

Community Shopping

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ABSTRACT

Technology is at the centre stage now. All the tech companies are giving their guidance that we are going to witness a multiyear technological transformation cycle. This is going to impact in every wake of life. Adapting to this new technological landscape is the key to ones survival. One cannot find an area where the influence of the technology is avoided. Every wake of life has a touch of modern technology. It can be easily said that the impact of technology is influencing every wake of life. This book chapter deals with "SHOPPING". Especially after this pandemic, the way we are shopping witnessed a huge change in its landscape. It is witnessing a huge change in its pattern. The needs are changing. The way & style by which we do shopping is also changing. The modes of shopping are changing. Also this provides immense potential for future in terms of investment, job opportunities. India's journey towards 5 trillion economies is incomplete without the contribution of shopping. This book chapter proposes a concept called community shopping for connecting community and shopping with technology.

INTRODUCTION

Pandemic corona has shaken the world beyond anyone's expectation. Be it in health, economy, personal life, job, technology, transportation, energy, digital payments, shopping, entertainment, education or anything, there is a complete reorientation of the things. It is obvious that the post Covid world will be entirely different from the pre-Covid world. The way we do business has witnessed a complete turnaround. It has been devastating days for many. Equally it is boon for many too. While some sectors like tech, telecom and shipping were stable, small family businesses have been hit hard, and there are disastrously high unemployment rates among youth (Rich Karlgaard, 2020)

Before going to the concept, one should know the evolution of shopping in India. India is a country of 1.25 billion populations. By this sheer size of population, the vast geography and its vastly different cultures it has its own strength and weakness. This huge population also offers a highly lucrative market. Finding Jobs for such a big population is also a big s huge challenge.

This market is equally attractive to domestic and international players. The shops mainly small scale shops were a source of income for many. Also it was providing jobs to huge section of population. One can easily find one or two small scale shops at a throw away distance. Usually a local person starts these small shops and over a period of time a mutual relationship is established. Mostly one can find items which are mostly pertaining to the needs of that particular area. The items we find in these shops are mostly determined by demand generated in that particular area. Thus these small shops are governed by the demands from that particular local area.

It is well suited to the demands and requirements of the society. The competition is very limited and it is basically among the very local players. These shops were very essential to and was very integral part of our society. This was the scenario happening in our nation before the liberalization. Except the very few big metropolis, the nature of the shops and shopping were very similar to the one described above.

Slowly things started changing with the introduction of Liberalization of Indian Economy. The entire nation started witnessing a tremendous change due to the liberalization. This was evident in all the fields. GDP, FDI, Disinvestment, Special Economic Zone, Privatization, Infrastructure etc. became the common words. Slowly it was found that Government became a facilitator of things instead of provider. Things started changing at a very dramatic pace in the case of shopping. Slowly big malls started coming to the picture. Big, splashy and very attractive shops became the integral part of an average Indian. More than shopping, it became an experience and fun too. Visiting malls, watching a movie and having food outside became a norm of a common man now a days. This was aggressively happening especially at urban areas.

But the above developments came at the cause of the other. Small traders, shop keepers and merchants especially at the urban areas cannot withstand the onslaught from big players. Slowly the small players have to give way to big guys. The big players were able to provide products a very discounted price. The above developments can be termed as the next phase of our shopping scenario. This happened during the period 1995 to 2010.

It is a universal phenomenon that the things do not stay static. There is a continuous evolution of things. As introduced in the beginning of this chapter, technology started taking the centre stage of every aspects of life. With the advent of technology, the shopping space is witnessing a tremendous transformation.

The mode of shopping is changing. Everything is going online. Everything is now available at home with a click in mobile screen. India's top company Flipkart was taken over by Walmart. Amazon's battle with Reliance shows how lucrative the market is. Tatas, Bigbasket, Myntra are all big players. It is such a big market that the big fishes started eating away the small ones. Reliance plans to tie up with whatsapp for retail business.

DILEMMA OF THE SMALL SCALE TRADERS

Now what will be the condition of small scale traders, merchants and shoppers. They will not be able to with stand the onslaught from bigger players. They lose competitive edge in terms of the pricing, logistics, offers to the customers and direct delivery to the customer's home.

The COVID pandemic has been more catastrophic for these traders. Due to the restrictions imposed due to lock down, the small scale traders and shop keepers were at the receiving end. Many of them were not able to survive, many had given up. Since the mobility was highly restricted there was no business transaction. Neither there was any way for delivering the goods to the customers. Basically there was a disconnect between the shops and the customers. This was the perfect vacuum created for the bigger players by the pandemic.

Customers prefer not to have contact with a second person for the fear of contracting the virus. The fast-changing context in which companies are currently operating yields new markets for those who are able to quickly re-invent themselves and adapt to the new situation – such as offering online shopping or digital service consulting instead of physically visiting stores (Joerg et. al., 2020). With the vast infrastructure and help of technology the bigger players could perfectly fit in to the vacuum space created by the pandemic and there by smaller players could be chucked out. Also availability of the mobile network, cheap data and high degree of easiness also paved the way for the rapid migration of the customer base to the bigger players. In the short-term, there will be opportunities arising from the COVID-19 crisis, such as developing hygiene or digital work solutions. The long-term consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic are, however, not yet foreseeable, but it seems inevitable that broader opportunities will arise (Andreas Kuckertz, 2020).

PROPOSED CONCEPT-COMMUNITY SHOPPING:

The proposed concept called as community shopping is based on the concept “United we stand divide we fall”. Consider a small town with numerous shops & establishments. Each shop is it small or big becomes a part of a single entity. Thus the shops, traders and all business activities are each linked each other by way of a special software or application so that the entire each unit club together to form a single entity. On a simplified version the above concept comprises the following

1. Formation of the single entity
2. Formation of the interface.
3. Storage optimization
4. Logistics Optimization
5. System monitoring & control.

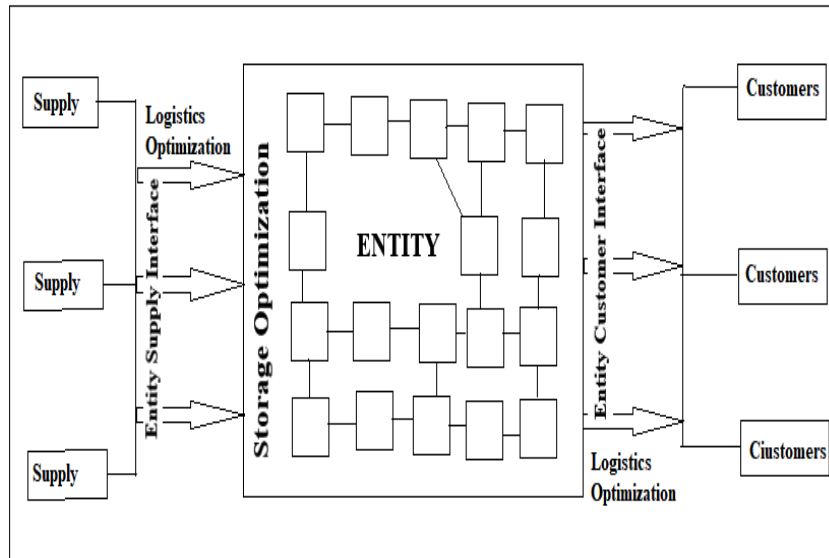


Fig: Proposed Concept: Community Shopping

The above components are just for the elementary introductory purpose only. A brief analysis of the components is provided below.

FORMATION OF SINGLE ENTITY

The single entity is the core of this proposal. The success of this concept lies in the effective implementation of this particular single entity. This single entity is the one going to take on the bigger players. This is developed on the basis of the mutual respect & understanding among the individual shop keepers. The design phase of this Single Entity is the key to its success. The underlying idea that the shop keepers (of the small town considered) will be communicating to a particular society is ‘Help us to help you’. The USP of this single entity is the highly customized approach to which you are targeting. Including all the shops will increase the effectiveness of this concept. The implementation of a perfect logic which is acceptable to all is the daunting task of this approach.

The following list is only for representation purpose. It should include all shops. The software is the binding factor which integrate Shops, Mini marts, Coffee shops, Theatres, Vegetable shops, Eateries, Coffee shops as a single entity. This is only one of the aspects of the soft ware.

FORMATION OF THE INTERFACE

The next aspect is the interface of this single entity. A simplified version should have atleast two interface. Both are mentioned below.

1. Entity- Customer Interface.(ECS)
2. Entity Supplier Interface.(ESI)

Entity Customer Interface (ECS): This is the interface through which the customers interact with entity. This should be user friendly, accommodative of all options, technology oriented, consistent with the entity design features, simple features oriented and ready for modifications. The outcome of ECS is very key for the successful implementation of this concept. How each customer is connected to each units of the entity is very important aspect.

Entity Supplier Interface (ESI): For the cost effective implementation of this concept, it is very important that the items purchased are from low cost points. How the items are sourced, how much it is brought, how much benefit can be passed o the customers form the part of this interface.

Storage Optimization

Another important aspect of this concept is the how effectively all the units can optimize the storage of items bought from the supplier before supplying to the end user. The internal movement of items between the each units of the entity is a critical one.

Logistics Optimization

The cost effectiveness of this concept stems from the fact that an optimized logistics of the goods serves in reducing the cost of the item drastically.

There are two components for it:

1. Transfer of items from the producer/supplier to the entity.
2. Transfer of items to the customer from the entity.

How well all the entities are clubbed together for an effective movement of the goods, both in the above components are decisive factor in reducing the overall cost. The main concept is the clubbing of the items of each unit of the entity for the smooth flow of items.

System Monitoring & Control

The entire system should be highly technical. It should be under constant monitoring for its effective performance. Use of artificial intelligence and machine language to adapt to the fast changes in the demand, requirements, entity formation, logistics and interface is a must. It should be glitch free and must be ready to take over the newer approaches of the competitor. There should be a control centre for monitoring the entire activities.

CONCLUSION

The COVID-19 crisis calls for a rethinking of the balance of the objectives of efficiency and resilience in different areas of economic and social systems. Post-crisis efforts can be turned into an opportunity to improve people's lives and stimulate innovation (OECD, 2020). In short the entire units of an area collectively contour the aggressive business activities of a very dominant player, who is a threat to the small scale player's existence through a collective approach using technology. The desired outcomes of these approaches includes highly customized service, cost effective shopping, delivering directly to home, maintaining the flavour of the society and community and effectively countering the aggressive players.

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