

EXPRESSION OF BUSINESS ENVIRONMENT CHANGES IN TRADING COMPANY: RESEARCH OF USERS' OPINION

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ABSTRACT

Expression of business environment in trading company is being analysed in this article. Theoretically it was determined, that by supervising own business environment the companies must accordingly react to its changes and envisage what influence one or another factor of business environment have on them as insufficient attention to this area may determine inability to adapt to changing business environment. Therefore it may be baneful for trading companies and this topic must be analysed as much as possible. After quantitative research was made and 65 users of trading company were interviewed (customers of services or production), it was determined that alternation of supplies, employees and financial institutions as well as changes in legal, political and technological environment have the greatest influence on the environment of trading company. Obtained results of the research showed practical significance when solving management tasks of changes in business environment under development conditions. In accordance with this information, more rapid and better reaction of trading company into satisfaction of needs of the users is possible. The most important aspects, which must be considered, and which are necessary for managers of trading companies in order to make effective decisions are having of such information, accuracy of information, effectiveness of existing measures to receive and transfer information.

KEY WORDS: *management of changes, changes in business environment, elements of business environment, trading company.*

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Introduction

Needs and expectations of users in Lithuania shall vary, products, services, methods of their creation shall change and improve as well as requirements raised for business shall increase. Rapidly changeable conditions of business environment shall determine transformations of the system of users' values, needs and interests. All efforts of the company are made for satisfaction of users' needs and services. Such efforts shall be implemented with reference to appropriate decisions and actions, related to product, its price, distribution and support of the offered product.

All this shall affect management of companies and change role of their managers. Managers of trading companies must understand the importance of existing and prospective changes of business environment, influence on business development and management, to learn to implement strategy of the company under permanently volatile conditions of business environment. Abilities of the manager to analyse strategic perspectives of the company, project and reorganise company, highlight and govern internal powers and competencies of the company, on purpose to qualitative changes of activity as well as to avail of influence of external forces, shall become essential on purpose to seek changes in the business oriented to the user. Management of changes shall include preparation of trading company to accept challenges of the environ-

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ment, management of qualitative changes in all areas and selection of the most suitable versions of activity in order to reach vision of organisation.

In accordance with Z. Grineitienė (2005), business environment has direct influence on the development of business activity. It can stimulate the business to originate or, on the contrary, to aggravate its establishment and further activity. Recently struggle for such global distribution channels as large global retail systems shall become relevant. Retail amounts in Lithuania shall be assessed more than 23 billion LTL and shall grow steadily. No new supermarkets were opened within five last years and there are no plans to open them. There are intentions only. Nets of supermarkets have fear that the sector will experience hard period. They concern, that in the nearest future price war will reach such extent, that some supermarkets will be forced to terminate their activity or will be taken over by their competitors cheaply. Such changes in business environment as often as not are experienced with difficulty and it may become a fatal challenge to improvement of the company's activity or even its survival on the market especially when appropriate and systematic preparation is not made.

Many authors (Zakarevičius, Kvedaravičius, Augustauskas, 2004; Campbell, Luchs, 2004; Švelienė, 2004; Christensen, 2004; Stripeikis, Žukauskas, 2004; Žvirblis, 2005; Stoškus, Beržinskienė, 2005) shall emphasize, that changes of business environment for the companies are inevitable. But at the same moment, authors shall often stress that they are unpredictable and hardly predictive. J. Barsėnaitė and others (2006) are of the same opinion. It is stated, that one of the reasons of companies' successful activity is favourably accepted changes. In case to understand possible business risk and possibilities, business representatives shall reach for more accurate information about market of their area as well as about potential users and competitors (Martinkienė etc., 2009). According to V. Zinkevičiūtė (2007), changes of business environment are a challenge for business, solicitous of competitive advantage, but also a possibility to use tendencies of environment changes, by developing these business abilities and by accepting these strategic decisions, which would allow gain competitive supremacy in the context of new tendencies. Changes shall take place when the company shall change as a whole in integrated way. R. Korsakienė (2012) shall state, that current companies confront with changes of various nature, which are inevitable because of variable business environment. It is noticeable, that new technologies and variable needs of the clients stimulate the companies to renew so that they would remain innovative and competitive. V. Venckutė (2005) confirmed, that variable process is constant and anticipation of changes or their consequences would allow managers of organisations correct their strategies and prepare for tomorrow. It would ensure competitive supremacy and successful activity of organisations. Mostly occurring reaction to changes is stand against them, as one could not understand how to react to them (Lodienė, 2005). "One of companies' bankruptcy reasons is inability to react to global or event local changes, which shall take place constantly", state J. Kvedaravičius and D. Lodienė (2002).

Therefore understanding of these problems and aim to solve them shall require adequate scientific researches, intended for determination of assumptions that would allow increase effectiveness of activity of business subjects using measures of management improvement.

Problem: insufficient attention in scientific publications and practice is being paid for determination of expression of changes in trading company.

The subject of research – changes of business environment in trading company.

Aim of research: to determine influence of changes in business environment on trading company Maxima XX.

Tasks raised in order to reach the goal: to motivate influence of changes in business environment on goals of trading companies in theoretical aspect and to determine opinion of users about influence of changes in business environment on the goals of trading company Maxima.

Methods used: comparative analysis of scientific literature; quantitative research and data processing methods were applied in the research; obtained data of quantitative research were processed in accordance with SPSS 15.

An interview took place on 17 March 2014 at Maxima supermarket Maxima XX, in Plungė.

1. Theoretic reasoning of influence of changes on goals of trading company in business environment

The companies shall differ in size, structure, activity processes and results, existing resources, influence on society and community as well as other indexes. The amount of risk and structure, occurred during procedural management, changes and reforms of processes will greatly depend on these factors (Klimas, Ruževičius, 2009). Trading companies shall be attributable to service area. Their specifics shall distinguish by the fact, that they do not remake or in any other way process acquired goods before selling to the users and that they sell their products together with its specific services. Such companies may be retail, wholesale and public catering. Trading company is a private investment into human wellness, change of which shall depend on the success by satisfying human expectations. Success of trading company shall directly depend on that how rapidly it is able to react to changes in business environment and how these changes affect its condition.

In scientific literature authors shall differently emphasize the importance of analysis of business environment. Companies operating to the international extent shall understand business environment as business environments of different countries, but nowadays international business environment itself shall exist in regional and global business environment, which consists of supranational institutions, geopolitical factors and such measures of state politics as bilateral (multilateral) agreements, trade obstacles etc. (Sethi and others, 2002). According to A. Vasiliauskas (2004), pragmatism to business environment as to the whole of external objects, powers and factors shall dominate, which sensibly affects the company (its activity and its results). Usually changes in the company shall be implemented on purpose to improve or even to change substantially one or other elements of the company, having significant influence on activity of the company, which consists of components and factors of business environment (Žvirblis, 2005). Changes for the company (or individual) are necessary so that it would stay in competitive environment and would be able to reach tasks.

Therefore significance of changes in business environment on company's activity is great. As D. Klimas and J. Ruževičius (2009) state, management of companies (irrespective of one speaks about strategic or operational management) will have to refer to an assumption that background of management technology consists not of technology and end user. They only restrict it. The background must consist of client's values and client's decisions how to distribute disposable income. But it would be difficult to find "pure" changes, depending on one or another attitude in practise of companies. If companies wish to successfully compete on the market, they must constantly look for new reserves for improvement of activity, creation of new products and services, application of new technique and technologies as well as improvement of management methods (Mackevičius, 2005).

Business environment of trading company shall fully depend on business subject itself. Therefore we will not analyse it in detail in this article and concentrate our attention to the elements of business environment, that various authors mention mostly (Table 1): economic, technological, political, juridical, social, ecological changes of environments, change in clients, suppliers, competitors, employees and financial institutions.

As it could be seen from Table 1, authors shall differently classify environment elements affecting trading company. Regardless of appropriate differences, essential criteria shall remain the same. A threat to retain part of occupied market shall occur because of increased changes in business environment, i.e. increasing needs of users, occurrence of new competitors. Sophistication of the user shall be treated as a level of reception of user's information as well as familiarisation with alternative sellers and their prices on the market. Also it is possible to state that influence of all changes of business environment on trading companies is different. These changes may make favourable conditions for trading business to expand not only in the country, but in foreign countries as well, and on the contrary, impede its development or even destroy it. Changes of business environment are significant as competitive advantage may be acquired by using them and this topic must necessarily be analysed more and more.

In summarising a conclusion may be made, that changes in business environment of trading company are inevitable, sometimes even dependable on company's activity and endeavours to understand them and to control. Trading companies, in which analytic activity is well organised and managers of which always try

to control factors related to business risk, may foreseen forthcoming crisis of activity earlier, to operatively react into it and reduce possibility of its occurrence. Therefore elements of changes in business environment must be assessed in integrated way; influence of one element to others must be determined and optimum version of adjustment of all aspects must be found when seeking innovation of trading company, competitive ability and attractiveness to users.

Table 1. Influence of changes in business environment on trading company

Row No.	Elements of changes in business environment	Influence of changes in business environment on trading company
1.	Changes in economical environment	Business environment is influenced by tax and money politics executed by state management bodies, capital flow, investment environment, credit supply and interest rate politics, demand, supply, competition, pricing and other economic factors (Gineitienė, Korsakaitė and others, 2003). Economic environment assessment factors: economic growth, inflation, employment, interest rates, fluctuation of interest rates, investment climate, prices of production factors and so on (Švelienė, 2004). It is very important to pay attention to tendencies, determining purchasing power, as it may have great influence on the business, especially if the companies offer goods to the users, having high income and oriented to price (Kotler, Keller, 2007)
2.	Changes in technological environment	V. Venckutė (2005) shall state, that the most obvious and dynamic change is new technologies. It is very important to pay respect to the following tendencies of technologies: rate of changes, opportunities of occurrence of innovation, variable budgets of scientific researches and development and increased control (Kotler, Keller, 2007). New industrial and information technologies not only shorten duration of product's moral limitation, its lifetime, but also create new usage needs (Snieškienė, 2009)
3.	Changes in social environment	Social environment changes are determined by various factors: demographic changes, growth and distribution of people's income, people's attitude to work and leisure, changes of lifestyle and cultural values etc. (Robbins, 2003). Business entities, which are able to react to changes of social environment, shall start to look for ways or methods, into which they could direct their resources and compete (Navickas, Kontautienė, 2011)
4.	Changes in ecological environment	International environment protection requirements, which must be observed by organisations, shall form (Gineitienė, Korsakaitė and others, 2003). Security of growing ecology normative requirements shall require accurate selection of technologies and is related to higher costs (Vasiliauskas, 2006)
5.	Changes in political environment	According to J. Mackevičius and A. Rakštelienė (2004), political environment shall affect business through: taxing system, regional politics and support for small and medium business. Companies in their practical activity must follow decisions and appropriate legal acts (laws, resolutions, regulations) made by political forces (parties), formed by power and management structures (parliament, government), operating in the country (Pranulis and others, 2008)
6.	Changes in juridical environment	Activity of all companies is directly and indirectly influenced by separate legal acts and entire legislation, regulating general conditions of company's activity, taxes, working conditions and so on (Vasiliauskas, 2006). Entrepreneur must know how it will act if one or other law will be adopted, how it will have influence on production of goods or supply of services, prices of goods etc. (Virvilaitė, 2007)
7.	Change of clients	Companies should always take an interest in if their users are satisfied, as satisfied user shall remain loyal for a longer time, purchase more and new goods of the company, have favourable appreciations about the company and its goods, have less interest in competitor's trademarks, less react to price, offer their ideas to company (Kotler, Keller, 2007). Clients of the company shall directly affect finances of company by purchasing its goods (Černius, 2013)
8.	Change of competitors	Improvement of users' services shall linger a very long time and competitors must attempt to reach company's level (Jong and others, 2004). Presentation of required product or service in proper place on proper time may allow business entity acquire competitive ability (Navickas, Kontautienė, 2011)

Row No.	Elements of changes in business environment	Influence of changes in business environment on trading company
9.	Change of suppliers	Competitive supremacy of companies is often related to actions of suppliers and activity of distribution channels because of shortened lifetime of product, increasing quality requirements and variation of technologies (Stöttinger, 2001). First of all influence of suppliers on goals of company shall evidence through purchase cost price of goods on sale (Čermius, 2013)
10.	Change of employees	Repeated change of employees may make great damage for trading company, as first of all they communicate directly with clients, so creating image of company and their often change does not ensure excellent training level (Čiutienė, Kumpikaitė, 2003). Many service companies cannot implement service quality management process. It is supposed, that the main reason of it is intense change of employees in services (Žostautienė, Čerkauskytė, 2007)
11.	Change of financial institutions	Business obstacles: instability of country's economic and political status, change of taxing and finance systems, ambiguity of legal acts, inflation (Mackevičius, Rakštelienė, 2005). Companies vitally need effective working relations with financial institutions. Rate of development may be determined by changes of conditions of company's borrowing (slowdown or revival). By lending/not lending money banks have influence on finances of company (Čermius, 2013)

2. Organisation of research and discussion of results

Purpose of this research is to determine influence of changes in business environment on purposes of trading company Maxima XX, what would help manager of the company to react to and envisage what influence has one or other factor on competitive ability of company in existing situation.

Place of research. The research was made at Maxima system's trading company Maxima XX in Plungė. The trading company employs 103 employees. Today we could bravely name history of trading system Maxima establishment as a business success history, as after proclaim of Independence in Baltic states none of companies had such financial success, popularity in society and evaluation of buyers.

Type of research is *quantitative, descriptive*. Method of research is *questionnaire*. Anonymous questionnaire was applied by presenting private, open and mixed questions. Questions were made from demographic part and eleven blocks of questions, where respondents were asked to evaluate changes in business environment of trading company "Maxima" (table 1) from 1 – it has small influence,..., until 5 – has very great influence.

After statistical inspection of questionnaire was made, it was determined that Cronbach Alpha common value (indicating internal reliability of instrument with regard to its questions) is equal to 0,956.

Table 2. Cronbach's Alpha assessment results

Elements	Cronbach's Alpha	Elements	Cronbach's Alpha
Common value	0.956	6. Changes in juridical environment	0.897
1. Changes in economical environment	0.822	7. Change of clients	0.767
2. Changes in technological environment	0.833	8. Change of competitors	0.604
3. Changes in social environment	0.796	9. Change of suppliers	0.749
4. Changes in ecological environment	0.865	10. Change of employees	0.827
5. Changes in political environment	0.697	11. Change of financial institutions	0.455

Fluctuation of alpha value up to 1 shall indicate that reliability of data is valid and shall approach to ideal index. According to R. Gliem and J. Gliem (2003), when alpha index: >0.9 – ideal; >0.8 – strong; >0.7 – acceptable; >0.6 – doubtful; >0.5 – weak; <0.5 – unacceptable.

Alpha value 0,455 of change in financial institutions shall indicate that this block of questions have problems with internal compatibility of questions.

Extent of research. In consideration of purpose of research, *non-probabilistic* method of selection of investigative groups is provided – *purposive conclusion of groups* (Kardelis, 2007). Here researcher includes persons into the group, who, according to him, are typical from the point of view of feature under investigation, who are easy to find and who are nearby (Tydikis, 2003). In researches of small scope, investigative groups are often formed by not fully keeping to coincidence principle. Undoubtedly, in such way formed groups shall not fully reflect population. But results of such researches may be reliable enough if only researcher does not intend extrapolate them for all population that is transform outside investigative group. Most often groups are selected in such way by performing exploratory (preliminary) (Kardelis, 2007).

Respondents. 65 respondents participated in research. They are users: buyers of services or production. Importance of users is clear from the start of company's perception: they maintain company and capacitate to constantly renew activity.

It was tried to select respondents into group of research, income of which would distribute within all four groups:

- Group 1–12 % respondents (income below poverty level, up to 800 LTL).
- Group 2–22 % respondents (income beside poverty level, from 800 LTL to 1500 LTL).
- Group 3–17 % respondents (those, who receive average income, 1501–3000 LLT).
- Group 4–14 % respondents (those, who receive higher than average income, >3000 Lt).

Questionnaire took place on 17 March 2014. Administrative feature of performance of quantitative research shall be noticeable: respondents have the ability to explain them uncertain questions of questionnaire. Main difficulties with which were confronted during questionnaire, were reluctance or inability of users to participate in questionnaire because of subjective reasons.

Results of research. After Shapiro-Wilk test was applied, it was determined (Table 3), that all features are not distributed according to normal law (p meanings <0.05), consequently only non-parameter tests can be applied to more detail analysis and comparisons.

Table 3. Shapiro-Wilk test evaluation results

Elements of changes in business environment	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	p mean
1. Changes in economical environment	0.926	65	0.001
2. Changes in technological environment	0.951	65	0.013
3. Changes in social environment	0.950	65	0.010
4. Changes in ecological environment	0.895	65	0.000
5. Changes in political environment	0.943	65	0.005
6. Changes in juridical environment	0.918	65	0.000
7. Change of clients	0.907	65	0.000
8. Change of competitors	0.939	65	0.003
9. Change of suppliers	0.915	65	0.000
10. Change of employees	0.904	65	0.000
11. Change of financial institutions	0.913	65	0.000

In order to determine which changes have the greatest influence on and if there are statistically significant differences during assessment of these changes, Kruskal-Wallis test was applied. Obtained results of research, presented in Table 4, indicate that all changes of environment are assessed sufficiently equally (i.e. there are no statistically significant differences).

Table 4. Assessment results of changes in business environment

Elements of changes in business environment	Mean Rank
1. Changes in economical environment	324.91
2. Changes in technological environment	385.26
3. Changes in social environment	368.78
4. Changes in ecological environment	359.40
5. Changes in political environment	362.50
6. Changes in juridical environment	322.15
7. Change of clients	341.34
8. Change of competitors	315.28
9. Change of suppliers	375.57
10. Change of employees	357.78
11. Change of financial institutions	425.03

Table 5. Test Statistics results

Chi-Square	15.776
df	10
<i>p</i>	0.106

Attitude of clients (users) into quality of service in trading company shall depend on how: needs of particular client is being satisfied; possibilities of appliance of service to each client are being provided; supplier's behaviour, created by atmosphere of internecine confidence, and other circumstances. Therefore after performance of analysis of changes in business environment in trading company "Maxima", the greatest influence (>3.00) on business environment as main factors of success of service quality were such intangible factors as (Fig. 1):

- In group 1 (<800 LTL) – alternation of financial institutions (3.17), employees (3.04), suppliers (3.14) and clients (3.02), as well as changes of legal (3.21), political (3.21), ecological (3.11) and social (3.11) environments.
- In group 4 (>3000 LTL) – alternation of financial institutions (3.24) and suppliers (3.24) and changes of technological environment (3.27).

Results of research allow presume that behaviour of users is influenced by changes in business environment. Wishes and economic possibilities of user shall form demand of goods and services, which determine supply. It depends not only on the size of income of users but also on change of clients, suppliers, competitors, employees and financial institutions as well as on other legal, political, ecologic, social, technological and economic conditions.

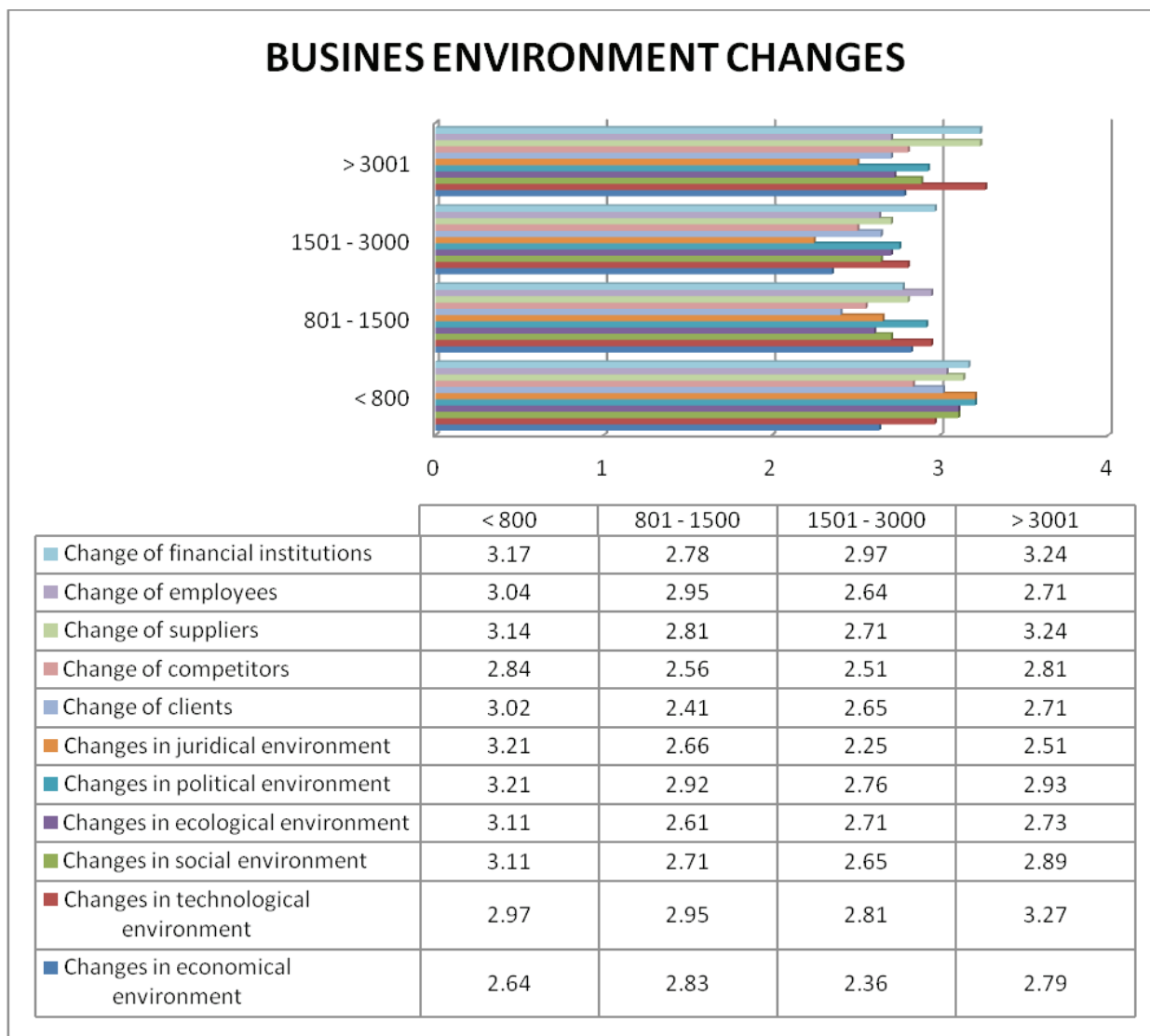


Fig. 1. Assessment results of changes in business environment from viewpoint of users

Interviewed participants of research (respondents), whose monthly income does not reach 800 LTL, indicated that changes of *legal* (3.21) and *political environment* (3.21) have the greatest influence on business environment. Respondents, monthly income of whom is from 800 LTL to 1500 LTL state that, business environment is mostly influenced by *change of employees* (2.95) and *changes of technological environment* (2.95). Respondents, monthly income of whose is from 1501 LTL to 3000 LTL state, that business environment is mostly influenced by *change of financial institutions* (2.97) and *change of technological environment* (2.81). Respondents, monthly income of whom is more than 3000 LTL also state, that business environment is mostly influenced by *change of financial institutions* (3.24), *change of suppliers* (3.24) and *changes of technological environment* (3.27).

In summarising it's possible to state, that obtained results of research indicated which changes of business environment have the greatest influence on this trading company. That is: *change of suppliers, employees and financial institutions* as well as *changes of legal, political and technological environment*. Obtained results of the research may guarantee the trading company ability to flexibly and effectively react into changes of business environment and educate collectives, that are able coherently participate in the process of constant increase of competition. According to this information more rapid and better reaction of trading

company into satisfaction of needs of users is possible. Expenses of company related to search of users shall decrease by maintaining long-term relations with users, besides, expenses of finding new users are significantly higher than for maintaining of the old ones.

Conclusions

Theoretic analysis of scientific literature revealed that changes in business environment of trading company are inevitable. Sometimes irrespective of company's activity and endeavours to understand and control them. Business environment shall change constantly therefore if trading companies wish to persist and continue activity they must be flexible, dynamic and open. It is possible to state that by supervising their business environment, trading companies must accordingly react to its changes and envisage what influence one or other element of business environment will make for them as insufficient attention to this area may determine inability to adopt in variable business environment. The company may become insolvent and a threat of bankruptcy may occur because of adversely changed business environment, unforeseen and undesirable events. Therefore it may be disastrous for trading companies and this topic must be analysed in more detail.

During practical research it was determined that participants of research (65 users) indicated the most important elements of business environment, which have the greatest influence on business environment of trading company. That is alternation of suppliers, employees and financial institutions as well as changes in legal, political and technological environment. The most important aspects, which must be considered, and which are necessary for managers of trading companies in order to make effective decisions are having of such information, accuracy of information, effectiveness of existing measures to receive and transfer information. Therefore in trading companies in all management levels, at a stretch, it is necessary to seek that transfer of knowledge and information from users about business environment, reflection of acquired experience and discussion of activity perspectives would take place in order to seek for goals of the company by adjusting to volatile business environment...

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VERSLO APLINKOS POKYČIŲ RAIŠKA PREKYBOS ĮMONĖJE: VARTOTOJŲ NUOMONIŲ TYRIMAS

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje nagrinėjama verslo aplinkos raiška prekybos įmonėje. Teoriškai nustatyta, kad įmonės privalo stebėti savo verslo aplinką ir atitinkamai reaguoti į jos pokyčius, matyti, kokią įtaką joms daro vienas ar kitas verslo aplinkos elementas. Nepakankamas dėmesys šiai sričiai gali lemti negebėjimą prisitaikyti kintančioje verslo aplinkoje. Prekybos įmonėms tai gali būti pražūtinga, todėl šią temą būtina tyrinėti.

Atlikus kiekybinį tyrimą, t. y. apklausus 65 prekybos įmonės vartotojus (paslaugų ar produkcijos vartotojus), nustatyta, kad didžiausią įtaką prekybos įmonės verslo aplinkai daro: tiekėjų, darbuotojų ir finansinių institucijų kaita, teisinės, politinės ir technologinės aplinkos pokyčiai. Tyrimo rezultatai atskleidė praktinę verslo aplinkos pokyčių valdymo uždavinių sprendimo reikšmę plėtros sąlygomis. Remdamosi šia infor-

macija, prekybos įmonės gali greičiau reaguoti į vartotojų poreikius. Tokios informacijos turėjimas, jos tikslumas, turimų priemonių efektyvumas gauti ir perduoti informaciją yra svarbiausi aspektai, į kuriuos reikia atsižvelgti ir kurie būtini prekybos įmonių vadovams, siekiant priimti veiksmingus sprendimus.

PAGRINDINIAI ŽODŽIAI: *pokyčiai įmonėse, pokyčių valdymas, verslo aplinkos elementai, prekybos įmonė.*

JEL KLASIFIKACIJA: M12, R11.