



Impact of E-Commerce on Retailers

Dr. Madhu Jain

Associate Professor, Economics, UGC Research Award Fellow, SPC Govt. College, Ajmer, Rajasthan, India

ABSTRACT: The rise of eCommerce has been one of the biggest disruptions in the retail industry in recent years. With the convenience of online shopping and the ever-increasing range of products available, traditional retail models have been challenged like never before. Retailers that have been slow to adapt to the changing landscape have struggled, with many even going out of business. In this article, we will explore how eCommerce has disrupted traditional retail models and discuss how retailers can adapt and compete in an increasingly eCommerce-driven world. Online shopping has revolutionized the way people shop, with consumers now able to browse and purchase products from anywhere, at any time. And with eCommerce logistic options expanding, customers can often receive their products the same day they order them. eCommerce has brought a level of convenience and accessibility that traditional retail models simply cannot match. Online shopping has also allowed consumers to compare prices and products easily, leading to increased competition and pressure on retailers to offer better value for money.

KEYWORDS: Impact, E-Commerce, Retailers, Business, Customers, Online, Shopping, Money, Competition

I. INTRODUCTION

The growth of eCommerce has had a significant impact on traditional retail models. Brick-and-mortar stores are struggling to compete with the convenience and accessibility of online shopping. Retailers have had to adapt their business models to incorporate eCommerce, whether by building their own online stores or partnering with established eCommerce platforms such as Shopify or Amazon.

Some retailers have also invested in experiential retail, creating a unique shopping experience that cannot be replicated online. This involves providing customers with an in-store experience that cannot be found online, such as interactive displays, personalized recommendations, and exclusive events. By focusing on the customer experience, retailers can create a loyal customer base that values the in-person shopping experience.[1,2,3]

Adapting to an eCommerce-Driven World

To adapt to an increasingly eCommerce-driven world, retailers must focus on creating a seamless omnichannel experience for customers. This involves integrating their online and offline operations to provide a consistent shopping experience, regardless of how customers choose to shop. Here are some strategies that retailers can use to adapt:

1. Invest in eCommerce

Retailers must invest in their online presence and eCommerce operations to remain competitive. This includes building a user-friendly online store, optimizing the customer journey, and leveraging digital marketing to reach new customers.

2. Offer In-Store Pickup and Returns

Retailers can leverage their physical stores by offering in-store pickup and returns for online orders. This provides customers with a convenient way to shop online and pick up their orders at a nearby store, reducing delivery times and shipping costs.

3. Create Unique In-Store Experiences

Retailers can differentiate themselves from online competitors by creating a unique in-store experience that cannot be replicated online. This includes offering exclusive products, hosting events, and providing personalized recommendations for in-store items.



4. Leverage Data Analytics

By tapping into data analytics, retailers can gain insights into customer behavior and preferences. This data can be used to create targeted marketing campaigns and improve the customer experience across all channels.

5. Partner with eCommerce Platforms

Retailers can partner with established eCommerce platforms such as Amazon or Shopify to expand their online reach and benefit from their existing customer base. For example, by joining Amazon Marketplace, retailers can tap into a large, engaged audience to sell their goods online.

How to Utilize Email Marketing to Remain Competitive

Email marketing can be a powerful tool for retailers looking to adapt and compete in an increasingly eCommerce-driven world. Here are some ways in which email marketing can help retailers:

- **Building and Nurturing Customer Relationships:** Email marketing allows retailers to communicate directly with their customers, building and nurturing relationships with them. By sending regular emails that are relevant, personalized, and engaging, retailers can stay top of mind and build brand loyalty.[5,7,8]
- **Promoting eCommerce Channels:** Email marketing can be used to promote eCommerce channels such as online stores, mobile apps, and social media platforms. Retailers can use email to showcase new products, promotions, and discounts, encouraging customers to visit their online channels and make purchases.
- **Offering Personalization and Customization:** Email marketing allows retailers to offer personalized and customized content based on customer preferences and behaviors. By using data analytics and segmentation, retailers can send targeted emails that are more relevant to customers, improving engagement and driving sales.
- **Creating a Sense of Urgency:** Email marketing can be used to create a sense of urgency and encourage customers to take action. By offering limited-time promotions, exclusive discounts, and special offers, retailers can incentivize customers to make purchases and create a sense of urgency that encourages them to act quickly.
- **Providing Customer Service and Support:** Email marketing can be used to provide customer service and support, answering questions and addressing concerns. By including contact information and links to customer service resources, retailers can make it easy for customers to get the help they need.

Email marketing can be a powerful tool for retailers looking to adapt and compete in an increasingly eCommerce-driven world. By building and nurturing customer relationships, promoting eCommerce channels, offering personalization and customization, creating a sense of urgency, and providing customer service and support, retailers can use email marketing to drive sales, improve customer loyalty, and succeed in the new retail landscape.

Ecommerce has disrupted traditional retail models and created new challenges for retailers. To compete in an increasingly eCommerce-driven world, retailers must adapt their business models to incorporate eCommerce and create a seamless omnichannel experience for customers. By investing in their online presence, leveraging physical stores, creating unique in-store experiences, leveraging data analytics, and partnering with eCommerce platforms, retailers can remain competitive and succeed in the new retail landscape.

II. DISCUSSION

Not that long ago, when you wanted to buy a product, the obvious move was to get in your car (or hop on public transit) and head to one of the stores in your town. [9,10,11]

Now, it's just as natural to pull up a website any time of day to buy just about anything you could want. eCommerce has impacted every part of our lives. It's changed total industries and caused huge shifts in buying behavior.

One of the biggest areas that has been impacted by eCommerce is the retail industry.



Before buying items online was an option, almost all shopping had to be done by going into a physical store, browsing, and buying the specific items you wanted. Granted, there were also catalogs and home shopping networks. But for most people, the obvious option anytime you wanted to purchase a new item was to head to the local mall or shopping center.

The internet changed all of that. And eCommerce has only been growing in influence and popularity in the time it's been on the scene.

eCommerce's Impact on Retail By the Numbers

To start to understand eCommerce's impact on retail, it helps to look at the statistics that measure growth, declines, and other trends in each.

Online sales overtook in-store ones for the first time in 2019.

While the difference between the two was minor, a report from the Commerce Department noted that February 2019 was the first month that online sales beat those of retail stores.

What they called "non-store retail" sales—meaning sales through a website rather than a physical storefront—accounted for 11.813% of all sales that month, as compared to 11.807% for brick-and-mortar retail.

Even though the numbers are close, it was an important moment for marking the shift in consumer habits. People haven't abandoned the physical shopping experience by any means, but the share of shopping they do online has grown to be comparable to the amount they do in-store.

The number of retail stores was growing until recently.

For most of the time eCommerce has been an option, the retail industry was still growing. Contrary to what some may have assumed, online stores didn't sound the death knell for traditional retail.

Instead, Nielsen's data shows more than 27,000 new retail stores opened between 2007 and 2018 in the United States. The industry didn't see any slowdown until late 2017, suggesting that even as eCommerce sales grew, brick-and-mortar stores were still making profits.[12,13,15]

The average size of retail stores has decreased.

While the number of stores grew, they started to get smaller. Nielsen notes that the rapid growth was primarily in small-format stores like convenience and drug stores, rather than large retail locations.

The average square-footage of retail stores has dropped 4.4%, from 10,516 in 2009 (its biggest year) to 10,051.

Certain types of retail stores are disproportionately hit by eCommerce competition.

The term retail includes a lot of variety—dollar stores, pet stores, the auto industry, and electronics, just to name a few examples.

The impact of eCommerce on retail is not consistent across store types. Consumers have primarily shifted to shopping online for a few types of items in particular.

Nielsen's research found that consumer electronics was the hardest hit with 6,507 fewer retail stores between 2007 and 2018, followed by apparel with 4,630 less. On the other end of the spectrum, the number of dollar stores increased by 12,535, convenience stores by 6,943, and drug stores by 4,296.



Retail is increasingly omnichannel.

When we talk about eCommerce and brick-and-mortar stores as two different things, it's accurate, but obscures the fact that there's a lot of overlap.

Some of the biggest eCommerce businesses—think Walmart, Target, Home Depot—are also some of the biggest traditional retail brands in the country. Many brands that sell physical products have seen the value of doing both—letting people choose between a visit to a store, buying items from their living room, or doing a combo of the two.

According to Business Insider, 68% of consumers say they've taken advantage of the option to purchase an item online and pick it up in a store (often called "click and carry"). Customers increasingly expect brands to deliver a seamless experience in which the distinction between the eCommerce side of a business and the brick-and-mortar is collapsed.

Generational differences impact eCommerce vs retail choices.

Consumers aren't all alike in their shopping preferences. Statista's data shows clear generational trends in who shops more online, and who heads to the store for most of their items.

67% of millennials prefer eCommerce, as compared with 56% of Generation X, 41% of boomers, and only 28% of seniors. That suggests that eCommerce's impact is much more significant for consumers of some ages than others

10 Other Ways eCommerce Has Changed Retail

Those numbers don't tell the whole story though. The rise of eCommerce has changed a lot about how customers think about shopping and what their everyday shopping behaviors look like. There are at least ten other important ways eCommerce has had an impact on retail.

1. Customer expectations around convenience

Buying a product online is easy and efficient. You don't have to deal with traffic and parking. You don't have to figure out the best bus route. You find the item you want and with a few clicks, it will come straight to you. [17,18,19]

Customers are now spoiled for convenience, and that changes our idea of normal. If anything about the process of buying products from a retail company makes it feel hard—an item is out of stock and won't be available that day, or the lines are long because your store is understaffed—they won't be holding the store to the standards of the typical retail experience. They'll be comparing the inconvenience to their experiences with the future of eCommerce shopping.

That makes it that much more important for both online stores and brick-and-mortar ones to up their game to improve customer satisfaction and experience.

2. The ease of doing advance research on products

The internet makes it easy to find detailed information about almost any product a customer could consider buying.

They can compare prices, see what third-party sites have to say about products, and learn about the company behind them. If a retail brand experiences a scandal, there's no hiding it. If a new brand in your space starts to undercut their prices, customers have an easy way to learn about it.

That all increases the importance of consistently providing high-quality customer service, and striving to run a business that's above board. When someone goes Googling to learn more about a product, they'll definitely be influenced by the information they learn. You want anything they learn about your brand to be positive.



3. The influence of customer reviews

Customer reviews are an especially influential component in the research process. When you're considering a new product—especially a high-cost one—how often do you read reviews other people have left?

The average consumer reads ten reviews before making a purchasing decision, according to BrightLocal.

For both online businesses and traditional retail stores, encouraging and monitoring reviews is now an essential part of running a successful business. And if your business gets a lot of negative reviews, it's important to figure out why and improve on it before you lose your customer base because of it. [20,21]

Understanding customer reviews will also be vital to your customer retention strategy, so you can ensure your customers remain loyal.

4. Expectations of increased choice

Customers are accustomed to having lots of options. That applies to product options—it's now possible to find almost any type of product you could want online, and have it shipped from anywhere.

But it also applies to having more choice in the way they shop, from shipping speeds, to the ability to buy online and return in store, to the capability to find and choose brands based on shared values. If someone decides they want to prioritize buying from eco-conscious brands or woman-owned shops, that's a lot easier in 2019 than it would have been in 2000.

In all areas, it's important for businesses to consider what choices a consumer will expect to have available and which ones they may want to have. Pay attention to what your competitors are offering to understand the choices customers take for granted as normal.

5. The need to promote your brand online

When someone wants to buy a product in person, they still often start their shopping experience by looking online to see what their store options are.

That means even if a retail business doesn't have an eCommerce component, it's still necessary to have a website and invest in online promotion. Billboards and radio ads won't cut it anymore.

Modern businesses will want to be on social media, optimize their website for search engines, and possibly invest in paid advertising channels.

6. Ease of starting a new business

eCommerce has lowered the barriers to entry for entrepreneurship. Starting an online store is cheaper than a brick-and-mortar one, since you don't have to invest in the real estate costs of a storefront or pay to staff the space full time.

And building an eCommerce website doesn't have to be difficult or time consuming. Website builders are an efficient way to set up a site quickly and affordably, while still looking professional.

Anyone with a dream of starting a business now has a much better chance of realizing it. People with innovative product ideas or creatives that produce items they can sell, like artwork or clothes, can now much more easily monetize their work and find their audience.



7. Pressure to provide customer support in more channels

Another big change the internet wrought is expectations around customer service. Customers aren't satisfied with knowing they can talk to a human at the store, or contact a call center if they have an issue. They want brands to be available in all the channels they like using—a list that seems to experience rapid growth every year.

Retail companies can expect customer service inquiries to come in through email, social media channels, and the business website. And many customers now want the option to use messaging apps like WhatsApp as well.

Having enough staff to provide support across channels is an expense all retail businesses now need to consider. [18,20,21]

8. More cybersecurity responsibilities

Data breaches are an unfortunate and far too common part of life in the internet age. Now that all businesses are expected to have a website, they must also take steps to make sure all the information they collect and store digitally is secure.

If hackers can get into the data you have about your customers—especially if that includes sensitive financial information like credit card numbers—you're responsible. It's bad for your brand, and bad for the customers that trusted you.

As retail brands move toward collecting and keeping more data about customers and prospects to aid in personalization, the risks only increase. Part of being in business today is accepting the heightened cybersecurity responsibilities required, and that extends to traditional retail businesses with a website as well as eCommerce ones.

9. Increased drive toward personalization

Now that brands are starting to employ personalization, mostly in online contexts, customers are coming to expect more of it. Many don't want to see ads for products that are irrelevant to them, or emails that have nothing to do with the array of products and categories they've shown an active interest in.

eCommerce personalization can be hard to do well, particularly for omnichannel companies that want to provide a consistent in-store and online experience. But it's a growing trend and expectation for retail experiences.

10. The need to evolve quickly

Technology moves fast. New channels keep coming into play. Businesses have to learn how best to interact with consumers on different device types. And with more brands to compete against, you have more business owners trying out ways to set themselves apart.

If a retailer in your space starts offering free shipping, or providing free items with every purchase, or doing something else you don't yet do—you'll have to figure out how to up your game to avoid losing customers to them.

Across the board, retailers of all types now have to stay on top of changing trends and technologies to make sure you don't fall behind. Having some agility in your business model so you can quickly adapt as needed is an important ingredient to success.

eCommerce and Retail Both Have Their Place

Consumers may be increasing how many purchases they make online, but they clearly still get something out of the in-store experience. Whether it's the ability to bring the items they want home the same day, the browsing experience, the option to see what they buy in person, or some entirely different element—brick-and-mortar stores are unlikely to disappear. [15,17]



For many retail brands, the question is how to best offer both experiences, a great online store and brick-and-mortar locations. But whatever your business model is, having a website to represent your brand online isn't optional. It's a crucial component for any retail business to include, online or off.

III. RESULTS

E-commerce might have been changing the face of retail for over a decade, but the COVID-19 pandemic turned an evolution into a revolution. As a result, the impact of e-commerce on retailers has left them scrambling to stay connected to their consumers while pivoting to a digital offering. In an increasingly physically disconnected world, how can brands offer a customer support strategy which delivers the experiences demanded by customers?

Customer experience (CX) is one of the key levers for value a business can pull; keeping customers engaged and satisfied generates repeat business and boosts brand reputation. It's no secret that the impact of e-commerce on retailers has grown exponentially since the start of the global pandemic. Brick-and-mortar shops have been forced to close and customers have turned to online retail first by necessity and then by convenience. This acceleration offers both challenges and opportunities for retailers. While in-person service within retail outlets will remain a key piece in the overall CX mix, customers are increasingly conducting part of their shopping online and this looks set to continue beyond the pressures of the pandemic.

Cushioning the impact of e-commerce on retailers through the contact centre

So how do you maintain connection and attention in a digital environment? Back in 2018, Barclaycard estimated that businesses were losing out on £18 billion of lost sales each year as a result of abandoned online shopping baskets. This surf-n-turf approach to internet shopping is a testament to how disconnected customers are from the retailers they interact with. Furthermore in June 2018 a survey reported that one-third of UK customers abandoned baskets out of frustration with digital services. Unfortunately, customer frustration can be compounded when disruptions do happen, stocking and supply chain issues for example, as these issues tend to highlight gaps or problems in service provisions. [13,18]

Findings like this begin to paint a clearer picture. Retailers must not only attract attention with their products but keep it and convert it into sales by prioritising the improvement of their digital services with both customer satisfaction and customer effort scores in mind. So where does the contact centre fit into this? Embracing a new mindset can lessen the impact of e-commerce on retailers by turning contact centres into hubs of communication and connection.

Traditionally customer service has always been more reactive but in the sphere of e-commerce customers move rapidly from site to site, which presents a massive potential loss of revenue. Even if you offer the best post-purchase customer service on the market you are limiting your potential income if you fail to engage customers proactively. Companies can proactively initiate conversations by reaching out to engage customers and captivate their attention. One example of this would be to utilise the full range of channels to bridge the gap left by physical touchpoints and use video chat and co-browsing so agents and customers can navigate the shopping experience side-by-side.

With these things, and changes in customer expectations, in mind, an increasingly complex number of drivers on contact centre services can be seen. Traditional customer services need to evolve with goals such as proactive outreach, personalisation and convenience in mind. But how can this all be orchestrated into a coordinated channel-less strategy?

Connecting the e-commerce dots has a positive impact on customers and retailers

When you consider the complexity of delivering this type of service it becomes clear that part of the solution lies with technology. Imagine if a contact centre tried to institute such a policy of outreach and engagement in the high-speed online environment with outgoing calls. Old solutions to new problems won't work; the number of agents, the cost and the overstressed supervisors trying to coordinate it all would be an impossibly huge task. [19,20]

This is where Contact Centre as a Service (CCaaS) solutions come in. With a strong sense of brand identity and company direction, retailers can lessen the impact of e-commerce on their business with consistent messages rolled out across numerous channels. Crucially, CCaaS solutions also enable retailers to bypass the customer frustration of repeating information, by integrating all these touchpoints into a single channel-less conversation. This continuity means customers can swap devices during transactions and agents have complete visibility of customer histories so they can interact with agility, accuracy and insight.

Social media and instant messaging represent newer areas for retailers to explore as they are increasingly used by younger generations to communicate and express opinion on the services of online retailers. As such this can be utilised to counteract the impact of e-commerce on retailers by creating interactive one-to-one connections and meeting customers on their terms. Importantly it also enables a quick reaction to customer complaints in an arena where others can see, and judge,



these efforts. The high visibility of these interactions and the way they can be further shared is another reason why a strong brand identity is needed to temper reactions into measured consistent responses.

Leveraging attention to grow connection

As e-commerce continues to expand and competition for customer attention grows, retailers need to pull out all the stops to stay connected. It may well become the case that for an increasing number of retailers brand image and the quality of customer experiences will be more important than the product itself. To rise to this new challenge and moderate the impact of e-commerce on retailers CCaaS solutions can be leveraged to help deliver a new level of customer connection.

IV. CONCLUSIONS

The Indian retail industry has been slightly disrupted over the last two years due to the pandemic which saw operations globally slow down due to periodic lockdowns. People had no choice but to rely on the use of online platforms to make daily purchases as access to the local markets were limited. As a result, internet shopping saw a major boom globally, thereby becoming a vital resource for both consumers and retailers to buy things. In numerous ways, this has had an impact on the offline Indian retail sector, considered to be one of the biggest retail industries in the world.

E-commerce was unquestionably growing in popularity before the advent of the pandemic as well, especially in metros and tier-I cities, nevertheless, the outbreak has made retailers realize the many benefits of shifting themselves to digital platforms. It not only connected the businesses to the new potential clients but lowered the operating costs.

E-commerce has grown to be an important part of daily life now and a far more lucrative alternative than actual stores, given the discounts and convenience of exchange. There are multiple reasons that explain how e-commerce has accelerated the growth of India's retail sector:[20]

E-commerce can save money

E-commerce enables you to avoid the significant up-front costs of running traditional stores, like rent, design, inventory, and so forth. Most of these expenses can be avoided by e-commerce firms running retail websites. An e-commerce website often requires less time to set up than a non-eCommerce website.

Of course, opening an online store is not free. The bare minimum initial expenses for an internet business would be web hosting, e-commerce software, and a domain name. Along with paying for things like marketing, you also need to address the basics like taxes and laws (often by employing an attorney). However, the overall cost of carrying out all of these tasks is still significantly lower than that of a physical business.

Access to a larger clientele

People now have additional options for buying and selling, thanks to the expansion of e-commerce. A site, a mobile phone app, online stores like Amazon and Flipkart, or social media platforms like Facebook and Instagram Ads can all be used to handle online sales.

Instead of waiting for new consumers to come into the physical store like the earlier way, people can now approach them with just a click.

Space for visual merchandising

You can provide as many or as few details about your item on a product page. Additionally, online retailers have plenty of room to display a variety of products, from colors to details, sizes, and substances, all of which are difficult to carry out in physical stores.

Additionally, e-commerce companies can publish products on social media, where users may get ideas from other consumers and develop a stronger bond with a company.



Enhance your business's image

Online stores also present an opportunity to enhance the overall reputation of a brand. Giving users a solid online sales platform helps in enhancing the corporate image of business. You can compare costs from home instead of having to travel to the actual store, for instance.

Additionally, by using the brand loyalty or feedback business can improve products in ways that the customers will like.

E-commerce is accelerating the growth of retail sector and becoming a more viable alternative compared to actual stores. It is because of its convenience and user friendly features. Regardless of physical presence, a number of factors have the potential to effect sales, making e-commerce platforms even more crucial.[21]

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