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**IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC COVID-19 ON E-COMMERCE**

I remember when this virus first came out, it seemed like an everyday sickness that could be cured by over the counter drugs, then it began to rise and it even became social media famous more than I was and existed for years, it was used for memes(like a comical picture), videos and all sort of jokes. Not to be to absorbed in my optimistic side of life, it is a bad virus affecting millions of people and killing in thousands, there was a day that is killed almost two thousand people in a space of roughly 3 hours in the United States of America. The number of cases rose astronomically even greater than any geometric progression done for population increase and it was declared a pandemic by the WHO on March 11, 2020.

Coronavirus, COVID-19 or Rona as the street call it, is an infectious disease caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus The disease was first identified in December 2019 in Wuhan, the capital of China's Hubei province, and has since spread globally, resulting in the ongoing 2019–20 coronavirus pandemic. As of 25 April 2020, more than 2.86 million cases have been reported across 185 countries and territories, resulting in more than 201,000 deaths. More than 811,000 people have recovered.

Moving away from the disease and putting more focus on E-commerce. Basically E-commerce is a business or transaction carried out online, and it can also be called internet business. In a more refined definition Ecommerce, also known as electronic commerce or internet commerce, refers to the buying and selling of goods or services using the internet, and the transfer of money and data to execute these transactions. The key phrase here is buying and selling of goods and services using the internet, these transactions are carried out through online stores like Amazon, Flipkart, Shopify, Myntra, eBay, Quikr, Olx and these are examples of E-commerce websites.

These business transactions can be done in four ways:

1. Business to Business

Here the companies are doing business with each other. The final consumer is not involved. So the online transactions only involve the manufacturers, wholesalers, retailers, etc.

2. Business to Consumer

Here the company will sell its goods and/or services directly to the consumer. The consumer can browse their websites and look at products, pictures, read reviews. Then they place their order and the company ships the goods directly to them. Popular examples are Amazon, Flipkart, Jabong, etc. This is also called B2C

3. Consumer to Consumer

Consumer to consumer, where the consumers are in direct contact with each other. No company is involved. It helps people sell their personal goods and assets directly to an interested party. Usually, goods traded are cars, bikes, electronics, etc. OLX, Quikr, etc follow this model.

4. Consumer to Business

This is the reverse of B2C, it is a consumer to business. So the consumer provides a good or some service to the company. Say for example an IT freelancer who demos and sells his software to a company. This would be a C2B transaction.

Not delving deep but looking and some advantages and disadvantages of e-commerce they are as follows

ADVANTAGES OF E-COMMERCE

⦁ E-commerce provides the sellers with a global reach

⦁ Electronic commerce will substantially lower the transaction cost

⦁ It also saves time, energy, and effort for both the consumers and the company.

⦁ A customer can shop 24×7. The website is functional at all times, it does not have working hours like a shop.

DISADVANTAGES OF E-COMMERCE

⦁ The setup of the hardware and the software, the training cost of employees, the constant maintenance and upkeep are all quite expensive.

⦁ Although it may seem like a sure thing, the e-commerce industry has a high risk of failure. Many companies riding the dot-com wave of the 2000s have failed miserably. The high risk of failure remains even today.

⦁ At times, e-commerce can feel impersonal. So it lacks the warmth of an interpersonal relationship which is important for many brands and products. This lack of a personal touch can be a disadvantage for many types of services and products like interior designing or the jewelry business.

⦁ Security is another area of concern. Only recently, we have witnessed many security breaches where the information of the customers was stolen. Credit card theft, identity theft, etc. remain big concerns with the customers.

⦁ Then there are also fulfillment problems. Even after the order is placed there can be problems with shipping, delivery, mix-ups, etc. This leaves the customers unhappy and dissatisfied.

As lives were moving smoothly to somewhat of degree before the Big Bad Wolf which in this case Corona Virus came and put the majority of the world at a standstill, this both has an impact on e-commerce and Brick-and-Mortar Store. Narrowing our focus to E-commerce we both have positive and negative impacts and also how this affects the economy of any country.

IMPACT OF CORONA VIRUS ON E-COMMERCE

POSITIVE IMPACT

As absurd this may seem, it can be seen that of a truth it has some positive impacts. For example, drawing a bit away from E-commerce, this virus has once again shown the world that whether you are black, white, we are all humans and we would all die, if we don't help one another and also in Nigeria it has shown the leaders that they really have failed us in the health care sector, Now the question that I ask myself every time is, WILL THEY LEARN?

The positive impact includes

1. A few months ago, shopping malls and supermarkets were experiencing a high demand for these products. But now there are very low footprints in those places and people are opting for online purchasing. So good news! There is an increase in demand for products on various eCommerce platforms. In Q4 of 2019, the total online retail spending was around 11.4%, which is expected to increase by 12% or more after the coronavirus outbreak. As it is shown here there would be an increase in demand for products on the various e-commerce platform, if this was E-commerce vs Brick and Mortar stores, E-commerce would be making a great comeback.

2. E-commerce has given people a chance to still acquire services and products without leaving their safe haven.This though as been in existence for a while now but at this moment, it has become so essential for our survival.Increase in contactless payments which is as a result of stay-at-home orders is a huge surge in demand for digital payment services. Italy, for example, has experienced an 81% increase in E-Commerce transactions since the end of February, and also Amazon has announced that they’re reopening their shipping services for nonessential items. At the start of the outbreak, Amazon shut down this service to third-party sellers to prioritize products that would assist in the containment of the disease the most. With sellers making up 58% of Amazon’s sales, this announcement will offer a huge boost to the company. Each seller will still have limits on how much they can ship to ensure essential goods still have rooms in the warehouses. In addition to this as more consumers continue avoiding crowded public places, they’ll increasingly turn to online shopping to get their essentials. In fact, JD.com, China’s largest online retailer, has seen sales of common household staples quadruple over the same time period last year. With the growth of e-commerce, coronavirus shouldn’t disrupt the economy as much as the SARS outbreak did in 2002. However, it will still bring strain to online-based businesses who need to deal with potentially delayed deliveries or out-of-stock items because of increased demand.

3. Another positive impact is that many E-commerce websites now have seen a lot of gaps in their websites and also seen other problems since a lot of focus was made on E-commerce. For example, Coronavirus exposes gaps in Amazon’s regulation of their marketplace The problem of counterfeit goods isn’t a new issue for Amazon, but they need to regulate and remove these goods is more important than ever. Hundreds and thousands of hand sanitizers, face masks, and other cleaning products have popped up on the sight claiming to prevent coronavirus. More than one million products with similar suspicious or misleading claims were removed from the site in February alone. This shows their previous policies on the acceptance of goods to their warehouse or storage unit was irrelevant.

4. Coronavirus will change what consumers purchase online. Food, beverages, and health supplements were already rapidly growing E-commerce sectors, and this is only expected to increase with the coronavirus outbreak. In order to avoid going to stores, consumers are purchasing more groceries online, and many are taking additional vitamins to stay healthy. Once they see how easy it is to purchase groceries and supplements online, many customers will likely continue doing so long after the coronavirus crisis subsides. Some other E-commerce sectors that will likely see an increase in orders as a result of the coronavirus pandemic are the pet product, cleaning product, and household goods sectors.

5. Coronavirus will change who shops online. Prior to the coronavirus outbreak, 69% of Americans had shopped online at least once, with 25% shopping online at least once per month. Both percentages are expected to increase, as the coronavirus pandemic is causing more people to avoid brick-and-mortar stores and shop online from the safety of their homes. Elderly people who have never shopped online before are now more likely to alter their behavior, as the virus has proven to be more dangerous for them. Although this demographic has been slow to adopt eCommerce, they may rethink visiting crowded, germy stores and opt to purchase what they need online.

NEGATIVE IMPACT

1. With the shutdown of factories and so many countries with China being major contributors to the major production of a lot of materials, so as we see made in China on a lot of goods and we laugh, the joke was on us. Goods are running out of stocks for example face masks, sanitizers, and even foodstuffs, actions should be taken quickly. Some of these actions include

2. Ecommerce delivery and supply chain concerns. While increased demand is better than the alternative, there is a concern that supply won’t be able to meet it. Disruptions to the supply chain — beginning in China in the early days of the coronavirus outbreak — have impacted the availability of inventory and delivery times. Signs are good, as China begins to recover, that a return to normal may be underway. But for e-commerce businesses in the U.S., they may still have more challenges to contend with, particularly in terms of fulfillment, before the volatility settles.

3. Supply Chain Issues will be of challenge to online retailers that currently face supply chain-related problems, and online marketplaces are responding in various ways. For example, retail giant Amazon has experienced a massive strain on its supply chain, resulting in shipment delays, technical glitches, and labor shortages. Now, it’s stopping shipments of nonessential products to its warehouses. It’s accepting only household staples, medical supplies, and other high-demand products until April 5. This affects even non-Amazon sellers who use Fulfillment By Amazon (FBA) for their fulfillment needs.“Leaked documents from the U.S. government are suggesting [shortages] could last up to 18 months and come in waves,” says Tommy Walker, global editor-in-chief of the QuickBooks Resource Center. “We’re still in the early days, but if that is the case, options like FBA will be unreliable at best, and the entire supply chain will continue to be disrupted.”Amazon is also prioritizing shipment in the following categories: baby products, health and household, beauty and personal care, grocery, industrial and scientific, and pet supplies. This prioritizing is good but the truth is many people won't care if there is a world war if they haven't eaten all day. Retailers who were asked what actions they’re taking as a result of the pandemic cited supply chain communication and contingency planning as their top actions.

CONCLUSION

It’s not pleasant to think about the opportunity in a time of crisis. Despite this, the opportunities and changes as a result of coronavirus are abundant and there will be winners and losers. Luckily for e-commerce retailers (including subscription), they will likely end up on the winning side in the short and long term. And this gives a chance to work harder on the E-commerce platform to make it more stable and better for future occurrences which in turn we hope not.