned with absorption of distinguished process and underestimation of transaction costs.

Rapid development of outsourcing and offshoring, falling on last thirty years made traditional and Internet companies and enterprises like: Allegro.pl, eBay, Amazon, Microsoft, General Electric, Intel and American Express depend on quick development of their companies, assuming that their success and good results depend also on skilful deputing parts of their processes and services to competing domestic and foreign companies. For Polish and foreign enterprises entering the zone of changes that are brought by Globalization 3.0 and the Flat World has become a parameter that points on its competitiveness, while constant process of adjusting to transforms that occur all the time in the global trade is the parameter of situation, where enterprises understood: what the „flatness of the world” is evinced in, by using which mechanisms and tools they should function and how important today outsourcing, offshoring, networking or insourcing are.

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