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DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION AND THE NEW LOGIC OF B2B BUYER BEHAVIOUR IN GLOBAL MARKETS

ЦИФРОВА ТРАНСФОРМАЦІЯ ТА ФОРМУВАННЯ НОВОЇ ЛОГІКИ ПОВЕДІНКИ В2В-ПОКУПЦІВ НА ГЛОБАЛЬНИХ РИНКАХ

Oleksandra V. Gron, PhD in Economics, Associate Professor
Simon Kuznets Kharkiv National University of Economics, Kharkiv, Ukraine
ORCID: 0000-0002-4229-3484
Email: gronsense@gmail.com

Гронь О.В. Цифрова трансформація та формування нової логіки поведінки В2В-покупців на глобальних ринках. Науково-методична стаття.

Сучасні В2В-ринки змінюються під впливом таких факторів, як цифровізація, зростання вимог до прозорості бізнесу та необхідності перевірки надійності партнерів. У цих умовах дедалі більше трансформується поведінка В2В-покупців, які починають самостійно шукати інформацію, порівнювати постачальників через цифрові канали, та приймати рішення на основі отриманих даних. Метою дослідження є визначення напрямів трансформації поведінки В2В-покупців на глобальних ринках під впливом цифрових технологій, комплаєнсу, кібербезпеки та прозорості бізнес-взаємодії. Увагу приділено переходу від моделі переконання, керованої постачальником, до моделі, у якій покупець самостійно збирає й перевіряє докази для вибору постачальника. Обґрунтовано, що сучасний В2В-покупець стає більш автономним, вимогливим до цифрових інструментів і орієнтованим на інформацію, яку можна перевірити. Показано, що можливість самостійного пошуку і вибору постачальника, цифрові канали, сертифікати відповідності, прозорість і гарантії кібербезпеки впливають на рішення щодо включення постачальника до списку потенційних партнерів та формування довіри. Запропоновано матрицю поведінкових змін В2В-покупців, модель поведінки центру ухвалення рішення, сходи сигналів довіри та цикли трансформації поведінки В2В-покупців. Обґрунтовано перехід В2В-маркетингу від переконання покупця до координації доказів, що допомагають шукати, порівнювати, перевіряти й обґрунтовувати вибір постачальника. Подальші дослідження доцільно спрямувати на поглиблення аналізу поведінки В2В-покупців, зокрема впливу цифрової прозорості, комплаєнс-готовності, кібербезпеки та перевірюваних доказів на довіру, вибір партнерів і конкурентоспроможність компанії.

Ключові слова: В2В-маркетинг, поведінка покупців, цифрова трансформація, організаційні закупівлі, інституційна довіра, омніканальність, самообслуговування, центр ухвалення рішень

Gron O.V. Digital Transformation and the New Logic of B2B Buyer Behaviour in Global Markets. Scientific and methodical article.

Modern business-to-business markets are changing under the influence of factors such as digitalization, increasing demands for business transparency, and the need to verify the reliability of partners. In these conditions, the behavior of business-to-business buyers is increasingly transforming, as they begin to independently search for information, compare suppliers through digital channels, and make decisions based on the data obtained. The purpose of the study is to identify the directions of transformation of business-to-business buyer behavior in global markets under the influence of digital technologies, compliance, cybersecurity, and transparent business interaction. Attention is paid to the transition from a supplier-driven model of persuasion to a model in which the buyer independently collects and verifies evidence for the selection of a supplier. It is substantiated that the modern business-to-business buyer is becoming more autonomous, demanding of digital tools, and oriented towards information that can be verified. It is shown that the ability to independently search and select a supplier, digital channels, certificates of conformity, transparency, and cybersecurity guarantees influence decisions about including a supplier in the list of potential partners and building trust. A matrix of business-to-business buyer behavior changes, a decision center behavior model, a ladder of trust signals, and a business-to-business buyer behavior transformation cycle are proposed. The study substantiates that business-to-business marketing is gradually moving from buyer persuasion toward evidence coordination that helps buyers search, compare, verify and justify supplier selection. Further research should be directed to deepening the analysis of business-to-business buyer behavior, in particular, the impact of digital transparency, compliance readiness, cybersecurity, and verifiable evidence on trust, partner selection, and company competitiveness.

Keywords: business-to-business marketing, buyer behaviour, digital transformation, organizational buying, institutional trust, omnichannel, self-service, decision-making unit.

Business-to-business (B2B) marketing is increasingly defined by behavioural change rather than by technological modernization alone, since digital tools matter not only because firms adopt them, but because they alter how organizational buyers search, compare, consult and validate purchasing decisions inside their own companies. Classical B2B theory described organizational buying as rational, formalized, collective and relationship based, and this view remains analytically valuable because purchasing decisions still involve risk, accountability and multiple actors, yet it is no longer sufficient for explaining how buyers behave in digital and institutionally demanding markets [1-3].

The contemporary B2B buyer has not become less rational; rather, buyer rationality is now enacted through a different behavioural infrastructure in which independent online research, peer content, supplier portals, procurement platforms, automated comparison tools, compliance documentation, cybersecurity statements and sustainability evidence become part of the decision process before any formal meeting with a sales representative. As a result, the traditional supplier-controlled path is weakened, while the buyer gains greater control over the sequence, pace, and evidence base of the purchasing decision.

The findings from leading consulting and research companies indicate that buyer autonomy, digital self-service and ease of interaction are becoming stable behavioural characteristics of contemporary B2B markets. The transformation is also institutional because organizational buyers operate in global value chains where partner selection is shaped by compliance, cybersecurity, responsible business conduct, sustainability reporting and broader requirements for transparent and accountable business interaction. This transformation requires a behavioural interpretation of digital transformation, since the marketing significance of a technology depends on how organizational buyers incorporate it into search, evaluation, coordination and justification routines.

Analysis of recent publications on the problem

The literature on organizational buying began from the recognition that B2B purchasing differs from consumer purchasing because it is embedded in organizational roles, formal procedures, budget constraints and risk accountability. Webster and Wind explained organizational buying through environmental, organizational, interpersonal and individual variables [1], Sheth emphasized expectations, role perceptions and conflict resolution within the buying process [2], while Robinson, Faris and Wind conceptualized purchasing as a sequence of stages and buying situations that vary according to novelty and complexity [3].

These early models remain useful because they show why B2B buying cannot be understood as the preference of one individual, yet their behavioural context was largely pre-digital, with high information asymmetry, limited supplier visibility and strong dependence on personal contact. In that setting, trust accumulated through repeated interaction, reputation, direct experience and the work of salespeople who acted simultaneously as information providers, relationship builders and uncertainty reducers.

The Industrial Marketing and Purchasing tradition deepened this logic by interpreting business markets as networks of long-term relationships rather than isolated transactions [4], while relationship marketing positioned trust and commitment as central mechanisms of exchange performance [5]. Anderson and Narus added that supplier value is created through cooperation and through the customer's evaluation of benefits, sacrifices and relationship outcomes [6], which makes value fundamentally interactional rather than purely product-based.

Ukrainian scholarship has also contributed to the conceptualization of industrial and B2B marketing as a specific field of interorganizational exchange. Starostina, Dligach and Kravchenko systematized industrial marketing by combining theoretical foundations, international experience and Ukrainian practice [7], Dobrianska and Halaida examined marketing of production-sector enterprises with attention to organizational buyer behaviour and the marketing mix in production markets [8], while Boychuk linked the classical Ukrainian tradition of industrial marketing with the modern terminology of business-to-business marketing [9].

Digital transformation research explains why these classical assumptions require refinement. Vial defines digital transformation as a process in which digital technologies generate changes in value creation and organizational response [10], while Verhoef and coauthors emphasize that digital transformation affects strategy, structure, channels and customer relationships [11]. In B2B marketing, the most immediate behavioural consequence is a changed information environment in which buyers gain access to supplier websites, online demonstrations, product documentation, peer reviews, configurators, webinars, procurement tools and AI-supported comparison before direct supplier engagement.

Harvard Business Review research captures the managerial consequences of this change. Almquist, Cleghorn and Sherer show that B2B buyers evaluate not only functional benefits but also ease of doing business, confidence, reputational effects and social responsibility [12], Adamson argues that traditional linear sales and marketing handoffs are increasingly misaligned with complex B2B buying [13], and Sinha, Shastri and Lorimer emphasize that digitally connected buyers use multiple channels and expect coordinated interactions across personal and digital touchpoints [14].

Identification of previously unresolved parts of the general problem

The current transformation of B2B buyer behaviour requires a reconsideration of how digitalization, decision-making unit (DMU) reconfiguration and institutional trust are conceptualized in contemporary marketing research. These themes are often analysed separately, although in actual buying practice they increasingly operate as interconnected elements of the same process, because buyers collect evidence digitally, DMU members interpret it through professional risk lenses and institutional trust signals influence whether a supplier can be justified internally.

A further conceptual clarification is needed in relation to omnichannel behaviour. Digital B2B buying is frequently described through the language of channels, yet buyers experience purchasing as a sequence of organizational tasks that must be completed with minimum uncertainty, including problem understanding, supplier comparison, colleague involvement, risk evaluation, internal defence of the preferred option and post-purchase monitoring. A channel becomes relevant only when it helps complete one of these tasks, which is why this article interprets omnichannel behaviour as task-oriented evidence navigation rather than media diversification.

The behavioural interpretation of B2B buying also needs to be connected with institutional theory because contemporary buyers increasingly make decisions under conditions of auditability, transparency and internal accountability. Procurement teams, sustainability officers, legal departments and IT security specialists do not merely influence preferences; they establish approval conditions that define acceptable supplier choice. In this sense, institutional trust enters the decision process by structuring attention, shaping risk perception and limiting options that can be internally approved [15].

Formulation of research objectives (task setting)

The aim of the article is to identify the main directions of transformation in B2B buyer behaviour in global markets under the influence of digital technologies, institutional trust, compliance, cybersecurity and growing requirements for transparent business interaction. Special attention is paid to the shift from a model in which the supplier mainly persuades the buyer through personal contacts and control over information flow to a model in which the buyer independently collects, verifies and uses

evidence for supplier selection and internal approval of the purchasing decision.

Materials and methods

The materials of the study include the works of foreign and Ukrainian scholars on organizational buying behaviour, industrial and B2B marketing, relationship marketing, digital transformation and institutional trust. The study also uses analytical reports and managerial publications by McKinsey & Company, Gartner, Deloitte, Harvard Business Review and PwC, which provide data on B2B buyer behaviour, self-service development, omnichannel interaction and the growing role of digital evidence in supplier evaluation. The research applies the methods of theoretical generalization, comparative analysis, systematization, logical generalization and conceptual modelling.

Presentation of main results and their justification

In the classical model, the supplier controlled much of the information flow through sales meetings, catalogues, trade fairs, demonstrations and account management, whereas in the digital-institutional model buyers often reach supplier contact already informed, partly aligned internally and equipped with comparison criteria formed through independent digital research. This does not make marketing less important, but changes its position in the buying process, since searchable technical documentation, product information, implementation cases, certifications,

demo environments, data security statements, ESG disclosures and procurement-ready materials become behavioural resources that help buyers verify value, reduce uncertainty and prepare internal justification.

Recent global studies show that this tendency is structural rather than temporary. McKinsey & Company identifies a persistent rule of thirds in B2B interaction, according to which organizational buyers distribute their activity among in-person, remote and self-service channels rather than relying on one dominant mode of communication [16]. Gartner reports that 61 percent of B2B buyers preferred a rep-free buying experience in 2025 and 67 percent expressed such a preference in 2026 [17, 18], while Deloitte shows that 81 percent of B2B buyers expect more self-service and web-based tools, 69 percent prefer digital platforms for reordering and 37 percent are willing to pay a premium for suppliers that make the buying process easier [19]. These criteria are not external additions to marketing practice, they become behavioural filters that determine whether a supplier can enter the shortlist, pass internal approval and be justified to procurement, finance, legal, IT security and senior management stakeholders [20-23].

Evidence coordination differs from persuasion because it does not assume that the supplier can control the buyer through arguments, promotional pressure or personal relationships.

Table 1. B2B buyer behavioural shifts

Behavioural dimension	Classical B2B pattern	Digital-institutional pattern	Marketing consequence
Information search	Supplier-mediated information flow through salespeople, catalogues, trade fairs and referrals	Buyer-led research through search, portals, peer content, configurators, documentation and platforms	Evidence must be discoverable, reliable and understandable before direct supplier contact
Buying journey	Relatively sequential movement from need recognition to supplier evaluation and purchase.	Nonlinear movement across learning, comparison, validation, internal consensus and re-evaluation	Marketing must support multiple entry points and buyer tasks rather than a single linear funnel
Channel behaviour	Preference for personal meetings and relationship-based communication	Hybrid use of self-service, remote interaction and in-person expertise depending on the buyer task	Omnichannel design should ensure continuity, consistency and ease of movement across touchpoints
DMU reconfiguration	Supplier interaction is focused on identified decision makers and influencers	Supplier evaluation becomes distributed across DMU members who interpret digital evidence through professional risk lenses	Marketing must create a coherent evidence architecture for multiple organizational stakeholders
Trust formation	Trust develops through familiarity, reputation and repeated cooperation	Trust is supported by data integrity, certifications, auditability, cybersecurity and institutional signals	Credibility depends on verifiable proof rather than promotional claims
Role of sales	Salesperson acts as information gatekeeper and relationship builder	Salesperson acts as expert interpreter, validator, solution co-designer and consensus supporter	Sales should enter where complexity, risk or internal uncertainty requires human expertise
Post-purchase behaviour	Relationship continuity is evaluated through delivery, service and account management	Continuous evaluation occurs through dashboards, service portals, analytics, support data and performance evidence	Customer success, transparency and continuous proof become retention tools

Source: elaborated by the author based on [1-6, 10-19]

It means that the supplier creates a coherent system of proof that can be discovered independently, interpreted by different DMU members, validated through expert consultation when necessary and reused inside the buyer organization during approval. This shift also changes the meaning of content in B2B marketing, because technical guides, security certificates, transparent pricing explanations and documented customer cases can reduce perceived risk and give internal stakeholders a reason to continue the process rather than postpone the decision. The main dimensions of this behavioural transformation are summarized in Table 1.

Buyer autonomy is the most visible behavioural change, yet it should not be interpreted as an anti-sales tendency because buyers usually want less unsolicited selling rather than less expertise. Rep-free preferences reflect a desire to control the pace and sequence of engagement, to avoid irrelevant outreach and to collect evidence without social pressure, while expert contact remains valuable when the buyer must interpret complexity, justify risk or coordinate internal stakeholders [17, 18]. Self-service behaviour is also an efficiency behaviour because it reduces cognitive effort, administrative delay and dependence on repetitive communication. When buyers can reorder, track, compare, configure or download documentation without contacting a representative, the supplier becomes easier to work with, and ease of doing business becomes an economic attribute rather than a service luxury [19]. Nonlinear omnichannel behaviour strengthens this logic because buyers do not move through a neat funnel from awareness to purchase; they move back and forth between learning, comparison, validation, internal discussion, expert consultation and renewed evaluation. McKinsey's evidence that there is no single channel customer confirms that omnichannel should be understood as a behavioural setting where

buyers expect continuity, choice and consistency across self-service, remote and in person interactions [16].

In such an environment, consistency means that product information, pricing logic, service promises, compliance evidence, sustainability claims and expert explanations should not contradict one another. Inconsistency becomes a trust problem because it forces the buyer to spend additional effort reconciling evidence, and this friction may be enough to remove a supplier from consideration.

The decision-making unit remains central to B2B behaviour, yet it becomes more distributed and asynchronous in digital markets. Procurement specialists, users, IT experts, finance departments, compliance officers and senior managers may interact with supplier evidence at different moments, through different channels and without the supplier knowing that evaluation has already begun. This shift means that suppliers may lose a potential deal before the formal sales conversation if an invisible stakeholder cannot find role-relevant proof. A technical user may reject a supplier because the demo is unclear, IT may hesitate because cybersecurity documentation is incomplete, finance may block the proposal because total cost evidence is weak, and compliance may slow the process because ownership transparency or responsible conduct documentation is unavailable. The marketing function therefore becomes a coordinator of evidence across the whole DMU. A single corporate message cannot support all stakeholders, while an evidence architecture can help each actor find the artefact needed for internal interpretation and still maintain one coherent supplier narrative. These changes in the structure of organizational buying are summarized in Table 2, which shows how different DMU actors participate in supplier evaluation and what type of evidence they expect from the supplier.

Table 2. Model of digital-institutional DMU behaviour

DMU actor	Classical role	Digital-institutional behaviour	Evidence expected from supplier
End user	Defines functional requirements and evaluates usability	Tests demos, watches tutorials, reads peer cases and compares workflows	Use cases, demos, training materials and usability evidence
Procurement	Manages tendering, price comparison and supplier selection procedure	Uses portals, supplier databases, platforms and automated procurement tools	Transparent terms, delivery data, references and contract templates
Technical expert and IT	Assesses technical fit and implementation feasibility	Checks integration capacity, security statements and compatibility	API documentation for system integration, security certificates and implementation roadmap
Finance	Evaluates budget impact, payment terms and total cost	Models cost scenarios and compares measurable outcomes	ROI logic, cost transparency, performance metrics and payment conditions
Compliance and legal	Checks contractual, legal and reputational risks	Screens sanctions, ownership, ESG claims, data protection and responsible conduct	Compliance certificates, policies, due diligence data and audit trails
Top management	Approves strategic or high value decisions	Evaluates resilience, reputation, strategic fit and long-term partnership value	Executive business case, risk summary and institutional credibility

Source: elaborated by the author based on [1-6, 12-14, 16-19]

Trust remains fundamental in B2B marketing, but the behavioural sources of trust have expanded from interpersonal familiarity toward digital, operational and institutional proof. Relationship continuity and reputation continue to matter, yet buyers increasingly ask whether supplier claims can be demonstrated through data, certifications, audit trails, cybersecurity assurances, compliance systems, sustainability disclosures and third-party verification [20-23].

Digital trust is therefore not an abstract attitude, it is a behavioural condition that allows the buyer to continue the process. When sufficient trust signals are available, the buyer is more willing to shortlist the supplier, request a demonstration, share data, involve senior stakeholders or move toward contractual commitment, whereas missing trust signals produce delay, additional documentation requests or exclusion.

ESG, cybersecurity and compliance work as behavioural filters because they determine whether a supplier can pass to the next stage of evaluation before price and product superiority are fully assessed. This does not mean that every B2B decision is primarily sustainability driven, but it means that institutional risks increasingly shape the shortlist and the internal approval process, especially in cross-border value chains where buyers must justify supplier selection to regulators, investors, customers and internal governance bodies [20, 22, 23]. The role of trust signals in supplier evaluation is summarized in Table 3, which presents different levels of evidence and shows how each type of proof reduces specific buyer risks and enables further movement in the purchasing process.

Table 3. Trust signal ladder for B2B supplier evaluation

Level of trust signal	Typical evidence	Buyer behaviour enabled	Risk reduced
Functional proof	Specifications, demos, samples, user cases and documentation	Initial technical consideration and inclusion in the comparison set	Product performance risk
Operational proof	Delivery data, service commitments, support process, tracking and references	Willingness to test, reorder or move to negotiation	Execution and service risk
Digital proof	Portal functionality, API documentation, cybersecurity statements and integration capability	Remote evaluation, data sharing and process integration.	Cybersecurity, information and interoperability risk
Institutional proof	Compliance management, sanctions screening, ownership transparency, certifications and auditability	Internal approval by procurement, legal and compliance stakeholders	Legal, reputational and third party risk
Sustainability proof	ESG disclosure, responsible sourcing data and environmental or social indicators	Long-term partnership consideration and compatibility with customer obligations	Sustainability, investor and stakeholder risk
Strategic proof	Resilience record, innovation roadmap, ecosystem participation and recognition	Senior level commitment and strategic partnership	Strategic misfit and future readiness risk

Source: elaborated by the author based on [5, 6, 15, 20-23]

The conducted conceptual synthesis suggests that contemporary B2B buyer behaviour is better represented as a transformation cycle than as a linear funnel. A funnel implies a sequential narrowing of alternatives controlled largely by the supplier, whereas the cycle reflects repeated evidence seeking, risk interpretation, internal justification, expert validation and continuous post-purchase assessment. The cycle begins when a business problem, regulatory requirement, disruption or innovation need triggers search. The buyer then enters an autonomous research phase, screens suppliers according to the availability of credible evidence, interprets this evidence through role-specific DMU lenses, engages human experts when complexity remains, commits when the decision can be justified internally and continues validating the supplier through dashboards, service data and renewal evidence. This logic is summarized in Table 4.

Several propositions follow from the proposed framework. Reliable self-service evidence can reduce

buyers' willingness to engage with unsolicited early-stage outreach, consistency across digital, remote and personal channels can strengthen buyer confidence and shortlist inclusion, evidence prepared for non-commercial DMU members can support internal consensus, institutional trust signals can function as preliminary filters before product superiority is fully evaluated, and human sales interaction creates the greatest value after autonomous buyer research when the buyer needs interpretation, customization and internal decision support. The framework also explains why digital transformation does not automatically improve B2B marketing performance. Digital tools create value only when they support real buyer tasks and provide information that can be trusted, reused and connected to the next step of the decision process, which links technological design with behavioural usefulness, evidence consistency and institutional credibility.

Table 4. Digital-institutional B2B buyer behaviour transformation cycle

Stage	Dominant buyer behaviour	Supplier evidence required	Marketing and sales implication
Problem trigger	A business problem, risk, regulation, innovation need or market disruption initiates supplier search	Problem framing, sector insight, benchmark data and thought leadership materials	Marketing helps buyers recognize and structure the decision problem
Autonomous search	Buyer explores and compares options through digital channels before direct supplier contact	Searchable content, technical documentation, cases, comparison materials, webinars and demos	Evidence must be accessible and understandable without sales mediation
Evidence screening	Buyer excludes suppliers that lack credible, complete or transparent proof	Certifications, security statements, ESG data, references, demo access, pricing logic and procurement-ready materials	Supplier must provide verifiable and role-specific proof at the early stage of evaluation
Distributed DMU interpretation	Procurement, users, IT, finance, compliance and management interpret supplier evidence through different professional risk lenses	Stakeholder-specific artefacts and consistent cross-channel information	Marketing coordinates evidence architecture for the whole decision-making unit
Expert validation	Buyer seeks human interaction when complexity, risk or internal uncertainty remains	Expert consultation, solution co-design, risk interpretation, implementation explanation and negotiation support	Sales shifts from persuasion to expert validation and internal consensus support
Internal justification and commitment	Buyer selects the supplier when value, risk and credibility can be justified inside the organization	Business case, implementation plan, contract clarity, performance guarantees and risk summary	Marketing and sales support internal approval and reduce decision friction
Continuous validation and renewal	Buyer monitors service quality, delivery, data reliability, compliance and performance after purchase	Dashboards, service portals, reports, customer success evidence and renewal data	Retention depends on continuous proof, transparency and evidence-based customer success

Source: elaborated by the author based on [1-6, 10-23]

The proposed interpretation has practical implications for B2B marketing. Firms should treat self-directed buyer research as an early and often invisible market interaction, organize marketing around the DMU rather than an abstract buyer persona and prepare evidence for users, procurement, IT, finance, compliance and senior management while maintaining one coherent internal narrative. Sales should be repositioned as expert support for complex decisions rather than as a source of basic information, while compliance, cybersecurity and sustainability evidence should be integrated into the buyer journey because transparency, resilience and institutional readiness increasingly become sources of trust and competitiveness in international B2B markets.

Finally, companies should measure buyer friction, including how easily buyers find documentation, how often they repeat information requests, where channel inconsistency occurs, which stakeholders block approval and what evidence accelerates movement from search to shortlist, negotiation and commitment.

Conclusions and prospects for further research

The conducted analysis and conceptual synthesis shows that contemporary B2B marketing is changing not only because suppliers adopt digital technologies, but also because buyers increasingly behave differently in the purchasing process. They search more independently, move across multiple channels, prefer self-service for many tasks, involve DMU members asynchronously, evaluate suppliers through evidence

and use institutional trust signals as filters in partner selection. Classical B2B theory remains relevant because organizational buying is still collective, risk-sensitive and relational, yet these characteristics now operate through distributed digital evidence, documentation, cybersecurity, compliance and sustainability proof. The theoretical contribution of the study lies in shifting attention from technological adoption and industrial consumer needs to B2B buyer behaviour transformation. The proposed author-developed analytical tools systematize behavioural shifts, DMU reconfiguration, trust signals and the transformation cycle, while the conceptual synthesis demonstrates how digital transparency and verification mechanisms support the convergence of B2B buyer behaviour in global markets. From a practical perspective, B2B marketing should move from supplier-led persuasion toward buyer-enabled evidence coordination, where firms provide digital and institutional evidence that helps buyers search, compare, verify, justify and continuously validate supplier relationships.

Further research should focus on a deeper conceptual analysis of B2B buyer behaviour transformation across different industries and market contexts, with special attention to how digital transparency, compliance readiness, cybersecurity and verifiable supplier evidence influence trust formation, partner selection and company competitiveness in international B2B markets.

Abstract

Modern business-to-business markets are undergoing substantial transformation under the influence of digitalization, increasing transparency requirements, cybersecurity concerns, compliance expectations and the growing need to verify the reliability of partners in global value chains. These changes affect not only marketing tools and communication channels, but also the behaviour of B2B buyers. Organizational buyers increasingly conduct independent online research, compare suppliers through digital channels, use supplier portals, procurement platforms, technical documentation, certificates, cybersecurity statements, compliance information and sustainability evidence before direct contact with sales representatives. As a result, the traditional supplier-controlled model of persuasion is weakening, while buyers gain greater control over the pace, sequence and evidence base of purchasing decisions.

The purpose of the study is to identify the main directions of transformation in B2B buyer behaviour in global markets under the influence of digital technologies, institutional trust, compliance, cybersecurity and growing requirements for transparent business interaction. The study focuses on the shift from a model in which the supplier mainly persuades the buyer through personal contact and control over information flow to a model in which the buyer independently collects, verifies and uses evidence for supplier selection and internal approval of the purchasing decision.

The research is based on theoretical generalization, comparative analysis, systematization, logical generalization and conceptual modelling. The study uses classical and contemporary academic literature on organizational buying behaviour, industrial and B2B marketing, relationship marketing, digital transformation and institutional trust, as well as analytical reports and managerial publications on B2B buyer behaviour, self-service, omnichannel interaction and digital evidence in supplier evaluation.

The results show that the contemporary B2B buyer is becoming more autonomous, digitally active and evidence-oriented. The study substantiates that self-service tools, digital channels, documentation, certifications, transparency, cybersecurity assurances, compliance readiness and sustainability evidence increasingly influence supplier shortlisting, internal approval and trust formation. The article proposes several author-developed analytical tools: a matrix of B2B buyer behavioural shifts, a digital-institutional model of decision-making unit behaviour, a trust-signal ladder for B2B supplier evaluation and a transformation cycle of B2B buyer behaviour. These tools systematize how organizational buyers search, compare, verify, interpret and justify supplier choice in digital and institutionally demanding markets.

The study concludes that contemporary B2B marketing is gradually moving from supplier-led persuasion toward buyer-enabled evidence coordination. In this logic, marketing should not only communicate value, but also organize reliable, accessible and role-specific evidence that helps different members of the decision-making unit evaluate suppliers, reduce uncertainty, justify decisions internally and continuously validate supplier relationships after purchase. Further research should deepen the conceptual and empirical analysis of how digital transparency, compliance readiness, cybersecurity and verifiable supplier evidence influence trust formation, partner selection and company competitiveness in international B2B markets.

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