



Marketing Challenges for Online Stores

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ABSTRACT

In India most of internet users are purchasing their commodities and services through online shopping through internet and e-business. The recent survey conducted by Nielsen, India has emerged as the 3rd biggest nation when it comes to online shopping and using a credit card online. This paper deals with challenges faced by online shopping concept and some strategies to fight the challenges. As an online seller you require a strong back end resource in form of technology. Success of an online store depends on a strong team performance. The team members include IT team, sales team, customer support team, fund sourcing team, order execution team, etc. Supplier problem remain same at both online and offline levels. E-mail marketing is a direct form of marketing and connects you well with your audience. In the present web scenario, the best way to market your business online is social media optimisation. Social media optimisation (SMO) is almost no cost way to advertise or market your business and build a solid customer base.

Keywords : Leadership, Communication, Skills, Management

INTRODUCTION

This era of business is marked with a high degree of dynamism. Due to technological advancement, the concept of competitive advantage is emerging day by day. This has resulted in the concept of luring the maximum customers by becoming more and more innovative. How much receptive company can become to their needs and aspirations. All these have forced the companies to register their presence at every nook and corner and take the help of latest of the technology in this endeavour. The one such technology is "Online shopping". Companies are facing a tough competition in this dynamic arena of business. They are always looking for new avenues so that they can increase contact with consumers and in for this they are letting no stone unturned. This paper deals with challenges faced by online shopping concept and some strategies to fight the challenges.

According to the Preti Desai, President, Internet and Online Association of India, "E-commerce is coming off age in India. Changing lifestyles and shopping habits". Now a day's, most of the metro and non metro corporation cities are basing completely on the media and internet and multiple internet access points. In India most of internet users are purchasing their commodities and services through online shopping through internet and e-business. The recent survey conducted by Nielsen, India has emerged as the 3rd biggest nation when it comes to online shopping and using a credit card online. Drawn by the facilities offered by the Web and the diversity of products available on it, Indian citizens have emerged as the third biggest credit card users globally for online purchasing, next only to the Turkey and Ireland. The survey shows more than 85 per cent of Internet users in the world are purchasing goods or services online, with credit cards as the most used method of payment. For developing countries and low-income households in developed countries, adoption of e-commerce in place of or in addition to conventional methods is limited by a lack of affordable Internet access.

ONLINE SHOPPING

Online shopping provides all type of goods to be available in the virtual world. It is just like a shop in the neighborhood, selling all type of goods but with some prominent differences. Here one can access these shops any time without stepping out of their home / office. It can be accessed any time when you are on the move, relaxing in your home or having a time

out at your office. Here all the products are displayed with the price and detailed mention of the features. Potential customers can have a look at them, analyze it on all the parameters like features, price and availability and at the same time compare them with what other similar online shopping outlets are offering and can get the best deal out of it.

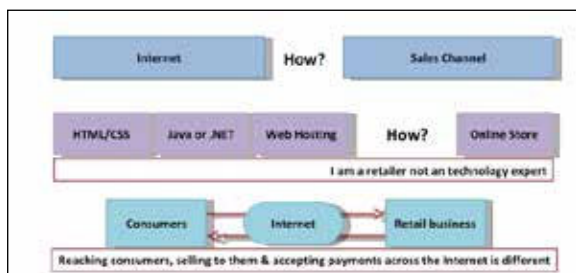
Nowadays, the concept "DIC" i.e. double income couples are becoming all the more prominent in India. With the long working hours and increased distances to travel, they are not having enough time to devote it to shopping as people don't feel like going out for buying day to day things after a very hectic day at office. They want to reserve it for other works like socializing, entertainment etc. Now the companies are coming up with the ways so that this section of society can be tapped to the maximum and only way to attract them is a convenient way of shopping any time and what can be more convenient for them than a shop which is just a click away and that too at any time 24 x 7. Moreover, this is located in the virtual world and can be accessed any time when you are watching your favorite TV show or having a coffee break at office. This is the online shopping concept.

Specific features of Online shopping:-

1. It is based on the concept of flexi time.
2. It can be accessed from anywhere.
3. One can evaluate many online shopping stores at a time.
4. Comparison can be made in real time.
5. There is provision of replacement of product if it is not as per the aspiration of the customer.
6. Casual shopping.

CHALLENGES

1. **TECHNOLOGY:** As an online seller you require a strong back end resource in form of technology. You select a server which will host your webpage. Commonly web-based company charge a hosting fee and designing fee. They may not be scalable in terms of integrated system or web user. Any failure at back end technology support level can lead to a serious damage to your brand name. Moreover, technology up gradation is also a challenge. Whatever is present will be obsolete tomorrow. Also managing CRM and ERP is a problem.



2. **COST:** The cost of setting up a website and giving to a host server itself is a huge cost. But the story doesn't end there. There will be other costs also in form of advertising, sales promotion, customer satisfaction and feedback, etc. The cost of setting up banners and pop-ups on other websites is also a costly issue. Marketing costs will also include customer representatives and executives at different levels.



3. **BUILDING A STRONG TEAM:** Success of an online store depends on a strong team performance. The team members include IT team, sales team, customer support team, fund sourcing team, order execution team, etc. The concerning team members of each team has to be techno-savvy and conversant with the technology in use. Since, all the activities are co-ordinated a mistake at one level will be spilled to all levels.

4. **STREAMLINING YOUR SUPPLIERS:** Suppliers of your products and services are also an important part of your business transaction. Supplier problem remain same at both online and offline levels. It is always advisable to have more than one supplier and maintain better communication with all of them regarding your requirements.

5. **ONLINE PROTECTION:** Just as you have theft of goods and shoplifters in offline store, you find hackers in online format. The hackers can disturb your online operations and affect you from delay in delivery of goods to even blocking in business operations.

6. **SETTING UP PAYMENT MECHANISM:** Payment is what you are working for! In online format fund transfer happens online. This is quite secure but there are chances of payment to wrong accounts or payment of wrong amounts and dislodging the access or ownership of bank accounts.

7. **INEFFICIENT AND DELAYED SERVICE:** Many cases of delayed delivery, damaged or inferior goods, quality issues and even instances of cheating where the goods were never shipped have been reported. The much proclaimed ease and convenience comes with a heavy price and overall, Consumers do not have a good experience with the results of online shopping.

The above challenges are difficult to face but they are not impossible to solve. In spite of above hindrances, there can be various solutions and strategies to have a successful online store. Some of the strategies to mitigate challenges are as follows:

STRATEGIES

1. E-Mail Marketing –

Very important and still a gem for marketers. E-mail marketing gives you a platform to get in touch with your target audience and customers. It helps two way communication between you and your clients or prospects. All you need to do this build a list of e-mail ids of your visitors and send them, newsletters, information about offers, schemes and events on a regular

basis. E-mail marketing is a direct form of marketing and connects you well with your audience.

2. Search Engine Optimisation –

Importance of SEO or search engine optimisation can never be ignored. SEO is a long term process and help your website get higher search engine rankings. Today, almost 80 percent of web audience refers search engines to find out a website that serve information, products or services they are looking for. If your website is search engine friendly then it will certainly get good traffic volume which you can convert to achieve your business goal.

3. Banner Advertising –

It is a type of display advertising on internet. The primary idea behind banner advertising is same i.e. to get a stream of web traffic flowing into your website. Marketers advertise with the banner ads of their website on popular websites. The idea is to get your information or marketing message exposed to a lot of online visitors and attract them to visit your store and convince them to buy your products or services.



4. Social Media Optimisation –

In the present web scenario, the best way to market your business online is social media optimisation. Today, the trend is social networking through several websites. Social media optimisation (SMO) is almost no cost way to advertise or market your business and build a solid customer base. You can reach masses and enhance your online presence and brand reputation. Also called as Social media marketing (SMM), SMO gives you an opportunity to interact with web audience and let them form opinions about your store or business. It helps you create buzz.

5. Online Press Release –

Just like traditional press releases, online press releases help you share your news / views, opinion or information about events, products, services, etc. with online visitors. Press releases help you generate traffic to your website which gets redirected from PR directories or websites. Online press releases help you build and maintain strong public relations.

6. Viral Marketing –

Viral marketing is nothing but a new form of traditional word of mouth advertising. Here marketer can create a buzz around his website, products or services and business. Viral marketing give opportunity to marketers to improve their brand awareness. It creates a buzz and inspires audiences to share your marketing message with their friends, family or relatives on social networks and through other mediums. It is very effective medium but requires close monitoring otherwise you may end up with ruining your brand image.

CONCLUSION

Online shopping has come up as a boon for all type of consumers and it has something to offer for everyone. Despite of this fact that it is highly convenient and time saving and to certain extent it is also cost cutting exercise as one need not to step out of his / her home for doing shopping. The main area of concern is the limited internet usage and language

problem. A lot of stress need to be given on these two parameters so that this IT revolution can be of use to everyone in India and then only it can be a success in true sense of terms.

Otherwise, it will just end up being a style statement of few who wants to be away from the crowd and then it will lose its applicability in the real world.

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