

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY OF E-COMMERCE AND GROWTH OF BUSINESS ENTERPRISES IN NIGERIA

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Abstract

This study examined the relationship between electronic commerce and growth of business enterprises. The population of this study consists of business owners and staff of all the business enterprises in Computer Village, Ikeja, Lagos, while the sample size was 50 which is five respondents from ten business organizations randomly selected from the population that responded to administered questionnaire. Data was collected using structured questionnaire and analyzed using frequency tables and percentages. Hypothesis were tested using Chi-Square statistics. The finding of the study is that there is a significant relationship between E-commerce and the growth of business enterprises. It was also found out that electronic commerce facilities ensure quick access to information, increased comfort and time saving transactions. It was recommended that the policy makers should put adequate and appropriate measures to check mate the challenges posed by electronic commerce and also the government should ensure that electronic commerce is regulated to continuously enhance business transactions.

Introduction

Electronic commerce (E-commerce) has facilitated the emergence of new strategies in several businesses in Nigeria. There have been different changes in business organizations due to the introduction of on line shopping especially in terms of channel development and new ways of customer value creation. According to Johnson (2012), E-commerce is a technological innovation that enables business organizations to compete on the same level with their counterparts all over the world. E-commerce has the potential to improve efficiency and productivity in many areas and, therefore, has received significant attention in many countries of the world. Mohammed (2004) asserts that E-commerce refers to the use of communication technology especially the internet to buy, sell and market goods and services to customers. Gbolagade, Ayo & Adebayo (2013) affirmed that the innovation, culture, infrastructure, finance, knowledge and skill, compatibility and level of security were the significant factors in the adoption of

(internet). The facility of internet is a global computer

E-commerce is the use of internet facility which is electronic network to facilitate transactions between sellers and buyers through on-line payment for goods and services that result in fast delivery and payment of goods and services through the use of electronic network network providing a variety of information and communication facilities consisting of interconnected network by the use of standardized communication protocols (Laudon & Laudon, 2013). With mobile commerce gaining speed, more users are purchasing from the palm of their hands as it is easier for transactional exchanges to happen online (Miva 2011).

According to Katherine Arline (2015), electronic commerce (e-commerce) is a type of business model, or segment of a larger business model, that enables a firm or individual to conduct business over an electronic network, typically the internet. Electronic commerce operates in all four of the major market segments: business to business, business to consumer, consumer to consumer and consumer to business. Almost any product or service can be offered via ecommerce, from books and music to financial services and plane tickets. According to UNCTAD (2015), E-commerce is rapidly transforming the way in which enterprises are interacting among each other as well as with consumers and government as E-commerce is growing rapidly in several emerging markets and developing economies.

The internet technological explosion into the world arena coincided with the new millennium and the uses of the internet for commercial purposes have since spiraled out of control. The internet known to have originated from the United States of America has received a worldwide acceptance and is now at par with global products such as coca-cola. The Dot.com companies in the United States such as Amazon and eBay led the way by creating new and distinctive online services where none ever existed. The successes recorded by these organizations paved the way for other organizations including other well known traditional organizations all over the western world such as Wal-Mart, Tesco, and others in retail; Cisco in networking, Dell in the PC manufacturing industry, Well Fargo, HSBC, Bank of America, etc, in banking services. Bakos (1998) stressed that a company without a website today is considered as outdated. The radical changes that

have braved the world of business in general and businesses that now run only over the internet could be viewed from a different innovative perspective. The various changes evidenced by its impact have redrawn the boundaries of businesses, thus creating a new but strong world economy never envisaged before and at a much faster rate than the industrial revolutions. Based on these however, the radical changes came with new requirements such as new but strong competitive strategies by organizations, new business models, new products, and new management techniques. The internet compresses time and space making it easier for organizations to expand beyond regional boundaries. Control of commerce as usual has now gone beyond the grips of individual countries and governments of the world. The internet and e-Commerce compared to physical channels have also given consumers more benefits and variety of choices on both products and services. However, many industry analysts attribute the slow growth of businesses to lack of awareness of e-commerce applications among business organizations.

Statement of problem

The essence of electronic commerce (e-commerce) is to enhance communication between sellers and buyers, reduction in the communication, marketing and promotion costs, also enhance the production and distribution of goods and services faster and likewise provide customers with up-to-date information on prices and creating extensive market space. Lomerson et al (2004) affirmed that business firms need to get in the E-commerce game or they are going to be shut out of a critical part of the market place.

In spite of the above mentioned benefits of e-commerce to small and medium enterprises, the growth of small and medium enterprises is very slow in Nigeria. It is observed that most business organizations lack the awareness of adoption of e-commerce, and where some of them are aware they lack the capital to adequately utilize the potential and opportunities provided by e-commerce. Most business organizations do not have the required personnel that could use e-commerce to the advantage of their enterprises. Hence they do not have the capability to configure their own internet web sites interacting with their customers, suppliers, banks government etc. in the extensive market space.

Besides, the epileptic power supply and the unethical practices of most telecommunication network contribute negatively to the effectiveness use of e-commerce potential to the advantage of business enterprises.

Consequent to the above, the communication, marketing and promotion costs incurred by business organizations have not considerably reduce for them to operate effectively with the economic system. This has resulted in

high prices of goods and services offered for sales to enable them to competitive. Hence the production and distribution costs of goods and services are negatively affected.

There have been so many studies on E-commerce adaptation and its effect on business growth in developed countries (Sparring & Toleman, 2007) while similar attempt on E-commerce adaptation has been limited in developing countries (Wirtz & Kam 2006, Moller & Licker, 2005)

It is then pertinent to investigate the relationship between e-commerce and the growth of business organizations.

Conceptual clarification

What is Electronic Commerce?

Electronic commerce (E-commerce) is a type of business model, or segment of a larger business model, that enables a firm or individual to conduct business over an electronic network, typically the internet. Electronic commerce operates in all four of the major market segments: business to business, business to consumer, consumer to consumer and consumer to business. It can be thought of as a more advanced form of mail-order purchasing through a catalog. Almost any product or service can be offered via ecommerce, from books and music to financial services and plane tickets.

Over the past several years, e-commerce has transformed how people buy and sell online. The Internet provides a fast and easy way for people to purchase things without having to visit an actual store. An online store can reach customers anywhere in the world. In fact, online shopping has become so popular that many vendors sell only online with no physical location. E-commerce also facilitates the purchase of digital media such as downloadable music and movies: with no physical product, vendors can boast truly instant delivery. There are many e-commerce companies, and it's important to understand which of the best e-commerce sites let your online shop flourish as you sell online.

Today's top e-commerce site builders take all of these factors into account for your ecommerce website. Many programs are designed to accommodate the sale of both physical and downloadable products. In addition, online businesses are quickly evolving to face times of economic hardship by offering steeper discounts, flat-rate shipping, loyalty programs, and other perks. Many e-commerce site builders and the

best ecommerce platform options make it easy to run promotions and keep your customers happy. Finally, although the boom in online sales has also opened a potential avenue for fraud and scams, site-builders have managed to stay ahead by offering top-of-the-line site protection and payment security to keep the online marketplace as safe as possible. Besides, are you thinking about starting a business where you sell your products online? Then you'll be joining the millions of entrepreneurs who have carved out a niche in the world of e-commerce. At its core, e-commerce refers to the purchase and sale of goods and/or services via electronic channels such as the Internet. E-commerce was first introduced in the 1960s via an electronic data interchange (EDI) on value-added networks (VANs). The medium grew with the increased availability of Internet access and the advent of popular online sellers in the 1990s and early 2000s. Amazon began operating as a book-shipping business in Jeff Bezos' garage in 1995. EBay, which enables consumers to sell to each other online, introduced online auctions in 1995 and exploded with the 1997 Beanie Babies frenzy (Kapurunbandara, 2009).

Like any digital technology or consumer-based purchasing market, e-commerce has evolved over the years. As mobile devices became more popular, mobile commerce has become its own market. With the rise of sites like Facebook and Pinterest, social media has become an important driver of e-commerce. As of 2014, Facebook drove 85 percent of social media-originating sales on e-commerce platform.

The changing market represents a vast opportunity for businesses to improve their relevance and expand their market in the online world. By 2013, worldwide e-commerce sales reached \$1.2 trillion, and U.S. mobile sales reached \$38 billion, according to Statistics. More than 40 percent of Internet users — 1 billion in total — have purchased goods online. These figures will continue to climb as mobile and Internet use expand both in the U.S. and in developing markets around the world.

Categories of e-commerce

Chaffey, et al., (2009) categorized various model of e-Commerce into:

- i. Customer to Customer (C2C): Consumers directly transact with other consumers in the cyberspace. Furthermore, Hoffman & Novak, (1996) in their submission noted that C2C interactions are very important model in internet based transactions and further suggested the need for companies to take such innovation into consideration in their market planning efforts. Their assertion is exemplified by the growth of social media network sites in recent times such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.;

- ii. Business to Customer (B2C): Customers learn about products or services through electronic publishing, and buy them using electronic cash and secure payment systems, and have them delivered electronically or through physical channels;
- iii. Business to Business (B2B): An electronic market transaction in which businesses, governments, and other organisations depend on computer-to-computer communications as a fast, economical, and a dependable way to conduct business transactions;
- iv. Customer to Business (C2B): A type of online transactions where consumers initiate trading with companies – these are mostly suppliers;
- v. Customer to Government (C2G): A type of online interaction where feedback is given to government through pressure group or individual sites;
- vi. Business to Government (B2G): A type of online interaction where feedback from businesses is given to government and non-government organizations;
- vii. Government to Citizen (G2C): A type of online interaction through which government offer national transactions such as local government services, national government information, and tax information to its citizens and other stakeholders.

At the moment the only well developed form of e-Commerce in Nigeria are Business to Business (B2B) and Business to customers (B2C). Others such as the government related commerce have not seen the light of the day. Government transactions are still manual in nature and bunch of files are kept under locks and keys in large cabinets and passed round from table to table.

Challenges for E-commerce adoption among business organizations

There are several explanations for the slow diffusion of e-commerce in developing countries, in general, and in Africa, in particular. These barriers can grouped into three categories: sociopolitical, including legal and human preference; cognitive, including literacy, content and language; and economic barriers, such as access and use of ICTs.

ICT supported e-commerce readiness; studies conducted in Ethiopia and in the Gambia, as well as other studies undertaken across the continent, broadly identify similar challenges pertaining to growth of e-commerce in Africa. These challenges are summarized below:

Affordable ICT infrastructure, particularly the Internet and broadband, is one of the key factors affecting the growth of e-commerce. A study conducted in 13 African countries involving 3,691 SMEs revealed that 72 per cent of SMEs in general rated the computer as being important, while only 52 per cent of them believed that the Internet was important or very important. This suggests that cost and accessibility may be a consideration when comparing computer and Internet usage to mobile phone usage, which was rated by 95 per cent of SMEs as being important or very important, even though, in the last few years, the cost of access decreased significantly in line with the introduction of an undersea fibre cable network. According to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), for example, fixed-broadband prices are by far the least affordable in Africa, with an average regional value of 64.3 per cent of gross national income (GNI) per capita. Other infrastructure issues, including electricity, transport and roads, and communication, are among the challenges that need to be tackled.

Digital literacy among consumers and businesses in terms of computer literacy, language barriers, awareness of e-commerce benefits, lack of confidence and security in online transactions, including lack of a skilled workforce in e-commerce enterprises, are common in many countries. In this regard, a recent report issued by the Symantec Corporation shows that business organizations have become the top target for cyber criminals. The report indicates that the number of attacks on business organizations accounted for 31 per cent of the 69 million attacks that occurred in 2012 in the 157 countries covered in the survey. This represents a 13 percentage point rise from the previous year when business outfits accounted for 18 per cent of the total attacks. The importance of cyber security and the need for a policy action measures in Africa is also emphasized in a recent ECA policy brief (Gupta, 2008).

Limited delivery and distribution networks (physical transportation), in both Ethiopia and the Gambia, and the absence of proper street addressing and naming Systems related to electronic payment, branding/recognition, and the issue of tracking, monitoring and taxation systems are also some of the challenges that affect the online transaction process. In this regard, one of the main challenges identified as barriers to full-scale implementation of the e-commerce platforms developed under the ECA-supported project in Ethiopia and the Gambia is the absence of e-payment solutions in the countries. This is also among the main challenges most face in the development of e-commerce.

Legal frameworks to build security and trust are common issues that both consumers and businesses find difficult in

adapting e-commerce as their business strategic tool (Timothy, 2012).

Ensuring legal and regulatory environments are critical for the complete functioning of e-commerce in a country. This is potentially a transnational activity.

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Research methodology

Sampling Procedure and Sampling Size

A sample is a representative part of the entire population collected to make the research process faster and economical (Adedokun, 2013). Sample is usually studied because it would be virtually impossible to study the entire population due to constraints of time and costs. However, the sample must be representative of the population from which it is drawn to give a representative view of the entire population. The sampling procedure for this study is random sampling techniques. Ten business organizations were randomly selected out of which five respondents were also selected from each business outfit. The ten businesses were randomly selected from all those who are registered in the Market Association of Computer Village. The choice for businesses in computer village is because computer village is a highly commercialized area and core economic setting for business organizations in Lagos State.

Data collection

The instrument that is used for data collection in this study is a structured questionnaire. Each subsection is meant to provide answers to the research questions and for testing of the two hypotheses formulated. Each of the questionnaire items has a stem in form of an opinion statement followed by a list of four optional responses. The four options are in form of the Likert-scale format and assigned a numerical weight. The options and their corresponding numerical weights are as follows:

- Strongly Agree (SA) 4
- Agree (A) 3
- Disagree (D) 2
- Strongly Disagree (SD) 1

Frequency ratio and simple percentage were used in presenting the response rate of respondents to each of the developed questions in the questionnaire, while, the chi-square test statistic method was used in testing the hypotheses formulated in order to ascertain their level of validity and subsequently make conclusion. In addition, the statistical package for social sciences software was used in coding and running the returned questionnaire rather than through desk calculation in order to achieve very near accurate result.

This deals with the presentation and analysis of collected data from the questionnaire administered to respondents who are business owners and staff of ten selected businesses from all the registered businesses in the market associations of business owners in Computer Village Ikeja, Lagos. Fifty questionnaires (50) were administered and completed by the respondents. Simple percentage is used in analyzing each question from both sections. Chi-square statistics was used in testing hypothesis.

Data analysis and discussion

Data Presentation

Table 1: Sex of the Respondents

| Options | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------|-----------|------------|
| Male | 33 | 66% |
| Female | 17 | 34% |
| TOTAL | 50 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2017

From the above table 1, 33 of the respondents are male representing 66% while 17 are female representing 34%.

Table 2: Educational Qualification

| Options | Frequency | Percentage |
|----------|-----------|------------|
| SSCE/GCE | 2 | 4% |
| OND/NCE | 10 | 20% |
| BSC/HND | 17 | 34% |
| MSC/MBA | 16 | 32% |
| Others | 5 | 10% |
| TOTAL | 50 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2017

Table 2 above shows that 16 of the respondents are MSC/MBA representing 32%, 17 are BSC/HND holders representing 34% and 10 OND/NCE holders are 20% of

the respondents. While Both SSCE/GCE and others are 2 and 5 respondents representing 4% and 10% respectively.

Table 3: Age of Respondent

| Options | Frequency | Percentage |
|--------------|-----------|------------|
| 18-30 YRS | 13 | 26% |
| 31-40 YRS | 27 | 54% |
| 41 and Above | 10 | 20% |
| TOTAL | 50 | 100% |

Source: Field Survey, 2017

From the above table, 13 of the respondents are 18 - 30 years representing 26%, 27 are 31 - 40 years representing

54%, and the remaining 10 are 41 and above representing 20%.

Table 4: Marital Status

| Options | Frequency | Percentage |
|---------------|-----------|------------|
| Married | 25 | 50% |
| Single | 18 | 36% |
| Separated | 5 | 10 |
| Widow/Widower | 1 | 2 |
| Divorced | 1 | 2 |
| TOTAL | 50 | 100 |

Source: Field Survey, 2017

From the above table 4, 25 of the respondents are married representing 50% and 18 are single representing 36%. While 5 are superheated representing 10% and Widow and Divorced are 1 each representing 2%

Testing of hypothesis

The data collected are analyzed using the Chi-square (X^2) test technique. The chi-square test is used to test degree of relationship between two sets of variables. Thus the calculated chi-square formula is

$$\text{Chi-square } (X^2) = \sum (O_{ij} - E_{ij})^2 / E_{ij}$$
 Where O_{ij} - Observed Frequency
 E_{ij} - Expected Frequency

The calculated chi-square is used against the tabulated ($X^2_{\alpha, (c-1)(r-1)}$) where α is level of significance, c is no of columns and r is no of rows .

Decision rule:

| S/N | ITEM | SA | A | D | SD | TOTAL |
|-----|---|----|----|----|----|-------|
| 1. | E-commerce contributes to growth of business organizations | 24 | 13 | 9 | 4 | 50 |
| 2. | E-commerce contributes to growth Gross Domestic Products (GDP) | 20 | 17 | 7 | 6 | 50 |
| 3. | E-commerce makes the links between customers and business organizations faster and sustainable. | 17 | 20 | 4 | 9 | 50 |
| 4. | E-commerce enable the businesses to reach out beyond their local market to the world over. | 25 | 12 | 8 | 5 | 50 |
| | Total | 86 | 62 | 28 | 24 | 200 |

The expected values $E_{ij} = (NR \times NC) / GT$ where NR – No of rows; NC – No of columns and GT Grand total
 Thus, $E_{11} = (50 \times 86) / 200 = 21.5$

$E_{12} = (50 \times 62) / 200 = 15.5$
 $E_{13} = (50 \times 28) / 200 = 7$
 $E_{14} = (50 \times 24) / 200 = 6$ and so on

The chi-square is used to accept or reject the null hypothesis statement, which is constructed from research question. In order to determine the degree of relationships between the two set of variables. The under stated decision is applied. If calculated X^2 is less than tabulated X^2 the null hypothesis is accepted, alternative hypothesis is rejected. On the other hand, if calculated X^2 is more than tabulated X^2 the null hypothesis is rejected, alternative hypothesis is accepted. In the five-point Likert scale, no response provided by respondents for “don’t know”. So it was omitted in the contingency table.

Hypothesis I

Ho: There is no significant relationship between E-commerce and growth of business organizations
 Hi: There is significant relationship between E-commerce and growth of business organizations

| O | E | O-E | (O-E) ² | (O-E) ² /E |
|-----------------------------|------|------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 24 | 21.5 | 2.5 | 6.25 | 0.290698 |
| 13 | 15.5 | -2.5 | 6.25 | 0.403226 |
| 9 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 0.571429 |
| 4 | 6 | -2 | 4 | 0.666667 |
| 20 | 21.5 | -1.5 | 2.25 | 0.104651 |
| 17 | 15.5 | 1.5 | 2.25 | 0.145161 |
| 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 6 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 17 | 21.5 | -4.5 | 20.25 | 0.94186 |
| 20 | 15.5 | 4.5 | 20.25 | 1.306452 |
| 4 | 7 | -3 | 9 | 1.285714 |
| 9 | 6 | 3 | 9 | 1.5 |
| 25 | 21.5 | 3.5 | 12.25 | 0.569767 |
| 12 | 15.5 | -3.5 | 12.25 | 0.790323 |
| 8 | 7 | 1 | 1 | 0.142857 |
| 5 | 6 | -1 | 1 | 0.166667 |
| Calculated X ² = | | | | 8.885471 |

The calculated chi-square is 8.885471

The tabulated ($X^2_{0.5,(4-1)(4-1)}$) where 0.5 is level of significance = 8.343.

Decision Rule: (i.e. 8.885471 > 8.343),

Calculated X² is greater than tabulated X² (i.e. (i.e. 14.17911 > 8.343), the null hypothesis is rejected, alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is significant relationship between E-commerce and growth of business organizations

Ho: There is no significant relationship between E-commerce and substantial savings in communication, marketing and advertising cost for business organizations

Hi: There is significant relationship between E-commerce and substantial savings in communication, marketing and advertising cost of business organizations

Hypothesis II

| S/N | ITEM | SA | A | D | SD | Total |
|-------|--|----|----|----|----|-------|
| 5. | E-commerce creates substantial savings in communication, marketing and advertising cost for business organisations | 26 | 10 | 7 | 7 | 50 |
| 6. | E-commerce has greater advantages over the traditional ways of marketing their products | 18 | 19 | 9 | 4 | 50 |
| 7. | E-commerce makes two-way communication more closer, faster and timely. | 17 | 20 | 4 | 9 | 50 |
| 8. | Delivery of small items/goods are facilitated quickly through E-commerce | 21 | 11 | 10 | 8 | 50 |
| Total | | 82 | 60 | 30 | 28 | 200 |

The expected values $E_{ij} = (NR - NC)/GT$
 where NR – No of rows; NC – No of columns and GT
 Grand total

Thus, $E_{11} = (50 \times 82)/200 = 20,5$
 $E_{12} = (50 \times 60)/200 = 15$

$E_{13} = (50 \times 30)/200 = 7.5$
 $E_{14} = (50 \times 28)/200 = 7$ and so on

| O | E | O-E | (O-E) ² | (O-E) ² /E |
|-----------------------------|------|------|--------------------|-----------------------|
| 26 | 20.5 | 5.5 | 30.25 | 1.47561 |
| 10 | 15 | -5 | 25 | 1.666667 |
| 7 | 7.5 | -0.5 | 0.25 | 0.033333 |
| 7 | 7 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 18 | 20.5 | -2.5 | 6.25 | 0.304878 |
| 19 | 15 | 4 | 16 | 1.066667 |
| 9 | 7.5 | 1.5 | 2.25 | 0.3 |
| 4 | 7 | -3 | 9 | 1.285714 |
| 17 | 20.5 | -3.5 | 12.25 | 0.597561 |
| 20 | 15 | 5 | 25 | 1.666667 |
| 4 | 7.5 | -3.5 | 12.25 | 1.633333 |
| 9 | 7 | 2 | 4 | 0.571429 |
| 21 | 20.5 | 0.5 | 0.25 | 0.012195 |
| 11 | 15 | -4 | 16 | 1.066667 |
| 10 | 7.5 | 2.5 | 6.25 | 0.833333 |
| 6 | 7 | -1 | 1 | 0.142857 |
| Calculated X ² = | | | | 12.65691 |

The calculated chi-square is 12.65691. The tabulated ($X^2_{0.5,(4-1)(4-1)}$) where 0.5 is level of significance = 8.343.

Decision Rule: Calculated X² is greater than tabulated X² (i.e. 12.65691 > 8.343), the null hypothesis is rejected, and alternative hypothesis is accepted. Therefore, there is significant relationship between E-commerce and substantial savings in communication, marketing and advertising cost for business organizations.

Discussion of the findings

- i. From the analysis of the data, it was revealed that there is a significant relationship between E-commerce and growth of Business organizations. This finding is in agreement with Turban, et al, (2008) who stressed that by embracing e-commerce consumers may benefit from price reductions as a result of increased competition as more suppliers are able to compete in an electronically open marketplace, as a result of reduced selling prices due to a reduction in operational/transaction costs, and manufacturers internalizing activities traditionally performed by intermediaries. Also, E-commerce contributes to growth Gross Domestic Products (GDP) as it enables the SMEs to reach out beyond their local market to the world over.
- ii. There is a significant relationship between E-commerce and substantial savings in communication, marketing and advertising cost for businesses. Also, delivery of small items/goods is facilitated quickly through E-commerce. Other findings are that the deliveries of small items/goods are facilitated quickly through E-commerce and E-commerce contributes to growth Gross Domestic Products (GDP). It also enables

business organizations to reach out beyond their local market to the world over.

Conclusion

E-commerce provides customer access to large amount of information based on which decisions can be made on every aspect of business. The online market place presents a stiff competition among sellers and there is always a war on price; this however, gives the consumers opportunity to make wide range of choices. It saves time as working parents can conveniently combine their work schedule and shopping with ease. In online delivery, purchases are delivered with ease on the online channel such as e-tickets, e-books etc; as such the whole commercial cycle can be conducted via a network – providing instant access to products. This means a customer can shop anytime from anywhere in the world; and this singular benefit is often the most cited reason for e-Commerce adoption. These findings support the view that E-commerce significantly enhances the growth of business organizations.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of this research, the researcher has the following recommendation:

- i. Policy makers should provide clear guidelines and legal issues that need to be in place such as laws on electronic signatures and

- authentication, electronic contracting, consumer protection, privacy and data protection, computer/cybercrime, taxation and custom duties, and intellectual property rights.
- ii. E-commerce can be improved through a nationwide assessment of the e-commerce readiness to identify if, how and when business organizations can adapt e-commerce as a growth intervention tool.
 - iii. There is a need for E-commerce awareness by designating responsible institutions to provide information on electronic commerce, particularly on best practices, success stories, opportunities and obstacles related to the use of e-commerce.
 - iv. To stimulate the uptake of electronic commerce among business organizations greater priority must be given to the needs of small firms in terms of training and skill development strategies by ministries in charge of ICTs, as part of their wider ICT capacity-building programmes in such areas as basic ICT skills, ICT use in business and project management.
 - v. Finally, in the context of most of the countries where different agencies and government bodies implement e-commerce initiatives that are specifically targeted to business organizations, an institutional mechanism to coordinate among the lead actors needs to be developed in order to prevent duplication of efforts and to effectively implement some of these policy actions.

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