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MASTER'S THESIS (PROJECT)

**«Creating an effective digital channel for sales and promotion of IT services in the
B2B segment: the case of Ismet.kz»**

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Abstract

This paper discusses the use of the effectiveness of digital promotion and sales channels in the B2B segment in the Kazakhstan market, which will affect: increase profits, brand promotion, create and strengthen reputation, and also provide support for the interest of regular customers in business. The introduction of a marketplace of IT services for business in Kazakhstan will be in high demand among entrepreneurs.

The structure and volume of the thesis: The thesis consists of an introduction, 4 chapters, conclusion and recommendations, a list of references and applications.

The text of the master's work includes 6 tables, 15 figures

Key words: B2B, promotion, digital marketing, sales, IT

B2B - is a term that defines the type of information and economic interaction, classified by the type of interacting subjects, in this case, these are legal entities that work not for the end ordinary consumer, but for the same companies, that is, for another business. (Kotler F., 2018)

Sale - the exchange of goods or services for money, confirmed by a sales receipt, an act of work performed, an invoice for the transfer of goods. (Kotler F., 2018)

Promotion - a complex of market activities (marketing activities), the goals of which are to increase the share of a product, service, company or brand occupied by them in the market; bringing goods to the market; increasing their recognition; attracting new customers, increasing sales efficiency through a communicative impact on staff, partners and consumers. (marketch.ru, 2021)

Digital Marketing- is a generic term used to refer to targeted and interactive marketing of products and services that uses digital technology to attract leads and retain them as consumers. (Akulich M., 2019)

IT - processes, methods of searching, collecting, storing, processing, providing, distributing information and ways of implementing such processes and methods. (It.info.ru, 2021)

Introduction

The development of the Internet has served as the starting point of the information revolution. Internet applications are increasingly being used to meet human needs, from learning, entertainment, shopping to operations management, promotion and corporate tasks. Along with the development of the online environment, consumers have begun to change their traditional habits, leading to a major transformation of markets. As the Internet has established itself as a promising platform for information retrieval, the presence of IT businesses in the digital environment is usually expected by customers. At the same time as traditional means of mass communication, such as periodicals and television, digital marketing has become active, bringing much greater benefits to businesses.

Internet technology is replacing a number of classic methods of providing products and services, and is being used by companies to gather information about customer needs. The interconnected network not only expands the scope of customer information but also increases the size of the target audience. Thanks to the Internet, manufacturers and service providers can improve their offerings in a timely and efficient manner according to individual customer requirements. This allows companies to reach a much larger customer base while limiting promotional efforts.

In the modern era, online promotion of goods and services is no longer new to businesses. However, all the benefits of this kind of communication can only be achieved with an appropriate strategic approach. In addition, the current stage of development of the digital environment and digital communications is characterized by the fact that:

1. Classic tools, forms and channels are losing effectiveness.
2. The consumer becomes more knowledgeable and more discerning.
3. Internet-communications are reaching a qualitatively new level. In this regard, there is a need to comprehend digital-communications as a new marketing complex.

This paper examines the use of digital sales channels and promotion of IT services in the B2B segment on the example of Ismet.kz.

This research is **relevant as it** combines the study of already established and developing approaches to digital-communications and has a narrow focus on the specifics of promotion within the B2B segment.

The goal of the study is to create an effective digital sales and promotion channel for IT services in the B2B segment.

The implementation of the goal has necessitated the solution of the following **tasks**:

- 1 to systematize the theoretical foundations of digital communications;
- 2 to study the conditions of formation of the modern digital space and features of promotion strategy in the digital environment;
- 3 Identify key tools and channels for cyber sales channels;
- 4 Identify meaningful features of the B2B segment;
- 5 to analyze digital-communications on the example of «Ismet.kz»;
- 6 Identify the specifics of creating an effective digital sales channel and promoting IT services in the B2B segment.

The object of the study is Ismet.kz.

The subject of the study is the application of digital communications as a tool to promote products and services of the company B2B segment.

Hypothesis: The use of digital channels for business affects: increasing profits, brand promotion, creating and strengthening the reputation, maintaining the interest of loyal customers to your business. Implementation of marketplace IT services for business in Kazakhstan will have a high demand among entrepreneurs.

General analysis of sources and literature. Monographic literature, dissertation research, periodicals and Internet resources were used as a source base.

To date, digital has not been comprehensively comprehended in the modern literature. Most of the books are written by practitioners, and these works are of publicistic nature, each of the authors uses their own terminology and their own categories of classification, which deprives this direction in general of a comprehensive theoretical understanding.

A number of studies by foreign scientists (D. Bell, P. Drucker, M. Castells, E. Toffler, A. Touraine, J. Helbraith, C.K. Colin, etc.) are devoted to the development of the concept of information society. This study analyzed the process of social change and assessed the general direction of changes in the life of individuals and society as a whole under the global influence of information flows.

The researchers of St. Petersburg school in their research offer the analysis of digital as a channel (A.D. Krivonosov, O.G. Filatova, M.A. Shishkina). The works of a number of researchers are devoted to the key principles of Web 2.0 platform and its distinguishing characteristics from the first generation platform (Tim O'Reilly, Kalakanis J., Dolgin A.B.). In this study, the features of the Web 3.0 platform and its distinguishing characteristics from previous platforms have been studied (Dolgin A.B., Calacanis J.). Separate researchers have also analyzed the dynamics of PR development - from classical PR to PR 2.0 (Breckenridge D., Solis B., Gurov F. Scott D.M.).

A number of foreign researchers devoted their works to the issue of target audience study - principles of its formation, main characteristics, individual features (Kotler F., Armstrong G., Percy L., Rossiter J., Sharma S.). Studies by Lin K., Sherlock T., Cheng L., Dowhan D. and Kotler F. reveal the essence of the concept «brand» and analyze in detail key aspects of brand formation and positioning.

The works of S. Minetta and F. Webster provide a comprehensive analysis of the features of marketing in this segment and describe the authors' original views on how a marketing and PR specialist should act in the industrial sphere. In their works the researchers provide a comprehensive analysis of the B2B segment; formulate the differences between industrial and consumer promotion; and evaluate the impact of these differences on a company's communication strategy in this market segment.

To implement the objectives of the research **methods of theoretical and empirical research** were used: systematization and analysis of theoretical literature on the problem, primary analysis of internal documents of the company, secondary analysis of internal research organization, comparative analysis of statistical indicators, content analysis of digital-activity of the studied company and its main competitors.

The **empirical base of the research** was the materials of «Ismet. kz»:

(communication and marketing strategies, press releases in thematic publications), as well as secondary data of internal research of the company (analysis of customer loyalty (NPS), research of the company's target audience portrait, main channels of communication with customers), web-resources of international companies-manufacturers of metal cutting tools.

Provisions made for the defense:

- 1 Currently, there is an increase in the activity of business entities to promote IT services in the Kazakhstani market, which is largely based on the use of digital communications.
- 2 The current level of development of digital communications in the B2B segment is characterized by the fact that companies in this market segment actively compete with each other in quality and content of the content presented in the digital space.
- 3 The optimized set of digital PR tools: SEO, SMM, work with industry portals, when used in combination, helps to create a positive image of the company in the field of B2B.
- 4 The company's website, which aims to reduce the user's path to the product, simplifying interaction algorithms, allows «Ismet. kz» to build optimal communication with target public groups and contributes to increasing the loyalty of existing customers.

The **structure of the work** reflects the set objectives as well as the general sense of the research and consists of an introduction, main sections, conclusion, list of references and appendices.

1 Literature review

Since the 70s of the 20th century, theorists and practitioners around the world have been engaged in lively discussions about the era of the information revolution. Subsequently, many theories of post-industrial society emerged. Among them we should mention the fundamental constructions of post-industrial society by D. Bell, M. Castells, the concept of information society by P. Drucker, the widely known futurology by E. Toffler. All of them agreed that information technology opens up vast horizons for the realization of personality, human communication, significantly changes communication in society. One of the proofs of this was the active formation of the Global Network.

At the moment, due to the rapid development of the Internet environment and the technologies associated with it, a large number of definitions of communications that are developing in this plane have appeared. That is why this study needs a more detailed analysis of the key provisions. With regard to the concept of «communication», this study is based on the definition of a specialist in the field of mass communication, Gavr D.P. Under communication he understands effective synchronous and diachronic interaction, the purpose of which is the transfer of information from one subject of interaction to another.

In thematic literature and international practice, the following concepts are now actively used: web communications, Internet communications, online communications, digital communications, mobile communications, digital communications.

As for such concepts as «Internet communications», «web communications» and «online communications», it can be noted that they are all synonymous with each other. Turning to the essence of these phenomena, it is worth noting that the researchers of the St. Petersburg School believe that Internet communications is a set of online activities that are part of an overall communication campaign. Thus, these definitions are united by the fact that the process of communication takes place exclusively in the online space, in the expanse of the Global Web (WWW). In this approach, it is important to consider that the authors perceive digital as a channel aimed at evaluating, supporting and changing around the company on the Internet .

In turn, mobile communication is a type of online communication and is a process carried out through a mobile device (phone, smartphone, etc.) that has access to the Global Internet.

Digital can be interpreted as a digital environment or digital space. It follows that this type of PR is not limited to the Internet space, which, for example, is confirmed by OOH (Out of home) technologies, which include QR codes, NFC, augmented reality technologies, etc.

Thus, we can safely say that these definitions are used interchangeably and have a broader scope than all the previous concepts. In fact, digital-communications, unlike Internet and mobile communications, go beyond the online environment and also cover the offline space, using appropriate technologies and channels, which will be discussed below.

It is worth mentioning that digital is a relatively new direction and today its concepts and theories are only being formed in the scientific discourse, and, therefore, the existing studies are only intermediate results.

The evolution of the tone of communication between the modern consumer and the basic subject of communication and their increasing movement to the Internet sets new rules for the relationship. If previously the main channels in communication campaigns were print media, radio and television, today the most effective campaigns are those that use all the possibilities of digital communications.

The main prerequisite for the formation of the digital space was the Web 2.0 platform. The principles of this platform were first formulated in history by Tim O'Reilly

The Web as a platform is associated with the processes of developing and deploying applications that can be used directly with a web browser. Such applications are Rich Internet Applications, which translates to «rich Internet applications». As a rule, they are all similar to regular applications in their functions, but they can be run directly through the Internet.

The second principle was to use new WWW technologies to create RichInternetApplications (e.g. CDN; Ajax; RSS, etc.).

The principle of complicity represents the third criterion of Web 2.0. Co-participation is the relationship of user-user and user-developer formats.

Social networks represent the last, fourth, criterion. There are many varieties of social networks: social bookmarking, social libraries, social cataloging, social media repositories and specialized social networks. All of them are the last element that significantly distinguishes Web 2.0 from the outdated Web 1.0.

With Web 1.0, content (photos, texts, audio and video files) was placed exclusively in a hierarchical manner, and it was done only by professionals for a monetary reward. The consumers of the content were ordinary users. With the advent of Web 2.0 content began to be created and posted by users who often do not have any professional skills and knowledge in this area. They (the users) are the consumers of this content. That is, the key difference of the Web 2.0 platform is the principle of UGC (User-generated content) - content generated by users themselves. This freedom of content production has given a lot of noise information, which gave rise to the development of the concept of Web 3.0, the idea of which is formulated by Jason Calacanis. The author speaks about the emergence of a new platform on the basis of Web 2.0, but the accent is transferred from technical innovations to the social and cultural ones, as the main task is to reduce the degree of content quality degradation. A.V. Dolgin, developing this idea, highlights the key difference between Web 3.0 and Web 2.0. In his opinion, it lies in the fact that Web 3.0 allows users to independently generate and certify content (i.e. to mark only what is worth attention of an individual and his reference groups in which they consist).

Thus, the key trends of Web development are related to two important parameters: the evolution of Web-technologies themselves and the evolution of user interaction with these technologies.

Researchers believe that at the moment, communication is increasingly shifting towards direct communication with the end consumer - and this is the main difference between PR 2.0 and PR 1.0. But the classic technology of PR must not be left aside. According to D. Breckenbridge, now comes a time when there are plenty of new opportunities for communications:

- 1 track customer feedback;

- 2 dive into the online environment to deliver meaningful news;
- 3 Influence consumers through more relevant channels of communication.

In contemporary discourse, different views persist about traditional PR - some researchers are convinced that the «old PR» no longer exists; others believe that it still exists on par with PR 2.0.

The position of D.M. Scott, a specialist in the field of Internet strategies, seems more credible. He is convinced that today in the information environment there are completely new rules. In his book «The New Rules of Marketing and PR» D.M. Scott excluded the term PR 2.0, however, he concluded that the development of the global network makes traditional PR methods less and less effective.

The terms 'digital promotion' and 'digital promotion' are used interchangeably to refer to a set of activities that use digital media, such as www-pages, email and mobile technologies, together with a set of electronic data and software applications . In fact, companies are using digital promotion as an integral part of their marketing function. It can be said that modern technology has facilitated the promotion of a company's products and services, taking it to a whole new level.

However, in order to use these technological advances effectively, professionals must have a full understanding of them. F. Kotler and G. Armstrong proposed an accessible technology to consider from two perspectives, information and interaction. Information technology (IT) deals with the collection, research, analysis, organization and control of information. These may include, for example, data collection systems, data storage systems, access to database tools, and software (software) that helps in organizing information into relevant and timely knowledge. Thanks to IT information processing, it is now possible to perform operations much faster, on a larger scale and more economically. Meanwhile, in terms of interaction, technology has supported customers and businesses in how they communicate, create and maintain relationships, and collaborate with others through email, mobile, social media, interactive products and self-service technologies. Therefore, the relationship between customers and businesses allows for growth at an interactive level, gaining more competitive advantage and time duration.

2 Theoretical approaches to creating an effective sales channel and promoting IT services in the B2B segment

2.1 Key features of the B2B segment

It is crucially important to consider whether specific products and/or services belong to B2C (business-to-customers) or B2B (business-to-business) markets when developing a communications mix. Different types of markets have significant differences, which are related to the process and nature of promotion of goods and services. Thus, consumer activity, constraints, terms and conditions, the sales process, and the effectiveness of communications will vary significantly from segment to segment.

Business to Business (B2B) is a company's activity focused on obtaining benefits from rendering services, sale of goods to other companies. In this case, the object of such activity is a product or service, and the subjects are companies interacting in the market field. According to researchers in this segment, in a general sense, the term «business-to-business» refers to a situation where one company carries out a commercial transaction with another company. Typically, this process occurs when:

- 1 The business is the source of the materials for their production (e.g., a producer of products that buys salt).
- 2 A company needs the services of another organization for operational reasons (e.g., a food manufacturer using an accounting firm to review its finances).
- 3 A company resells goods and services produced by others (e.g., a retailer buys a final product from a food manufacturer).

Generally, researchers distinguish two main business-to-business models, namely:

1. Vertical B2B model
2. Horizontal B2B model

Companies in the vertical business-to-business model tend to be manufacturing or business-oriented. Manufacturers or commercial retailers may have relationships with raw material suppliers. For example, Dell works in this way with chips and computer boards. Manufacturers and the franchisor may form a trading relationship. Simply put, in this case, a B2B website is like an online store for an enterprise. Through the website, the company can vigorously promote its products and increase the number of transactions.

The horizontal business-to-business model is a transaction model for the intermediate trading market. According to the economist and researcher of this segment T. Robert, this model is associated with the concentration of similar transactions of different industries in one place. It is a kind of platform that provides a trading opportunity for the buyer and the supplier. The company in this model does not own the products or sell the products, but only provides a platform to attract sellers and buyers doing business through an online website. Buyers can easily find vendor information and relevant product information on the relevant online resource.

To identify the key characteristics of digital promotion in this segment, let us first analyze this segment in more detail, identifying the main features of its formation and development.

The theoretical aspects of B2B marketing communications in the scientific

discourse were formulated much later than B2C. Initially, many researchers were of the opinion that, at the conceptual level, marketing principles are applicable to all markets, but later they began to highlight the first differences characterizing the interaction of market actors in B2B . Such differences include: higher volume of purchases, higher risk of the buyer, complexity of the purchasing decision-making process, closer relationship between the buyer and the seller and their mutual influence on each other.

The concept of the B2B market has come to Eastern Europe relatively recently.

Today, Kazakhstani B2B companies seeking to expand their market through participation in government procurement programs are faced with ever-increasing competition from foreign enterprises. As a result, an important condition for maintaining the company's competitiveness is the ability not only to create a demanded product at an acceptable price and find ways to deliver this product to the consumer, but also to take into account the specifics of the market based on knowledge about the end user.

Considering the scope of marketing and PR, who it is aimed at, as well as its main goals and objectives, most researchers agree that the first step is to determine in what part of the production chain is the product of the basic entity, and how important the brand is in its further promotion in the market .

Φ. Webster identified three main types of products:

1. The product produced by an enterprise is the initial raw material for subsequent processing (as an example, rolled metal products produced by steel mills). That is, this rolled metal product is then processed in some way (cut, bent, etc.), but when the final product is produced, it is not very important which particular steel mill manufactured the rolled metal product.

2. A product that is a raw material for further processing, but also plays a major role in the positioning of the final product.

3. Products (including household products) whose name is important to the consumer - both the product itself and the manufacturing company.

Whereas in the B2C segment the basic subject is the manufacturing company or the seller's representative, and the representative of the target public is the individual, the consumer (as an individual); in the B2B market segment, on both sides are the company (enterprise) customers who produce and buy manufacturing and technical products. From which it follows that the specificity of industrial marketing can be defined as an activity in the field of the market of goods of industrial and technical purpose, which aims to promote these goods or business services from the companies that produce them, to those organizations that buy them for their subsequent operation in production or resale excluding changes. The marketing problem of the industrial segment, which PR activities should partially solve, is related to the fact that buyer awareness of the brand or product often does not provide the desired behavior.

To understand in detail at what stages digital promotion begins to work, consider the stages of the procurement process as cited by J. Coe:

- 1 Awareness and identification of the need
- 2 Identification of suppliers
- 3 Information gathering
- 4 KP Request

- 5 Narrowing down the number of options
- 6 Showing/presenting goods to salespeople
- 7 Information verification
- 8 Selection of supplier
- 9 Negotiations
- 10 First purchase
- 11 Evaluation
- 12 Second purchase

These stages make it possible to deduce the main difference from the purchase in the B2C segment: in B2B the buyer is always more aware of the market condition of the products being purchased and a large number of analytical operations reduce the influence of the emotional factor on the purchase decision. Consequently, the communication process in digital will appeal more to rational facts about the product and brand positioning.

As mentioned above, the relevant definition of B2B marketing for this study is as follows: a company sells products and services to another company for its own use or to sell to a third company that will also use them for its own use.

According to F. Webster, in such a difficult market for creating non-unique, standardized products, communications efforts are aimed at fully understanding - «who is the company's customer?», and at finding those digital communications channels where the company could differentiate itself.

Companies operating in the B2B segment purchase goods and services for their subsequent exploitation in the production of other goods and services. One way or another, most companies participate in industrial markets, hence, industrial markets are superior to consumer markets. The main difference from B2C is a large volume of sales per customer, diversity of demand, and a closer and longer supplier-customer relationship. Given that most B2B firms produce goods and services in very limited quantities, changes in the value chain of a good or service can have a significant impact on all suppliers involved. Consequently, demand for manufactured goods is more volatile than for consumer goods. This backlash can cause fluctuations in demand, which are called the «whiplash effect».

A major specialist in marketing F. Kotler noted the importance of branding for companies operating in the segment of B2B as it helps to identify goods and services of companies and their differences from competitors and also serves as a guarantee of quality, increasing the perceived value of goods.

Φ. Kotler distinguishes the functions of industrial brand, such as:

- 1 increasing information efficiency;
- 2 Reducing risk by creating added value (image benefit) .

Note that the most important condition for the implementation of these functions is to work with all points of contact of the basic subject with the client. «Respect is built only on the basis of performance. Actions at all points of interaction without exception».

C. Minette, considering the differences of branding in different markets, notes that while in B2C the central focus of branding is most often built on the «resonance of values», in B2B markets competence is the dominant element that determines the credibility of the brand.

The author even highlights the pedagogical task of industrial marketing, which is expressed in the transfer of knowledge about how the characteristics of the relevant product, especially high-tech, can translate into its non-obvious benefits.

The B2B environment is much more complex than B2C. This segment is characterized by:

- Longer, often more complex, sales cycles;
- The level of service, which is often set by contract;
- Usually a significantly larger investment (in time, money and resources);
- Increased complexity due to the number of stakeholders with different voices, goals and agendas;
- The personal goals and expectations of each stakeholder to be understood.

But fundamentally, as in B2C, the epicentre of success here is the connection between people, the commercial partnership and the ongoing desire to maintain that relationship over time. Research shows that when relationships are based on shared values, culture and behaviours, then the company is most successful.

There are various models that reveal the structure and mechanisms of consumer behaviour in the B2B market. The main purpose of such models is to reveal the mechanics of purchase decision-making. For example, Gord Sheth's model focuses on buyers' expectations, role orientation, lifestyle and perceived risk. Sheth, on the one hand, notes that several employees are involved in the decision-making process, but his model looks specifically at individual behavior. The author answers the question of what influences differences between buyer expectations in the B2B segment and, among others, highlights the factor of perceptual distortion, which is defined as «the extent to which each participant distorts information to 'fit' their beliefs and previous experiences.

In the model of F. Webster and J. Wind the structure of the organization is divided into five subsystems - among which communication, power, status, remuneration and the set of business processes. The communication subsystem in B2B has the following functions: informing, guiding, instructing, influencing and persuading, and integrating. In this model, B2B communication is analyzed in terms of interpersonal interaction; the authors elaborate on role expectations, behaviors and attitudes, and conclude that, as a result, purchasing behavior in the B2B market turns out to be individual - in the framework of joint decision-making at the organizational level.

Paul Anderson and Terry Chambers developed a model for motivating members of the procurement process and their involvement in decision making . Based on expectation theory, where motivation depends on the subject's view of the relationship of possible rewards and punishments to their actions, this model was created.

In the motivational component of this model, an individual's desire to work and sense of satisfaction from his or her activity is driven by both 'intrinsic' and 'extrinsic' rewards. Intrinsic rewards are directly related to the nature of that work and are important for satisfying the individual's 'higher order' needs, such as self-esteem and self-actualization. For example, the satisfaction of solving a difficult task or the satisfaction of a successful negotiation.

In P. Andersen and T. Chambers' model the key point is the system of performance evaluation, which suggests that different performance models correlate with different

performance indicators that a company should pay attention to in the process of performance evaluation. The main thing in this model is the degree to which these indicators correspond to an individual's perceptions of how to do his/her job, the level of performance expressed in the indicators, and the materiality of error in specific assessments.

B2B promotional specialist Steve Minette offers his own paradigm based on cases. By cases the author understands the use of specific business situations, which form the optimal approach for the industrial promotion paradigm. A specific situation according to Steve Minette is a need that has been identified by an industrial customer and the story of how a certain solution has been found over time.

Communication in the business-to-business segment is a set of personal and impersonal communications addressed to the industrial customer. According to F. Webster, this kind of communication usually includes:

- 1 personal sales;
- 2 catalogues and literature on the company's products;
- 3 promotions;
- 4 direct mailings;
- 5 trade shows;
- 6 advertising and PR.

The author is convinced that the effectiveness of any tool of this kind depends on how it is combined with the rest of the promotion tools. Each of them plays a separate role in solving the problem of raising customer awareness, the purpose of which is «to bring the potential customer out of a state where he is absolutely unaware of the company and its products, and accompany him at all stages of the purchasing decision process up to the moment of purchase». Thus, F. Webster is convinced that the expert on industrial promotion must plan a communication strategy taking into account the characteristics of each of its elements. Most researchers note that there is a strong interdependence between the objectives and the evaluation process of the PR campaign, and also emphasize the need for economic evaluation of the preferences of the target audience and the impact of key communication messages on these preferences.

Let us consider the features of the target audience segments in B2B. On the one hand, objectively the consumer in B2B is more aware of the product than in the B2C segment, and may even act as an expert. However, on the other hand, the expected awareness may be only superficial. Therefore, communication with a professional buyer should be based primarily on the use of logic and facts. Researchers point out that logic in B2B communication should not only be based on rational, cognitive thinking, but also supported by facts, as only verbal logical reasoning reduces the level of persuasion, especially in the first purchase.

Another important feature of B2B is the need for narrow but in-depth coverage of the target audience, as its core consists of people who make direct financial decisions to purchase a product or service. As O.U. Yuldasheva writes, several people, including executives, are involved in making purchasing decisions.

A B2B company «wins» when the following components are present:

- Demonstration of a fundamental understanding of the client's business, objectives

and strategic direction

- Continued focus on reducing costs and effort for client organisations; removing barriers and risks; facilitating interaction and enabling self-service through accessible and convenient channels

- Meeting and/or exceeding expectations, especially in the light of consumer experience

- Emphasis on building trust and developing trust in the relationship with the client

- Proactive management of problems and risks in order to neutralize them

Numerous studies show that companies that consistently excel within these provisions will ultimately benefit through loyalty, increased revenue and increased shareholder value.

As for the main trends in the development of business-to-business, it is worth noting that now this market segment is still actively developing. However, according to Western researchers A. Brzozowska, S. Clycombe, despite the good dynamics of development, B2B is still immature in terms of online price negotiations and opportunities for effective online collaboration - these areas are still considered by researchers of the B2B segment as underdeveloped .

In terms of key trends, it is worth noting that the B2B segment has been actively changing over the past two years. And the nature of these developments may serve as a challenge for some brands in this segment. It's no secret that the B2B audience is largely online. About 89% of B2B job seekers use the internet while searching for the necessary information on the segment . Technological advancements, ever-increasing digital adoption and even more digital life have led to new trends and business scenarios in the consumer world.

According to marketers and PR-specialists, integrated e-commerce has a special role in the development of the segment at the moment. With integrated e-commerce, part of the software solutions are installed within the [ERP](#) (Enterprise Resource Planning) system. That means that the connection between the business logic and database of the embedded system is configured automatically. The information available in the back-end system, such as item numbers, prices and current product stocks, is used without being copied to another system and displayed directly in the e-commerce system. In this way, integrated e-commerce software requires no investment in the creation and maintenance of a separate database or business logic. Instead, all data is stored in one place. According to marketers, this will prevent redundant input, errors, and synchronization time.

2.2 Digital promotion tools and channels

Before analyzing the key channels and tools of digital PR, let us turn to the key terminology for this paragraph. For a proper analysis, it is necessary to distinguish between digital promotion channels and tools.

By **channel of communication** is meant a physical communicative intermediary that ensures the existence of the message and its movement from communicator to recipient. Each channel has its own set of tools. The whole variety of communication channels is divided into natural and technical channels. In this paper, the second type of

communication channels is of particular research interest. Technical or artificial communication channels are subject mediators, and have a material expression. These can be material media or technical devices.

Communication tools are to be understood as the means by which a communication message is encoded.

In general terms, we can imagine that communication channels answer the question «Where is the promotion?», and the tools - «With what exactly is it implemented? The specifics of sales via the Internet are presented in Figure 1.

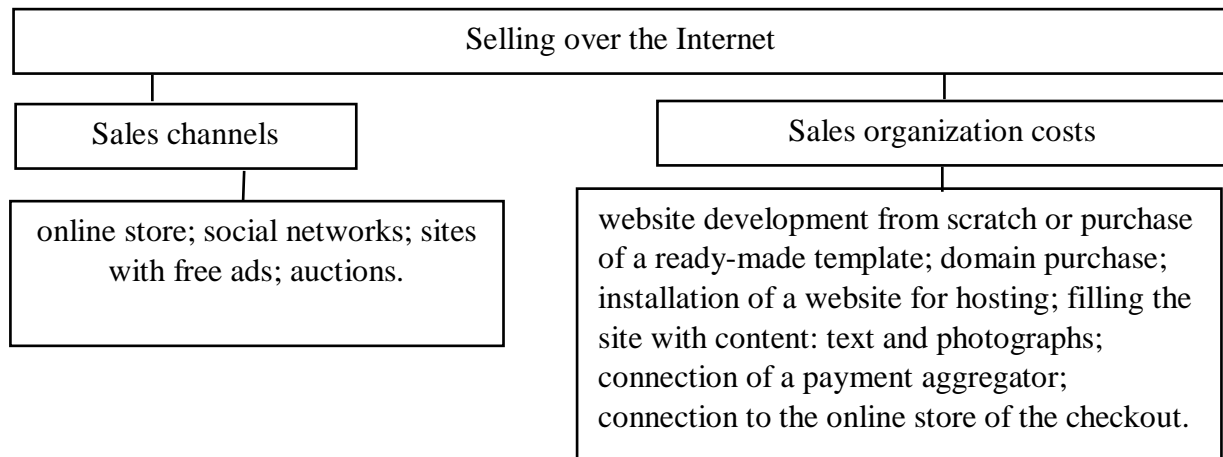


Figure 1. Features of organizing online sales

Internet sales are convenient and quite profitable for both sellers of goods and their buyers.

However, it is worth noting that in some cases, digital promotion channels and tools can take one form. An example is an organization's website. On the one hand, it is a communication intermediary (i.e. channel) between the user and the company, and on the other hand, the website acts as a tool through which the company implements its digital strategy (navigation, storage, data processing, etc.). Accordingly, the distinction mainly comes down to the functional features of the components of digital communication.

Generally speaking, the most significant channels of digital promotion are as follows:

- 1 website;
- 2 search engines;
- 3 social media;
- 4 mobile applications;
- 5 email.

In addition to the main channels presented, the following channels are additionally distinguished: game consoles, digital TV, interactive screens, self-service terminals, etc. However, in this paper only the most popular and effective communication channels will be analyzed in more detail.

Search engines are very popular at the moment, among them the following are well known: Google, Bing, Yandex. According to A. Charlesworth, the key mission of search

engines lies in providing their users with timely and relevant search results. The author argues that people turn to search engines when they are looking for a physical or virtual product, service, entertainment or brand name . The work of American search engine researchers C. Hillis, C. Jarrett, and M. Pettit, «Google and Search Culture» describes in detail the process of search sites. According to their book, automatic programs called spiders or bots are used for relevant output, they monitor hyperlinks and scan them on the page they find. The information gathered from each page is then stored in a massive database with a link and output called an index. The authors point out: when a query is generated, these indexes are retrieved and the corresponding results are displayed on search engine results pages (SERPs) almost immediately. The number of results can be numerous, and the quality of the result with respect to what users are searching for varies greatly . This is why search engines use their ranking algorithms to assess the quality of each result and place them at the appropriate level in the search results.

Russian information technology expert, I.S. Ashmanov, points out that with their large number of users, search engines have become a critical channel for reaching the necessary target audience on the Internet. Search engines as a digital channel provide the following communication tools:

- 1 Search Engine Optimization (SEO);
- 2 Search advertising .

In his paper «Promoting a Website in Search Engines», the author concludes that all search engine optimization is about thorough keyword research. This includes finding out how people come to a particular website - what terms they use, what questions they ask, etc. These parameters are directly related to the characteristics of a particular company's target audience. By targeting certain words with various search engine marketing techniques, website owners can increase their chances of showing up in the results for a particular search. Russian researcher D.N. Kolisnichenko notes that optimizing a site for search engines and creating targeted content with keywords provides direct traffic, which usually expands with content sharing, direct traffic and link usage, as more people find and use what has been created .

I.S. Ashmanov states that it is necessary to use search engine optimization when it is possible to monetize traffic without actions or financial transactions on the company website itself (usually through search engine and other types of advertising) and when the corporate website presents products/services that are directly sold.

Search advertising, in turn, is a special case of contextual advertising. In general terms, the main stages of creating search advertising include:

- 4 Creating a search ad;
- 5 Search for customers using keywords;
- 6 Defining a budget for a search campaign .

The purpose of search engine advertising is to create attractive positions for a company on search engine results pages in order to increase the number of visitors to their own web page.

E-mail is a convenient channel for interaction between businesses and customers in the form of direct promotion and customer relationship management. Sending advertising through this channel is a means of mass communication, group communication, one of the

tools of Internet promotion. This kind of advertising is associated with automated e-mailing of messages to a group of recipients according to a pre-formulated plan.

Digital marketing researcher, A. Charlesworth, argues that checking email is one of the most common reasons people go online. Together with its potential for personalization, this channel is predictable and attractive for deploying direct promotion.

Thus, email marketing allows building direct communication between a brand/business/company and potential or existing customers. In particular, the researchers of online promotion B. Halligan and D. Shah note that the result of such communication is usually expressed in an increase in customer loyalty to the business, as well as an increase in orders. In other words, promotional mailing promotes customer retention, attraction and return. Now in the world there are a large number of specialized Internet agencies that provide this kind of service.

Next, let's consider such a promising and relatively young communication channel as **social media**. Although the potential of social media is still more felt in B2C marketing, according to F. Ellis-Chadwick, an expert in retail and digital promotion, this channel can also be useful for companies operating in business markets. According to the author, B2B companies can optimize the excellent features of social networks, such as interactivity, cost-effectiveness and wide coverage of their professional connections, increase brand awareness and keep in touch with the public, for example, by creating or participating in a specialized community.

B. Halligan and D. Shah believe that strategic planning of social media communication should start first with understanding the target segments. Next, possible goals are identified based on a rational consideration of the commercial benefits and costs of the selected social media. A clearly defined set of goals, responsibilities and resource allocation is necessary to guide any corporate social media activities.

According to digital communication researchers, digital promotion is based on certain principles. The principles formulated by Scott Klososki are of research interest.

According to S. Klososki, digital promotion implements the following principles:

- 1 at the heart of digital promotion is the synthesis of what technology can do and what an individual can create;
- 2 Digital promotion is the integration of a large number of different technologies (social, mobile, web, etc.);
- 3 The more data about the target audience is used in the promotion process, the better;
- 4 digital promotion implies the need for constant communication with target public groups.

A critical part of a digital promotion strategy is choosing which digital tools to use for the wide range of digital marketing channels available.

This paper is based on Scott Klososki's classification. On its basis 5 groups of digital-communication tools can be distinguished:

1. Website.
2. Social technologies.
3. mobile applications.
4. traffic.

5. Measurements.

Corporate website today is one of the powerful tools of modern digital PR. Experts figuratively call the company website «home base», because specialists visit it to get information for research, analysis of user preferences, etc. The site focuses the use of other channels of digital PR . It is a kind of digital entrance, which presents to the public brand aesthetics, corporate culture, mission, vision and business proposals.

According to S. Klososki, a corporate website is a digital copy of a brand that communicates the value proposition and shows exactly what differentiates a certain company from its competitors. As a rule, digital brand copy includes the following components:

- 1 About the company;
- 2 Services page;
- 3 Products and catalog;
- 4 Warranty page;
- 5 Executive Team.

Website content is best defined by what helps support and tell the story and news of a particular brand (visual or textual presentation of information).

It is worth noting that according to D. Ryan and C. Jones, an effective website should start with a set of clearly defined goals. The ultimate goal of a website, according to the researchers, is to convert traffic into customers or potential customers, so everything on the site should always target it, either directly through product information, calls to action, and sales-oriented content or indirectly, motivating repeat visits . According to this goal of conversion the function of the website can be presented in different forms, such as e-commerce, brand-building, portal to other websites or social media .

Thus, several factors for website success include: content quality, usability, accessibility, aesthetics and an effective website promotion strategy. A. Charlesworth calls the quality of content a key factor in attracting visitors to a company's site, as well as their retention . In addition, the ranking of the site in search engines is also determined by the merit and relevance of the information provided. Usability, accessibility and aesthetics are important characteristics necessary for a web page to be engaging among those with similar content.

The scientific-applied concept of usability comes from micro-ergonomics, but while in ergonomics the performance is determined by the performance of the system as a whole, usability is derived from the human factor and is based on usability and ease of use for humans. One of the founders of this concept is the Danish researcher and practitioner Jakob Nielsen. The author believes that ease of use is a determining factor in the development of the Internet economy. J. Nielsen's approach. Nielsen's «Home-run» usability implies taking into account the following factors:

- high quality content;
- frequent updates;
- minimum loading time;
- ease of use;
- relevance to the user's needs;
- uniqueness in the online space;

- a corporate culture focused on the online environment.

In the understanding of another expert, Stephen Krug, «usability» means that a certain thing is adapted so well that a person with average ability and typical life experience can easily use it for its intended purpose.

The author notes that when interacting with Internet resources, any additional issue forms a load of perception and distracts attention from the immediate objective. And despite the fact that these phenomena can be insignificant, S. Krug argues that they tend to accumulate and, in the end, confuse users. And since users tend to make decisions without much thought over the scripted behavior, developers need to make the necessary content obvious, otherwise users' confidence in the site's content will be undermined.

J. Nielsen notes that one of the few facts confirmed by research is that in most cases audiences tend to spend less time reading pages. Consequently, users browse content, looking for visual images, phrases that would attract attention.

In turn, I.S. Ashmanov notes that when designing web pages, developers often proceed from the assumption that users will view the page, evaluate all the variety of options and make a choice in favor of the most suitable one. In practice, however, the author argues, it is often not the best option that is chosen, but the one that first seemed appropriate. Such strategy in the literature is called «satisficing» . This term was introduced by social and political scientist Herbert Simon back in 1956.

So, website usability consists of three key blocks:

1. Structure of the site (should be obvious for a user with different level of perception).
2. Ease of searching for necessary information (possibility of filtering and personalization of the output).
3. text (must match the communication strategy of the underlying PR subject and relate to the SEO promotion strategy).

However, a good website also requires a good website marketing strategy to reach the right groups of the target public. This can be achieved using both online and offline advertising tools such as search engine marketing, advertising, viral marketing or events and sponsorships .

Social technologies. This group of tools provides online communication of the basic subject of PR with the target audiences of this subject using the principle of UGC discussed above. Social technologies are various media platforms for communicating, finding partners, and building a company's reputation. They provide valuable tools for an organization to connect with target public groups in real time. Social technologies are media platforms for different needs and goals of a company. For example:

- media platforms for conversation;
- platforms for collaboration;
- platforms for community building;
- media platform to build a reputation.

Scott Klososki emphasizes that the social component of any digital strategy is not just all sorts of social media, but a combination of certain elements. Here are the most important of them:

- 1 interrelationship, which implies constant interaction;

- 2 Creating a community with a high degree of user involvement;
- 3 social networks and social interaction;
- 4 user-generated content;
- 5 crowdsourcing;
- 6 mobile technology.

Currently, there are many different definitions of social media. Crucially, all of them agree that social media are first and foremost a way of sharing data produced by users using the Internet. This exchange of data is also possible through the use of all kinds of mobile gadgets.

Robert Scoble highlighted the following distinctive characteristics of social media :

- Social media allows you to proofread published material;
- involve user interaction (dialogue);
- it is acceptable to check the popularity level of posts;
- rapid implementation of access to old publications;
- multimedia content (i.e., the use of multiple media at once);
- there is no need to coordinate the material for posting;
- publications are not limited in scope;
- the possibility of referring to other sources;
- there is no complete control over the content of the content.

According to Igor Reichman, social media have been actively used in Russian practice for the last 3-5 years, and the market is still oversaturated with low- and medium-quality services related to the use of this digital tool. At this stage, a methodology and system for corporate cooperation with social media and their integration into companies' general communication strategies is being formed. In the industrial B2B markets, the growth in the use of SMM (Social media marketing) is extremely low. The author believes that the top management of companies often does not see social media as consumers of industrial products, for example, suppliers of large enterprises that purchase rolled metal products, because the SMM performance indicators are completely different from those of other digital tools. Social media is not always a source of powerful traffic because the conversion rate of users is difficult to track. But the main PR task which can be solved by social media is image-forming. To be more specific, when used properly social media are «human face» of a company, the one which is hidden behind the classic forms of PR, such as press conferences or backgrounder on the website. A modern consumer is interested in the subjective side of a company's or brand's life. Social media illustrate the trend of media convergence. As Henry Jenkins observes, media convergence is mainly characterized by the fact that the culture of knowledge meets the culture of consumption.

Moving on to the analysis of the next communication tool, we note that by **traffic**, in this case, we mean the total number of unique visitors who have come to the site from all channels per unit time (K. Williamson). The author also points out that there are two types of traffic - inbound and outbound .

The most important task at this level, according to C. Williamson, is to achieve as much traffic for his site as possible. To achieve a good result, the whole set of digital tools is used.

The group of tools related to attracting traffic includes not only PR, but also

advertising and marketing tools: SEO, SMM, working with industry portals, contextual advertising, media advertising, viral and guerrilla marketing. The researcher argues that if the optimizer wields these tools competently, the increase in traffic will be significant.

Another element of digital promotion, according to S. Klossoski, is **measurement**. Measurements can include various web analytics tools, as well as measurements carried out with the help of internal company resources, which allow:

- 1 measure conversions and actions;
- 2 analyze user engagement and response;
- 3 record the level of influence on user actions (e.g., the number of users who opened the email sent).
- 4 according to domestic and foreign experts, when creating a unified strategy for the selection of digital channels, the following criteria should be kept in mind:
- 5 knowledge of the goals and objectives of the underlying pr entity.
- 6 target group research.
- 7 analysis of planning based on the interests and behaviors of target groups in the online space, rather than based on the ability to use the tools themselves.

The precise portrait of the target digital audience, its behavior show which channels and tools in the context of the campaign will be relevant (ie, will match the demands), and which - do not.

In addition, D. Ryan and other researchers are convinced that digital marketing communication (DMC) approaches to business rarely rely on a single channel. Since different digital channels have different advantages and disadvantages, promotional professionals not only need to be clear about how to choose the right tools, but they also need to combine them together, including with traditional communication tools and channels, to maximize the desired results.

C. Klososki argues that one should keep in mind the concept of so-called «technological Darwinism», when technology and its use become a decisive factor in the success of organizations. There is a certain trajectory of change in the industry itself. These changes and their speed vary from industry to industry. If one does not keep up with the times, according to the American researcher, there is a risk of offering goods and services that are irrelevant to the key demands of the times. In such cases, a so-called «transitional leader» can have a positive impact - a leader who is able to help a business entity to master know-how, to move from the current level of development to the next more promising .

Some specialists emphasize that various product categories (including independent brands) have their own specifics of staying in the digital environment. The head of the consulting company specializing in word-of-mouth marketing, Andy Sernowitz, mentions that certain categories of goods also have their «natural» reserves and limits in attracting users in communication, formation of viral influence and word of mouth. It is important to analyze such specifics to select only the relevant channels and tools. For this purpose, it uses such an analysis tool as digital-listening, which allows to take into account and analyze the presence of the company and its competitors in all digital channels.

Thanks to the ability to communicate with the business audience and the ability to

calculate and analyze, the digital environment is now one of the most innovative and effective spaces. This is a completely new environment that has replaced the usual Internet space, bringing together the possibilities of modern communication channels. Digital implies a comprehensive impact on the consumer.

The rapid development of the World Wide Web and its services, as well as the appearance of new gadgets and applications are encouraging modern organizations to use digital communications and consulting services in the digital environment.

In this way, the evolution of the tone of communication between the modern consumer and the basic communicator and their increasing migration to the Internet are setting new rules for the relationship. Thanks to the IT processing of information it seems possible to carry out operations much faster, on a larger scale and more economically. Meanwhile, in terms of interaction, researchers B. Halligan, A. Charlesworth agree that technology supports customers and businesses in how they communicate, create and maintain relationships, and collaborate with others through email, mobile communications, social media, interactive products and self-service technologies . Therefore, digital communication allows companies to grow at an interactive level, gaining more competitive advantages.

Thus, digital is a relatively new and extremely promising direction, and therefore, to date, its concepts and theories are only being formed in scientific discourse.

In order to optimize the attention of the target audience, a digital communication strategy is needed to focus all efforts on the relevant aspects of the business. Forming a holistic digital strategy requires sufficient understanding of the digital environment and the capabilities of digital channels and tools, a great deal of research, critical analysis, and rational and innovative solutions.

Different companies operate in different industries and target different types of customers, representing different levels of digital adoption.

A strategic digital promotion plan coordinates various tools, creates content and provides an online presence for the company to engage the target audience.

The precise portrait of the target digital audience, its behavior show which channels and tools in the context of the campaign will be relevant (that is, will match the demands), and which will not.

In addition, digital business promotion approaches rarely rely on a single channel. Since different digital channels have different advantages and disadvantages, it is necessary to combine them together, including with traditional marketing tools and channels, to maximize the desired results.

Thus, the rapid development of the World Wide Web and its services, as well as the emergence of new gadgets and applications encourage businesses to use digital communications, as well as consulting services in the digital environment. That is why the correct understanding of the essence of digital-communications and their role in creating digital sales channels for companies is of great importance at the moment.

3. Analysis of organization of digital sales channel and promotion of IT services in Ismet.kz

3.1 Key features of the B2B segment

Object of the study: Ismet.kz operates in the B2B sector.

Based on Philip Kotler, we can understand B2B sector as «market of services and industrial goods, as well as interactions in this market».

B2B market is defined by end users - individuals (sole proprietors) or legal entities that solve production tasks instead of meeting personal needs, like in B2C markets. That's why the marketing and management decision making in B2B sphere is complicated.

Users of B2B services have a high level of product and market knowledge and select potential partners for co-operation with great care. Therefore, in order to convince a potential customer in the B2B market, marketers in this field have to provide significant arguments in favour of their product. This level of awareness of B2B service users determines their behaviour - proactive search for future potential partners, focus on functional qualities of the product or service performance, and high level of involvement in business processes.

In addition, interaction with B2B customers is complicated by the fact that the decision to select a supplier is made collectively, often at a departmental level. Because of the mentioned characteristics of customers, pressure can be exerted on B2B service providers. Ismet.kz customers can influence the strategy of vendors, demanding that organizations change standard delivery terms, adjust service prices, and redesign an entire product or set of services to meet their needs. The similar changes complicate activity in B2B market, the organizations have to make concessions for maintenance of current quantity of clients and, simultaneously with it, to find balance between level of satisfaction of clients and financial plans of the company. When shaping the communicative policy it is important to consider the interests of the organization related to profit growth, interests of certain people involved in negotiations and management decision-making, as well as interests of contractors and competitors.

The development of market economy in Kazakhstan is characterized by consistent advancement of the country into the world economic system that can be successful only when ensuring competitiveness of products, goods and services. Therefore the state has set a course for construction of post-industrial society - a stage of economic development, following the period of industrialization and characterized by outstripping development and growth of the share of information and communication goods and services in the overall structure of the economy. The main concept of post-industrial society is the information society - a new historical phase of civilization development, in which the main products of production are information and knowledge. The distinctive feature of the information society is the creation of a global information space that provides effective information interaction between people, their access to global information resources and satisfaction of needs for information products and services.

Let us consider the history of development of information and communication technologies in Kazakhstan, among which several main stages can be distinguished

(Figure 2).

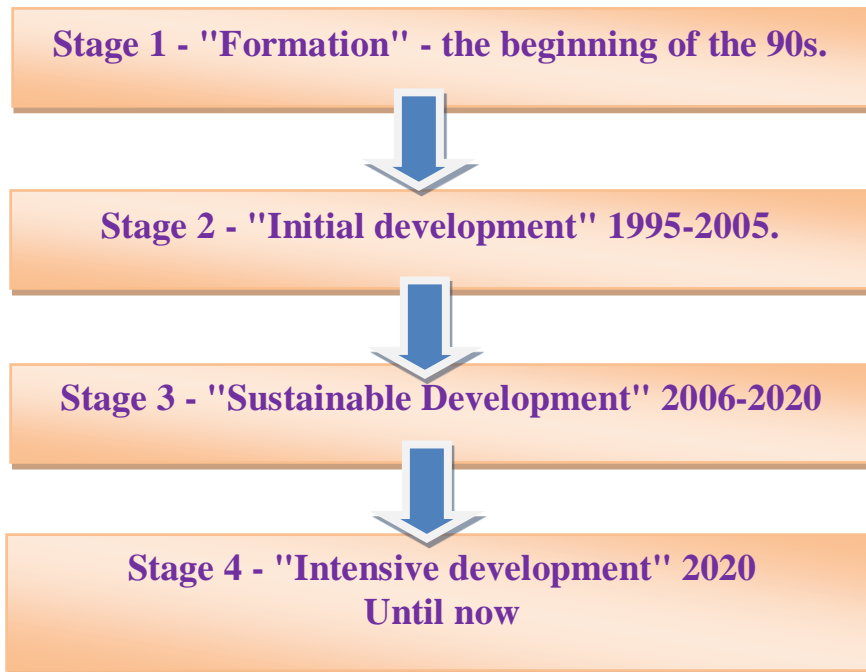


Figure 2 - Stages of development of information and communication technologies of the Republic of Kazakhstan

Sweden, Luxembourg, the Republic of Korea, Denmark, the Netherlands, Iceland, Switzerland, Japan, Norway and the UK are in the top 10 in 2021, according to the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) information and communication technology access index. Russia is 48th, Belarus is 55th, Ukraine is 58th and Kazakhstan is 69th. Kazakhstan is in fourth place among the EEU countries.

Kazakhstan's telecoms industry is developing dynamically. This is due to the role of communications in the life of mankind. Today not a single person or organization can do without telecommunications services. The telecommunications industry includes local and long distance carriers, cellular operators, as well as Internet service providers. Above all, the growth of telecommunication services indicates the economic development of any country and is also one of the key aspects of the social life of mankind. Products of telecommunication companies contribute to improving quality of life, development of modern business, and effective management of the state, strengthening of international economic ties.

Today, for any organization, any state and country as a whole is very important to the rapid transmission of information, as it is a key to the success of the globalization of the information space. However, the growth of accessibility of telecommunications in Kazakhstan has not yet reached its peak, and it is the development and availability of such services that is a pressing problem today. And in order to ensure this accessibility, the state will need some economic leverage to provide the population with quality services and

enable telecommunications companies to support the communications market in Kazakhstan.

Expansion of telecommunication sphere, implementation of new ideas, introduction of new technologies - these are all things that Kazakhstani companies-operators and the state are striving for now. Informatization of the citizens of the country also leads to changes in the socio-political sphere, because now people can get education remotely, pay for various services online, get access to interactive television, as well as negotiate, correspond and hold conferences at different parts of the world. Also, new opportunities with broadband Internet services provide an opportunity to access various official information on the websites of municipal bodies and private organizations. Therefore, the telecommunication industry performs an important state function, helps to manage the whole structure of the country and control political and economic life of the state.

Most countries of the world have recognised that the best way to benefit from information and communication technologies is to provide telecommunication services in a competitive market. Liberalisation is also driven by the forthcoming accession to the World Trade Organisation, which obliges its members to create a competitive environment in this sector of the economy.

In Kazakhstan, liberalisation started in 2004, when the new Law of the Republic of Kazakhstan «On Communications» and a number of other legal acts were adopted, which determined the further development of the telecommunications sector.

In order to implement this priority, the main tasks for the future have been defined, one of which was to ensure the development of the sector by introducing new technologies and liberalizing the communications market. Thus, the conditions for development of a real competitive environment in the market for telecommunications services were legislatively created, and the exclusive right of JSC Kazakhtelecom as a «national operator» was excluded.

The market for telecommunications services is developing stronger and stronger these days, the competition in this segment is growing as is the demand for such services.

Thus, B2B market, as opposed to B2C, has the main goal of building and strengthening long-term relationships with customers due to its specificity.

The main tools of internet marketing in this segment are:

- 1) e-mail marketing,
- 2) contextual advertising,
- 3) SEO-optimization,
- 4) website content.

The peculiarities of promoting B2B companies on the Internet are:

- 1) obligatory integration of a website with CRM-systems and analytical systems;
- 2) creation of website content in order to increase its expertise (creation of thematic highly specialized articles);
- 3) development of contextual advertising (focus on medium and low-frequency queries);
- 4) emphasis on personal communication in e-mailing.

Due to the fact that B2B audience is much smaller than B2C audience, and the competition is similar, it is necessary to make every website visitor a user by means of in-site marketing and, during further communication, to work on loyalty by means of personalized offers and work on quality of products and provided service.

3.2 Ismet.kz in the telecommunications market

ISMET platform is a part of the comprehensive program «Digital Kazakhstan» implemented by Kazakhtelecom JSC and is aimed at improving the standard of living of each resident of the country through the use of digital technologies.

Ismet.kz is a portal for small and medium businesses in Kazakhstan, combining information, advice on government support and marketplace of IT services for business development. This project was initiated by Kazakhtelecom JSC (the largest provider of telecommunications services owned by the state).

The priority objective of Ismet.kz is to help businesses simplify, automate and optimise processes and reduce the time it takes to solve formal tasks. The platform aims to ensure that small and medium-sized businesses actively use digital services and online products in their work. The portal also has a noticeboard functionality, where users can sell or buy necessary equipment, rent premises and perform other operations. You can participate in auctions on the electronic trading platform. The capabilities of the platform allow for integration with third-party sites, including government databases.

The company provides more than 50 IT services today.

- o Cloud accounting
- o Online Cash Book
- o EDMS
- o Counterparty verification
- o Accounting services
- o Market research
- o Legal support for entrepreneurs.

ISMET.KZ portal provides a variety of services, including

- 1) a personal office to control applications on Kazakhtelecom
- 2) record keeping in online mode
- 3) searching for partners, customers, contractors
- 4) advertising their products or services
- 5) promoting entrepreneurs business (through e-mail, placing banners, publications in social networks, cases/articles/interviews on the portal, etc.)

There are about 80 different services in the Buy-Sell section.

Some of them are offered exclusively and at the best price on the market.

There are 61417 registered users in the company's platform, which is quite a lot for the Kazakhstan market. More than 50,000 companies are attached to the platform. The company's growth for 2021 was more than 60% new users.

Advertising company

	Creation of materials	thousand tenge
	Name of the event	Sum
1	Installation of analytical systems	175
2	Creation of chat bots	350
3	Creation of SMM	280
4	Video creation	1 610
5	Creation of graphic elements	245
6	Creating contextual advertising	140
	Total	2 800
	Placement of materials	
1	Video RK	10 950
2	Banner and media campaign	10 500
3	SMM	3 150
4	Bots	660
5	contextual advertising	6 000
6	Analytics	1 080
7	SEO	6 825
8	Sending SMS messages	2 700
	Total	41 865
	Total in RK	44 665
	Total on road show	4 735
	Total for advertising	49 400

Looking at the table above, we see that a large amount of expenses go to banner ads, articles in the media, as well as to create video ads for the YouTube channel. It should be noted that the company also devotes to offline promotion using road shows, that is, it organizes events aimed at entrepreneurs in different regions of Kazakhstan.

Marketing activities:	Monthly Goal - Plan	Factual data (to date)
Telegrampromotion	300 subscribers	867 subscribers
Banner advertising in the KMS and YAN	7 million impressions	61 417 users
PR channels (Kursiv.kz, Tengri, Nur.kz, etc.)	Coverage 2200 people	10 087 users from SMEBanking.com and InBusiness.kz

Publication 3 times perweek Instagram	500subscribers	6 201
Tutorial videos on YouTube	5000	239,842 views in 2021
SEO	30 articles per year	13articles for December
road show	4000 target audience coverage at events	< 10,000 target audience coverage

In this table, we saw the top 3 services sold: cloud accounting, a CRM system for small and medium-sized businesses, and warehouse accounting. It should be noted that in comparison with 2019-2021, the share of service sales has increased. Of these, cloud accounting increased by 4.5%, a CRM system for small and medium-sized businesses increased by 6%, and warehouse accounting increased by 4%.

Digital services for business

	Service groups	Market size	2018		2019		2020	
			Our share (%)	Quantity	Our share (%)	Quantity	Our share (%)	Quantity
1	cloud accounting	334 930	0,5	1 675	2	6 699	5	16 747
2	Cloud accounting for small businesses (simplified for individual entrepreneurs)	1 002 483	0,2	2 005	2	20 050	5	50 124
3	CRM system for SMEs	193 400	1	1 934	5	9 670	7	13 538
4	Trade automation software	89 993	3	2 700	5	4 500	10	8 999
5	Hotel automation software	2 854	3	86	5	143	10	285
6	Restaurant automation software	4 183	3	125	5	209	10	418
7	Pharmacy automation software	6 146	3	184	5	307	10	615
8	Medical Center Automation Software	4 050	3	122	5	203	10	405
9	Document flow	334 930	3	10 048	2	6 699	5	16 747
10	Automated budgeting/business planning system	334 930	2	6 699	2,5	8 373	5	16 747
11	Inventory control	89 993	1	900	5	4 500	5	4 500
12	Cash accounting	334	2	6 699	3	10 048	4	13 397

		930						
13	Recruitment and recruitment	334 930	0,5	1 675	1,0	3 349	1,5	5 024
14	Personel assessment	334 930	0,2	670	0,5	1 675	1	3 349
15	Education	334 930	0,5	1 675	1	3 349	2	6 699
16	Project management	334 930	0,1	335	1	1 675	1	3 349
17	Analytics and marketing	334 930	0,5	1 675	2	6 699	3	10 048
	financial services							
18	Aggregator of financial instruments (financial platform)	334 930	1	3 349	2	6 699	3	10 048
19	TNF Assistant	334 930	1	3 349	2	6 699	3	10 048
20	Providing a corporate credit report	334 930	1	3 349	1	3 349	1	3 349
21	Providing a personal credit report	1 532 981	1	15 330	1	15 330	1	15 330

The creators of the company's new innovative product believe that it has the potential to significantly increase the company's sales through its uniqueness and functionality. However, it's also important to keep in mind the changing customer perception of the company's product. Every product has an obsolescence period, which means that customer loyalty will change over time. Kano's model can be used to predict future emotional reactions to a product. The results can be used to determine customer satisfaction and loyalty.

It is important to consider the characteristics of the product when managing sales. The performance of everyone in the company depends on its characteristics. A Japanese consultant suggested that customer loyalty is related to their emotional response. It is important to consider this when dealing with customers throughout the company. The customer focus of the firm enables the successful functioning of the company. It is an important criterion when building a system of organization, its departments, the dependencies between them.

Innovation orientation obliges you to constantly create new products and develop new technology. A customer survey on the firm's «Exciting Characteristics» revealed that the fact that the firm offers unique methods of information exchange and new ways of communication sets it apart from the crowd, surprises its clients and increases their loyalty. This is the firm's competitive advantage in the marketplace, the very unexpected quality that delights customers.

Customer loyalty is not eternal, their demands are constantly changing, so it is worth remembering to constantly improve products, to make them better. What is admired by customers today may become a must-have parameter tomorrow.

«Basic performance» is type no. 2 in the Kano model. For all customers, they are self-evident. Without them, there can be no product on the market. However, the impact of building up mandatory features gradually diminishes, approaching neutrality.

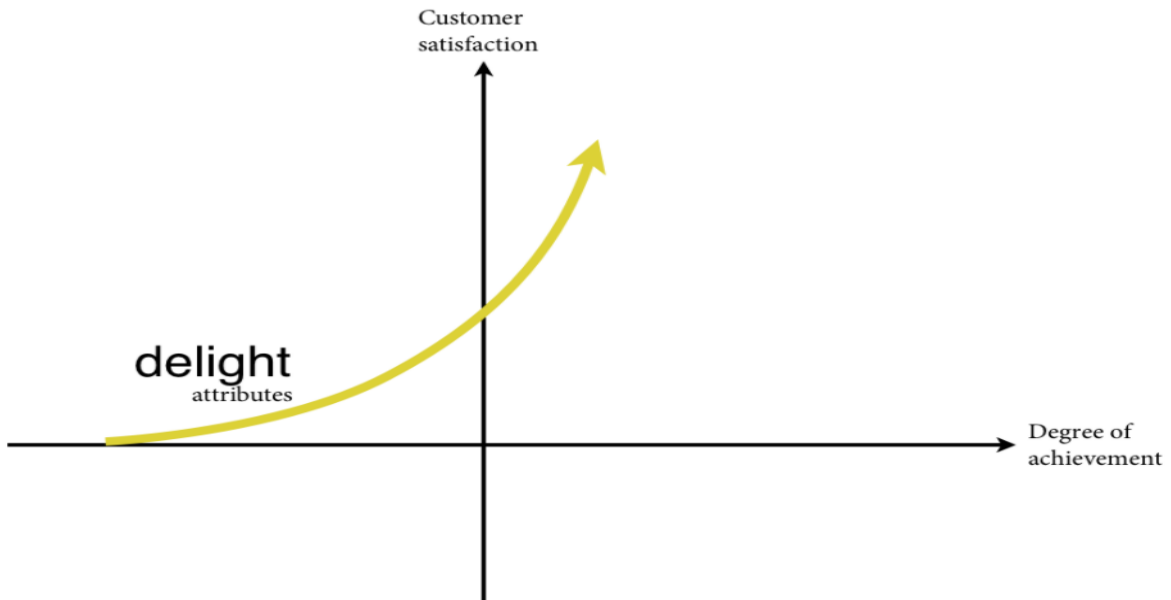


Figure 3 Attractive qualities in the Kano model

Source: Lance, B. The customer-driven organisation: Employing the Kano Model / B. Lance, Coleman Sr. - 1st edition - San Francisco: Productivity Press, 2014. - P. 11.

The absence of these qualities causes negative attitudes among customers, and the presence of them causes absolutely no enthusiasm at all. They are basic to consumers. The customer survey showed that Ismet.kz has these characteristics, but does not strive to improve them, focusing on its competitive advantages - «attractive» factors.

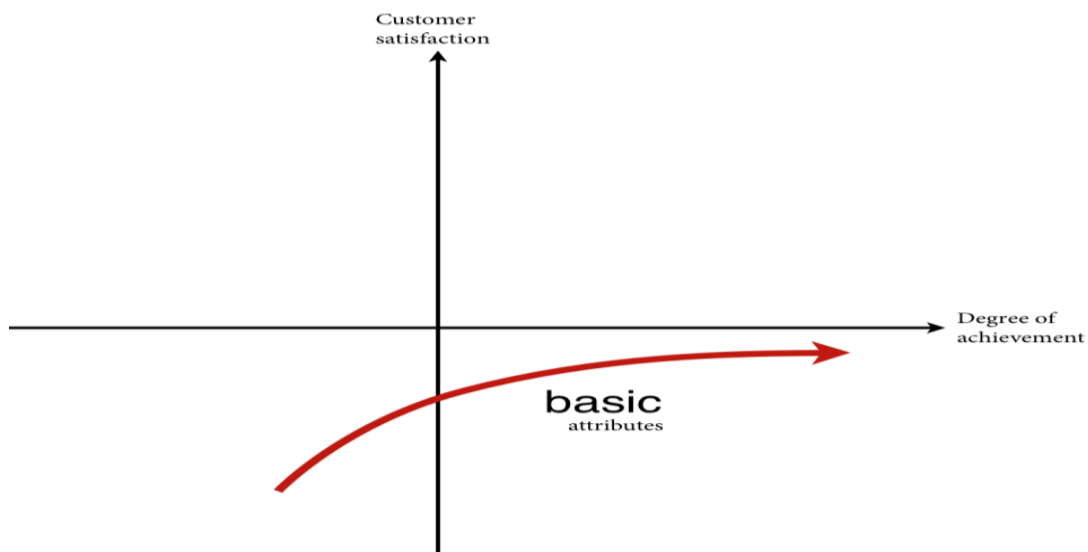


Figure 4 Mandatory qualities in the Kano model

Source: Lance, B. The customer-driven organisation: Employing the Kano Model / B. Lance, Coleman Sr. - 1st edition - San Francisco: Productivity Press, 2014. - P. 13.

And the last type #3 is «Essential Characteristics». These qualities cause satisfaction if they are present and dissatisfaction if they are not. This linear relationship is characteristic of the basic characteristics: cost, use, safety. A survey of Ismet.kz customers showed that the mandatory characteristics are at an average level compared to other companies in the market in this industry. The company does not do anything special to develop these characteristics, focusing solely on its unique feature.

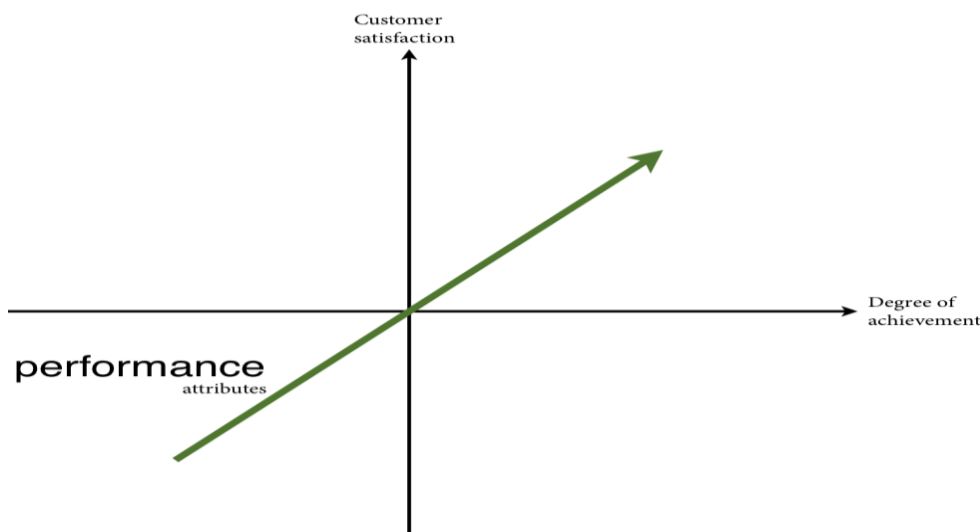


Figure 5 Unidimensional characteristics in the Kano model

Source: Lance, B. The customer-driven organisation: Employing the Kano Model / B. Lance, Coleman Sr. - 1st edition - San Francisco: Productivity Press, 2014. - P. 14.

The graphs of the Kano model illustrate the impact of different types of characteristics. They show that only 'attractive' and 'one-dimensional' qualities ensure customer satisfaction with products. This means that these are the characteristics that companies should focus on when creating their products to maintain customer loyalty.

Ismet.kz focuses on «attractive» qualities in its performance because of its innovative focus, and these qualities are those that other companies do not have and that exceed customer expectations and impress customers. But innovative ideas don't come easy. It requires a lot of research to find an unmet customer need that represents a hidden opportunity for a company to break through. And even after an idea has been created and implemented, it is important to promote the unusual idea and conduct various market studies to ensure that potential customers learn about the product, try it out and accept it. And then, in the long run, increasing the complexity of the 'attractive' features will move

the current point on the graph towards consumer satisfaction. And a return on investment analysis helps to determine the need for the changes being made. Therefore, it is clear that Ismet.kz products have a future because of the innovative ideas of the company.

Ismet.kz develops business solutions for businesses. This is an area that is in high demand right now.

A financial analysis shows that the company is solvent at present and is not threatened by insolvency. This is a very important factor in managing the company's sales. Based on the financial analysis of the company, appropriate decisions can be made about possible sales volumes, future investments and the projected amount of resources required. When it comes to sales management decisions, financials also play an important role. Decisions about projected sales, production plan, marketing, motivation and hiring depend on the financial position of the firm.

An analysis of the characteristics of the product output suggests that the firm's innovative products are competitive. Kano's model suggests that customers will be loyal because of the novelty of the product and the response to customer loyalty expectations. Ismet.kz emphasises «attractive» qualities in its performance because of its innovative focus, as these qualities include features that other companies do not have, which exceed expectations and impress customers.

3.3 Study of the company's current customer acquisition and retention strategy

Researchers have long proved that a company's profitability is closely linked to customer loyalty. Thus, companies with a large base of loyal customers incur much less promotion costs, while companies that do not pay due attention to customer loyalty not only incur unjustified marketing costs, but sometimes suffer serious losses due to customer dissatisfaction and, as a consequence, damaged reputations.

At present, marketers' priorities are customer retention rather than attracting new customers. This is due to the fact that recently the level of welfare of the population has been growing and the price factor is receding into the background. Consumers now pay more attention to product quality and level of service.

However, these methods are not always suitable for this market, and there are several reasons for that: in the B2C market, the customer buys on their own (sometimes with their family) and the goods purchased are used for personal purposes. Therefore, the purchasing process in the B2C market takes a short time. In the B2B market, however, purchasing is often done by one department of a company for another department, and therefore the purchasing process takes a long time, as the supplier selection factors for departmental representatives may differ significantly. It is also important to take into account the fact that a company's purchasing decision-maker may seek his or her own advantage in choosing a particular supplier.

A common mistake in dealing with B2B customers is to perceive any one company as one specific decision-maker for signing or rejecting contracts without taking into consideration that within each company there may be a conflict of interest among several

decision-makers.

Due to the difficulty of capturing and managing customer loyalty in the marketplace, a company faces the challenge of developing an adequate research program that would help to identify and rank the various factors that have a significant impact on the customer's attitude towards a particular B2B company. The objectives of such a research programme include:

- 1) Identifying the factors that influence customer loyalty to suppliers;
- 2) Determining the importance of various loyalty factors for customers;
- 3) assessing the declared loyalty of customers to different suppliers;
- 4) assessing the true loyalty of customers to different suppliers;
- 5) identifying the characteristics of the ideal supplier;
- 6) identifying the most relevant tools for increasing customer loyalty.

When selecting one supplier from several similar ones, a company pays attention to the following factors:

1) Rational factors. These include everything consumers think about first: price, quality, breadth and depth of assortment, consistency with the quality of the goods as declared by the manufacturer, etc.

2) Operational (functional) factors. Here the interaction between the supplier and consumer companies is evaluated in terms of the quality of implementation of individual business processes and operations.

3) Image factors. A company's reputation and market position play an important role when considering this factor. Competitive advantages and key competencies are also considered here.

4) Influence factors (personal communication).

Experience shows that the personal communications of a procurement specialist with a supplier representative have a significant impact on the development of loyal business relationships between counterparties. In particular, the existence of long-term relations between employees of partner companies makes it possible to resolve various issues more quickly and efficiently, as well as to find compromise solutions.

A correctly structured loyalty programme allows the company to save on advertising costs, and a satisfied client will use the company's services more often, will be less price sensitive and will always be able to make a recommendation to their friends or acquaintances.

In order to meet the ever-changing needs of customers, Ismet.kz has developed a strategic partner programme. The focus is on building deep partnerships that accelerate the commercialization of digital services for service providers worldwide. Because the focus within Ismet.kz is on rapid commercialization, Ismet.kz works with partners on commercial agreements, contract management, licenses and revenue sharing agreements. Ismet.kz enables partners to analyze and improve the virtualization of network functions while working together and in real time. Partner program members benefit from some of the best service design technologies on the market, expertise in business support systems and the company's ability to create turnkey solutions for service providers.

Ismet.kz offers significant benefits to each partner, regardless of technology or company focus. Ismet.kz's flexible approach enables it to work with a wide range of

companies in its programme, from venture-backed start-ups to the largest Fortune Global 500 companies. Companies participating in the programme can choose from different levels of affiliation: trusted affiliate, preferred affiliate or strategic affiliate. Depending on the level of participation, Ismet.kz is ready to help with qualification, testing, integration, cataloguing, marketing and solution implementation.

Reliable partners:

Included in the list of Ismet.kz partners.

Joint marketing: logos, branding, media.

Access to Ismet.kz technical community and documentation.

Access to the Ismet.kz partner portal.

Self-design and integration of network functions virtualization with the help of your support manager.

Preferred partners:

All the benefits of a Reliable Partner.

Joint marketing activities: brochures, events, webinars, blogs.

Formal market interaction with joint sales plans and communication channel overviews.

Technical support for joint implementation of software solutions.

Service level integration with Ismet.kz flexible virtualization platform.

Strategic partners:

All the listed benefits of a Preferred Partner.

Deeper partner sales plans and channel overview.

Development of partner sales plans and channel visibility.

Professional partner for Ismet.kz to support participation in global and regional events.

Strategic market collaboration and multi-disciplinary cooperation.

Software solution lifecycle management.

Ismet.kz has a large and growing ecosystem of partners consisting of suppliers, developers and system integrators from different fields. Ismet.kz expands the community of solution providers and continues to deliver the best pre-tested and integrated virtualization solutions for network functions. As a result, the company minimizes customer time to market and reduces virtualization risk, allowing service providers to leverage an almost endless supply of professional services and solutions to add business value.

After examining Ismet.kz and diagnosing how the company manages its customer loyalty, let's move on to the SWOT analysis in Table 2.3 to summarize.

SWOT analysis of Ismet.kz

Strengths	Weak sides
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Leaders in Operations Support Systems (OSS) 2. Market leader in network function virtualization (NFV) 3. Support of the parent corporation 4. Availability of own Cloud platform 5. Activities in trending niches of the telecommunications industry (5G, virtualization, support for operating and business systems) 6. A wide and high-quality range of software solutions 7. Major clients throughout Kazakhstan 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. High degree of customization of the proposed software solutions 2. Unaffordable prices for small businesses 3. The need to pay for additional services to support and develop software solutions
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transition telecommunications service providers contribute to the demand for new technologies 2. Active preparation of companies for 5G 3. Increasing need for virtualization 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Low association with the company 2. Increasing competition in the market for technologies used in telecommunications 3. Exhaustion of price methods of competition

Based on the strengths, weaknesses, potential opportunities and threats listed above, let's draw up possible development strategies for Ismet.kz.

Development strategies (opportunities - strengths):

Entering a new telecommunication market (virtualization, monetization of 5G) and its development.

Potential development strategies (threats - strengths):

Develop deep partnerships with major brands that are already customers of the company by providing end-to-end solutions for virtualisation, 5G monetisation and operations and business support systems.

Strategies for internal transformation (opportunities - weaknesses):

Design and build software solutions tailored to small businesses (bespoke and simplified modules).

Threat mitigation strategy (threats - weaknesses):

Enhancement of the existing Virtualisation Loyalty Partner Programme

Having examined Ismet.kz's internal factors, we must now move on to an analysis of the external market environment, which has a strong influence on the firm's position. The existence and future of the organisation depends on various environmental factors.

We will now proceed directly to the examination of the firm's position and the development strategy. The risk of potential competitors entering an industry creates a risk to the firm's profitability. New entrants are usually the carriers of new capacity, technology and resources. Michael Porter has identified six assumptions which, in turn, affect the strength of barriers to entry: economies of scale, product differentiation and strength of

existing brands, capital requirements, high fixed costs, access to distribution channels and government policies.

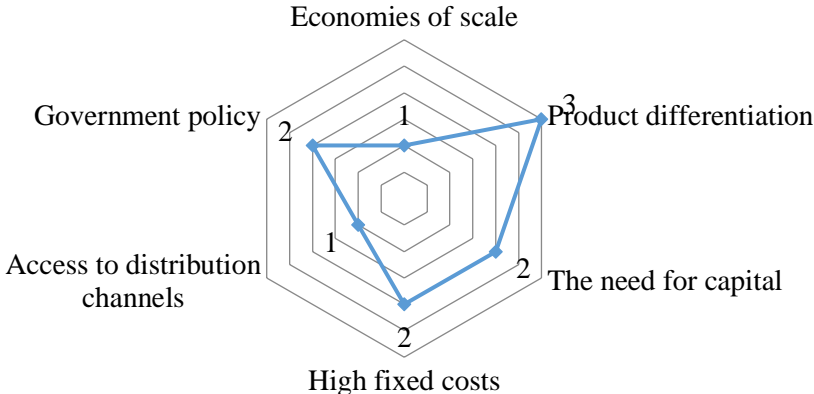


Figure 6 Threat of emergence of new players for Ismet.kz

Source: Author's analysis of a company based on Porter's Competitive Forces Model

In Figure 6 we can observe the level of different factors affecting the threat of new entrants to the market for Ismet.kz. Capital requirements, high fixed costs and government policies are in the middle range, economies of scale and access to distribution channels are low and product differentiation is high.

To deal with potential competitors, the firm should pay more attention to entry barriers. They are low in this industry and provide an easy entry point for new entrants.

Consumers, as consumers of the final product, play one of the key roles in influencing the competitiveness of firms in the market place. We can point to the following situations where buyers have the most influence on manufacturers: large buyers, tendency to switch to other manufacturers, price sensitivity, quality dissatisfaction, heavy reliance on individual buyers and intermediate buyers with their share of the profits.

In the information security market, most customers are loyal to their service provider. Therefore, the price is also inelastic for the most part to the industry. Customers find a company they can trust to oversee their security. Constant product improvements force companies to turn to the same information security vendors.

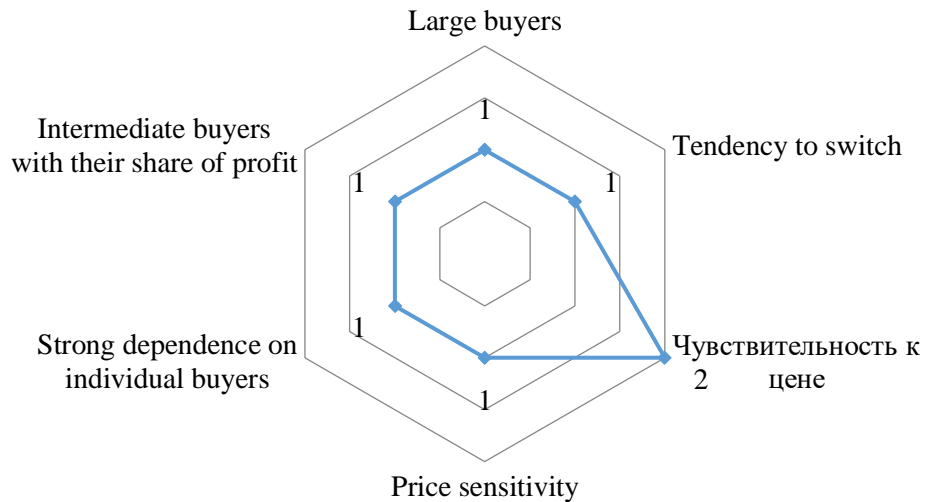


Figure 7 Bargaining power of Ismet.kz buyers

Source: Author's analysis of a company based on Porter's Competitive Forces Model

In Figure 7 we can observe the strength of the influence of customers' market power factors on Ismet.kz in the area of information security. For the most part, customer power is at a low level. At a low level are large buyers, intermediate buyers and dependence on individual buyers. Because of the nature of privacy products, there is a noticeable low propensity to switch customers.

Suppliers are owners of resources for producing goods in the industry and therefore they also have a significant impact on the level of competitiveness of companies in the market. For Ismet.kz, an information security company, the power of suppliers is not important; they do not have any influence on the firm's operations.

If we talk about substitute products, it should be noted that they have a limiting effect on the ability to increase prices. The threat to the firm comes when substitutes are produced by large firms and have a significant market share, and when substitute goods have a better price-quality ratio. Substitute products are very advanced in the field of information security. New ways of hacking data and preventing it are being invented every day.

Competition between companies has a strong influence. A high level of competition leads to what is known as «price competition», higher promotion costs, sometimes higher quality of products produced, and more money invested in new developments by the company.

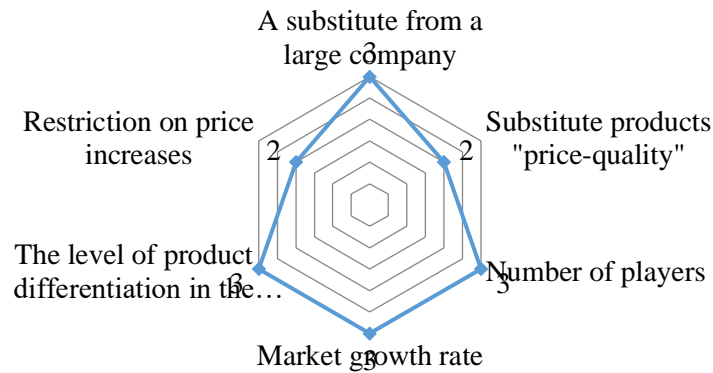


Figure 8 Emergence of substitute products and intra-industry competition

Source: Author's analysis of a company based on Porter's Competitive Forces Model

For Ismet.kz it can be observed from Figure 11 that the threat factors from substitute products and intra-industry competition are at a high level. These factors need to be monitored more closely and emphasis should be placed on improving them. Suggestions to address the threats discussed below are presented.

Table 5 Recommendations for addressing competitive risks

Parameter	Meaning	Offers
The threat of new players	The average level of threat of entry of new players.	Monitor the emergence of new competitors, improve technology
Bargaining power of buyers	Average customer exit threat	Create mechanisms to increase customer loyalty
Threats from substitute products	High level of threat from substitute products	Maintain a high level of service, improve the services provided
Intra-industry competition	High level of intra-industry competition	Raise awareness of the company, follow the offers of customers

Source: developed by the author

The business solutions market is innovation-oriented. This field is very popular nowadays. The growth rate of the market is only increasing every year, so continuous improvement of the products offered is necessary to maintain its position in the market.

The target audience and pricing of the new product have been determined by the company's marketing experts. During my internship I have studied the customer satisfaction index (CSI-customer satisfaction index). This index allows to determine the satisfaction of customers with the manufactured products by comparing several key criteria of the evaluated company and its closest competitors. The results allow for the

timely development and implementation of improvements that affect customer sentiment and thus the company's bottom line. Customer satisfaction should be the purpose of a company's existence. Customers come to the company with their expectations regarding the functionality and operation of products, service and ease of use. A combination of factors will allow a company to identify its competitive advantages and disadvantages.

Table 6 CSI of Ismet.kz products

Parameter name	Significance factor	Ideal Model	Item being valued	Competitor #1	Competitor #2	Competitor #3
Price, thousand tenge		300	360	330	390	270
Ease of use, evaluation	0.09	five	five	4	3	4
Security, days	0.13	200	150	thirty	60	one hundred
Assortment, quantity	0.15	15	10	13	12	8
Novelty of technology, days	0.09	thirty	one	90	120	thirty
Technology implementation period, days	0.10	fourteen	twenty	25	10	8
The work of the company's personnel, evaluation	0.10	five	4	five	4	five
Image of the company, number of people	0.14	twenty	15	17	eighteen	15
Advertising, number of attracted companies	0.08	thirty	25	22	twenty	23
Service maintenance, number of years	0.12	2	2	one	one	0.5
CSI, %			81.92	64.52	65.48	70.33

Calculation of customer satisfaction scores for Ismet.kz products showed that overall 81.92% of customers are satisfied with the products. The nearest competitor provides 70.33% of customers with acceptable products.

Ismet.kz uses a direct sales channel - without intermediaries. Sales management employees at Ismet.kz are fully engaged in customer relations. Their duties include searching for new customers, high-quality work with current customers, which includes the functions of negotiating, executing and signing contracts. There is a division of managers in the sales management department according to the territory and complexity of the order.

The structure of Ismet.kz's sales department should be changed. Currently, the workload is unevenly distributed among employees, which creates difficulties for some employees and leaves an incomplete workload for others.

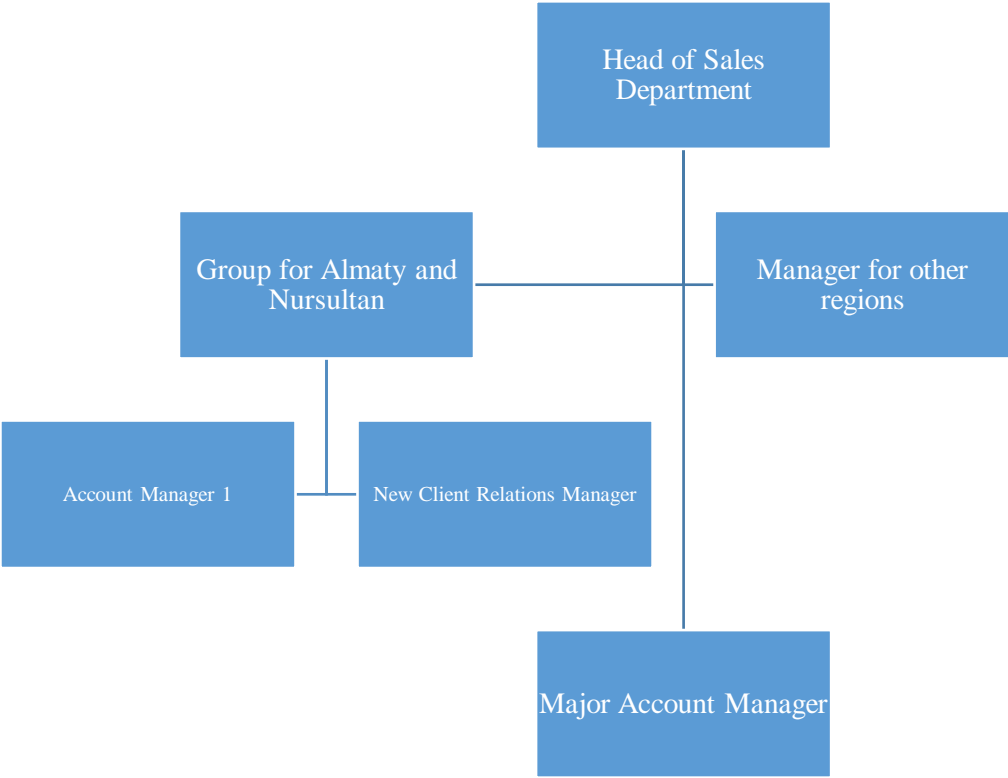


Figure 9 Organizational structure of the sales department at Ismet.kz

Source: developed by the author

The sales manager at Ismet.kz is responsible for managing employees as well as overseeing the entire sales process. He or she motivates employees, establishes long-term and short-term goals and objectives, supervises their performance and makes corrections when necessary.

The main work of Ismet.kz is done in

Most of Ismet.kz work is done in Almaty and the main part of its staff is concentrated on customers in this region. The current distribution of responsibilities in the

company's sales department should be changed in line with this factor. There should be one manager responsible for the rest of the regions, including abroad. Managers for Almaty should be divided according to the type of client: regular or new client. There should also be a manager for particularly large clients who will handle particularly important, significant and expensive contracts. This should be the most experienced member of the department and will have more responsibility than others.

3.4 Survey of consumer preferences

Our entrepreneurs are poorly informed and not particularly IT literate, so they only use three digital sales channels, such as Instagram, FB, Tik Tok. The demand for these platforms is high. Due to poor Internet literacy, Kazakh entrepreneurs do not understand that there are a number of other digital channels to promote their goods / services. IT now covers more office workers - e-mail, accounting, workflow. Companies are massively moving from an information model to a communicative one, and the term «feedback» has become not just a standard section on the site, but a real engine for improving the quality of services and business efficiency. Online advertising and SMM are developing very quickly. Even housewives began to realize that it was possible to sell through Instagram.

The introduction of IT services for small and medium-sized businesses in Kazakhstan is very important. But there are a number of reasons hindering the development of digital channels:

1. Our country has a very low level of Internet penetration.
2. Huge investments from the state.
3. Unavailability of small and medium-sized businesses.

Entrepreneurs do not want to pay for «packages» because they do not know. They are used to standard platforms.

A. Customer segmentations

- 1) Early entrepreneurs (staff up to 10 people)
 - 1.25 to 34, Generation Y
 2. Higher education
 3. Gender: female (70%), male (30%)
 4. Country: Kazakhstan. Astana-Almaty
 5. Relationship status: in a relationship or married
 6. Education: bachelor's and master's degree
 7. Income level: Depends on the payback of the business. During the first year works at 0
 8. Social media: Facebook, Instagram, YouTube
- 2) Entrepreneur (staff from 20 to 500)
 - 1.35 to 55, Generation X
 2. Higher education
 3. Gender: female (60%), male (40%)

4. Country: Kazakhstan. Astana-Almaty, West Kazakhstan
 5. Relationship status: in a relationship or married
 6. Education: bachelor's and master's degree
 7. Income level: 1,300,000 and more
- 3) Client of Kazakhtelecom JSC
 - 1.21 to 60
 2. Gender: female (50%), male (50%)
 3. Country: Kazakhstan, all region
 4. Relationship status: All categories
 5. Income level: 230,000 (average salary in KZ) and more

B. Conclusion of in-depth interview with entrepreneurs and employees of Ismet.kz

Only 27% of respondents knew about the portal (<http://Ismet.kz>). 75% correctly perceive the wording: «Portal for SMEs in Kazakhstan», or only 1 respondent could name all types of services on the portal. The respondents have little awareness of the possibilities of getting advice (24%) and buying an IT solution for doing business (30%).

The conclusion is this: Most people do not know the platform, the portal is associated with a catalog of different services. First of all, on document flow and bookkeeping. For a better understanding of the target audience portal, you can conduct free consultations.

Popular answers of the respondents «What is Ismet for them»:

1. Site where various services for business are collected:
 - a. Workflow
 - b. Accounting
 - c. Taxes
 - d. The cash desk
2. Site of help for SMEs
3. Site for communication between entrepreneurs to find clients
4. Website for selling your own services

For our survey 86% of respondents answered that they found a useful service for themselves. Different groups of respondents identify services that are useful to themselves. There is a service for each group's request, and it is convenient for users to navigate the services according to the type of their business. One respondent noted an overabundance of information and was unable to highlight the main services for himself on the home page.

Based on the above data, it is worth considering the need to separate user groups from the very beginning of the main page. Beginning entrepreneurs should be taken to one section of the site or the main page, and existing entrepreneurs should be divided by type of activity.

Some respondents noted the lack of photos, screenshots, and video analysis of the platform's work. All respondents coped with the registration process. Three respondents

had difficulty guessing the password. It is worth adding the ability to automatically generate a password or simplify validation.

One respondent expressed the opinion that it is necessary to give an opportunity to choose the method of registration, since a mobile phone will be more convenient for a part of the adult audience.

One respondent noted the convenience of a single login for the Ismet and Atameken portal

The division by type of business will help entrepreneurs for whom IT solutions in business are new. Also, respondents highlight popular and proven services: Atameken and Kompra. For promotion, it is worth showing users the availability of these services on the portal.

Most of the respondents had a positive impression of using the portal. However, the main page does not leave a holistic perception of the platform, for some respondents the information on the main page is «noisy, they are more accustomed to minimalistic design». Only 14% of respondents were able to find a company by type of activity. Many respondents had difficulties in searching the catalog of services and companies.

All services need to highlight the price and pricing, the lack of live reviews and ratings also influences decision making.

Recommendations for improving the platform:

1. Create paths from the main page for different types of users
2. Divide description pages into blocks
3. Conduct text editing using the information style
4. Make an accurate end-to-end site search
5. Add pricing description and reviews to service cards
6. Add filters to company directories

Entrepreneurs use business channels on YouTube, Instagram, Telegram as their main source of business knowledge. For the interests of consulting and training, they lack specialized information resources adapted to the realities of Kazakhstan.

The three most important criteria are: review, rating, price. Reviews and ratings tell users about reliability and quality. Users trust reviews and ratings.

Along with these three criteria, the presence of product visualization is required. Either the results, or the interface, or the process. Users trust more a service that has visualization, they understand how it will look and this makes them feel confident that they understand it better.

4. Development of a set of measures to create an effective digital channel for sales and promotion of IT services in the B2B segment: the case of Ismet.kz»

4.1 Prospective directions of digital sales channel development in b2b business Ismet.kz

The key factors of the internal environment that ensure Ismet.kz's long-term advantage are:

1. «specialisation»,
2. «quality»,
3. «marketability»,
4. «image»,
5. «well-developed partner infrastructure»,
6. «development dynamics»,
7. «a client-centred approach to work»,
8. «matching quality and price».

Ismet.kz has the potential to create a competitive advantage in the marketplace with the following company resources and capabilities:

1. «cooperation with large customers»,
2. «management system»,
3. «infrastructure»,
4. «range of assortment». The competitive potential for the development of Ismet.kz

is such resources and capabilities as:

1. «marketing activity» including digital,
2. «multistage system of interaction with customers»,
3. «staff competence».

Ismet.kz cooperates with a large number of clients, the most significant of which are shown in Figure 13.



Figure 10 The company's clients

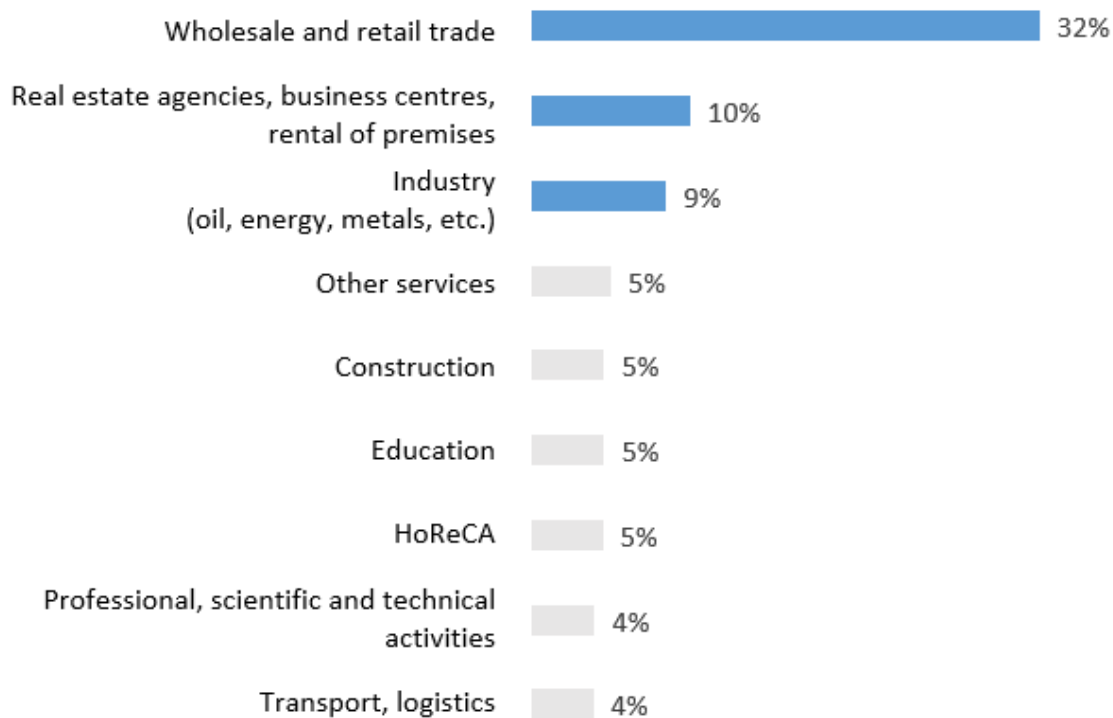


Figure 11 Customers by business area

Commercial flows within Ismet.kz's sales organisation system of distribution between participants in the process: - ownership flow: transfer of ownership of goods from one owner to another - physical flow: successive movement of goods from the manufacturer through intermediaries to the consumer - order flow: orders received from buyers and intermediaries and sent to manufacturers - financial flow: payments and bills that move from the consumer to intermediaries and the manufacturer - information flow: market information moves towards the manufacturer, product information moves towards the market.

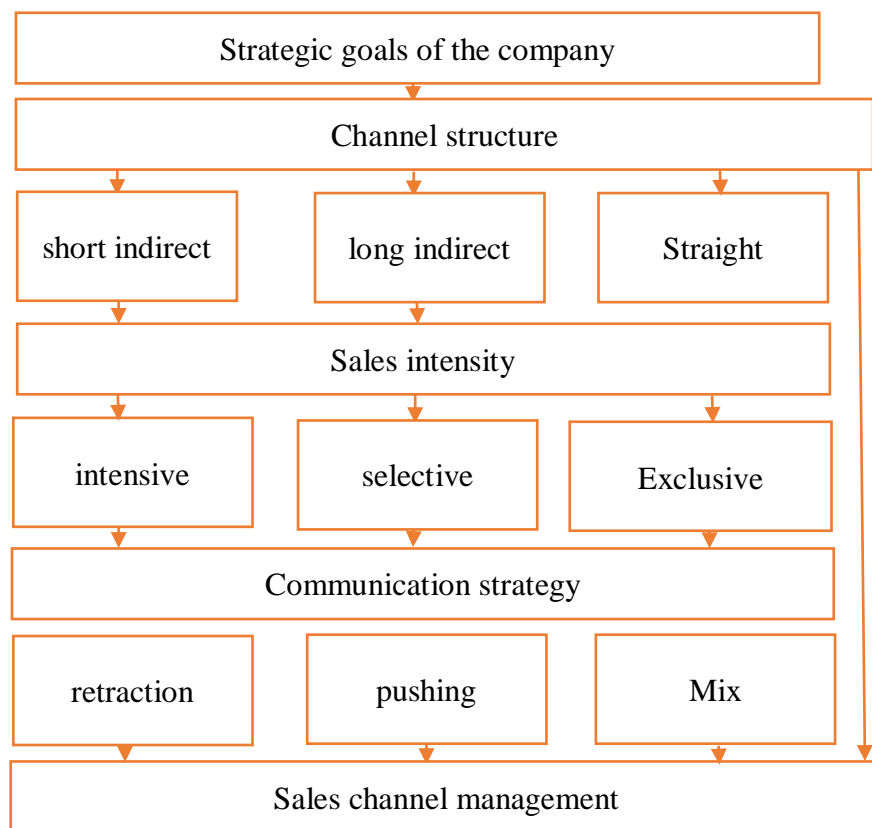


Figure 12 Sales channel formation options

The strategic factors for the development of Ismet.kz's sales channels include: 1. Professional performance of sales system functions by the staff in accordance with the specifics of Ismet.kz products; 2. Flexibility of Ismet.kz service system depending on market changes. Interaction with Ismet.kz customers is based on the formation of a value chain (Figure 16).

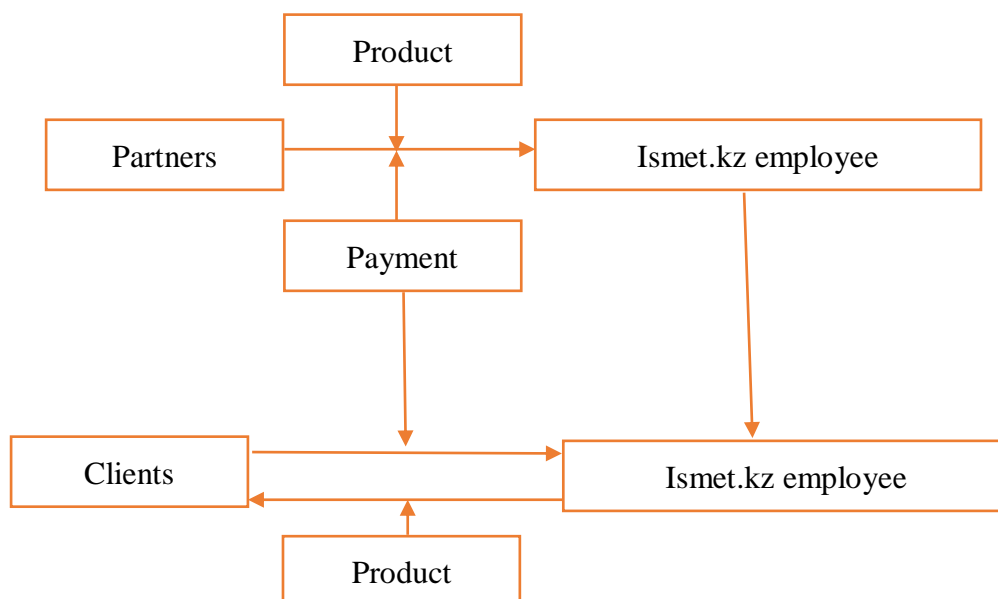


Figure 13 - Building a value chain in the activities of Ismet.kz

Ismet.kz's top-level customer relations processes aim to

- 1) Building, maintaining and developing loyalty and understanding between the organisation and the public in order to establish a favourable environment for interaction,
- 2) building an attractive image and maintaining the organisation's public image,
- (3) To build corporate responsibility and loyalty in the organisation's staff,
- 4) Intensifying influence through «soft power» and «non-direct influence» means.

The market forecast for 2022-2023 implies a generally negative sales trend for Ismet. kz, which will be «mitigated» by the government's market-supporting measures.

The ultimate goal of the development of information and marketing interaction in the Ismet. kz, expressed quantitatively - it is an increase in revenue due to increased sales caused by the advertising impact on the target audience. Objectives of development of information-marketing interaction in sales channel Ismet. kz are as follows:

- Building demand for Ismet. kz's sales portfolio. kz with potential consumers;
- informing existing and potential customers about the new assortment portfolio of Ismet. kz, about promotions;
- attracting the maximum number of customers to Ismet's sales channel. kz;
- improving the image of partners operating in Ismet's sales channel. kz in the eyes of consumers and the public;
- increasing the number of customers.

Prospects for the development of information and marketing interaction in Ismet's sales channel. kz is connected with activation of such multimedia channel as Internet-communication.

To assess the prospects of using Internet-communication as a tool to improve the effectiveness of information and communication activities, an express survey of 10 respondents - visitors to the office of Ismet. kz.

The age structure of the respondents:

30% are respondents aged 21 to 25.

60% are respondents between the ages of 26 and 32.

10% are respondents between the ages of 33 and 40.

The gender structure of the respondents:

20% of respondents were women.

70% are male respondents.

The social structure of the respondents:

100% are respondents who are employees of companies.

Respondents were asked to assess the prospects for using digital marketing.

The responses to the question «What do you dislike about Ismet's sales channel? kz» 70% of the appeal of communication via websites is negatively influenced by the design of the website and the lack of opportunity to view the offer in 3D.

Respondents highlighted the following strong features of digital communications for Ismet's sales channel.kz:

- Comprehensiveness of company and model range information - 50%
- Ratio of advertising to objective information in communications - 30%
- Use of modern communication technology - 10%
- Availability of internet resources to users - 10%

According to respondents' answers, the main weaknesses are the following features of Digital - communications for Ismet's sales channel. kz:

- The number of resources involved is 40%;
- Involvement of users in digital - communications - 30%;
- Level of feedback and relevance of information - 30%.

As opportunities for the development of Digital - communications for Ismet's sales channel. kz, respondents highlighted the following

- Expansion of multimedia format Digital - communications for Ismet's sales channel. kz - 35%;
- Increased efforts to attract and retain customers - 24%;
- Increase in the level of internet services - 18%;
- Keeping the information up to date - 14%;
- More active use of social media - 6%;
- Use website tie-in promotions and bournoise systems - 3%.

The main channels for attracting new customers and retaining old ones as part of the communication development prospects for Ismet's sales channel. kz according to 67% of respondents are:

- The Internet (social media groups);
- A system of discount cards and bonuses (e.g.: 0.5-1% discounts when participating in competitions and promotion programmes, free consultations, possibility of payment in instalments, etc.);
- Off-line counselling channels.

It is proposed to use the Internet to improve the level of communication for Ismet's short sales channel. kz and informing consumers.

When analysing the various channel management methodologies of modern organisations, it can be concluded that they all have a common basis, which is the ability to apply certain processes for managing communication processes in the Ismet sales channel. kz to each item and gives project managers a tool sufficient to manage this area of activity.

Agile management methods Agile methodology is actively used in today's environment. To use agile management methods in Ismet. kz the following conditions are necessary:

- the importance of the project is clearly stated;
- the consumer is actively involved throughout the project;
- active interaction between project participants;
- It is possible to manage a project step by step, based on the functions of the project participants;

- imaging and multimedia channels are preferred.

The flexible management method in the Ismet. kz is divided into multiple «short» management cycles of planning and development, allowing the project team to continuously assess the product's progress and receive instant feedback from project participants. The team continually learns and improves the product and the method of working in each successful cycle.

Strengths of Agile - Stakeholder Engagement Technologies in Sales and Customer Engagement with Ismet. kz

The most important advantage of Agile technology is its flexibility and adaptability. The benefits of agile development are clearly visible to stakeholders and managers. These include:

- faster results;
- the opportunity to get feedback;
- focus on the most important and critical areas of the project;
- the ability to identify problems early, which increases responsiveness to change and reduces the risk associated with constant testing, feedback and design iterations.

Also advantages of using an agile approach are the reduction of risk due to the lack of project scope definition (and hence product quality risk), as well as improved project communication.

Weaknesses in Agile - Stakeholder Engagement Technologies in Sales and Customer Engagement with Ismet. kz

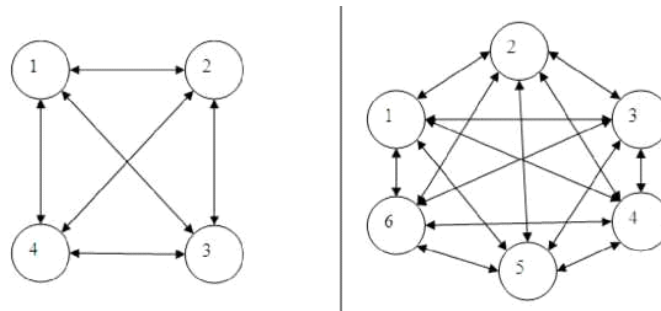
Although there are many advantages to the flexible approach, it is not a one-size-fits-all and faithful means of successful project implementation. The disadvantages of this methodology include the following:

- it is difficult to estimate the effort and resource requirements needed;
- frequent changes can lead to a loss of focus;
- it takes a highly skilled team to get results.

Once the planning and definition of needs have been fine-tuned, the phase is completed with the project iterating with the management processes already worked out. This approach allows for very rapid changes during project implementation.

Agile-technology adaptation in managing empirical stakeholder engagement processes in the sales and customer engagement process with Ismet. kz is based on three main principles: transparency, inspection and adaptation.

In doing so, the number of participants in the interaction geometrically dwarfs the number of connections and affects efficiency. As part of the Ismet. kz, four basic types of interaction links are formed depending on the participants in the communication transaction presented in Figure 17.



Participants: 4 Interaction:6	Participants:6 Interaction:15
----------------------------------	----------------------------------

Figure 14 'Basic' formats for organising communications with Ismet's sales process stakeholders. kz

It is also proposed to maintain a unified customer base of Ismet's sales channels. kz.

«Industrialisation» of Ismet. kz's customer interaction processes and systems. kz - a comprehensive restructuring, transferring them to a new «information-technological» platform - amoCRM.

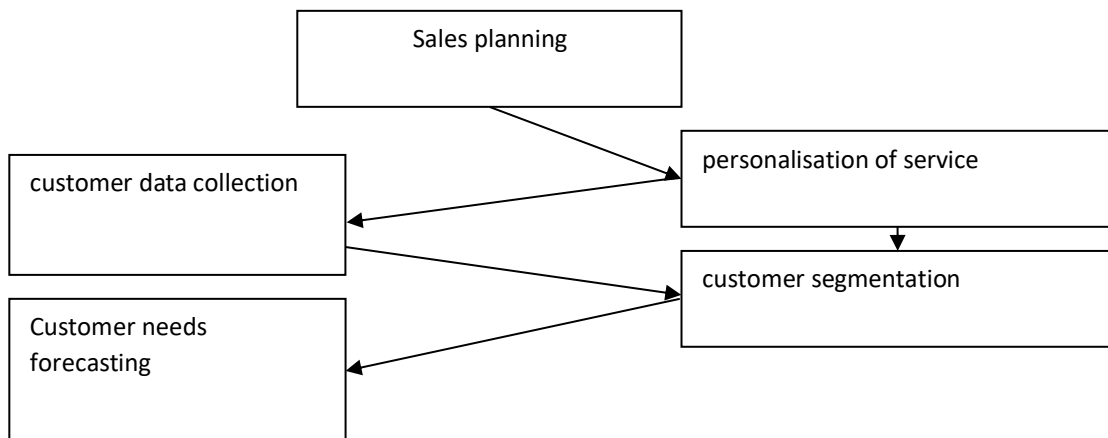


Figure 15 - Implementation of the Ismet.kz based on the amoCRM project

A customer-oriented business model will best enable Ismet. kz to take advantage of its competitive advantages (see Figure 15).

Table 3.1 shows the main management decision factors for the implementation of amoCRM in Ismet. kz.

Table 3.1 Main management decision factors for the implementation of amoCRM in Ismet. kz.

cost reduction	risk mitigation	business automation	process
Improving service quality	Improving management of the organisation	Increasing customer loyalty	
Increasing the number of customers	Maximising sales	Improved contact management	
Sales funnel management	Analytics and forecasting	Accumulation of company knowledge	

Table 3.2 shows the main points of the amoCRM implementation project in Ismet.kz.

Table 3.2 - Key points of the amoCRM implementation project in Ismet. kz.

Criteria	Description of the impact on Ismet. kz	Planned impact on Ismet. kz
A single amoCRM system could be the source of a significant number of potential deals		
Cross-selling	amoCRM makes it possible to capture potential transactions that would normally go unnoticed	Increase in cross-selling income by 10-20%
High efficiency in sales, marketing and customer service	amoCRM allows quick access to information across different parts of the organisation reduces errors in order processing and customer service	Increase in sales efficiency by 5%
Increased customer satisfaction	amoCRM allows for a more holistic view of the customer and provides access to information for all parts of the company	Reduction in customer churn by 5 -10%
A single CRM system reduces the total cost of ownership (TCO) of the solution		
Cost licences	Flexible licensing agreements allow for an optimum long-term engagement scheme	Reducing the cost of licensing by 10 - 20%
Introduction	Deploying amoCRM reduces integration and data migration costs, which have a significant impact on implementation costs	Reduced implementation costs of the system by 6%, when comparing 2 CRM instances and 1 CRM instance
Training and change management	amoCRM reduces the cost of training and change management through the reuse of experience and knowledge gained in previous phases or in other parts of the company	Reduced training costs (5 to 10%) and change management costs (up to 25%)
Service and support	Installation of amoCRM reduces hardware, user and software (application) support costs	Reduction of technical support and business process support costs (5 to 10%)

A single CRM instance minimises implementation risks		
Implementation risks	amoCRM minimises technology and integration risks by implementing proven and tested solutions amoCRM also minimises the risks of choosing a third-party service provider for company operations. amoCRM minimises the learning curve through a single Training infrastructure, user support, corporate culture and continuous skills development	Reduction of business process risks by 5 - 10%
A single CRM system increases the flexibility of interaction		
Technological flexibility	Extending amoCRM to other divisions ensures fast, simple and well understood integration; allowing flexible use of existing and new system functionality.	Cost reduction of 5 to 10%
Scaling	Uniform administrative procedures allow the company to further develop a single system and ensure high scalability in deployment, easily adding new users when needed	Cost reduction of 5 to 10%
New functionality	The amoCRM solution allows the company to provide new functionality to those departments that need it now and to transfer this functionality to other departments as needed.	Cost reduction of 5 to 10%

Next, we will assess the effectiveness and acceptability of the project to introduce stakeholder engagement technologies in the sales and customer engagement process with Ismet. kz.

4.2 IT services promotion strategy at Ismet.kz

The mission of the project «Creating a digital channel for sales and promotion of IT services of Ismet. kz» is to create conditions for effective development of the potential of interaction with customers and achieve maximum efficiency in the processes of customer orientation, thereby forming the basis for the dynamic development of Ismet. kz.

The objective of the organisational project is to improve business processes for the promotion of Ismet.kz's IT services based on customer relations.

The main source of funding for the proposed activities is part of the financial resources of Ismet. kz generated from the core activity in 2018-2021.

No other means are planned.

The analysis of the external and internal environment allows us to state that the project is in demand. The characteristics of the project are shown in Table 3.3

Table 3.3 - Project characteristics for Ismet. kz

Criteria	Characteristics of the Ismet.kz project
In terms of the scale of change	corporate
By purpose	terminal
In terms of timing	medium-term
In terms of complexity	organizationally complex

By type of use of the result	implementation
By class	multiproject
By project type	innovative
By functional orientation	organisational

The tactical objectives of Ismet. kz:

- Optimisation of existing regulations;
- Ensure full coverage of Ismet's staff and customers. kz;
- Increase the efficiency of the organisation of interaction between staff and customers of Ismet. kz.

Table 3.4 - Evaluation of Ismet. kz according to SMART criteria

Name	Qty	Time limit	Implementer
Implementation of a new customer-centric interaction procedure in Ismet. kz on the amoCRM system platform	Coverage of 80% of the company's staff Ismet. kz	By the end of Q2 2022	Administration Project team
Develop the involvement of Ismet. kz in engagement procedures	Coverage of 90% of the company's staff Ismet. kz	By the end of Q3 2022	Administration Project team
Creation of a new procedure for interaction between customers and Ismet staff. kz.	Coverage of 100% of company staff and customers Ismet.kz	By the end of Q3 2022	Administration Project team

The project team «Creating a digital sales and promotion channel for IT services at Ismet. kz» is one of the main conditions for effective project management.

The main stakeholders of the Ismet. kz are shown in Table 3.4.

Table 3.4 Matrix of stakeholders of the project «Creation of digital channel for sales and promotion of IT services of Ismet. kz»

Level of influence	High	Level of importance	
		Low	High
		The public	Owners - founders Managers of Ismet's divisions. kz Ismet Customer Service. kz Project working group
	Low	Partner business structures	Customers, Personnel

The timetable for the Ismet. kz is presented in Table 3.5

Table 3.5 - Timetable for the project «Creation of digital sales and promotion channel for IT services of Ismet. kz»

Name of work	Start date	End date
Initial study	11.06.22	24.06.22
Exploring the alternatives and risks of the amoCRM system Ismet. kz	12.06.22	30.06.22
Researching and establishing cause-effect relationships in the CRM system	22.06.22	29.06.22
Detailed design of amoCRM implementation project elements	06.07.22	10.07.22
Approval of the amoCRM implementation project	10.07.22	12.07.22
Detailed cost estimate and work plan for amoCRM implementation	12.07.22	19.07.22
Approval of amoCRM implementation documentation	19.07.22	20.07.22
Formation of a working group to implement the amoCRM system	22.07.22	29.08.22
Consistent implementation of amoCRM system project activities	06.08.22	30.08.22
Pilot run of the new amoCRM system	06.09.22	31.09.22

The main phases of the project and the human resources Ismet. kz are presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6 - Labour requirements for the project «Restructuring the sales and customer service system of Ismet. kz»

Stage	Need, people.	Period, weeks	Source
Original study	1	0,5	The team at Ismet.kz
Exploring the potential	3	1	The team at Ismet.kz
Establishing a cause and effect relationship	1	0,5	The team at Ismet.kz
Research and selection	1	2	The team at Ismet.kz
Project timetable	1	1,5	The team at Ismet.kz
Developing an estimate and work plan	1	2	The team at Ismet.kz
Approval of documentation	1	0,5	The team at Ismet.kz
Formation of a working group	16	1,5	The team at Ismet.kz
Consistent introduction to practice	16	12	The team at Ismet.kz
Project handover	16	0,1	The company's team Ismet.kz

Monitoring and control procedures are organised along the following lines:

- Monitoring of compliance with the project implementation plan-schedule.
- Monitoring the expenditure of funds in the implementation of the project.

The main method of controlling the stages of the project «Restructuring the sales and customer service system of Ismet. kz» is a work plan. Let's form a Gantt chart for the implementation of innovation in Ismet. kz with a horizon of 3 months (12 weeks).

Table 3.7 - Distribution of work on implementation of activities of the project «Creation of digital channel of sales and promotion of IT services of Ismet. kz» in the practice of Ismet. kz

Stages	The period is 2022.											
	Preparatory				Main				Final			
	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks	1 week	2 weeks	3 weeks	4 weeks
Adoption solutions												
Development NAP												
Forming a project implementation team												
Implementation of a new client-oriented interaction procedure in Ismet.kz on amoCRM-system platform												
Develop the involvement of Ismet.kz in engagement procedures												
Creating a new procedure for interaction between customers and Ismet. kz												
Functioning on an ongoing basis												
Level of project implementation(%)	70%				30%				100%			

Thus, the company's Ismet. kz is fully resourced. And at the same time it is characterised by transparency and a high level of implementation control.

Conclusion

Today's market conditions require businesses to develop factors that contribute to business competitiveness and sustainability. One such strong factor is the adoption of a customer-centric strategy and implementation of digital marketing to increase customer loyalty and manage the full cycle of customer relationships. Applying these tools to most effectively manage customer relationships in today's business helps direct a company's activities towards creating long-term and prospective customer relationships, increasing company revenue, net profit and market share.

The main success factor in adopting digital marketing to increase customer loyalty is customer satisfaction and working with customers in the most efficient and effective way possible.

The key benefits of digital marketing for customer loyalty are personalisation of products and services, creation of opportunities for company scaling and development, increased customer loyalty, automation and improvement of organisational management processes, improvement of product and service quality, accumulation of knowledge and analytics. The use of loyalty programmes makes it possible to make the most of existing resources - markets, opportunities, customer relationships.

The following key findings emerged from the analysis: Ismet.kz is a high-tech company.

Ismet.kz specialises in

- Comprehensive approach;
- Development strategy;
- Experience gained.

Ismet.kz sales channel and customer interaction is characterised by the following attributes:

- Strategic objectives of the company: sales expansion
- Sales channel structure: short indirect channel;
- Sales intensity: Selective;
- Communication strategy: pushing in.

Ismet.kz indirect short sales channel includes the following elements: manufacturer; Ismet.kz; end customers.

Selective (selective) Ismet.kz sales channel involves limiting the number of sales intermediaries and is effective, but it is necessary to develop the effectiveness of customer relations and increase the level of customer focus of the company.

In 2018-2021, Ismet.kz has focused its competitive efforts on offering a full range of services to its customers. Ismet.kz has focused its competitive efforts on offering a full range of services to its customers, positioning itself in the market as a universal provider.

The following measures are proposed for improvement as part of the restructuring of Ismet.kz sales and customer relations system based on digital marketing techniques to increase customer loyalty:

Action 1: Activate the use of a push strategy in the sales channel through digital marketing.

The forecast implies a generally negative sales trend for Ismet.kz, which will be «mitigated» by market supporters. The ultimate goal of the development of information and marketing interaction in the Ismet.kz sales channel, expressed quantitatively, is to increase revenue by boosting sales due to the advertising impact on the target audience.

Activity 2: Use elements of Agile - techniques to improve the effectiveness of interactions as part of channel sales management.

Action 3: «Industrialisation» of processes and systems of interaction with customers Ismet.kz is a comprehensive restructuring, transferring them to a new «information-technological» platform - amoCRM digital (digital) marketing.

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Appendix

Users

61 417
registered users

27 553
registered
for January-October

86%
user growth
for January-October

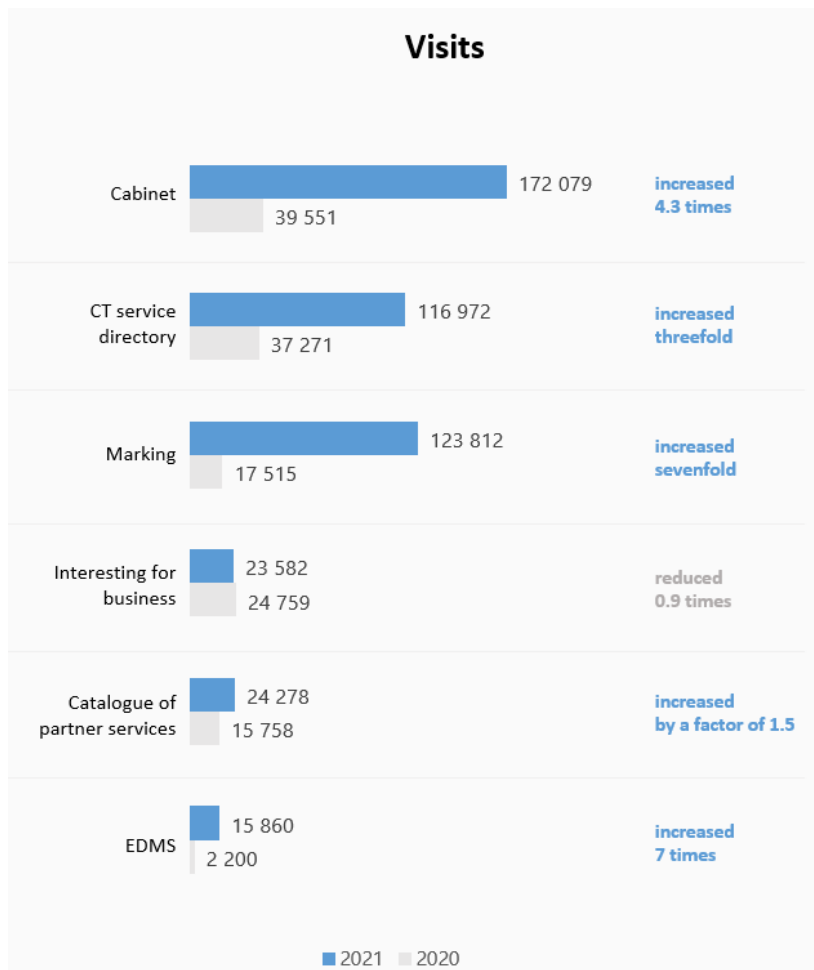
Companies

50 661
attached companies

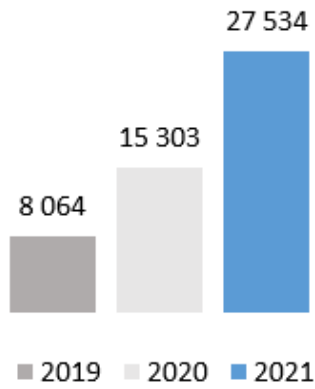
17 180
attached
for January-October

60%
company growth
for January-October

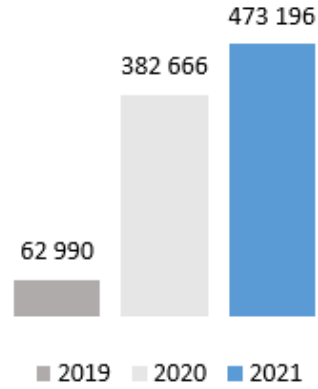
Visits



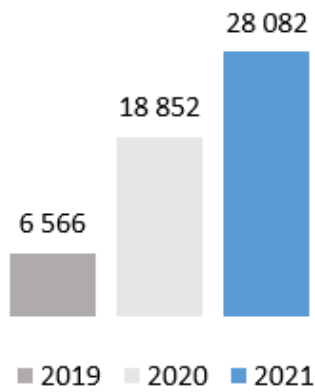
Registrations
increased by a factor of 1.8



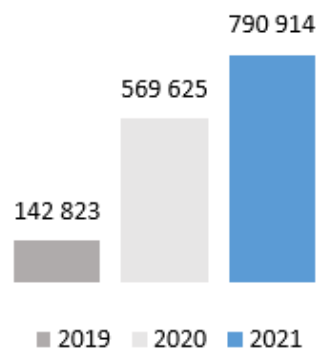
Unique users
increased by a factor of 1.2



Attaching companies
increased fourfold



Visits
increased by a factor of 1.3



What are the individual services at a standard price that entrepreneurs are interested in?

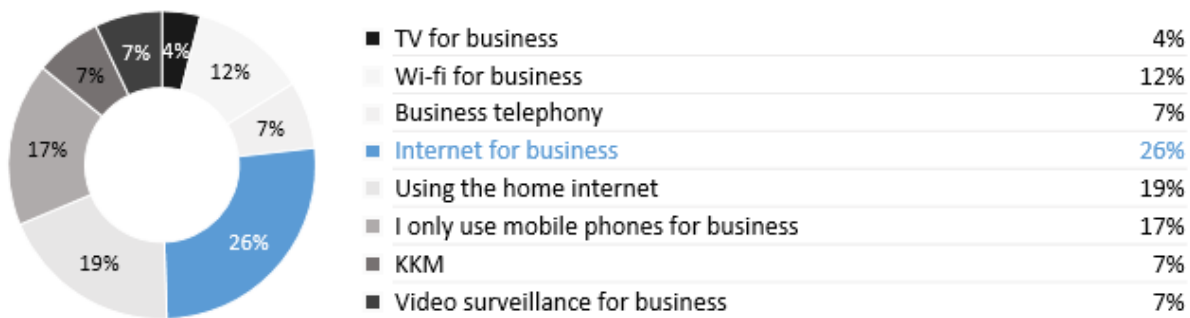
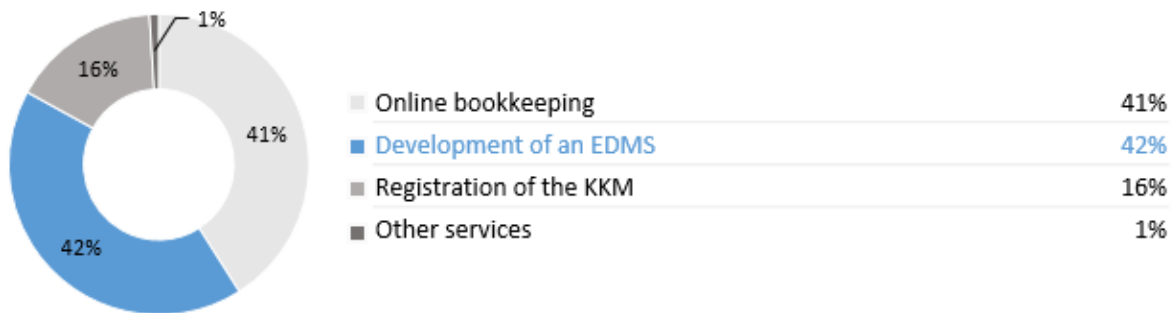


Рисунок 8 –

What kind of additional information to support businesses would entrepreneurs like to see on ISMET pages?



What services would entrepreneurs like to receive on Ismet?



What would be the main purpose of an online marketplace for SMEs in Kazakhstan?

