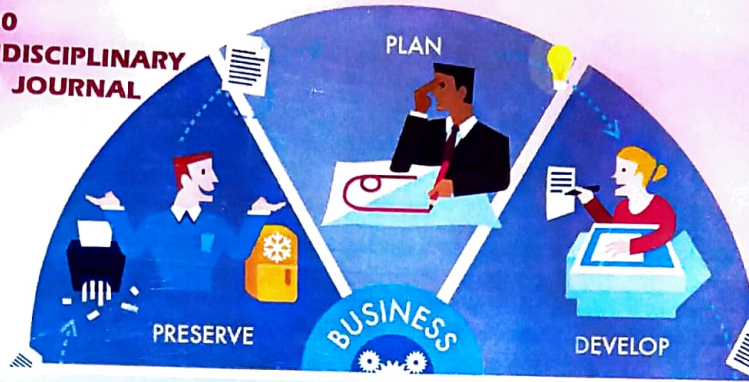




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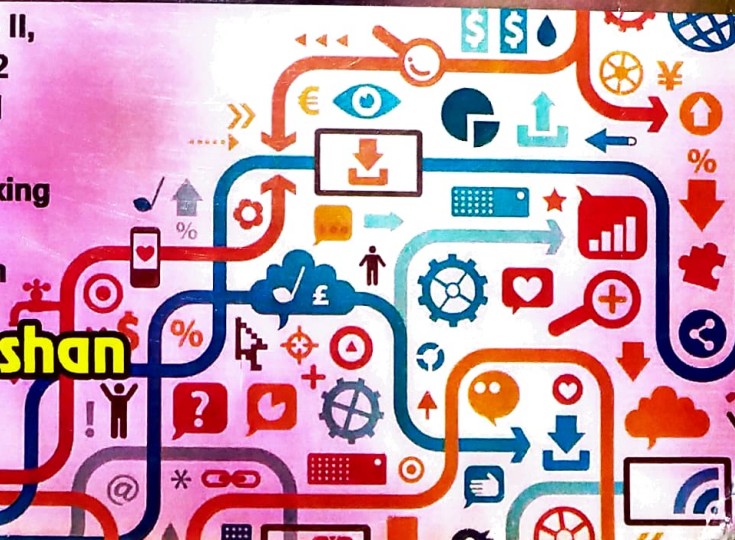


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4. Opportunities and Challenges before Smes with Reference to E-Commerce Technology

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Abstract

In the last few years, the usage of internet commerce by businesses in developed countries has increased dramatically. While the private sector looks to be gaining from this low-cost means of contacting consumers around the world, the issue remains if other sectors can profit from e-commerce. The SMEs constitutes a large part of the Indian economy both in terms of employment potential and its contribution to national income. It is very important to know about the position of e-commerce in developing countries. How it is very important in the development of the entrepreneurs and also different sectors.

It offers a win-win platform to both customers and businessmen. Customers get convenience, variety, cost-saving and anonymity. The aim of paper was to examine the importance of e-commerce in developing country like India and also Opportunities and challenges faced by SMEs in India.

The research paper also tried to review the present situation and prospects of e-commerce. Methodology applied in doing my study is collected secondary data and articles in esteemed newspaper and different sites on e-commerce in the net.

Key Words- E-commerce, B2B, SME, Security, challenges and opportunity.

1. Introduction

SMEs employ around 40% of India's workforce, which is an estimated 80 million people, who are given an opportunity for livelihood and employment via low-skilled jobs. Around 1.3 million SMEs contribute 45% to India's manufacturing output and 40% of India's total export. At 48 million, India has the second largest number of SMEs in the world, edging close to China which has around 50 million SMEs.¹ Earlier, it is observed that SMEs were reluctant to use modern technology but now they are waking up to the fact that technology and culture of innovation can be high potential growth drivers. Access to internet, resources, virtual skilled workers and client opportunities can help them grow by leaps and bounds.

The importance, of SMEs, emerged from their positions since they contributed more than 50% of the economy and they were considered to be the backbone of any economy. Hence, the main purpose, of conducting this research, is to increase the body of knowledge about the Adoption of e-commerce of the SMEs in India.

1.1 Reasons for the slow growth of SMEs in India

- Many SMEs are reluctant to grow.
- Bank credit was drastically falling due to the high interest rates
- Repayment timelines. SMEs get only 60 days to pay back their interest-loaded bank loans.
- Supply chain inefficiencies, global and local competition and insufficient skilled manpower
- Demand of goods and services has been slowing in European countries

2. Objective of the study

1. To study the problems and issues faced by SME
2. To find out the impact of e commerce on SMEs
3. To understand the benefits and potential of E-commerce
4. To know the importance of e-commerce in developing country
5. To study the emerging trends in E-commerce technology

3. Research Methodology

The study is based on secondary data collected through various business magazines and journals and internet web sites and research studies.

3.1 . Research Methodology

3.2 Coverage of the Study

This research paper is confined to study of e-commerce in developing country like India with special reference to SMEs.

3.3 Sources of Data

Data and information were gathered from secondary published sources viz., books, journals, newspapers, websites, research studies, etc. The study is based on secondary data collected through various business magazines, journals, newspapers, internet web sites and research studies.

3.4 Data Analysis

Analysis of data and information collected from published sources were made keeping the objectives of the study in mind.

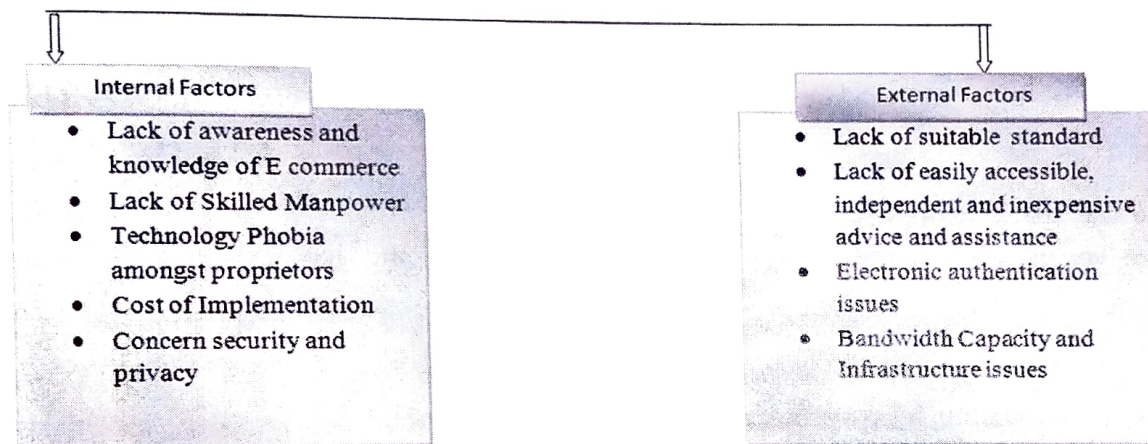
4. Concepts, Dimension and performance of E-commerce

Sr. no	Potential and Benefits	Challenges and Dangers
1	Exponential growth in a-commerce trade will lead to overall increase in world trade	The developed and wired world will benefit the most
2	About 80% of e-commerce growth will be in B2B trade. There is therefore a potential opportunity for businesses to link to supply chains. E-commerce could lead to faster transfer of technology of IT industries developing countries	IT multinational may be the sole beneficiaries if local industry is weak
3	Giant corporations will emerge but so will small enterprises that are able to offer similar services at lower cost.	For developing countries, this will mean great opportunities but also greater , threats from multinational
4	Access to information on markets, opportunities and supply chains will increase.	Greater access for some would exclude those without access from some of the benefits of e-commerce.
5	E-commerce can help overcome the drawback of distance from developed markets.	Multinational can use the same technology to access local markets in developing countries. Maintenance, upgrading and marketing cost are high. Issues of security, payment mechanisms and assured suppliers need to be addressed.
6	Exporting SMEs can established virtual shops more cheaply than actual stores abroad.	Internet service providers and portals may emerge as the new power brokers.
7	SMEs could rely less on middlemen intermediaries agents	Many SME and developing countries may not have the expertise to do this
8	SMEs could generate new business by expanding into digital commerce	Developing countries that can provide a skilled labour force at lower cost could benefits. Employees will need familiarity with the English language and computing skills firms will have to develop a strategy for moving up the value chain in the software Industry.
9	SMEs could generate new business by expanding into digital commerce	Developing countries that can provide a skilled labour force at lower cost could benefits. Employees will need familiarity with the English language and computing skills firms will have to develop a strategy for

		moving up the value chain in the software Industry.
10	Companies will locate their services wherever they have access to competitive skills	Dangers of cutting out existing suppliers in developing countries
11	Developing countries may have a comparative advantage in providing back office operation	Local producers in developing countries lose existing local customers.

5. The obstacles, problems and issues faced by SMEs in their use of ICT in business or in engaging in e-commerce

The following are the Internal and External factors responsible for the slow transition of E-Commerce in SMEs



In general, the main issues of concern that act as barriers to the increased uptake of information technology and e-commerce are the following:

Lack of Awareness and Understanding of the Value of E-Commerce.

Most SMEs in developing countries have not taken up e-commerce or use the Internet because they fail to see the value of e-commerce to their businesses. Many think e-commerce is suited only to big companies and that it is an additional cost that will not bring any major returns on investment.

Lack of ICT Knowledge and Skills

People play a vital role in the development of e-commerce. However, technology literacy is still very limited in most developing countries. There is a shortage of skilled workers among SMEs, a key issue in moving forward with using information technology in business. There are also doubts about whether SMEs can indeed take advantage of the benefits of accessing the global market through the Internet, given their limited capabilities in design, distribution,

marketing, and post-sale support. While the Internet can be useful in accessing international design expertise, SMEs are not confident that they can command a premium on the prices for their goods unless they offer product innovations. They can, however, capitalize on returns on the basis that they are the low cost providers.

Financial Costs

Cost is a crucial issue. The initial investment for the adoption of a new technology is proportionately heavier for small than for large firms. The high cost of computers and Internet access is a barrier to the uptake of e-commerce. Faced with budgetary constraints, SMEs consider the additional costs of ICT spending as too big an investment without immediate returns.

Many SMEs find marketing on the Internet expensive. Having a Web site is not equivalent to having a well-visited Web site. One reason is that there may be no critical mass of users. Another reason is the challenge of anonymity for SMEs. Because of the presence of numerous entrepreneurs in the Internet, it seems that brand recognition matters in order to be competitive. Moreover, it is not enough that a Web site is informative and user-friendly; it should also be updated frequently. One solution may be to encourage several SMEs to aggregate their information on a common Web site, which in turn would have the responsibility of building recognition/branding by hyperlinking or updating, for example.

Infrastructure

The national network/physical infrastructure of many developing countries is characterized by relatively low teledensity, a major barrier to e-commerce. There are also relatively few main phone lines for business use among SMEs.

Security

Ensuring security of payments and privacy of online transactions is key to the widespread acceptance and adoption of e-commerce. While the appropriate policies are in place to facilitate e-commerce, lack of trust is still a barrier to using the Internet to make online transactions. Moreover, credit card usage in many developing countries is still relatively low. Also, consumers are reluctant to use the Internet for conducting transactions with SMEs due to the uncertainty of the SMEs' return policy and use of data.

Other Privacy- and Security-Related Issues

While security is commonly used as the catch-all word for many different reasons why individuals and firms do not engage in extensive e-commerce and use of Internet-based technologies, there are other related reasons and unresolved issues, such as tax evasion, privacy and anonymity, fraud adjudication, and legal liability on credit cards. In many countries, cash is preferred not only for security reasons but also because of a desire for anonymity on the part of those engaged in tax evasion or those who simply do not want others to know where they are spending their money. Others worry that there is lack of legal protection against fraud (i.e., there is no provision for adjudicating fraud and there may be no legal limit on liability, say, for a lost or stolen credit card). It is necessary to distinguish these concerns from the general security concerns (i.e., transaction privacy, protection and security) since they may not be addressed by the employment of an effective encryption method (or other security measure).

6. How is E-Commerce useful to Developing Country Entrepreneurs?

There are at least five ways by which the Internet and e-commerce are useful for developing country entrepreneurs:

1. It facilitates the access of artisans and SMEs to world markets.
2. It facilitates the promotion and development of tourism of developing countries in a global scale.
3. It facilitates the marketing of agricultural and tropical products in the global market.
4. It provides avenues for firms in poorer countries to enter into B2B and B2G supply chains.
5. It assists service-providing enterprises in developing countries by allowing them to operate more efficiently and directly provide specific services to customers globally.

7. Impact of E - Commerce on SMEs

Increase in Revenue

Offline SMEs are limited by their geographic reach. Use of e commerce in SMEs helped to increase revenue due to faster speed of distribution of goods and reach globally to buyers and fulfilled their needs.

Lower Marketing and Distribution Cost

Due to adoption of e commerce, SMEs enable to reduce the offline advertising and trade shows cost. E commerce helped them in maintaining good relationship with customers.

Increase Profit Margin

Adoption of e commerce enables SMEs to take advantage of third party trading platform with limited or no investment in developing and hosting online storefronts and in managing information for packaging, logistics, warehousing etc. boost the profit margin upto 49% by reducing overhead cost.

Improved Customer Expenses

Intense competition in the e commerce environment nudges and at the same time encourages the SMEs to operate within the paradigm of 'Customer First' business philosophies. Quick response to customer inquiries, interactive order taking process and better after sale service to customers are just few of the important which over a period of time lock in a loyal customers.²

8. Main Findings of the Study

There is wide scope in SMEs for e-commerce in economic development. But there are several challenges that impede the progress of e-commerce in the country. The government should take initiatives to encourage the small and medium businessmen. The problems should be resolved on priority basis faced by SMEs. Many SMEs are reluctant to use ICT due to fear of job losing, legal threats, operation process and so on , hence the workshops, seminars and conference need to organized to trained the SMEs and to provide knowledge about use of ICT. Changing demography with large youth population, rising standard of living and concomitant changes in lifestyle, rapid growth in ICT, availability of broadband, RFID, 3 G technologies, etc. are opportunities for augmenting e-commerce in India. But, the economic disparity of districts, poor infrastructure, transport, telecommunication, social and cultural attitudes to e-commerce, inadequacies in payment gateway systems in terms of quality, reliability and uptime, lack of e-commerce legal framework, etc. are challenges that need to be addressed by all stakeholders to promote e-commerce.

Conclusion

Advances in telecommunications and computer technologies in recent years have made computer networks an integral part of the economic infrastructure. More and more companies whether it is manufacturing or service sector are facilitating transactions over web. There has been tremendous competition to target each and every computer owner who is connected to the Web.

The main obstacle to e commerce for SMEs is the lack of understanding about how to sell their products through online. It is found that many SMEs are missing technical knowledge and the cost of engagement in e business is too high. Generally, there is lack of confidence and knowledge about new technology. The main reasons for SMEs to become involved in E-business are improved service, procurement cost saving and cost efficiency in general, improved relations with suppliers. The role of government is also very important in encouraging SMEs to get involved in e businesses and should organize the seminars and workshops to provide them knowledge as well as training.

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