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#### CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE AND CHURN MANAGEMENT IN ONLINE AND MOBILE COMMERCE COMPANIES

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#### ABSTRACT

Number of online commerce companies has been launched in the past few years due to advent of technologies, penetration of smart devices, access to broadband services, and for providing customers different shopping experience. These companies are building strong logistics and operational capabilities. Similarly, they are building global supply chain so that customers have choice and access for the products at competitive prices. Penetration of smart phones continues to increase as affordability is enhanced due to falling prices. Hence customers are enjoying mobility while doing commerce or shopping. The business models or operational models adopted by most of these companies are almost similar. This is posing a major challenge to companies hence they have to be innovative, creative, operationally efficient, and most importantly provide excellent customer experience. This paper presents review of existing working models adopted by most of interest are identified from customer experience point of view. A survey was conducted and feedback was sought by users in various sections in the society. The data collected from this survey was analysed to confirm the validity of selected parameters and allo rank them in the order of importance so that companies can make necessary changes in the operational model. In this highly competitive service industry survival for a 'me too' is simply not possible and customer experience will be a critical factor for maintaining churn at low levels and ensuring repeat business by customers.

#### **KEYWORDS**

online, mobile, customer experience, commerce, smart phones.

#### **1.0 INTRODUCTION**

usinesses are key drivers of growth for a nation and its people. Today, in a cluttered business environment it is important that opportunities are capitalized and sound business is established. Due to increased access to broadband and penetration of mobile phones, increasing number of users has started using internet for most of their personal and professional transactions including shopping. India has over billion subscribers for mobile communication and increasing. The middle class population in the urban cities alone is around 350-400 million people. This demographic provides an excellent opportunity for online commerce.

TABLE 1: GROWTH IN NUMBER OF INTERNET USERS IN INDIA

Year	Number of Internet User in India (Million)
2013	110
2014	159
2015	213
2016	236
2017	314

#### Sources: (Srivastava, 2015)

Almost 3.6 billion people worldwide (Internet live stats, 2016) use internet today which is grown from 40.69 % (ITU, World Bank, 2014) of world population in 2014. As a matter of fact, in developing countries alone the number of internet users has more than doubled since 2009. In India, Mobile Internet users reached to 371 million by June 2016 (Indian Express, 2016).

Internet user penetration has reached 49.2 % globally (Internet world stats, 2016) but growth rate in developing countries remain relatively low at 3.3% compared to 8.7% in developed countries. Huge business opportunity also lies in 4 billion people who are not yet connected to the internet (Erik Hersman, 2014).

The Table 1 shows number of smartphone users in developed and developing countries. For the first time, more than one-quarter of the global population will use smartphones in 2015, and by 2018 more than 2.5 Billion consumers worldwide would have Smart phones (eMarketer, 2014)

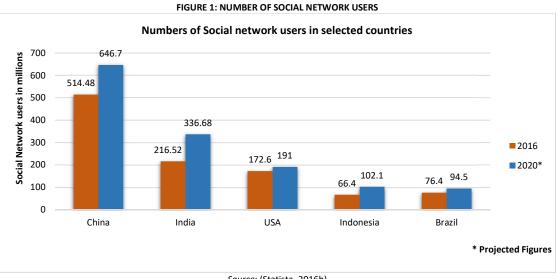
TABLE 2: RANKING OF COUNTRIES BY NUMBER OF SMART PHONE USERS, 2013 TO 2018

Top 7 countries, Ranked by the smartphone users, 2013-2018 (In millions)					one	
Country	2013	2014	2015 (E)	2016 (E)	2017 (E)	2018 (E)
China*	436.1	519.7	574.2	624.7	672.1	704.1
US**	143.9	165.3	184.2	198.5	211.5	220.0
India	76.0	123.3	167.9	204.1	243.8	279.2
Japan	40.5	50.8	57.4	61.2	63.9	65.5
Russia	35.8	49.0	58.2	65.1	71.9	76.4
Brazil	27.1	38.8	48.6	58.5	66.6	71.9
Indonesia	27.4	38.3	52.2	69.4	86.6	103.0
Global	1311.2	1639.0	1914.6	2155.0	2380.2	2561.8

Note: Individuals of the age who own atleast one Smartphone and use the smartphone(s) atleast once per month;\*excludes Hong Kong, \*\*Forecast from August 2014,(E)-Estimates

Source: (eMarketer, 2014)

Social network is today one of the mediums which companies use to market their products and make selling proposition to the consumers. As shown in figure 2, number of social media users has grown substantially in the past couple of years. As of the second quarter of 2016, Facebook alone had 1.71 billion monthly active users (Statista, 2016a)

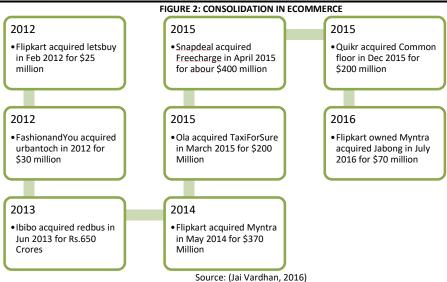


#### Source: (Statista, 2016b)

The number of users of online commerce in India may be comparatively lower than the US and other European markets, but it continues to grow at a rapid rate with many new entrants. Currently, eCommerce is heavily dependent on the web and smartphone revolution that has essentially altered the way businesses interact with customers.

The growing population and demographics of India will probably be the major driving force behind the explosion of eCommerce in the near future. Indian eCommerce industry has grown substantially in the past few years, especially the online retail sector. In 2007, Flipkart, an eCommerce company was founded by Sachin Bansal and Binny Bansal. It is registered in Singapore and it operates in India, where it is headquartered in Bangalore, Karnataka. Flipkart today is one of the largest player in the Indian eCommerce market. Snapdeal, established in the year 2010, was first in India to move to the Marketplace model. Amazon entered Indian market in 2013. Entry of this eCommerce giant in the Indian market has not only spurred heightened competition, but has also increased the pace of consolidation in last four years in an eCommerce space. There have been several mergers and acquisitions as the eCommerce industry in India matures as shown in figure 2.

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The eCommerce industry continues to grow top line at a healthy clip. Presently B2C (Business to Customers) segment alone is about \$16 billion dollars Gross Merchant Value (GMV). It is projected to cross over \$100 billion dollars by year 2020. Government agencies such as Indian Railways have also started offering number of online services to customers which is values at \$1-1.2 billion dollars.

#### TABLE 3: SIZE OF e-COMMERCE INDUSTRY IN INDIA (INCLUDES ONLY B2C e-TAIL EXCLUDING ONLINE TRAVEL AND CLASSIFIEDS)

Year	Total e-Commerce size(\$ Billion)	
2013	2.9	
2014	13.6	
2015	16.0	
2018*	40.3	
2020*	101.9	
Source: (CII & Deloitte, 2016)		

#### 2.0 CURRENT GLOBAL SCENARIO

The eCommerce share of users in the countries like the US, Europe and Japan are seeing slower growth in home markets and hence moving towards India, Brazil and China which have forecast growth rates of more than 20% over the coming years (ASSOCHAM & Deloitte, 2015) as shown in figure 4 and also as discussed in the previous section.

#### TABLE 4: COMPARISON OF WORLD ECONOMIES IN e-COMMERCE **Countries with Largest Share** of Global E-shoppers Ranked by 2019 Projections (% of Total) 2019 Rank 2019 China 29.0% 28.6% 1 2 India 11.6% 5.6% 3 U.S. 9.4% 11.7% 4 Japan 3.9% 5.3% 5 Indonesia 3.0% 1.5%

Source: (Jim Erickson, 2016)

#### 3.0 CHALLENGES FOR eCOMMERCE COMPANIES IN INDIA

Digital commerce market in India will touch \$100 billion dollars by the end of 2020 on the back of growing internet using population and increased online shoppers due to increase in digital penetration as number of online shoppers is likely to touch 220 million in 2020 from 39 million in 2015 (CII & Deloitte, 2016). The hotel booking business grew 165% year in December 2015, while spend on online railway ticket booking grew at around 34% in 2015 (Neha Alawadhi, 2016). The eCommerce industry is relatively new in India hence there are number of challenges faced by the service providers. Some of the challenges are listed below based on discussions with professionals engaged in this industry:

- Indian customers return much of the merchandise they purchase online.
- 2. Cash on delivery (CoD) is the preferred payment mode.
- 3. Payment gateways have a high failure rate.
- 4. Internet penetration is low.
- 5. Feature phones still rule the roost.
- 6. Postal addresses are not standardized.
- 7. Logistics is a problem in thousands of Indian towns.
- 8. Overfunded competitors are driving up cost of customer acquisition.

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#### **4.0 CUSTOMER CHURN AND CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE**

Consumers today have more places and ways to shop than ever. Hence they have increasingly shorter attention span. It is imperative for eCommerce service providers to provide customers pleasant and easy shopping experience so that they will continue to shop and provide repeat business. Attractiveness and usability are important requirements considerations for e-commerce (Oscar de Bruijn, 2007). As majority of target audience for Indian Ecommerce Company is younger generation which give more importance to appearance/attractiveness which enhance customer experience (Lightner, 2003).

Customer shopping experience depends on the efficient implementation of the operational model by the service providers and ensuring that all the stakeholders in the value chain deliver quality service. Some of the services in the chain include being able to buy online and return to the store, or buy online and pick up in the store, ability to have multiple payment types, use of different credit cards as well as things like bill-me-later or PayPal. It is extremely important for an eCommerce company to understand the customer such as products or services preferences, buying pattern and habits, spending capability, geographical location etc. The customer must feel secure about all the online transactions just the way s/he feels while doing physical transactions. Since the business model adopted by most eCommerce companies is identical, that is, a marketplace model companies have to be innovative in providing services. The quality of service decides if the customer will continue to shop with certain companies or switch to others. Companies have capability to analyse and access customer behaviour data which could be used for providing very personal shopping experience.

#### 5.0. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

- 1. To review of existing working models adopted by most online commerce companies.
- 2. To identify critical parameters for Ecommerce from customer experience point of view.
- 3. To understand the customer's perspective of the quality of service provided by the Ecommerce companies and also to identify the areas where the companies needed to shift their focus
- 4. To provide recommendation based on analysis to enhance customer experience and reduce increasing rate of customer churn

#### 6.0 METHODOLOGY AND APPROACH

The proposed research adopted quantitative research methodology where questionnaire was designed keeping in mind the various dimensions of the eCommerce space. The survey was conducted across various sections of the users. The total number of responses received was 110. The mean age of the respondents was 24 years. The age bracket for the survey was not predetermined, however the respondents were aged between 18 to 42 years. The respondents belonged to urban areas only.

The primary research was carried out by collecting primary data using a comprehensive questionnaire. The secondary research comprised of reports from various organisations like PwC, KPMG, ITU and BCG. It also included study of various articles from renowned publications.

#### QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

The objective of the research questionnaire was to understand the customer's perspective of the quality of service provided by the eCommerce companies and also to identify the areas where the companies needed to shift their focus.

The questionnaire was prepared keeping in mind various dimensions of the eCommerce space. These included Quality of Service, Safety, Payment, Interface and Delivery. These dimensions are clearly related to providing excellent customer experience hence minimizing thee churn. Following are considered as the set of critical parameters from customer experience point of view which defines the essence of the questionnaire:

- 1. Whether the respondent is a regular user or not
- 2. Frequency of shopping online
- 3. Average monthly spending
- 4. Perception of safety related to personal identity and transactions
- 5. Trust worthiness of the online players
- 6. Preference of Usage (Website Vs Mobile application)
- 7. Impact of e-Commerce players advertising on social media
- 8. Associated risks in e-Commerce
- 9. Preferred method of payment
- 10. Mismatch between expected quality and actual quality

#### 7.0 ANALYSIS AND KEY FINDINGS

For any business to grow and prosper, it is necessary that the core profit making areas are identified and optimum utilisation of the resource is carried out to enhance and improve them.

This study revealed interesting scenario where it was observed that the e-Commerce services like Carpooling and online ticketing are becoming equally profitable as the online retail or e-tail. 82.70% of the total number of respondents using online retail and 79.10% use other eCommerce services.

TABLE 5: KIND OF e-COMMERCE WEBSITES IN USE			
	Where does the profit lie?	Percent's	
	Online Retail	82.70%	
	Services	79.10%	
	Others	27.30%	

Whether a product or a service is a success or a failure largely depends on the usage pattern of the customer. In the eCommerce space, since customer loyalty is difficult to come by, it becomes extremely important to understand the usage behaviour of the customers. From the

#### TABLE 6: USAGE PATTERN OF THE CUSTOMERS ONLINE

Usage Pattern	Percent's	
Frequently	44%	
Sometimes	52%	
Rarely	4%	

Survey, it can be seen that only 44% of the total respondents are frequent users of the eCommerce space.

#### TABLE 7: SAFETY OF TRANSACTION

TABLE 7. SAFETT OF TRANSACTION			
Is Your Transaction Safe?	Percent's		
Agree	69%		
Disagree	5%		
Can't Say	26%		

When it comes to spending over the internet, 65% of the respondents spent less than Rs. 1000 per month. The amount spent per month is seen to be increasing with the steady growth that is taking place in the eCommerce market. 48.2% of the respondents are not sure whether their personal information like name,

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address, phone number and email id are safe in the hands of the eCommerce players. 27.3% feel that their information is unsafe. This clearly shows lack of trust among the customers. The lack of trust is also vindicated by the fact that only 39 out of the 110 respondents believe that the rating of the sellers is genuine. The main objectives of electronic payment system are to increase efficiency, improve security, and enhance customer experience and ease of use (Abhay, 2012).Safety is one of the major issues that the Indian customers are worried about. Although 69.1% of the respondents said that the online transactions are safe, yet 49.1% believe that online payment is the most risky of all.

TABLE 8: APPLICATION VS WEBSITE			
War of Application and Website			
Platform Percent's			
Mobile App	35%		
Website	65%		

28 out of 110 respondents consider delivery of goods to be a risky affair. 71.9% of the respondents have not received their ordered goods/services on time. Frequent delay in delivery tests the patience of the customer that may lead to churn in the longer run.

Even though smartphones and applications are considered to be the future, ignoring the present is a not wise idea. That 65% of the total respondents still prefer using website than applications. The data in following figure shows that 58% of the respondents preferred Cash on delivery as the most convenient mode of payment in comparison to 42.2% who preferred paying online).

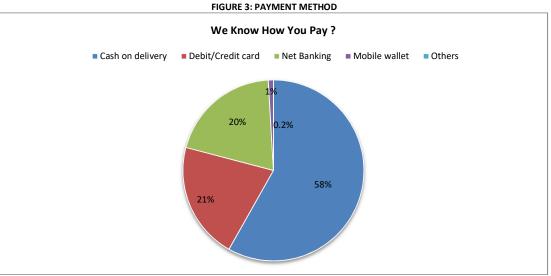
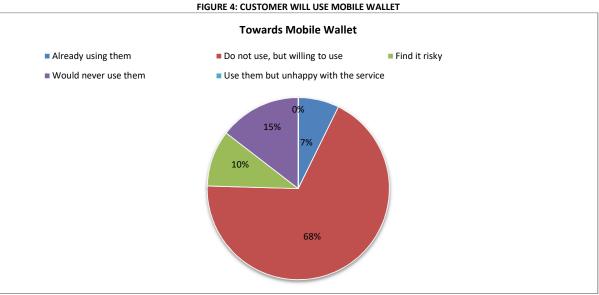


Figure shows, that those who do not use wallet services but are willing to use are 68% of the total respondents. As per (IBEF & HT Business, 2016) The acceptance of mobile wallets system for e-commerce transactions has been increased among customers with an annual growth rate of 180%.



That 69% of the respondents mostly get the expected quality of service. However, only 24% sometimes get the QOS as desired.

TABLE 9: DESIRED QUA	LITY OF SERVI
Quality Of Service	Percent's
Mostly	69%
Sometimes	24%
Always	5%
Never	2%

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#### **8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

The findings and recommendations from the research can be used by eCommerce industry players to enhance the customer experience and reduce the increasing rate of churn. These recommendations become relevant in the extensively cluttered eCommerce space.

Following are the recommendations made on the basis of the analysis and key findings;

- 1. The eCommerce companies need to identify as to why 56% of the total respondents were not frequent users of the eCommerce space and should take measures to bridge this gap.
- Trust is one of the most important factors to build a fruitful customer relationship. However, from our research we have identified that the trust factor among the customers is low. This directly impacts the growth prospects of the industry. E-Commerce industry needs to formulate a trust building exercise for its customers. This may include,
- a. Promoting the brand as the most trusted one through ATL, BTL and TTL communication strategies.
- b. Make the customer feel like family and avoid any inconvenience to the customer. A negative word of mouth has an avalanche effect on the brand image of the company.
- c. The rating of the sellers needs to have a transparent mechanism where the parameters and methodology are made clear to the customers.
- Since, it is already established that the customers consider online transactions to be safe it is high time that the procedure for online payment is made easier. One click payment option should be made available readily to the customers who are willing to use the service. Instant reverting back the transaction should be allowed to the customer in case of cancellation of order.
- 4. With a large population in India still using 2G network and the ones using 3G have patched connectivity, the experience of using a mobile application can be daunting. Also, the rural population is still using feature phones. Thus, we recommend that a light version of the application must be designed keeping in mind the rural sector and as far as the urban sector is concerned, the interface should be aligned with the requirements of the customer. Customisation of content is one way to go. The other may be localisation of content for both urban and rural sectors.
- 5. Improved technology to the extent of tracking the order should logically reduce churn. However, as already mentioned earlier, due to extensive cluttering, it is very convenient for the customer to switch from one player to another. This can be tackled by information tracking solution both at customer as well as company's end. The customer should be provided with real time information of the package and the company should be able to track the delivery person for timely delivery of goods/services.
- 6. Online payment is the considered to be the safest by the respondents yet they prefer Cash on Delivery (COD) as the preferred mode of payment. Does this mean that the online cashback and discount schemes for paying online are failing? May be not, since the online transactions seem to be increasing but not in linearity with the number of people who are willing to pay online. The study suggests that the online and mobile commerce companies should drive the consumers towards mobile wallet payment and payment banking.
- Usage of Virtual walls and virtual mirror technology can be promoted extensively. In India, HomeShop18 launched India's first virtual-shopping wall. Scan N Shop at New Delhi's International Airport uses a similar technological interface.
- 8. More focus needs to be put on the supply chain and delivery management systems.

#### 9.0 FUTURE SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH

This study is work in progress as the eCommerce industry is extremely dynamic and is going through several changes for enhancing the top line and bottom line while keeping in mind the customer experience.

The objective of the research is to conduct a comprehensive study of the online and mobile commerce industry and suggest recommendations to enhance the customer experience and manage the churn. But in the course of the study we have identified the immense potential of the Indian semi urban and rural market. The future growth is expected to come from 68.84 % of the Indian population living in rural areas (Census of India, 2011). The expectation, preference and behaviour of the rural market are enormously different from that of the urban market. Hence, further research is underway by taking rural population into the survey. This work will identify behaviour pattern, expectation, experience, loyalty and possibility of churn of the rural consumers. As the lines have disappeared between eCommerce and mCommerce, the researchers intend to study various aspects of related to mobility, network coverage, available data rate, ease of using smart phones, etc.

#### **10.0 CONCLUSION**

According to (PwC, 2014) emergence of new technologies, especially mobile, in India has sparked a social change that's difficult to quantify. Quantification of mobile, internet, and social media penetration and growth is possible but what is challenging is describing the changes in social values and lifestyles that have accompanied those trends. The change in the social values and lifestyle redefines the expectation of the consumers. These expectations results in demand for a unique customer experience and make it more challenging to provide the right kind of customer satisfaction.

The eCommerce industry in India may currently be behind its counterparts in a number of developed countries and even some emerging markets yet it has access to funds from within the country and international investors. The industry must address issues related Customer loyalty to reduce churn. Overall, the eCommerce sector is maturing and a number of serious players are entering the market.

There will be challenges, be it operational, regulatory, or digital. How a company prepares itself to meet these challenges will decide whether or not it succeeds.

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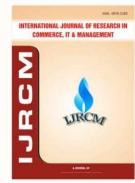
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