



DIGITAL REVOLUTION IN RETAIL TRADE (WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SMALL RETAILERS IN KALYAN REGION)

Dr. (CA) Mahesh Bhiwandikar

Assistant Professor

Department Of Commerce

K.M. Agrawal College, Kalyan.

Ms. Sana Khan

Assistant Professor

Department Of Commerce

Achievers College, Kalyan.

Abstract:

Small local retailers have a big contribution to the surrounding citizens as well as Indian economy. These retailers include tiny shops, small grocery stores, medical stores, hardware shops, mobile shops, mobile recharge stores, local vegetable and fruit sellers, etc. These small shops are spread all over, who makes groceries and consumables available for the customers easily.

During COVID-19, because of the pandemic, these small retailers came to the rescue of the surrounding citizens. Most of the online marketing and its shopping portals had stopped sending home delivery. Even then most such businesses suffered a lot, and they have incurred huge losses. Since people were not able to go out in crowded areas and do shopping on their own, many of them opted for sitting at their homes and ordering products for their daily needs.

With time the face of business is changing, and businesses are going digital. This is impacting the routine operations of local shopkeepers due to many reasons. If these small businessmen's won't upgrade their strategies or adopt new technology, they may vanish over a period of time.

The basic feature of the e-Commerce is ease of doing business. It has been proved over a period of time that small business if do not adopt new techniques then the situation may led to the closure of several businesses, regardless of size or nature.

This research paper attempts to ascertain the problems faced and opportunities grabbed by small retailers of Kalyan City in recent times and the massive use of e-commerce by them in their sustenance and growth. Further it also assesses the distress amongst the business community and focuses on the real time benefits of e-commerce to the small businessmen's community in the near future.

Keywords: Digital Marketing, online shopping, e-commerce, Small businessmen's, Covid-19, Pandemic, retailers.

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Introduction

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local vegetable and fruit sellers, etc. These small shops are spread all over, who makes groceries and consumables available for the customers easily.

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As per the latest statistics the global e-commerce sales reached 3,500+ billion today and are expected to attain an amazing target of 7,000 billion by 2023 alone.

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Objectives Of The Study:-

1. The primary goal of this study is to illustrate the opportunities available through e-commerce avenues to the Small Businessmen in the light of online shopping.
2. The secondary objectives are :
 - a. To study the necessity of educating small retailers to adopt new techniques of online platform.
 - b. To study the difficulties barriers faced by the small businessmen to enter into the globalised market via e-commerce.
 - c. To create enlighten local small businessmen for the opportunities via e-commerce to grow their business.

Limitations:

This is a conceptual study. It is supported more by facts than by numerical data. The study is further limited to the discussion of the problems and opportunities for small businessmen in Kalyan region in light of the changing habits of the customers drifted by the online shopping.

Hypothesis

E-Commerce avenues will help Local small businessman to grow their business in the coming days.

Methodology

This study is based on Primary as well as the secondary data's. The information has been collected by way of structured questioner from the small businessmen and secondary data is collected from the books, journals, magazines, newspaper and websites.

Statement and Significance

Problem Under Study:

Since introduction of LPG in India, E-commerce has boomed as since then it offered a great deal of convenience as well as growth of both sellers and shoppers.



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The retail sector has witnessed rapid growth of e-commerce in the looks and corners of India as ever since the Covid-19 pandemic hit, it has become even easier for consumers to purchase not just fashion and luxury items, but even essentials, from the comfort of their homes.

It is seen that majority of the small business owners of conventional retailing have also joined the massive move, by initiating online platforms in addition, to offer customers ease of shopping. Many small retailers also have joined e-Commerce marketplaces like Flipkart and Amazon, by spending very less amount where they can enjoy the benefits of e-commerce without having their website or investing heavy amount to create their own market place or branding of their own products.

This is the result of the social impact of the internet in India; the explosion of the internet services and huge accessibility of mobile devices in the country has immensely contributed to the growth and development of of E-Commerce in all the corners of the county.

Impact of ignoring e-commerce by local small retailers:

The Covid pandemic has compelled small retailers to change their business model by adopting new techniques of e-commerce. Some traditional retailers ignored this drift from old and outdated methods of doing business to new online business techniques. This ignorance and non-adoptions had resulted in following ill effects::

1. **Reduction in sales and customers:** Now a days around 90% of the customers prefer to shop in online mode. This has resulted in poor turnout of the customers in the retail shops resulting in reduction of sales.
2. **Branding and CRM:** Due to the online availability of all goods and services which ease of buying methods, the shops with old and outdated business techniques failed to brand their products and loses on customers relations. Though during pandemic/ lockdown, these small shops had served customers for the groceries and utilities, the post pandemic period shows lower amount of repetition of customers.
3. **Market Opportunities:** Selling goods on online platform has offered tremendous customers base. This also had opened up new avenues of selling varied range of products. Small businessmen's who failed to adopt e-commerce has lost these opportunities to grow as to products and size of business.

Benefits of e-commerce to Small Retailers

1. Growth and Revenue generation :

Use of e-commerce had helped retails to expand the customer base and remarkable increase in the sales revenue. It also has seen the growth in the number of prospective buyers for the products offered.

2. **Customers Satisfaction:** The ease of buying or shopping for the customers due to the reason that they can shop anywhere and anytime they choose has been the great advantage. Many small retailers had developed their mobile application which has resulted in the great amount of customer's satisfaction.
3. **Reduction in the Cost of Marketing:** E-commerce has brought down the cost of conducting the business. It has drastically reduced cost of advertising and marketing. The economies of operation is attained due to reduction in the cost of operations of the small retailers.
4. **Customers analysis and repeat orders :** Due to use of e-commerce the small retailers has gained repeat orders and customers analysis shows large number of turnover of the customers.



Market Survey of 40 Small Retailers In Kalyan Region:

In view of the above a sample survey of 40 small retailers in the city of Kalyan, Dist Thane, Maharashtra was carried out which had revealed the following results :

SRN	Question asked	POSITIVE	NEGATIVE
1	During Lockdown period have you served surrounding customers?	YES -35	NO- 05
2	Were customers happy and shown their gratitude for your services during that Pandemic period?	Very Happy-40	--
3	Do you accept orders in online mode?	YES- 14	NO-26
4	Do You have Website for your Shop?	YES-0	NO-40
5	Do your shop offers mobile app for customer services?	YES -2	NO-38
6	Do you sell your goods on online platforms like: Amazon, Flipkart or any other E-Commerce websites?	YES- 6	NO- 34
7	Do you accept customer's orders using what's App?	YES -34	NO-06
8	Do you advertise for your shop in online mode or social media?	YES-4	NO-46
9	Is there reduction of Sales during last year?	YES-37	NO-03
10	Is there reduction in number of customers in post pandemic period?	YES-39	NO-01

From the above sample survey it is observed that:

1. During lockdown period almost all the local small retailers had served their customers in spite of many difficulties. It is seen that no online shopping was offered during that period. In those lockdown period testing times these local retailers played vital role and came to the rescue of the nearby residents.
2. The customers were happy and thankful that, they could get the consumables from the nearby shops during the lockdown period.
3. It is seen that many of such small retailers do not have their own website and do not have presence on e-commerce system to accept online orders, however some of the shopkeepers started accepting orders using WhatsApp and ensures home delivery.
4. Almost all the shops have not developed their mobile application for the customer's services.
5. Many of the shopkeepers do not opt to sell on the well-known and well accepted e-commerce operators like Amazon, flipkart, etc.
6. Shopkeepers still are adopting old and outdated techniques of doing business and still believes that the loyal customers will have repeated orders.
7. It is observed that there has been reduction in the customer flow and overall sales turnover of local small retailers.

Conclusion

E- Commerce had opened the doors of global market and local small businessmen's has great opportunities to grow their business. However, most of such small shopkeepers has failed to adopt



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new techniques and e-commerce avenues. This has resulted in low sales and less number of customers turnouts in such shops.

There are many advantages of having presence on e-Commerce website. Not only does it save time and energy, but it also tells customers that nearby small business are ready to serve their growing needs.

The future of e-commerce is favorable to small business. It is necessary that such businessmen shall deeply understand how e-commerce can positively impact small business, and how they can leverage it to dramatically boost their sales.

Based on the findings of the study, the following suggestions are offered:

1. Local Small shopkeepers shall adopt e-commerce techniques and offer goods and services in online mode for an overall growth of the business and benefit to the customer.
2. Such local retailers shall provide free home delivery to the customers or use a list of products packed in one package for that particular occasion which can be sold at discounted rates. This suggestion may prove useful for growth.
3. Local Shop keepers shall offer free membership card to the customers and keep on boosting various sales offers or discounts on bundle of varied range of products.
4. Local Small retailers shall initiate business tie-ups promoting cluster of small businessmen's offering varied range of goods and services like, food, beverages, grocery, fruits & veggies stores.
5. Payments facilities like debit card/ credit cards, or deferred payment using part in cash and balance on credit or installments shall be offered.
6. Branding shall be done by cataloguing the range of products offered which will ease customers to order different products in one go.

Having discussed the Opportunities and problems or prospects of the Local small businessmen's, it can be concluded that: - **"Listen to your customer if you want to Grow"**

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