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NEW MANAGEMENT CHALLENGES IN MARKETING

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Abstract

One of the fundamental criteria of efficient corporate marketing activity is the adaptation to the environmental factors. These days, in the developed economies, the Internet is a decisive environmental factor. Decisions concerning the Internet or Internet activities appear to be new challenges in the corporate operation.

In my conclusions, based on far-reaching relevant literature and empirical researching results, the Internet marketing has started to become a new scope of science and as regards its platform and tools, its particular areas are undergoing fundamental changes.

Keywords: corporate competitiveness, Internet usage, Internet economy, economic networks.

1. The Position and Role of the Internet in Corporate Competitiveness

The importance of the Internet and the information and communication technology that provides its technological background is prominent because it basically changes our and the corporations' lives. In my sight, the technological background of real flows will inevitably change just like the marketing activities and their tools. In this study, there will be firstly examined the connections describing the relationship between Internet and competitiveness; secondly, it will be focused on those new marketing categories that prove that the Internet alters competitive criteria.

There is a close connection between corporate Internet activities and the level of economic and technological development (comprising the information technology) in any given area (national economy), as well as other factors, for instance the social and cultural background.

Information as a competitive factor is gaining a completely new role. Its character and the requirements it faces have been radically changing. Sharing Drucker's views, it has to be emphasized that in the 'IT' (information technology) it is the 'I' that gets into the focus of our attention (DRUCKER, [7]). Nowadays, any information technology-based activities, business- or national economic sectors, in which the technology itself has turned to a platform of information and communication, are called ICT (Information and Communication Technology).

The primary and secondary research results reveal the actual Internet capacity that is characteristic of a given country.

Corporate competitiveness is radically influenced by the Internet, because several decision and operating mechanisms will be modified after the platforms are changed.

Examining the correlation between the Internet and competitiveness we can see immense differences between its characteristics in a traditional and an e-economic environment. The following chart highlights some of the significant features of these two different economies.

Table 1. Characteristics of Traditional and E-economy (*Source*: MAROSÁN, [14] p. 49)

Traditional economy	E-economy
Multiplicity is bad.	Multiplicity (not only in terms of commodities) is a pre-condition for staying in competition.
It is the experience that matters.	Insistence merely on tradition can induce the death of the corporate.
It is the size that is important.	Size and efficiency are hardly correlated; the economies of scale do not have a definite positive advantage.
You have to live on what you have produced so far.	Either the old commodity is to be completed with some new services or new ways for development have to be found.
The corporate is built on business sections (SBU). Attention is to be focused on the distribution of resources.	Resources are to be rearranged continuously in accordance with the priorities and the strategy has not to be carried out by focusing on the accomplishment of the profit centres.
Innovation is an exception	The base of e-economy is the innovation and it is to be treated accordingly; not separated from the corporate processes but included in them.

2. Habits and Attitudes in Internet Usage

According to a Carnation Consulting study, in 2000, 64% of the corporations had a written strategy on informatics, and merely 7% of them had an Internet strategy (www.carnationresearch.hu). There are only a few who make use of the opportunities of interaction and transaction, however, a part of the PR has been put on the webside. These questions are highly important concerning competitiveness, especially since the loss of corporate customers can be attributed to the low level of services in 68% and to a dissatisfaction with the product in 14% (MÁRTONFFY, [15]).

By questioning IT experts, a survey was carried out by HVG (Weakly World

Economy) about the information technological features of Hungary and its backwardness compared to the United States and the developed countries of Western Europe. Hungary falls two years behind Western Europe and 3 or 4 years behind the United States in terms of technology, content, and business application (HVG, [12]). Unfortunately, no considerable changes have happened in this respect so far.

In Hungary, the number of Internet users has been doubling yearly, as well as the value of purchases in the United States. The corporations want to use the Internet mainly for e-business and media purposes and some of them have already made thoughts about introducing Internet-based internal information and managing systems. A professional association which has business interests in IT estimates that the proportion of documents printed between 1995 and 2005 has decreased from 90% to 30% while the volume of documentation has doubled (HEIMER, [11]).

At the EU summit held in Lisbon in March 2000, a new programme entitled the 'Electronic revolution' was decided on and introduced, in order to catch up on the United States. The Hungarian government will contribute to the local achievement of the programme by setting up a new ministry for informatics.

Table 2. The Planned Rate to Realize an Information Society (*Source*: GAÁL, [8], p. 27)

Groups concerned, criteria	Present proportion (%)	Proportion to be attained till 2015 (%)
Families' supply with computers	18	80
Businesses' supply with computers	60	100
Government and governmental offices' work which is manageable electronically	–	75
Local-governments' work which is manageable electronically	–	50

The main focus of research on *corporate information* carried out by the BKÁE Centre of Competitiveness was the following: the information strategy and the budget, the features of the information systems and the organizational questions of informatics (DRÓTOS–SZABÓ, [6]).

Considering the data obtained from the surveys made in 1996 and 1999 some development can be observed, moreover, in certain areas there is a tendency for a remarkable increase. This survey also revealed that over 70% of the computer background was integrated supporting the corporate mechanism in accountancy, finances and HR at the participating corporations. The technological support, however, was not sufficient in inventory management, market-relations (sales, sourcing), and human resources in spite of the dynamic progress.

According to a *new survey* (GKI, [9]) on information readiness and back-

ground, the preparedness of the Hungarian corporations to join the *developed economies* is very diverse in different branches.

3. Characteristics of the Hungarian Internet Economy

The GKI Rt. studies the main characteristics of the Internet economy in each sector quarterly, as well as the major tendencies during the joining period to the highly developed economies. (GKI, [9]). The aim of the research is to study the knowledge, the spread and the future of the Internet and its business applications.

From this survey it is evident that in 2002 *only every third* of the questioned commercial corporations (over 5 employees), *had their own homepage.* It's vital, however, that while only every fourth corporation with 5–9 employees have a homepage, 50% of those with more than 10 employees are provided with it. It denotes the appreciation of the Internet that within one year, two of three corporations are expected to be present on the Internet. The highest increase is predicted at the micro firms with 5–9 employees, the lowest at the firms with 20–49 employees (10%). It's true that the latter group has the highest proportion of homepages at the moment. In the other categories a 16–18% increase can be expected. Within 1–3 years, additional commercial corporates will be expected to possess their own websites.

According to the data on e-commerce, the sales on the Internet, the sales figure of the interviewed commercial corporations (with more than 5 employees) were 390 million HUF in the first half of 2002. The annual sales of commercial corporations *on the Internet* are *about 8.6 billion HUF*. The share of the retail trade is 5.3 billion forints, and that of the wholesale trade is 3.3 billion HUF.

According to the questionnaire, the interviewed commercial corporations are optimistic about the perspectives of the following 12 months. From their expectations it can be concluded that they will furthermore increase the share of their Internet sales.

But *the Internet Sales* have their *obstacles* both in terms of quantity and measure. It is the *special character of some commodities* that makes the introduction of the Internet sales wearisome for a lot of corporations. The survey shows that for most of the corporations it can be decisive that *their customers, partners do not demand it at present*. The third considerable problem for corporations is that the *human resources are insufficiently trained* or the personal conditions are totally missing (especially corporations with 20–49 employees)

The *lack of the capital* needed to develop the system and the *lack of the applicable infrastructural background* was predominantly emphasized by the smaller corporations (with 10–19 employees), but the lack of material resources can be considerable for the large corporations as well.

It was also evident from the replies that according to the commercial corporations, sales on the Internet are not economical for corporations with less than 20 employees.

The commercial corporations expect that the volume and the proportion of purchases through the Internet will be continuously increasing.

Advertisement costs for the commercial corporations (with more than 5 employees) amounted to 380 million HUF nationally in the first half of 2002. Altogether, the annual advertisement costs amount to about 1.4 billion forint. The retail trade had a share of 600 million HUF, and the wholesale had 800 million HUF. The commercial corporations expect their advertisement costs to show an increasing tendency in the following 12 months as well.

Besides the commercial enterprises, the *Internet connection of the financial sector* is also a characteristic of a given economy as the activities of the financial sector influence the whole economy.

While there have been some shifting from the traditional bank towards the on-line bank services in the last few years, the financial transactions still mainly take place in the traditional banks in Europe. The shifting to the on-line, website services can be well traced. At present there are an estimated 24.6 million French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish and British customers making use of the on-line services of a given bank. This number may grow to 57.7 million by 2005.

According to the research data, practically 50% of the big corporations prefer those financial institutions that offer on-line bank service as well. Moreover, one third of the big corporations manages the greater part of their financial transactions exclusively at banks which lay great stress on their website presence. *32% of the medium-size corporations and 12% of the large ones* regularly manage their financial transactions on-line.

In the United States, the wealthy people who possess a capital of 1 million dollars or more to invest use on-line bank services in the first place. These customers prefer the administration through the Internet too.

Among the customers, the most popular on-line services are the requests for information about the account and the balance. *37% of the Europeans check their balance on the Internet at least twice a week.* It's interesting, however, that only 3% of them applied for a bank-card or credit-card on-line, although the banks keep bombarding the Internet-browsing customers with all kinds of favourable offers.

The fast headway of the on-line financial services will force plenty of banks to consider if the capital invested into the new technology is proportional to the customers' increasing satisfaction and to the efficiency of their retaining.

According to the Online Banking Report issued by the Financial Institute in the United States, the number of families managing their bank matters on-line has been continuously increasing (GKI, [9]). In 2001 20% of the American households is reported to manage their bank matters and pay their bills on-line. This proportion will be expectedly 33% by 2005.

In the highly developed economies, globalization and localization tendencies are happening simultaneously. New-type communities are emerging, and the modern corporations can be characterized by more diversified activities than previously. Considering competitiveness, the sectoral ranging is losing its importance and some kinds of virtualization of the corporations seem to emerge. In the highly developed economies, the small and medium enterprises have good prospects in services, re-

search and development, especially if they want to realize these by connecting to a given network like a sub-contractor (ÁVF, [1]; ÁVF, [2]).

4. Decisive Factors of the Economic Networks

On the basis of the relevant literature and the research experiences, the connecting surfaces and criteria of the economic organizations and networks that constitute the network economy, can be well specified.

Tracing the character of the marketing approaches, the factors, which are definitely needed to form the network connections from the corporation and management side, are compiled in the 'MODEL 4I' (from their English initials; Interest, Investment, Innovation, Integration).

The elements of the 'MODEL 4I' can be interpreted as 'dependent variable' together with the environmental factors, they constitute organic connecting surfaces with these elements and, simultaneously they determine the primary conditions of the whole system.

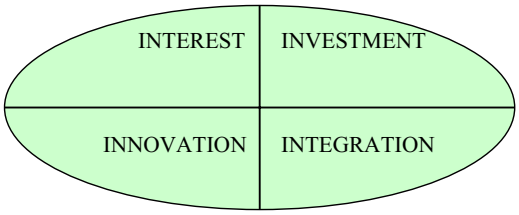

Fig. 1. The 'MODEL 4I'. *Source*: VASNÉ [20], p. 73.

INTEREST highlights the importance of corporate interest. In the model, INTEREST, the realized interest is the most significant element. INVESTMENT indicates the financial background and the willingness to invest, since the realized interest requires a financial background, in the form of available and/or liquid resources. INNOVATION indicates the ability and skills for innovation, since in the e-economy; responsiveness is a pre-condition for staying in competition to a much larger extent than previously. We have to emphasize that we are talking here about a new aspect of innovation, since the partners prefer less the traditional (new product) innovations. INTEGRATION highlights the importance of the corporate integrity's characteristics.

The participants of the e-economy preserve their independence and sovereign corporate integrity on the one hand; on the other hand, however, they are aware of their roles and duties in the networks.

The network connections, developed deliberately and possibly optimally in terms of competitiveness, determine the development of the corporate strategy and the realization of the long-term operation.

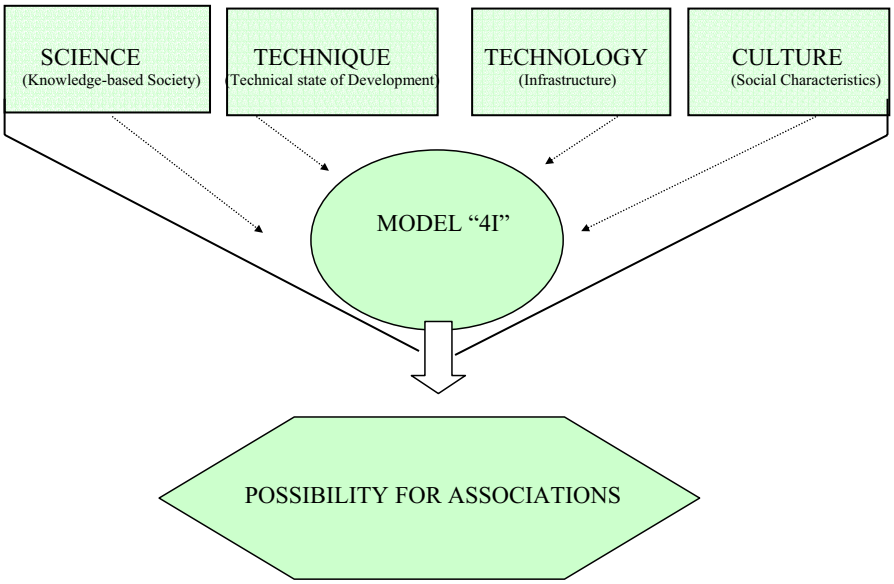

Fig. 2. Network-based environment model. *Source*: VASNÉ [20], p. 74

The network-economic factors, with the tools, corporate abilities and the environmental elements influence *the 'associative possibilities'* (formations, network functions, type of organization etc.) *of the market participants.*

The network's '*associative possibilities'* are determined by the environmental factors since economic organizations must operate in this market and network medium.

The environmental factors highlighted in the 'network-environmental model' can be defined as the summary of experiences emerging from literature and empirical research.

SCIENCE is included in the model as a basis and as a factor that influences progress. In this approach, it can be designated as a basic condition that is needed to create a society grounded in knowledge. The emphasis on TECHNIQUE (involving the technical development of the environment, region, and national economy, and their readiness for the adaptation of the e-economy) is justified by the fact that the tools that are needed for operation are continuously developing and innovation becomes a part of the corporate mechanisms on an everyday basis. TECHNOLOGY and its decisive factor, the infrastructural background is especially emphasized as the speed of the spread and the trend are determined by the parameters of the Internet use (contents, wide-range data processing, tariffs etc.). CULTURE is an environmental element, (the manifestation of such social phenomena as e.g. different customs, attitudes etc.), it is a passive background and, at the same time, an active participant and individual parameter of the network economy.

The 'ASSOCIATIVE POSSIBILITIES' on the diagram can be interpreted as

target-market influenced by the environmental as outer and the 'MODEL 4I' factors as inner corporate factors.

It can be stated that in the competitive economies the pulling force of growth is represented by branches and corporations grounded in knowledge and strongly attached to the network economy. The spread of their results can give some further impulse for economic growth; these economic advantages are indispensable for the national economy.

It follows from the foregoing that the Internet changes the criteria of competitiveness. The outer and inner corporate factors that enable the development of the network economies can be well formulated.

5. Internet Marketing

We can speak about Internet marketing when the Internet is used within the corporate marketing activity for research, planning, advertising, sales etc. It can work parallel with other activities that mutually support each other.

Studying the relationship between the Internet and competitiveness it can be stated that there are considerable changes going on at the meeting point of info communication and marketing. Highlighting some trends; the marketing information system (MIS) turns to integrated marketing information system (IMIS), the marketing communication (MARCOM) to info communication and the in-time interactivity becomes the basic quality. The tools of the marketing research also undergo major changes; the Internet-based research, even considering its limitations, starts to grow rapidly.

The Internet transforms the value-chain and it generates a new business model. *The information- and communication system* fundamentally overturns them in a sense that the focus has shifted and new categories have appeared.

For instance, the physical moving of commodities can be completely separated from the information related to it: both the invoicing (since the e-signature has become legitimate and the risks have decreased) and the opportunities provided by the 24-hour interactivity. For example, servicing has already been carried out without direct personal contribution, merely by info-communicational tools. The perspectives of distance work, and distance learning, and the effects of the other radical changes (e-books, paperless offices, computer-operated households etc.) cannot even be predicted yet.

In the e-economy the market and marketing activities are considerably changing. The market participants' attitude is changing too.

The Internet itself offers more information than any previous information sources did altogether.

The Internet offers radical changes for business participants. It can be comfortable to use and work with, but with the radical increase of variations, it can induce alienation, uncertainty and loss of confidence too.

Table 3. How does the electronic marketing change traditional marketing activities? *Source*: KOTLER [13], p. 253

Marketing activity	Traditional marketing	Electronic marketing
Advertisement	limited quantity of information, printed, video- or audio-media	information material in any optional size and other advertisements on personal websites
Customer services	5 days/week, 8 hours/day, maintenance, repairs made personally	7 days/week, 24 hours/day, electronic dialogues, remote controlled corrections
Sales	personal, phone or direct sales with commodity presentation	commodity presentation with computer
Marketing research	questioning: individual, personal, or group-focused, by phone or post	on-line and off-line interviews and electronic questionnaires
Public Relations*	traditional methods, press conferences, publications	electronic tools: newsletters, special websites
Relationship Marketing*	personal contact, paper-based contracts and vouchers	electronic tools: from order through the whole real flow
HRM*	recruiting with traditional methods, personal contact, paper-based work contract	recruiting: contact on the Internet and intranet, eHR, e-based inner PR
MIS*	inner softwares optimally supplemented with paper-based reports	all the input and output data arise in an electric way and gets into the system

In the chart, the elements and their features which we supplemented the original reference chart with, are marked with a*.

In the electronic age, corporations need to introduce a new *strategy* that is unimaginable without an Internet strategy.

In order to utilize the opportunities, the priorities and preferences of the buyers who purchase through the Internet have to be explored, for example:

- quick accessibility
- love of comfort
- the NETIZEN's rational pricing

While the Internet connections are impersonal, it is easier to identify the buyers, and their purchasing habits on the web than in the traditional commerce.

The Internet provides a lot of information for the corporations about the buyers in a hardly estimable quantity and structure. (For example, decisions of purchase, timing, preparation, collection of information, brand loyalty etc.) Researches prove

Table 4. B2B Models on the Internet. *Source*: OMIKK [17], pp. 12–13

Character of relation	Number of sellers	Number of buyers	Character of information
Bilateral relation	One	One	As per agreement
Exclusive producing platform	One	More, many	Supporting sale
Exclusive commercial Platform	More, many	One	Supporting purchase
Market-place opportunity	More, many	More, many	Neutral, not target-oriented

that corporations use only 30% of the web's options when collecting information on purchase (OMIKK, [16]).

It's important to see that the web is a tool and not a strategy, the whole corporation has to be submitted to it (background administration, efficient operation etc.). It's important to know for all employees of the corporation: *it is the corporate experience and not the technology that results in loyalty*, however, buyers' loyalty is supported by the technology.

It can be declared that in the world of the Internet corporations one can only survive if one takes the 'golden rules' into consideration (PAYNE, [18]).

In corporate marketing, the use of Internet induces fundamental changes in the system formulas. The new information-technological tools used by the information system are the communication channel as well.

The Internet marketing activity gives opportunities for example to:

- establish and keep up contacts easily
- operate customer service, collect customers' opinion
- make Internet-based advertising, apply PR and multimedia
- Sell 24 hours etc.

The characteristics listed above give the competitive advantages which can be included in the prices. In fact, the characteristics are the new elements of the integrated marketing communication as well. While some Internet functions appear as system elements, they are communication channels too, with independent features. So advertising, certain sales promotion, direct marketing activities and PR communication can be realized through the Internet.

The Internet proves to be a very efficient tool in operating all communication channels except for the personal selling among the elements of the traditional communication mix. The Internet is a special PR tool. It is able to send outer and inner letters, messages to the addressees by e-mail or other ways (e.g. by intranet) instead

of phone or post. By experience, we can say that in many cases the Internet is more reliable than the traditional methods and its rapidity is beyond all questions!

The image-improving role of the website has not been utilized by many Hungarian corporations yet. Even these days, there are banks and big corporations that do not or only formally operate websites. Though an own website has many advantages that should be used in any case: a 'newsroom' can be placed on it or it can give access to visual and sound archives.

Domestic corporations are generally very far from the ideal level of preparedness because the transformation of the corporate information system and inner mechanism to Internet-based connections is very expensive. The forwarding of information, the two or multi-sided communication including the development and operation of the system, imply a lot of expenses.

6. New Aspects of the Marketing Information System (MIS)

As a consequence of the changes in the information technology the relevant information becomes a competitive advantage. The corporations with their particular competitive features react to the environmental challenges in a different way. P. Drucker predicts a 'new revolution' to be in progress.

An information system is generally expected to have high-level and well-structured information available in order to prepare and to execute marketing decisions.

The spread of the Internet induces great expectations and its use can undoubtedly save time and costs, however, the differences in contents and the method of processing set new tasks both for the researchers and for corporative marketing experts.

A typical problem arising from the use of the Internet is that we cannot be 100% sure in the authenticity of the information.

One of essential aspects of the information system is a thorough knowledge of the buyers' and competitive partners' characteristics when making marketing decisions and collecting the possibly most information.

According to a traditional approach, the MIS appears as a process supporting the realization of the marketing strategy, however, with the change of platform, that is, the spread of the Internet, it becomes a part of the marketing communication (these days the indicatory of the technological background is not IT anymore but ICT). It is not an independently working system any more, but the buyers', partners' and other relationships' interactive nature demands a brand-new attitude. The information system has to prepare and follow the real flows in accordance with the Internet-activity form of the given corporation.

The time- and space dimensions of the web are often under-utilized in the local relationships. Let us think, for example, of the geographic advantages when forwarding goods, the opportunities offered by language use, or the utilization of cost efficiency etc.

In some areas the spread of the Internet depends on a lot of factors and it is mainly determined by culture and infrastructure. Market supply, the level, development and comfort of services are determinant and, in a cause-and-effect relation, the increase of the users' number generates additional expectations.

It appeared from the foregoing that the web-based connection firstly affects the marketing information- and secondly the marketing communication system but a new attitude is necessary for all corporative activities.

The corporate information- and communication systems are undergoing fundamental changes that are related to the Internet. Technological and organizational processes are also changing. The role and importance of the marketing will be different too; the relations and relationships within the corporate are changing too, everything, the information flow for example, is getting much quicker and more flexible.

It is indisputable that since Guttenberg no other tool has changed the world of information technology and within it the information management so much as the spreading of Internet: the paper-based information has been gradually succeeded by the electronic data management.

At the same time, the change of the information platform demands the restructuring of all the corporative information and background processes, both on the input and output sides. The data coming in different forms must be processed target-oriented or/and must be prepared for other use, for example for the establishment and maintenance of the database, market research etc.

The information mass issued by the micro- and macro environment gets to the corporative 'blood circulation' through the particular elements of the information system. The inner reporting system, the marketing observing-, researching- and analysing- sub-systems well supply their decision-preparing function in the electronic period as well.

One of the most decisive lines of the MIS, the marketing research, operates as a *part* of the corporative *information system*. It means the input and output of the particular elements of that processes that make up the whole corporate operations. The MIS has been undergoing changes and with the globalization it is getting more and more *international.*

Today the Internet pervades the economy to such a large extent that any research on competitiveness cannot exclude a research on the implications of the Internet either.

The Internet, as a research target and tool, can be used to realize the corporative strategy. The methods are adjusted to the Internet use; the web-technology related to the researches is adapted to the various research forms.

One of the key questions of the Internet marketing is the database marketing which has a special importance in the relation-oriented networks e.g. in the Relationship Marketing

It is evident that the transition of the Internet marketing to a new branch of science has begun and certain fields of marketing are fundamentally changing in terms of platform and tools.

7. Summary

Our research results prove that:

1. The preparedness of the Hungarian corporations for joining the European Union and the developed economies falls behind.
2. The position of the small and medium-size enterprises is invariably unfavourable in terms of competitiveness.
3. The role of the IT (information technology) in the enterprises depends on the size of the given sector and corporation. (ÁVF, [2])

A lot of market- and non-market participants have a lot of clear and well-defined responsibilities to enable that joining the EU happens with the fewest possible economic drawbacks for corporations and with a real chance to catch up the developed countries.

The previously highlighted points prove that the economic organizations should be able to react (in the largest possible number, on time, and in the most appropriate way) to the challenges formulated in the title of the study.

The corporations have to realize that there is no time to waste; they have to search for the market gaps and break-out points that can mean the future for the given corporation. They should not wait for a miracle (only) from outside or, what is worse, let 'come what may'. The corporation that does not recognize this and does not put itself in a more favourable position by itself or by some outer (financial and not financial) help, will undoubtedly become a victim.

For the Hungarian economy it is a matter of life and death that all the marketable enterprises should survive and grow since the diffuse effect of the pulling force of the growing organizations enables to forecast the positive results that seem to be a vital interest of both the consumers and all the other economic (or non-economic) participants.

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