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EXPLORATORY RESEARCH OF ACTIVITY-BASED COSTING METHOD IMPLEMENTATION IN SERBIA

ABSTRACT

The successful organization is the one that is able to improve quality, lower costs and increase efficiency of operations, and eliminate different activities and products that incur losses. To achieve this, organizations implement different costing systems. A costing system is a system that helps the management of an organisation with planning and decision making. This system plays an important role in providing accurate cost information about the products and services provided for clients. Many organizations shift their focus from conventional or traditional costing systems to an increasingly popular costing methodology system that is Activity Based Costing system. This article specifies characteristics and reasons for implementation of this method, and defines establishment of this method in Serbia.

Key words: *quality, costs, costing systems, management, data.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Economic and financial crisis has led Serbia, and many other far more developed countries in situation in which companies and entrepreneurs carefully analyze their investment options. Now, more than ever, investors need to decide which investment is profitable and which is not, and therefore needs to be terminated. In the process of making such decisions, investors compare costs with benefits that will eventually be achieved with such capital investment. It is very helpful to use different methods, techniques and instruments that will produce useful information (in proper time) about the exact amount of historical costs, their relevance and possible projection of their amount in the future. Costing systems play an important role in overhead costs allocation on results of production, providing in the same time the management of one company with important information about: production price of product or service; the sale price (pricing strategy); information that assists in business planning and controlling; and information that help managers in process of alternative decision-making.

Traditional costing systems allocate production overhead costs to products and services according to the volume-based cost drivers. In production companies cost drivers are usually machine-hours, the time that worker spend using a machine in order to produce one product, or direct-labour hour which is the employee's time spent in production of specific product. Those drivers are correlated with amount of working hours of employees and machines that are directly engaged in production of products. The greater amount of costs will be allocated to the products or service that requires more labour or machine hours to be completed. This is logical and practical solution of a very complex problem, but it cannot be applied in service providing organisations without sacrificing precision in cost allocation.

There was great inflow of foreign capital in Serbia during 2005, and in later years, that increased foreign investment on domestic market. Additional capital inflow has been injected by different commercial banks, and it has been mainly focused on service-providing companies that do not require expensive equipment and advanced technology, but only initial investment. These new trends shifted the domination of production companies to service-providing entities. For example, new financial and educational institutions are being established; also the government emphasizes on development of domestic tourism.

But the question is how well the managers and accountants in Serbia do know the relatively modern methods and techniques that can help them in control and analysis of costs and activities. The first part of this paper gets the reader familiar with advantages of Activity-based costing system. The second part presents the results of research on the application of this method in real life in Serbian companies.

2. BASICS OF ACTIVITY-BASED COSTING SYSTEM

Robert S. Kaplan introduced in 1988 new costing system (classic model) as a response to disadvantages and shortcomings of traditional costing methods.¹ Activity based costing system (ABC) quickly found its way to production companies. The main difference between this method and traditional costing methods is in the treatment of indirect costs. There is a direct connection between the results of production and direct costs (such is the price and quantity of wood used in production of chairs or tables), making its allocation simple. The problem lies with indirect costs; such is the cost of electricity used for lighting in production plants, because they have no direct causal connection with results of production. Total costs could be also classified to costs of production and period costs. Product cost is a cost assigned to goods that were either purchased or manufactured for resale, while period costs consist of costs recognized as expenses during the period in which they incurred and therefore will be covered with periodical result. Overhead production costs are not easily traced to the results of production, since these costs often have no direct relationship with one individual product/service or activity. In average, production costs, in production companies, measure from 40% to 60% of total costs. However, in service-providing entities, such as commercial banks, indirect costs make up the largest part of total costs. In such situations, accurate cost accounting is required, and Activity-based costing suits this requirements the most.

But what cause the appearance of costs in one organisation? Production (or service providing) company starts its business in order to realise income by selling products and services. To do so, it has to purchase materials and other factors of production and organise and execute production process. Results of production cause the existence of costs; this is basic assumption of traditional costing systems. But this doesn't mean that every purchased factor of production will be directly expensed in production of every product or service, on the contrary. Example, after the production process in food industry takes place, machines and other equipment have to be cleaned and disinfected. These expenditures are more connected (and could be easily

¹ *Traditional costing systems can be divided in two traditional forms: full absorption and variable costing. Full absorption costing system in costs of production includes all variable and fixed costs. This means that cost of a unit of product includes direct labour, direct material, and fixed and variable overhead production costs. On the contrary, variable costing in cost of a product includes only variable production costs. Based on this, period costs are consisted of total fixed costs, variable overhead costs, and expenses that belong to the period in which they appeared and cannot be directly or indirectly connected with production process*

distributed) to activities than to products-results of production. Activity-based costing system assumes that results of production consume activities, and activities spend purchased factors of production.

There are many definitions of the word - activity. Activity is every repeated action, movement or order of operations, carried out in order to execute the business function; and it can be described with a verb or noun, for example starting the machines or unloading of raw materials. (Rainborn and others, 1996) According to Brimson, activity can be defined as appropriate combination of people, technology, raw materials, methods and environment necessary for the production of certain products or services, which describes what one company does and how it uses its time and resources in order to achieve its goals. (Brimson, 1991) From these definitions it can be concluded that activity is a very small part of the business of one company that employs and spend its resources, and can be divided into smaller fractions. When implementing Activity-based costing system for the first time, it is very important to develop suitable activity dictionary which is the list of activities that company perform in its business. While composing activity dictionary, organisational structure and size of a company can be helpful. When defining activities, complex business is divided into basic operations and activities that can be perceived and managed. Different data collection methods and techniques can be used here, such as conducting interview with key staff, using diaries or notes of employees and direct observation of activities. Nevertheless, the basic principles of efficiency and materiality should not be ignored².

Traditional costing systems have four very complex stages in cost allocation; Activity-based costing system has only two. In the first phase of cost allocation, according to Activity-based costing method, total indirect costs are determined on company or business unit level. The next step is to define the activities that have to be accomplished in order to provide a service or to have a product being finalized. Activity-based costing system assumes that the execution of a certain activities drives the creation of production costs opposing to the assumption of traditional costing systems that suppose that results of production (products and services) cause the existence of these costs. Therefore, indirect costs are allocated on activities or activity cost pools³ in the first stage of this method based on pre-defined cost drivers⁴. The second stage of Activity-based costing method distributes total amount of allocated costs of activity centers to cost objects⁵.

Cost drivers are associated with the nature of activity performed. As example, in trading company, where one activity can be purchasing of goods to be sold, the number of suppliers and/or the number of purchase orders could be recognized as cost drivers. All costs calculated in order to get one purchase order to be accomplished will be allocated to that activity. In second phase of Activity-based costing method, allocated costs are being distributed to cost objects (in this example the good to be sold) according to cost driver - number of purchase orders accomplished for purchase of that good to be sold. Therefore, inventory that has been purchased in greater amounts or several times more than the others groups of inventories will

²*It is very important to have a limit when dividing business into activities, because the costing systems have to be economical. The costing system should no longer produce information that has higher costs of production than the benefit of its use*

³*Activity centre is a cluster of related activities*

⁴*Cost driver is a factor used to assign cost from an activity enter to other activity cost pools or cost objects*

⁵*Cost object is the ultimate goal for performing an activity, and in ABC it represents the final cost assigned to a product or service.*

be allocated with higher amount of indirect overhead costs, or the more the activities are performed the higher will be the overhead cost applied to cost object.

The previous paragraph described classic model of Activity-based costing method, however in 2004 Kaplan introduced more up to date model: Time-driven Activity-based costing. This model is even more suited and adapted for application in service-providing companies, though it can be applied in manufacturing companies as well. Time-driven Activity-based costing can successfully implemented in commercial banks. As an example, we can analyse one sector within the bank – credit department. Activities centres could be defined as: loan approval, customer complaints processing and other requests. The main difference between classical and modern model is the inclusion of new dimension: the capacity utilization. Namely, it is estimated practical capacity at the level of one sector or company, which represents the approximate number of working hours provided by employees that will be exploited in certain period of time. Unused capacity includes the time employees spend on breaks, arrival and departure from work and time that is not directly linked to the performance of the operations or activities. Furthermore, allocated indirect costs at the level of sector can be divided with number of working hours in order to calculate the amount of costs needed for execution of one unit of time – hours or minutes. Previous calculation is needed for cost allocation to activities. By multiplying working hours needed for one activity to be accomplished with cost per working hour, indirect costs are being allocated to activities or activity centres. The second stage of Activity-based costing method distributes allocated indirect costs of activities to cost objects (single client, or group of clients), by recording all activities conducted for each group of customers⁶. Using this calculation, the total indirect costs for each group of clients could be calculated, by adding all distributed costs for each client. This information is necessary for pricing strategy. Still, there is a portion of indirect costs that cannot be allocated, no matter which costing method company implies, and has to be covered with periodical result. Sometimes this amount of costs can be sufficient to turn positive periodical result to negative. Therefore, it is necessary to strive for thorough and complete indirect costs allocation.

Proponents of this method discuss its shortcomings, as well. To determine the practical capacity of one company or sector it is necessary to conduct interviews with employees, or to observe them while they perform activities and operations. Sometimes this is expensive, requires additional resources and it is definitely time-consuming. Also, employees may be motivated to provide subjective answers in order to increase their productivity.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

Activity-based costing was developed by Cooper and Kaplan in 1988. Ever since, numerous authors have advocated the benefits of Activity-based costing, and a number of researches have given empirical evidence to support those benefits. They noted that besides providing more accurate product costing, this system also improves the base upon which strategic decisions are made, resource allocation, product mix, pricing and marketing are performed. It is also noted that when Activity-based costing system is used in this way, customer profitability profiles and analysis are possible. There are many research papers proofing that Activity-based costing is not a theoretical method, but practical, since it is implemented in numerous companies. Although the Activity-based costing method is superior

⁶ *One commercial bank uses following client classification: retail, micros and corporate clients*

compared to traditional costing methods, there is still a great world domination of traditional costing systems⁷.

An on-line survey (2005) was completed by 528 participants from companies across various industries, sizes and job levels in US. Survey respondents were asked whether they actually use Activity-based costing method in their companies, or they consider its' implementation. It is interesting to notice that, besides communications⁸, 46% percent of respondents that actively use Activity-based costing belong to financial services. 33% of all financial service respondents use ABC for costing and cost control, and 31% for process improvement. Over the half of all respondents uses Activity-based costing outputs to support organization performance management. Also, only 28% of all respondents include capacity in their ABC implementation. It is noted that USA have the highest adoption rate of Activity-based costing method in the financial sector.

The rate of adoption of Activity-based costing method constantly rose since its introduction, but slightly falls during past few years. Several studies have been conducted trying to explore implementation rate, in different countries. As example, in New Zealand corporate sector of Chartered Accountants reported the implementation rate of 20.3%, similar survey in US revealed an 18 percent implementation rate. Also, a study of Canadian businesses presented 14 % had implemented Activity-based costing system.

The results of surveys in European countries on this subject are similar to previous one. A survey of Activity-based costing practices in United Kingdom is done by Innes and Mitchell (1995). 251 UK companies have been participated in this survey, and it is found that 19.5% of the respondents had adopted Activity-based costing method. 27.1% were considering its adoption. The extent of ABC adoption in the non-manufacturing sector has been similar as the one found in manufacturing concerns.

Innes (2000) survey of activity-based cost management practices of 177 of the largest companies in the UK found that ABC adoption/under consideration rate had fallen to 17.5% and 20.3%; from 21% and 29.5% respectively. However, the highest adoption rate was in the financial sector. The Activity-based costing system rejection rate had increased from 13.3% to 15.3% during this period (from 1995 to 2000).

Kennedy and Affleck-Graves (2001) examined the link between Activity-based costing method implementation and the creation of shareholder value. They have been surveyed 47 ABC users and 187 non-ABC users, and found that choice of management accounting system such as Activity-based costing had a significant impact on company value. From the beginning of the year in which Activity-based costing method was first introduced, there was 27% increase in shareholder value over three years. Though, it has to be considered that there was relevant impact of other variables on this result. Majority of authors emphasize the superiority of activity-based costing over standard traditional costing system, nevertheless the use of standard costing is still popular worldwide. Cornick (1998) noted that more than 75% of the companies use it in the USA, UK, Ireland and Sweden. Scarbrough (1991) find 65% usage of standard costing in Japan. In India, almost two-thirds of the respondents use standard costing as a costing system.

⁷ *Approximately 60% of companies worldwide use traditional costing methods*

⁸ *58% of respondents from this group actively use Activity-based costing method*

When discussing real life implementation of activity-based costing, there are numerous companies that have been used Activity-based costing method in profitability studies to help them decide which products or clients to cut or keep. But ABC system helps in decision making in so many other ways. Thousands of firms have adopted or explored the feasibility of adopting Activity-based costing, but many have given up, or their programs are stagnating. Two well known companies that have been very successful in Activity-based costing system integration in their organizations are Chrysler and Safety-Kleen Corporation. The Chrysler had benefits 10 to 20 times greater than the company's investment in the program, and saved 50 to 100 times the implementation cost. Safety-Kleen is smaller company in size than Chrysler, but had more than \$12.7 million in cost savings, cost avoidance, and increased revenues.

The need to measure more precisely how different services and products use resources has led companies such as American Express, Boeing, General Motors, and Exxon Mobil to refine their costing systems introducing Activity-based costing system. Other examples of successful Activity-based costing integration are service providing companies such as The Cooperative Bank, Braintree Hospital, BCTel in the telecommunications industry, and Union Pacific in the railroad industry. Also, many retail and wholesale companies like Supervalu (a retailer and distributor of grocery store products) and Owens and Minor (medical supplies distributor) have used Activity-based costing method, alongside with giant Hewlett-Packard. Finally, the initial cost of Activity-based costing system implementation is either insignificant or less than 1% of the sales (in most companies) and accordingly the payback period is less than one year, which concludes that integrating new costing model in company doesn't have to be expensive.

4. DATA COLLECTION AND THE RESULTS OF A SURVEY

Collecting data for the research is of great importance for the relevance of the outcome of the problem solving or making conclusions and predictions. Relevant research data can be obtained from variety of sources, but this research is based on primary data. A survey instrument was developed to collect data to provide evidence about the current status of Activity-based costing method adoption and implementation in Serbia. The survey was anonymous. In attempt to cover most of the companies across the Serbia (geographically), a questionnaire has been distributed to participants of accounting conventions in the biggest towns. The following towns have been subject of survey: Belgrade, Nis, Krusevac, Kragujevac, Novi Sad and Zlatibor. The response rate was 63% or 121 responses, 5 responses were excluded from the analysis because of too many blank variables. The questionnaire included demographic questions about respondent's position in the organization and about the size of the company, and the economic sector in which it operated. Respondents were also asked about their familiarity with ABC. The versatility in the characteristics of respondents and firms enriches this research.

There are advantages and disadvantages of this traditional „paper-and-pencil” format in comparison to web-based surveys. The greatest advantage is that resulting sample is extremely representative, since in web-based surveys it is unknown whether representative respondent did complete questionnaire or not. Self selection bias occurs because people who feel strongly about a subject are more likely to respond to survey than persons who are not interested about the topic; this error is especially often with self administered surveys conducted by e-mail. Self selection biases in our research are minimised since it hasn't been conducted by e-mail, and

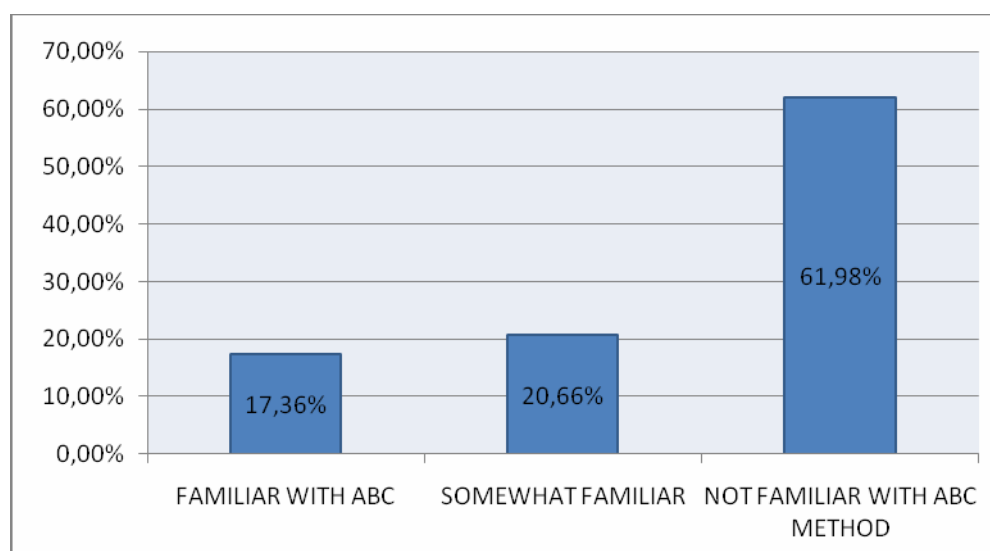
response rate is at very high level which means that there haven't been too many unrepresented indifferent respondents. Also, all respondents are very competent to provide thoughtful responses to the survey questions. Response bias is a survey error when respondents tend to answer questions in a certain direction. These errors are often with surveys conducted in companies since employees tend to give socially desirable answers or answers that aren't opposite to organisation culture or vision. Sometimes some people deliberately give false answers in order to appear intelligent, or to conceal personal information, or to avoid embarrassment. It could be anticipated that our respondents will answer questions in order to prove their skills and knowledge of their specialisation, but as it will be seen results show different situation. However, even though occasionally respondents try to be truthful and cooperative, response bias can arise from question format or question content in a way that respondents do not understand the question or what is the subject of the question. These errors could appear in almost every research and should be considered when analysing the results. Surveys are used to portray a representative cross-section of a particular target population, but even with technically proper random probability samples, statistical errors will occur and unless sample size is increased, random sampling errors are unavoidable.

Another limitation of this method is that whatever the respondents have said is believed to be their true response and hence, no statistical test has been performed as the research of non response bias and the consistency of individual's responses. However, responses that contained too many blank variables were excluded from the analyses. Also, this methodology measures beliefs and not necessarily actions, meaning respondents could have said that they use ABC method and reality could have been very different.

Summarized respondent's answers are presented on following pages. The respondents have been questioned whether they are familiar with Activity-based costing system or not. Overall, less than one-fifth of the respondents claimed that they were familiar with Activity-based costing method. It is concerning that 62% of respondents were not familiar with this method, although it has been introduced 20 years ago; the remaining 20% indicated some degree of familiarity. It can be concluded that overall familiarity with Activity-based costing system in Serbia is on quite low level, since more than eighty percent of respondents weren't completely introduced with this method.

Figure 1.

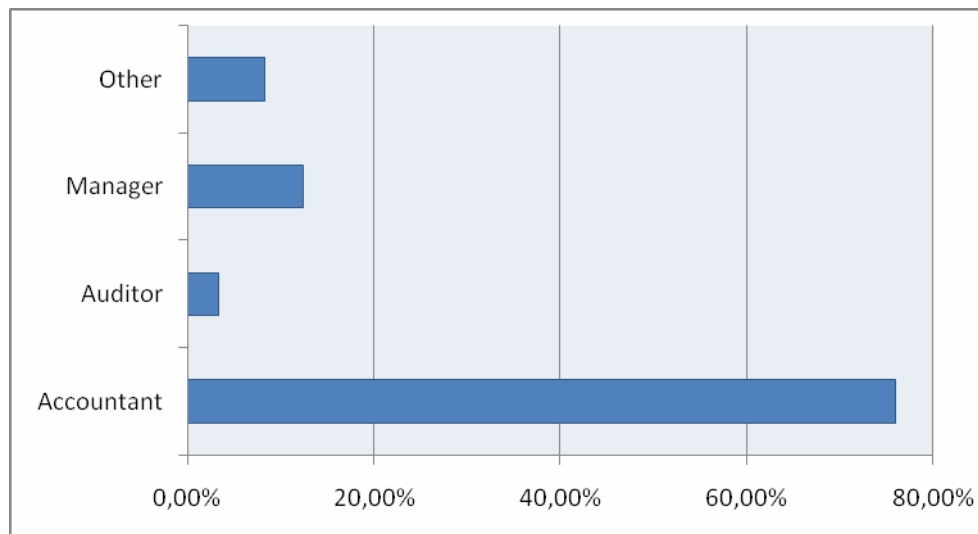
Familiarity with ABC method



Familiarity with ABC was not significantly related to industry sector, but it is also worthy of note that a surprisingly large portion of the manufacturing respondents indicated that they were unfamiliar with ABC. Since almost 76% of respondents were accountants, it can be anticipated that more than 66% of respondents familiar with ABC are accountants. ABC method is covered in almost every accounting publication aimed at practicing accountants, and has been rapidly integrated into managerial and cost accounting textbooks which explains relatively good familiarity of managers with this method. Figure number 2 shows job function of respondents.

FIGURE 2.

JOB FUNCTION



In table 1 presented below, we can see familiarity with Activity-based costing of respondents and their job function. Most familiar with ABC are accountants (14), but comparing this information with their total number, we can conclude that their familiarity is not on the highest level. The smallest number of respondents is auditors (4), and they are quite familiar with this method (3 out of 4 are somewhat familiar with ABC).

Table 1.

Familiarity with ABC by job function

<i>Job function</i>	<i>Familiar with ABC</i>	<i>Somewhat familiar</i>	<i>Not familiar with ABC</i>	<i>Total</i>
Accountant	14	19	59	92
Auditor	2	1	1	4
Manager	5	3	7	15
Other	0	2	8	10
Total	21	25	75	121

Figure 3 shows the relationship between firm sizes, according to previously given definition⁹, and familiarity with ABC method. As presented and maybe supposed, large companies were the most familiar with this method. This is not a surprise since large companies tend to implement more up-to date technology and methods, and advantages of Activity-based costing become more prominent. Over 70 % of respondents employed in both, small and medium sized companies are completely unfamiliar with this method. This can be explained with the fact that owner-managers are more generalist than a specialist, and may run a small company based more upon experience and intuition than upon the use of sophisticated managerial methods and tools. Also, larger companies having more available assets at disposal can afford getting subscriptions to accounting publications from individual publishers or standard setters.

Figure 3.

Familiarity with ABC and firm size

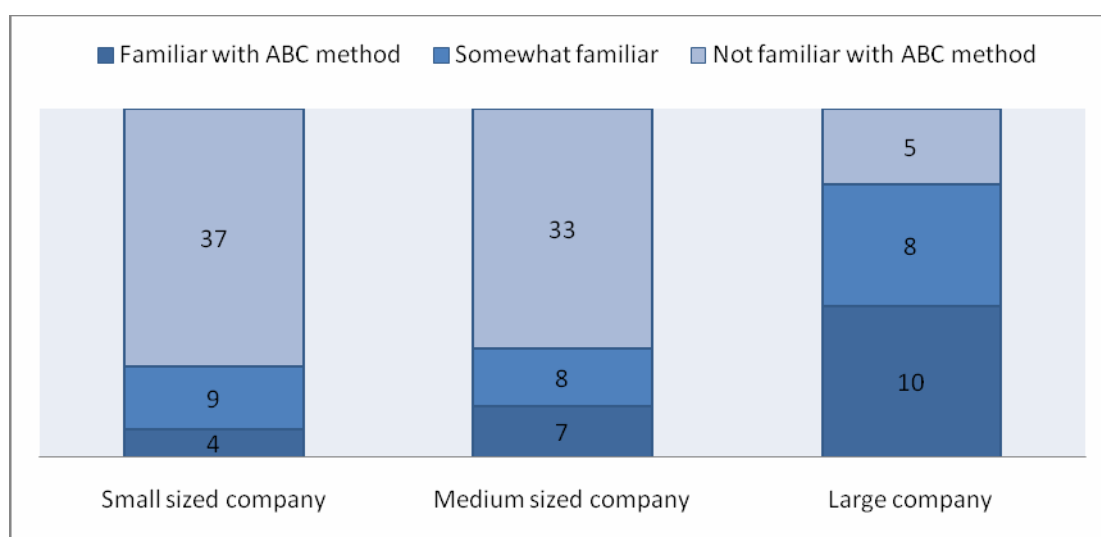
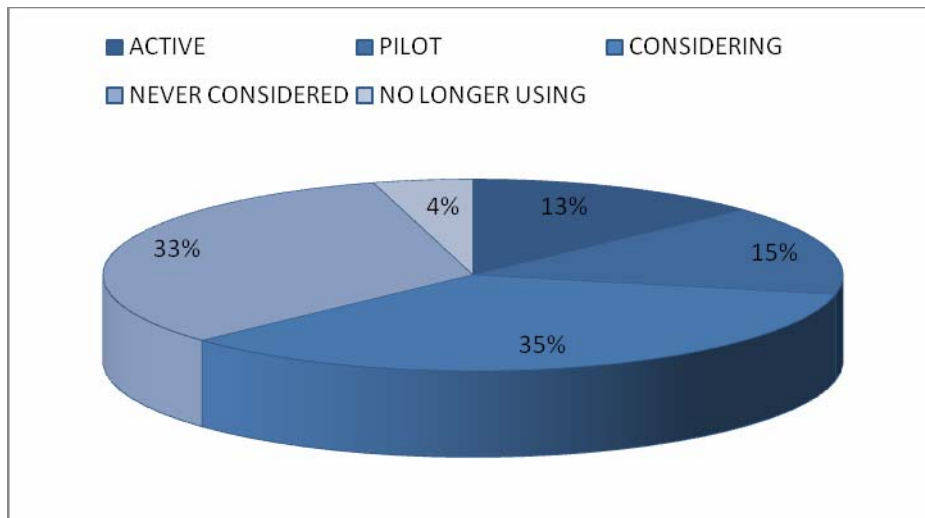


Figure 4 shows the status of ABC method in companies. Only respondents familiar with this method were included in this analysis.

⁹ In this research, classification based on republic Law on accounting has been used where all legal entities are divided in three groups: small, medium and large companies. Medium company is the one that fulfils at least two out of three following criteria: - it has average number of employees in current year between 50 and 250 ;- it has revenue per year between €2,500,000 and €10,000,000 - average assets (at the beginning and at the end of year) are between €1.000.000 and €5.000.000. The use of this classification simplifies gathering data since it avoids asking to many general questions about firm's revenue and number of employees.

Figure 4.

Implementation of ABC

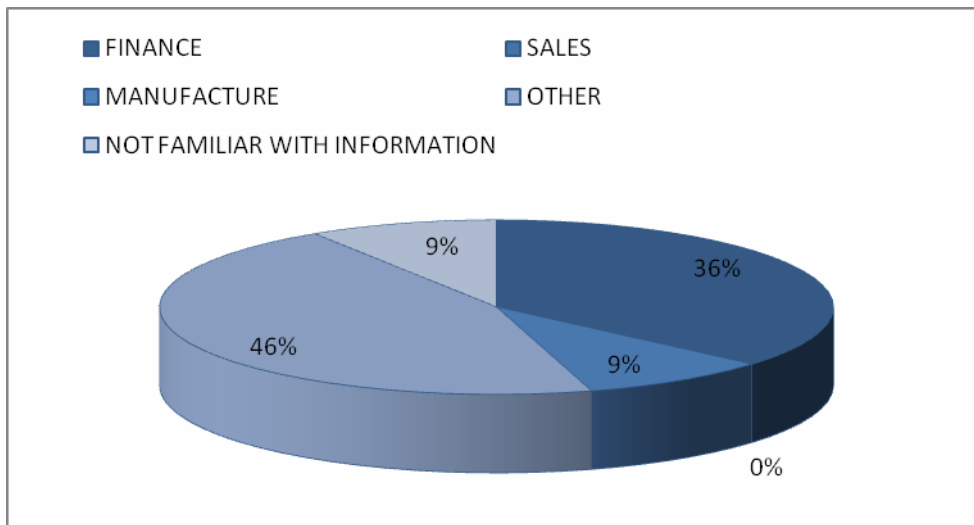


Surprisingly, 33 % of respondents never considered using ABC, probably not knowing all positive aspects and advantages of this method, but 35% actually considered or planned implementation of this method. One number is very important and is ultimate goal of this data collection. 13% of all companies familiar with this method, actively use Activity based method. Compared to data presented previously in literature review, this implementation percentage is acceptable. However, this information can be deceivable, since only 6 respondents actively use ABC, out of 46 respondents familiar with this method. There are 121 interviewed respondents in total, so less than 5% of all interviewed respondents actively use Activity based costing method. This is an extremely low rate of Activity-based costing system implementation.

Half of the companies that participated in survey claim that some other group (organization and development sector, or strategic management) within company is responsible for ABC implementation (Figure 5). However, finance area is the most dominated group within companies that initiated ABC implementation (36%). This is rather expecting, since finance sector tend to get a hold of unnecessary spending and use of firm's assets. Production sector was responsible in almost one of ten cases (9%). Sales division didn't initiate ABC in any company, and 9% of respondents haven't been familiar with the information which functional group initiated ABC implementation. Figure number 5 presents respondents answers on question: Which functional group initiated implementation of Activity-based costing.

Figure 5.

Functional group that initiated implementation of ABC



The main obstacle in ABC implementation should be designing and introducing the model in company, since it requires great amount of effort in planning and organizing its integration. There is always internal resistance of employees and sometimes even managers. But, based on this survey, half of the respondents consider that the main challenge company face when implementing ABC is gathering data (49%). This is because everyone probably suspects that it considers performing new amount of operations and activities. Every fourth respondent didn't know what was the main obstacle in ABC integration. A quarter of the respondents suggested that their greatest challenge is: reporting information (15%), designing and building the model (3%) and 9% claimed that some other unlisted challenge was the most important.

Figure 6.

The main challenge in implementing ABC

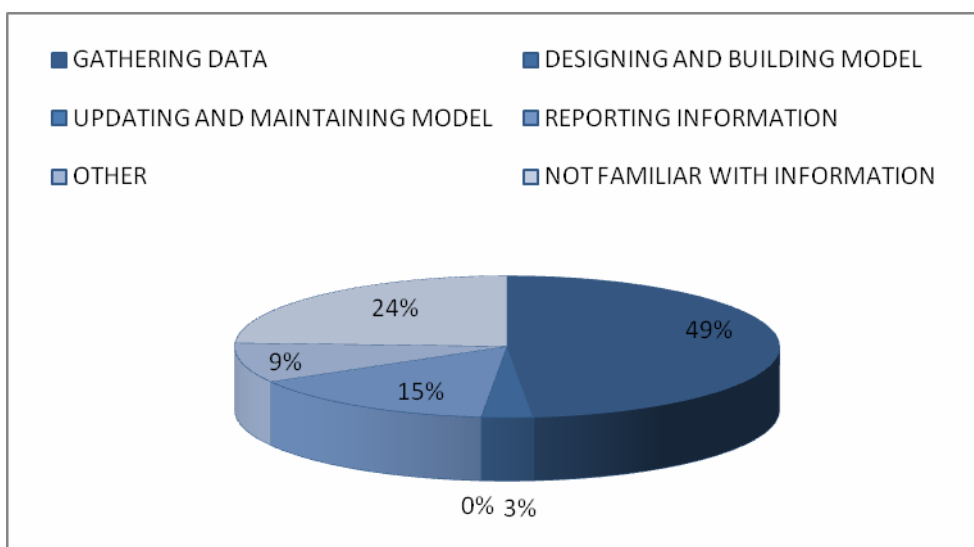


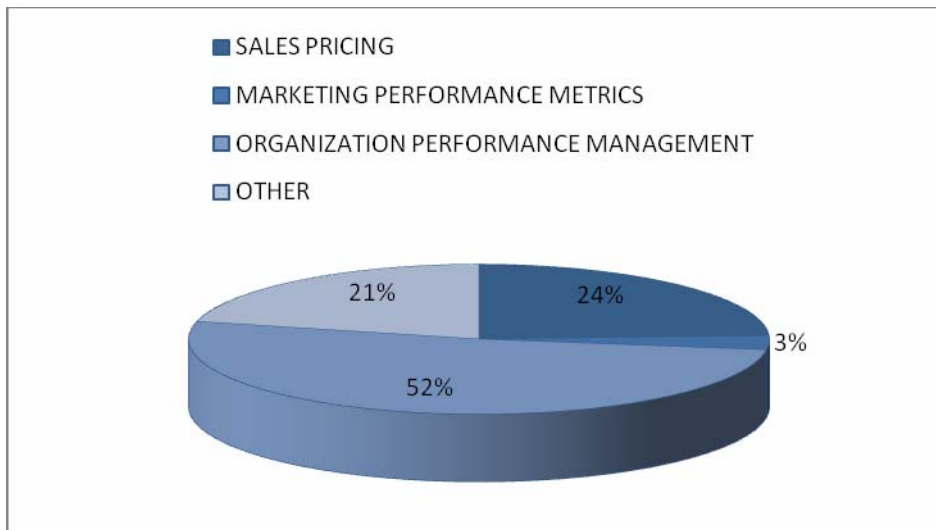
Figure 7 presents respondents answers on question what their ABC outputs currently support and they were given the opportunity to provide one response. Half of respondents (52%)

indicated that their ABC output supports organization performance management, which correlates with the use of ABC for costing and cost control. It is evident that ABC helps management in process of performance control, since its information is the base for cost control.

The remaining half divides its opinion on two and indicates that sale pricing (24%) and some other ways of using ABC information (21%) is equally important. Fewer companies reported that the primary output supported was marketing performance metrics (3%).

Figure 7.

ABC outputs usage



In many companies, top management delegates the implementation of ABC to the accountants; this means that managers are responsible for choosing which method will be implemented and accountants are assigned for actual implementation. If managers had the greatest share in respondent's total number, they would give more biased and more subjective answers, since they have a personal stake in ABC implementation. In this survey accountants prevail in number and their answers should be less biased.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Global competition requires that companies continually improve and innovate by developing and introducing new products, technologies, techniques and models. Companies are realizing, that producing different products and providing various services, places varying demands on their resources. However, using inaccurate averages to uniformly spread the cost of resources across different services and products results in imprecise and misleading product costs. Although having perfect accounting system implemented in one company is virtually impossible, some industries have specific characteristics that can be matched by few accounting methods.

Service companies in general are ideal candidates for ABC, even more than manufacturing companies, because virtually all the costs for a service company are indirect and appear to be

fixed. Service companies have few or no direct materials, and many of their employees provide indirect, not direct, support to services and costumers. This is an excellent playground for Activity-based costing system. We could assume that economies with mainly service providing industry are even more expected to have higher rate of ABC implementation than the others, but this is not the case in Serbia.

Using the data collected in first part of this research, it can be concluded that companies in Serbia are yet to be fully introduced with Activity-based costing system and all of its positive aspects. Implementation rate is relatively small, but general knowledge of interviewed employees is rather low. Implementing Activity-based costing in one company requires major organizational changes. Collecting all the necessary data is just the begging of ABC implementation; managers have to be prepared for this task. It has been noticed that when implementing any method, employee resistance is the single biggest obstacle. Educating employees at all levels about principles of ABC may be the most difficult task, since they have to realize what the company is trying to achieve through ABC, as well as how to use it in their jobs. There is fear of unknown in human nature, and when implementing new model that may change organizational structure, employees feel threatened. Besides, ABC may reveal inefficient practices and activities that had been hidden by the traditional cost accounting system. Employees may be afraid of new amount of work, as well. Both managers and workers have to be educated on cost behaviour and cost management subject. This can be primarily done by providing different seminars, symposiums and especially courses related with this subject. This role and good financial opportunity should take universities.

Most interviewed companies acknowledge the need of efficient costing system; they accept new methods and delegate the obligation of their implementation in their sectors and dependent companies. By doing this, implementation rate of Activity-based costing in Serbia will probably increase in the future.

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ISTRAŽIVANJE PRIMJENE METODE OBRAČUNA TROŠKOVA PREMA AKTIVNOSTIMA U SRBIJI

SAŽETAK

Uspješna organizacija je ona koja je u mogućnosti poboljšati kvalitetu, sniziti troškove i povećati učinkovitost poslovanja, te eliminirati razne aktivnosti i proizvode zbog kojih nastaju gubici. Da bi postigla navedeno, organizacija primjenjuje različite obračune troškova. Obračun troškova je sustav koji pomaže menadžmentu poduzeća u planiranju i donošenju odluka. Ovaj sustav ima važnu ulogu u pružanju točnih informacija o cijeni proizvoda i usluga za klijente. Mnoge organizacije pomiču fokus s konvencionalnih ili tradicionalnih obračuna troškova na sve popularnije suvremene metode obračuna troškova kao što je obračun troškova prema aktivnostima. Ovaj članak opisuje osnovne karakteristike i razloge za primjenu ove metode, te definira zastupljenost ove metode u Srbiji.

Ključne riječi: kvaliteta, troškovi, obračun troškova, menadžment, podaci