



IMPACT OF E-COMMERCE AND ROLE OF ONLINE SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES IN BRANDING AND ONLINE REPUTATION MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The e-commerce industry is truly open to everyone. E-commerce businesses that have generated profits have done so only after being in business for several years. Sizeable investments were also put into marketing, advertising and promotions. Online businesses like Amazon.com, eBay.com, Priceline.com and others were created by entrepreneurs who raised millions of dollars in investment capital and invested that money in the formations and marketing of their online business ventures. Retailing is the most active and attractive sector of the last decade. While retailing industry itself has been present since ages in our country, it is only that the recent past has witnessed so much dynamism. The world is moving towards Electronic Commerce activities at a very fast pace. Internet enables consumers to perform many stages of the sales process in a quick and efficient manner. It also provides comprehensive product information, facilitates comparison shopping, and allows for a condensed sales process. Online buying refers to buying through the internet.

KEYWORDS : E-Commerce, Social Networking Services, Online Reputation Management, Rural Marketing, Urban Marketing, Branding, Publicity.

INTRODUCTION

Exploring cyberspace reveals individual car dealerships successfully selling autos, real estate (houses, apartments, land) being sold on the internet, as well as yachts, jewelry, art work, insurance, financial services, collectibles and furniture. These are only the high ticket items. Companies have found success selling all sorts of mass-market products and services to the general web-surfing public including airline tickets, books, Movie/theater/concert tickets, clothing, vitamins and other healthcare products, cosmetics and toys.

Online business refers to any type of business venture being launched on the Internet (typically on the World Wide Web). An e-commerce site refers to a Web Site designed to accept orders for products and services. E-commerce sites typically accept credit card payments from customers and allow visitors to shop directly online, without having to call a toll free phone number, or mail an order form to place an order. The online businesses or e-commerce sites are also termed as virtual businesses, virtual stores, E-stores, E-businesses and Electronic malls. Investing time researching and creating a comprehensive business plan, considering how the day-to-day operations of business will work after launch of business, in nutshell preparation is truly one of the key ingredients for success, especially in an industry that is changing as rapidly as new technological innovations become available. The online presence ultimately created for business needs to cater specifically to target audience, look professional and be easy to navigate, even for novice Web surfers.

Rural marketing encompasses all the functions which manage entire activities involved in accessing, stimulating and converting the purchase power into an effective demand for specific products and services, and moving them to the people in rural areas to create satisfaction and a standard of living, thereby achieving the goal of the organization (Krishnamachayulu & Ramakrishnan).

Marketers frequently look at rural markets when they are faced with dwindling sales or saturation of the urban market. Knowledge about rural consumer behavior becomes all the more important in a country like India, because according to the Census 2011 published by the Government of India, the rural population accounts for 68.84% of the entire population, while the urban population accounts for only 31.16% of the same.

nothing but shopping through the internet and other media forms. E-tailing is "retailing conducted online, over the internet". E-tailing comes under E-Commerce.

E-business describes the use of electronic means and platforms to conduct a company's business. E-commerce means that the company or site offers to transact or facilitate the selling of products and services online. E-marketing describes company efforts to inform buyers, communicate, promote and sell its products and services over the internet.

Research Objectives:

1. The objective of the paper is to study the impact of e-commerce, social networking services, online reputation management, branding and publicity in the rural and urban market of India.
2. The objective of the paper is to understand rural and urban consumers and their consumption behavior.

LITERATURE REVIEW:

1. E-tailing helps retailers to build loyal customers and is aimed at selling in areas where they do not have a physical presence. E-Commerce and E-tailing, from a business perspective, offers an opportunity to cater to consumers across geographies, with no operational timings, unlimited shelf space- and all this with minuscule quantity of infrastructure. Most growth drivers are in India's favor-demographics, economy, changing life style and exposure to new ideas. India is moving towards broadband, and is experiencing strong growth in Web-based sales. (D. Muthamizh Vendan Murugavel, 2010)

2. The increasing popularity of Social Networking Sites has provided new opportunity for marketers to create awareness about their brands. SNS and sites like Twitter can help marketers to better position their brands among the target consumers. India has a huge youth population, and as more of them join SNS for keeping in touch with their friends and acquaintances, the number of users would increase dramatically. Twitter already has the fifth largest user base in India, and Facebook is also poised to have a large number of Indian users, and this network of potential consumers can be gainfully used by companies to promote their brands. The person can inform about a brand to millions of people, or at least to thousands, by rating it on relevant social networking or community site, by joining a 'fans of the brand' site, etc. (Pradhumn Kumar, 2011)

Electronic retailing, most commonly known as E-tailing, is

3. Over the past few years, e-marketing has evolved as one of

the most efficient tools for brand building and promotions. Looking at the growth of Internet technology, many companies have taken the route of e-marketing for creating awareness about their brands among online customers. However, though the companies create a lot of online positive branding, there can at the same time be negative word of mouth by competitors and problematic customers as well. Online Reputation Management assists a company in pushing the negative publicity down the search engines and influencing potential customers through positive promotional efforts (Priyank Azad, 2011)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY:

- Data type: Secondary data.
- Scope of Study: Indian rural market
- Research Type: Descriptive

Benefits Of Branding Through Social Networking Sites

1. A company and brand profile can be created with minimum expenditure and effort, and one can start circulating news about the brand.
2. When a company wants to inform its target consumers about a new product or brand, it can use social media websites to send out messages to relevant communities and user groups.
3. Social Networking Sites are helpful in raising brand awareness and image. With profiles on leading Social Networking Sites like Facebook and LinkedIn company can gain exposure through blogs, comments and articles, which will ultimately enhance brand image and awareness among the target audience.
4. Facebook offers the facility of specialized fan pages for companies, brands and people. With profile on Facebook, a large number of people will eventually patronize a company's brands.
5. Social Networking Sites (SNS) allows brands and consumers to develop richness in relationship. SNS provides an opportunity for exchange of ideas between consumers and brands and brand communities.
6. Technology enables the company to keep track of the number of people who have viewed its pages and this applies to Social Networking Sites also. A company can get to know how many people have viewed its page, offered positive reviews, commented, and so on.

Challenges of Branding through Social Networking Sites

1. If the product or service of a company is not good and people are not happy with it, negative publicity can spread very rapidly through social networking sites, thus accelerating the company's downfall. A company really needs to deliver on its promises before embarking on the social networking sites bandwagon.
2. There are sites developed for filing complaints against a product, service or brand. Many times, these websites are used by aggressive individuals for taking out their frustrations related to a brand. For instance, sharing their negative incidents with a brand and warning other readers to avoid or boycott that brand.
3. Competitors can easily communicate with the target segment through consumer generated media and can generate negative publicity for a brand.
4. Bad word of mouth because of the poor performance of counterfeits can spread very quickly in online media and this can lead to serious trouble which can escalate very rapidly.

CONCLUSION:

In today's highly competitive marketing environment, it is extremely important to build and maintain a strong and positive brand image. Online Reputation Management (ORM) is a concept in the world of e-marketing, which helps in responding to the problem of negative publicity about a brand or company. Many organizations are now implementing this concept to maintain their brand image online and to minimize

the impact of negative word of mouth. Social media tends to be more credible because people believe that what their friends say more than what traditional media tells them, as there is no company agenda.

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