Sandra Tyrała

WSB University in Poznań (Poland)
Faculty in Chorzów
orcid.org/0000-0002-3700-2355

Agata Orwat

WSB University in Poznań (Poland)
Faculty in Chorzów
orcid.org/0000-0002-5348-9757

Łukasz Makowski

WSB University in Poznań (Poland)
Faculty in Chorzów
orcid.org/0000-0002-1944-642X
email: lukasz.makowski@chorzow.wsb.pl

Trends and sales models in e-commerce: Examples of best practices

Abstract. *E-commerce is an innovative sales model, which represents the way forward for the future of global trade. The article describes current trends in this sector using examples of best practices: the mechanism underlying the Allegro platform, the ASOS sales application, IKEA's hybrid sales model, and e-commerce technologies used by Amazon.*

Keywords: *e-commerce, e-commerce technologies, sales*

1. Introduction

Due to the continuous development of technology and the phenomenon of digital transformation, many market sectors, including trade, are transforming and undergoing a kind of evolution. E-commerce as an innovative sales model is the way forward for the future of global trade. Among other things, it is characterised by greater mobility and flexibility in creating the entire shopping process. The development of e-commerce has been significantly influenced by the change in consumer habits and preferences brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. On-line sales facilitated and still enable today an impersonal form of service, which was an effective solution to the "problem" of closed shopping malls or stationary sales outlets, as well as a form of maintaining social distance.

2. The concept, essence and role of e-commerce

E-commerce (electronic commerce), due to its broad history and the evolution of both the concept and its essence, does not have just one generally accepted definition. The literature refers to e-commerce as the process of making all kinds of transactions, including buying, selling and exchanging goods, services or information via the Internet (Skorupska, 2017, pp. 13-14). Subsequently, e-commerce can be defined as a mechanism that is based on placing an order online and payment and delivery in traditional or electronic form (Wójcik, 2021, p. 5).

In terms of the parties of interest, it is possible to distinguish four types of e-commerce:

– B2C (business-to-consumer) e-commerce – an electronic transaction between a business and a consumer,

– B2B (business-to-business) e-commerce – electronic trading between businesses,

– C2C (consumer-to-consumer) e-commerce – e-commerce with consumers on both sides, in the role of seller and buyer,

– C2B (consumer-to-business) e-commerce – e-commerce between consumer and business (Chaffey, 2016, pp. 64-65).

When discussing e-commerce, it is important to mention the platforms through which transactions can be concluded. The most popular of these are undoubtedly online shops, auction portals and virtual bulletin boards. Online shops are a particularly common solution for B2C sales. Platforms created on the World Wide Web (WWW), thanks to special software, allow the consumer to browse through the offer of a given company, add products to a virtual shopping cart and go through the purchasing process in an unattended form. The C2C sales model, on the other hand, often makes use of auction and advertisement portals such as OLX or Allegro. Users appreciate this form of virtual marketplace because of its continuous development and effort to implement safe shopping methods, for example by introducing buyer protection, different delivery and payment options.

Over the years and considering created market predictions, an upward trend in e-commerce is also visible (Chevalier, 2022). When looking into the situation of e-commerce in Poland, it is worth taking into account the increasing number of people making purchases online every year. In 2021, 77% of Polish internet users bought online (Gemius, 2021), compared to 73% in 2020 (Gemius, 2020) and 62% in 2019 (Gemius, 2019). Numerous studies conducted in recent years by statistical offices, independent institutions or companies suggest that when we talk about the importance of e-commerce in the economy, we mean its increasing importance and scale in global terms.

The COVID-19 pandemic had a big impact on the growth and increased share of online sales in 2020; it generated the global interest in online shopping due

to government-imposed restrictions, including lockdowns, the consequence of which was a temporary inability to do so in the traditional form. Many companies have moved their operations to the digital space, enhancing the consumer experience and creating an environment for themselves to continue doing business by minimising the risk of corporate redundancies by providing the opportunity to work remotely.

3. Trends in e-commerce

Acquiring customers, building a lasting relationship and retaining them, requires a high degree of flexibility in adapting to changing market conditions and following emerging trends. E-commerce makes it possible to personalise a brand's communication with greater precision and to reach those who, due to a strong sense of their individuality – as a person and as a consumer – are precisely looking for a "tailor-made" brand. It is therefore worth pointing out universal, global trends that have worked and are working on a large scale in the online sales model.

One of the key trends is the idea of sustainable development, which aims to find a balance between economic growth and care for the environment (Mierzejewska, 2015, p. 5). Increasing consumer awareness of the impact of business activity on human living conditions has led to the emergence of the term corporate social responsibility (CSR). This strategy is based on leaning towards values that are important from an ethical perspective for market participants. The concept implies taking responsibility for the actions taken by companies whose interests affect society itself and have an impact on the condition of the environment (Janeczek, 2016, pp. 7-9). The idea of sustainability resonates in the media, consumer communication, but also in brand dialogue. According to a survey conducted by the Pew Research Center, as many as 77% of Generation Z in the United States say that addressing climate change is a major issue for them, including 37% who say it is the most important issue of all (Pew Research Center, 2021). This data shows that sustainability issues are an important part of their lives, which also translates into putting environmental focus on their own and others' choices – including the decisions concerning brands of which they are current or potential customers.

The implementation of multiple e-payment options can also be considered a trend. It is important to provide various forms and models of payment to allow customers to find solutions that suit them best. Quick online transfers, payment in instalments or even postponement of payment are nowadays elements of competitive advantage not only against traditional trade, but also determine the choice of a particular e-shop by consumers. The aforementioned generation Y and Z, characterised by their openness to new technologies and their desire for innovative, fast and simple means of payment, facilitates creation of more and more

unconventional methods of payment. In view of the increasing share of mobile sales among econsumers, it is important to provide mobile payment methods such as Google Pay or Blik – a mobile payment product developed by Polish Payment Standard company (Kiełacz, 2021, pp. 458-459).

When discussing e-commerce trends, one cannot forget about the essence of CX (Customer Experience), i.e. all the experiences of the user, who is also a customer of the brand, before, during and after the shopping process, across all channels and touchpoints (Dziegieć, 2016, pp. 268-269). CX is the response to the needs of Y and Z generation members, i.e. customers who are aware, hungry for information and self-reliant along their purchasing paths. They value convenience of use, decision-making and influence over almost every element of their interaction with a brand; the fact that a product meets their need is just not enough for them. At this point, it is worth mentioning the concept of the pro-consumer, created by Alvin Toffler – which was coined as a combination two words – producer and consumer and which directly illustrates the characteristics of generation Y (Blazevich, 2021, pp. 21-22). Generation Z, on the other hand, is enriched with strong needs and desires, centred around the experience of the purchasing process and the sense of authenticity of the brand they choose. Knowing the characteristics of these two largest stakeholders in the e-commerce market, it is important to ensure that in the process, their positive experiences are maximised and the amount of negative ones successively reduced. Taking the Customer Experience approach into account is a trend that should be incorporated into brand and business development strategy if you want to be at the forefront of the race for customers. It is worth starting by getting to know the customer thoroughly, identifying all the points of contact, creating a customer journey map, all with the idea in mind that the journey should be light and pleasant – so that only positive experiences are recorded in the customer's memory and it all stays there for a long time (Wisłocka, 2021, pp. 408-409).

Increasingly, e-businesses are beginning to pay much more attention to automation in its broadest sense, which makes it possible to streamline almost every online process. Automation can be used to support marketing actions and the sales process and fill in the lead gap, i.e. the space between the advertising action that generated the lead (potential customer contact data) and the expected transaction. Modern customers are less susceptible to advertising content which, as it seems, is no longer able to influence them strongly enough to lead directly to a sale. Advertising measures allow them to get to know a company, to build awareness, while they need time to thoroughly verify it and prepare for a purchase. It is worth mentioning now the concept of lead nurturing – that is, the process of preparing a potential customer to make a purchase, often referred to as the nurturing and maturing stage. The way to handle this part of the sales funnel, is to send informative and educational messages that will interest the consumer. Marketing au-

tomation, in the process of lead nurturing, can be used to guide the lead along the sales funnel and lead to a conversion, maintain the relationship and contact with the customer or influence how some specific and desired information about the company is presented to the customer. Automation facilitates a kind of navigation of the consumer in the purchase funnel. Starting from the stage of an unconscious need to the purchase of a specific product. Such a scheme, allows the consumer to be effectively prepared for purchase, without overwhelming them by the amount of information and applying strictly sales messages, thus leading to a win-win situation.

4. Selected e-commerce good practices

With reference to the sustainability trend, you should bring into focus green logistics. Caring for the environment, production and transport procedures can and will soon become the main factors affecting the modern e-consumer's choice of brand. Global aspects that lie in the area of concern for generation Y and Z include reducing carbon emissions, increasing the use of renewable energy sources, recycling or, above all, creating products from better and fewer materials. One of the good practices feasible for a company is to use sustainable packaging. This packaging can be either single-use and recyclable or reusable. In Mirosław Ciesielski's report *E-commerce and Fintechs. A system of interconnected vessels*, it was shown that people are willing to order from online shops much more often if the product packaging is ecological and made of renewable materials (Ciesielski, 2020, p. 20). It is important to remember that every form of consumption creates waste, still it is crucial to create packaging that protects the product, for example with a cardboard filler to stabilise it, thus fulfilling its primary function while not contributing to a negative environmental impact.

It is also a good solution in e-commerce to introduce the possibility of purchasing by instalments. This type of payment method is becoming increasingly popular among e-consumers. It contributes to increased value of the shopping cart and, in addition, it makes customers purchase goods more frequently. By creating an instalment plan that is convenient for consumers, we make goods or services affordable for them at a bargain price, even if they had not previously had any purchasing plans. Instalment purchase puts less of a burden on the consumer's wallet each time, so it is an increasingly used convenient form of payment. The introduction of this solution in an e-shop does not usually involve additional costs for the retailer. It is also worth considering introducing the deferred payment option, pioneered by the Swedish fintech (financial technology – in this context, it is a company providing financial services via the Internet) Klarna, and offered in Poland today by PayU or by the fintech PaypPo. It is based on the buy now – pay

later model. According to data collected by Fintek.pl, up to 400,000 Polish consumers follow such a shopping pattern, while forecasts suggest that this still fledgling market in Poland has high potential for growth (Tomaszewski, 2020). This form of payment has a direct impact on building customer loyalty, as more than half of the customers who used this solution once, return to the shop that offered it. Moreover, when young consumers can postpone their payments or spread them into instalments, they are more likely to complete their purchases and thus contribute to minimising the common phenomenon in the e-commerce sector, known as shopping cart abandonment (PRNews, 2020).

Bearing in mind how every element of a shop's furnishings or its development influences the customer's experience of the purchasing process, the same (if not even greater) care should be taken of it in any e-store. E-merchandising is nothing but an element of the Customer Experience, focusing on designing the usability of the website, refining its intuitiveness, but also creating the concept of product presentation, communication or general messages influencing the customer's motivation to purchase. A fine-tuned e-merchandising strategy makes it possible to create a kind of comfort zone on a company's website or in social media, which in turn, positively affects the customer experience. Through the way the products are displayed, the amount of information available and important from the customer's perspective, the arrangement of elements on the website, the ease of finding one's way around, the company is able to evoke in the customer the need to buy. The following ways of presenting a product are common in e-commerce: photos, videos, 3d presentations, descriptions and recommendations. Equally important from the consumer's perspective are the first few photos showing the product, the possibility to add an item to their watchlist, its name, price, highlighted availability of colours or configurations. In addition to the product, it is worth focusing on appropriately designed banners or other forms of content highlighting, including navigation banners, hints and shopping cart banners; for example, for up-selling, a place for social proof (a section: others have bought, bestseller) (Dziegieć, 2016, pp. 277-279). All this influences the purchasing decisions of the modern consumer, considering the fact that the online space offers limited options to influence all the customer's senses. Consistency of communication, content that is aesthetically pleasing for the recipient, navigation through the process and answering any customer questions that arise, even before they are asked, are nowadays an essential factor in gaining the customer's attention and trust, and thus, through a corresponding increase in conversion and consumer return rates, determines the success of the e-store. Therefore it is worthwhile to invest in customer insight and development, as up to 86% of shoppers are willing to pay more for a better Customer Experience (Kulbytė, 2022).

In today's world, we often deal with customers who want more than ever to be treated individually. In order to meet their requirements, it is first necessary to

know them well; to know why they are interested in a particular product, to know their preferences regarding the purchase items as well as the process itself, but also to be aware of their concerns – not only as consumers but also as individuals. With this knowledge, the company is able to create a lasting, personal relationship with customers, based on their wants and needs. Personalisation is a huge stimulant for shopping motivation, which gives the feeling of receiving a "just for me" offer. It is very good practice to personalise email communications, for example with newsletters. Each message sent responds to a specific need of the consumer, relates to the history of their behaviour on the company's website or corresponds to their purchasing choices, and all of this is possible because of online activity tracking systems and marketing automation. Consumer data analysis can help to make content better tailored to customer needs and generate value for the customer, in the right place and at the right time through the right channels. There are several forms of e-mail marketing. Newsletter – an informative message, usually with non-sales content, providing additional value to the recipient. Newsletter-catalogue – referred to as an electronic form of a news-sheet, sales-oriented, presenting a store's product range, including, for example, special offers, containing products of interest to the consumer. Mailing – also used for sales purposes. Its greatest advantage is that messages can be sent not only to e-mail addresses from our own database, but also using the services of external database providers and sending messages to a specific group of recipients whose data we do not have. A followup message (a reference to something) in the form of an autoresponder – used to trigger a desired action in the consumer, such as providing feedback after a purchase. The trigger for an autoresponder can be the time that has elapsed since a particular event, in the case of the example mentioned above – the number of days since the purchase (Sala, 2016, pp. 183-187). In the time of intense competition that exists in the digital world, personalisation is an effective arsenal in the battle for customers, so it is worth using it if a company's goal is not only customer acquisition, but customer loyalty – personalisation is a distinguishing feature that will strengthen the relationship.

When mentioning good practices in e-commerce, it is worth looking at how they are used by global companies operating in this area.

5. The e-commerce mechanism of the Allegro platform

Allegro is an auction portal that was initially used for so-called "garage sales", i.e. single transactions between individual customers on an auction basis. The service grew fast in popularity due to the continuous development of the platform, but also because some unconventional ideas were implemented at its very beginning. One of them, which can certainly be regarded as the spark of success, was

the signing of an agreement with the Onet.pl web service to promote Allegro auctions there. Today, Allegro is a giant among shopping platforms, with 22 million customers using its services each month and 135,000 sellers placing their offers (Allegro, n.d. a).

To understand the success of the brand, one should look at the entire mechanism which is the foundation of the Allegro platform. The customer has been at the heart of the portal from the very beginning and the **Buyer Protection Programme** has been implemented as a solution to meet customer needs. Its introduction in 2004 led to increased transaction security and provided a guarantee of fulfilment of contractual obligations between the seller and the consumer.

Another good example is **Monety Allegro**, Allegro's loyalty system, in which buyers collect points for concluded transactions, and collected points can later be used as a form of payment within the platform. It is worthwhile to mention the Allegro **Smart!** programme, which, among other things, gives the customer an opportunity to save on delivery costs. Paying a subscription fee of PLN 49 for annual access to the Allegro Smart service or PLN 10.99 as a monthly payment (Allegro, n.d. b), any user, making a purchase for a minimum of PLN 40 in a specified store, is provided with a free delivery service by courier or direct delivery to Allegro One Box machines, parcel machines and pick-up points, as well as can return the ordered goods free-of-charge. According to the Gemius 2020 report, low delivery costs are one of the key factors in choosing an online store by a customer to make a purchase (Gemius, 2020). Data presented by Allegro shows that to date, the Allegro Smart! programme has helped the platform's customers to save almost PLN 4 billion in free returns and deliveries, and this, combined with some additional benefits of programme participation, such as pre-ordering or making credit purchases with zero interest, has contributed to the increase in number of users of the service and increased their willingness to use it.

It is also worth looking into the **Allegro Pay** service; it provides users with a solution to spread their payments in instalments or postpone them for up to 30 days (Allegro, n.d. c). Thus, the service allows customers to take advantage of the buy now – pay later option, which is highly valued among consumers nowadays.

An important advantage from the point of view of the shopping experience is the **personalisation of communication** and its automation. Every registered Allegro user who has agreed to receive marketing content receives emails with personalised content from the platform. Among other things, Allegro uses email marketing to reduce the occurrence of the so-called cart abandonment. When there are unpaid products in the shopping cart and the user leaves the platform or closes the application, Allegro sends a message to the user's e-mail inbox, which addresses the recipient by the name provided during account registration and contains thumbnail photos of the products from the auction and a button, after click-

ing on which the customer is redirected to a page where they can complete their order and pay for it.

Product suggestions of potential interest to customers are yet another example of the use of personalised communication with users and its automation on the Allegro platform. Allegro's algorithms are able to process data concerning the user's choices at a certain time, their shopping preferences or even products they have previously searched for, and thus make another list of offers attractive to the recipient of the message.

Worth examining are also the specific measures taken by Allegro in the above-mentioned areas during the COVID-19 pandemic. One of them was the introduction of the "Smart! na Start" [Smart at the Start] offer, making it possible to have five free deliveries as part of the offer (Allegro, 2022, p. 51). According to Allegro's report; those who chose to take part in the free promotion at that time, subsequently decided to continue with a paid subscription in the programme later. The introduction of the promotional offer was an important factor while fighting for customers at a time when online sales were basically the only possible and safe way to purchase goods comprehensively.

Allegro also used the pandemic period to encourage much older people to shop online. Those previously unaccustomed or even unaware of the possibility of shopping in a different form than the traditional one, had the opportunity to use the "Allegro Helpline for Senior Citizens" created specifically for this purpose, with a task to help them to go through the entire shopping process, from setting up an account stage to making payments. Thus, through the effective implementation of measures aimed at creating a safe space for the elderly and attempting to eliminate in their minds the limitations and uncertainties brought about by the Internet; Allegro has blazed these trails and opened up the elderly to new opportunities related to the digitalisation of shopping process, thus earning the trust of this age group for its shopping platform.

6. Asos sales app

Founded in 2000, Asos is an online sales platform whose founders began their ebusiness by offering customers lower-priced products advertised on television. Today it operates as a fashion retailer with range including clothing items from various independent brands. E-commerce Asos directs its marketing content as well as all communication to their largest customer segment represented by Generation Z members. This generation is the largest group of customers in the entire e-commerce market, so creating a mobile app and designing the entire sales strategy with them in mind is an integral part of developing a competitive edge to win e-customers over.

The Asos sales app seems to be a good example of transferring almost all the functionalities that the modern consumer expects from a simple and enjoyable shopping experience. **The ability to filter products** by brand, size or type of garment, **to sort offers according to** figure type or even the company's responsibility to the sustainability trend – all this makes it possible to browse through a wide range of products limited to those that meet the consumer's expectations in various aspects, thus reducing the time spent on finding the perfect one.

When discussing beliefs shared by the platform's customers, one cannot leave out the concept of inclusivity, which is constantly communicated in Asos' promotional materials, in the content available on the website or even in the direct presentation of products. The models, who display a given product on the website and in the brand's mobile app, are people who deviate from the commonly accepted canons of beauty; this sends a clear message that fashion is accessible to all – no matter who you are or what you look like. Additionally, Asos establishes cooperation with people with disabilities in its promotional campaigns, thus drawing a lot of attention to the problem of designing clothes that are not adapted to people with illnesses and special needs.

Referring further to the way of presenting products beyond the purely ideological aspects, it is worth looking at the method of **e-merchandising** in the Asos app. Some of the products are also shown in video format, allowing the potential customer to see how the item of purchase looks on people of different body types or, for example, check how garments fit and behave during movement. Visualising the product in a more real and physical form is a solution that significantly facilitates the consumer's purchasing decision. The inclusion of a ratings section under a specific offer is a practice that is equally closely linked to a more authentic representation of a product. When a buyer decides to express an opinion on a purchased item, it goes into a dedicated section. Ratings submitted by users of the Asos sales app can include not only a description of their impressions and observations about the purchase, but also photos of them wearing bought products, information on their size fit or a subjective assessment of the fabric quality.

The use of artificial intelligence (AI) is an important factor improving Customer Experience in the purchasing process done through the sales app. Using the Asos mobile app, it is possible to search by an image uploaded to the system while looking for similar or identical products. The entire process is based on the use of so-called product attributes (features), which are extracted from images using convolutional neural networks. The combined attributes allow products to be classified and thus, after analysing the image; point to their counterparts. The use of artificial intelligence and machine learning seems to be a priority for the company in their effort to improve the shopping experience of app users.

In the context of machine learning and data processing, the use of algorithms to create so-called purchase recommendations should not be underestimated. The suggestions are based on the system processing of information about the customer's interactions with different products, frequency in their purchases, and then classifying them as similar. In this way, it is possible to detect a certain correlation between different products and qualify them as interconnected and compatible; this is how recommendations are created, and they are likely to be the ones which will appeal to a user interested in one of the recommended products.

Asos' e-commerce innovation is based on a consistently executed sales strategy and technological development. Taking the right action and displaying values in accord with the brand's mission and vision translates into high consumer loyalty to the brand. Tailoring almost every action to the needs of users, as well as quick and understanding contact with customer service via social media and *Live Chats*, undoubtedly makes going through the entire purchasing process easier and faster. Transparency and truthfulness that generation Z so particularly values in the context of their decisions and choices are also the two hallmarks responsible for the success of the brand and its sales app. An important role in the choice of this platform as a shopping site is the strong emphasis placed on responsible action by Asos and its FWI (Fashion with Integrity) programme which follows the policy of using recycled or so-called sustainably grown materials for packaging or production of clothes.

The key to gaining a competitive advantage and avoiding the crippling effects of the pandemic was to expand the product range and take over a few well-known brands, especially in the UK market, such as TopShop. Moreover, new delivery and payment options have been added, such as the Buy now – pay later (BNPL*)* facility. A lot of focus was placed on developing the customer's shopping experience by investing in data infrastructure, personalisation based on machine learning and improving customer service. Thus, in 2021, Asos managed to achieve a 22% increase in total sales and a 13% year-on-year increase in its active customer base (ASOS, 2021, p. 6).

7. IKEA's hybrid sales model

The Dutch company IKEA initially offered mail order of catalogue goods, a few years later the first stationary furniture store was established, followed by the launch of a website. Since 2008, the company has remained one of the largest furniture retailers in the world. The company's current sales model combines traditional and digital trade. The restrictions of the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the introduction of the change. An additional order-and-collect

service at pick-up points was implemented for customers to minimise the risk of face-to-face contacts.

A free IKEA mobile app has been made available for users of Android or iOS devices to make shopping easier, create a shopping list that the user can return to later, check product availability and track orders. The use of **an omnichannel strategy** ensures that logged-in users can access the created shopping cart on any device. The app features inspirations showcasing functional and stylish interior designs for every budget. As the statistics show, the app attracts more users of the younger generation, who are more likely to shop online. The mobile version of the IKEA Family card provides club members with access to special discounts, discount codes and purchase history. The introduction of the IKEA app has consequently helped to increase the share of online sales to 29% globally. To date, the app has been downloaded more than 10 million times and has earned an average 4.8 star rating based on users' reviews.

Innovative *augmented reality* technology has been implemented in the free IKEA Place app available for iOS and selected Android models. The technology combines a picture of physical reality with a three-dimensional virtual image having the true-size dimensions of products such as an armchair, a table or a bookcase, and its precision allows one to see the structure of textiles and the way light will fall on a piece of furnishing. The user can change the interior style, colours, arrangement and then save the visualisation image or immediately make a purchase on the IKEA website. In addition, the app has a *visual search* option that allows the user to find items in the IKEA database that are similar to those already owned by the user.

In order to increase sales, the IKEA online shop has used and continues to use cross-selling, which involves offering complementary goods to the main product or related goods. For example, by adding a chest of drawers to the shopping cart, a suggestion of related products, the customer might not have been aware of, automatically pops up.

Environmental **protection** is an important matter for the company, which is why the Circular Hub Online service offering products at a reduced price has been introduced. The goods offered within this service have been on display or have some minor defects that do not prevent them from normal use and sometimes they are the last pieces of a selected range. On the website, the customer selects the nearest stationary shop, reads a description and looks at a photo of the product, then makes a reservation, which lasts 24 hours, and finally goes to the shop to collect and complete the transaction.

IKEA is recognised as a pioneer in the implementation of the global **sustainability strategy**: "People & Planet Positive". Currently, the company has six wind farms in Poland, generating around 394 GWh of energy, which satisfies the company's entire demand in the country. Over the past few years, IKEA has phased

out disposable plastic products, created numerous campaigns and practical guides on sustainable consumption, pursuing its strategic goal of transforming the company into a circular, climate-friendly business.

The biggest impact on the digital transformation of the business came when the restrictions caused by the coronavirus outbreak kept consumers at home. The business moved entirely online and went from 7% revenue in the ongoing crisis to almost 50% of the budget planned for the entire period, all happened due to creativity and action that was taken quickly and in an out-of-the-box manner. Despite the challenges related to the uncertainty caused by the pandemic, the company recorded a 9% increase in sales between 2020 and 2021. In times of uncertainty, protecting employees, business, community and maintaining stability proved to be the main challenges the company faced. The pandemic demonstrated the high level of competence of the crisis management department, as the company successfully managed to reorganise its operations in a very short time and transformed from a traditional trade to an ecommerce model, using innovation.

8. E-commerce technologies used by Amazon.com

Amazon.com made its debut in 1995 as an online bookstore, but quickly expanded its product range to include white goods, DVDs, furniture and much more, thus, becoming an ecommerce leader serving customers worldwide. The company owes its success to careful analysis of market trends, planning and execution of its development strategy and development of its own technological innovations. In 2021, the amazon.pl website was made available to Polish users. The platform can be accessed directly through the website and mobile application.

Amazon has pioneered a number of innovations to support the growth of e-commerce, including popularising free shipping and returns, which has encouraged sceptical shoppers to buy online, and introducing customer reviews, which helps shoppers to decide what to buy. One of the company's biggest innovations has been the introduction of the one-click purchase option, which involves setting the default payment method and delivery address once this information has been entered for the first time; and from that point on, every following order is placed quickly and easily.

Amazon, aiming to attain the status of one of the most customer-oriented companies, provides their customers with tools to check the status of their order, make a quick return or exchange products. In addition, consumers can take advantage of the annual Amazon Prime **loyalty programme**, which guarantees free and fast delivery of unlimited number of products, without the requirement of reaching a minimum amount. Delivery to the selected pick-up point, parcel machine or straight to the customer's home, takes place the next day or in some cases, goods

are delivered on the day of placing the order. An additional advantage of Amazon Prime over membership schemes offered by competitors is access to unlimited entertainment in the form of popular films and series, TV shows and free computer games. Amazon Prime also grants access to the best deals all year round and the deals connected with the annual shopping holiday known as Prime Day (Amazon, n.d.). Professionally designed, easy to understand and cost-effective loyalty programmes develop a habit and turn customers into returning buyers.

It is important to note that they were also the first to introduce **personalised recommendations** on their online store website using an artificial intelligence algorithm and *machine learning,* which enables them to accurately analyse and predict consumers' shopping preferences and helps customers to find products and persuade them to make a purchase. Recommendations are based on users' past interactions, their purchases and ratings. The use of personalised recommendations is a factor that improves the user experience. From a business perspective, the use of personalisation increases the number of page views, maintains engagement, improves click-through rates and reduces bounce rates. The proprietary Amazon Personalize tool is used to develop recommendation solutions; it automatically makes data analysis, selects algorithms, chooses and optimises a model that generates recommendations in real time. According to its annual revenue reports, the company has seen a steady increase in sales since 2004, between 2020 and 2021 this was an increase of 21% (Statista Research Department, 2022). The company's continuously developed recommendation system integrated into the customer's purchasing process, which accounts for a considerable proportion of sales, is a significant contributor to such high sales figures.

In order to ensure the best possible user experience with the platform and to facilitate a smooth shopping process, the platform draws on the expertise of *User Experience* (UX) and *User Interface* (UI) specialists. The UX used by Amazon includes the following facilities: the aforementioned recommendations of similar products, easy navigation within the application and search for products, a drop-down menu that, unlike other online shops, has a description for each section, which helps to streamline the user's selection. The UI is the part of the user experience that concerns the creation of interfaces focused on appearance, styles, colour selection and visual elements; in general it is aimed at shaping the layout and designing an easy navigation path. By design, the interface is simple and so the application is easy to use. Other features used in the user experience path include scanning a code or photo to find products, voice search with the introduction of an Echo Dot device which has a built-in voice assistant, a developed customer service procedure and prompt answers to customer questions (Pal, 2020).

In 2007, the company launched its own digital wallet, **Amazon Pay,** which allows you to complete a purchase quickly using your Amazon account without having to enter your personal details and shipping address for the order. UX and

UI designers have gone to great lengths in developing the wallet so that it can be used just like other mobile payment apps (Arcoya, 2021).

In the face of growing volatility due to the pandemic, the company sought to apply innovative solutions that supported customers while encouraging service use. Amazon prioritised goods needed for daily living: food, personal care products, health products and merchandise and accessories needed for remote work from home. At the same time, sellers' offers were verified to ensure that no one artificially raised prices on basic need products, e.g. face masks. Moreover, Amazon created a separate section for groceries called Amazon Pantry, delivering common consumer goods to the customer's doorstep, and the online e-commerce store also became an online grocery store (Amazon, 2020).

9. Conclusions and observations

Following e-business trends that prove to appeal to its consumers is an important part of an e-commerce company's development strategy. When starting out in e-commerce, it is worth looking at what other market players have done and analyse what works and attracts users, and what should be avoided. Good practices that develop a habit and turn customers into returning buyers, such as loyalty programmes or personalised recommendations, have a positive impact on the shopping experience of consumers and strengthen their loyalty to the retailer. An attention-grabbing platform that is, at the same time, not complicated to use further streamlines the purchasing process. The problem of inability of making a physical contact with the product is resolved by using innovative technologies such as augmented reality, which combines an image of the real world object with a three-dimensional virtual image; the customer, supported with the visualisation, becomes attached to the thought of owning the product and decides to complete the purchase more quickly.

Undoubtedly, e-commerce is a part of the market that grew rapidly during the COVID-19 pandemic and gained many new followers in a short period of time. The vast majority of consumers who have benefited from online shopping continue to follow this shopping trend. The extra assistance provided to senior citizens by Allegro has opened the door to new opportunities for them and now, not only the younger generation will buy online, but also some senior citizens will be among them. During the time of social isolation, e-commerce platforms also evolved into online grocery stores, as such were the demands of that time. This confirms the considerable resilience of this model to risk, as it is possible to modify operations efficiently depending on the risks involved.

It is important to remember that e-commerce is not the ideal form of commerce for all industries, but due to the dynamic growth of this market and the

development of shopping trends and preferences, it is worth considering starting your business online, as the Internet is already heading towards becoming a leading sales channel and not just an alternative to its traditional form.

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Trendy i modele sprzedaży w handlu internetowym na wybranych przykładach

Streszczenie. Handel internetowy to innowacyjny model sprzedaży, który stanowi przyszłościowy kierunek rozwoju w światowym handlu. W artykule opisano aktualne trendy w tej dziedzinie na przykładzie wybranych dobrych praktyk. Opisano mechanizm funkcjonowania platformy Allegro, aplikację sprzedażową ASOS, hybrydowy model sprzedaży firmy IKEA, a także technologie wykorzystane przez platformę Amazon.

Słowa kluczowe: e-commerce, technologie e-commerce, sprzedaż, handel internetowy