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THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON E-COMMERCE: A CRITICAL STUDY

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Abstract: Coronavirus has impacted the entire e-commerce industry of the world. It has changed the nature of business. It has also affected many e-commerce businesses. COVID-19 crisis is likely to have long-lasting effects on e-commerce. E-commerce is a business model that lets firms and individuals buy and sell products and services over the internet. In addition, after COVID-19, social distancing and staying at home are expected to further encourage consumers to shop online. E-commerce involves an online transaction. It provides multiple benefits to the consumers in form of availability of goods at lower cost, wider choice, and saves time.

COVID-19 is a global emergency epidemic that affects all areas of life including the economy. Growth in the world economy has decreased due to a lack of purchasing power that lasts for only at-home policy. This policy carries out to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which on the other hand actually increases the use of e-commerce and mobile commerce as means of shopping. The use of e-commerce and mobile commerce is considered capable of helping consumers to buy basic necessities and health that are needed during activities at home. Buying and selling transactions through e-commerce and mobile commerce have increased during COVID-19. This is then utilized by e-commerce and mobile commerce by providing various attractive offers for consumers.

The purpose of the study is to emphasize the concept of COVID-19 and e-commerce. The research method of this study used the secondary data listed in different databases of books, research papers, and related articles of e-commerce available on the Internet.

The present study has been undertaken to describe the impact of COVID-19 on e-commerce in India as well as around the world and also describe overcome from the COVID-19 situation as well as future scope of e-commerce.

Keywords: -COVID-19 pandemic, e-commerce, impact, overcome, future scope.

I. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only affected traditional business on a global scale but has also brought numerous challenges to the e-commerce industries. It has driven the fastest change in traditional business across the globe, necessitated by social lockdown preventing face-to-face selling or buying.

COVID-19 pandemic creates new potentials and opportunities for e-commerce cooperation: more or less independent persons/organizations work together. Business actors can come together whenever they want it or whenever there is a need. It builds a global virtual place where every organization and person is interested in making business can come together without geographical restrictions. E-commerce increases the economic efficiency of business processes, through the coupling of business processes at the boundaries of the business partners.

The outbreak of the coronavirus disease COVID-19 has disrupted the lives of people around the world. COVID-19 which originated from China now has spread across the globe. The global cases of COVID-19 have surpassed the 2 million mark. And due to this, it has impacted many business sectors and affected the economy of many countries. This is because people are advised to maintain social distance or stay at home.

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India has emerged as one of the major players in the new international business scene. Its unstoppable economic growth since reforms in 1991 has become the focus of attention of researchers in the area of international business and management.

1.1 E-commerce

E-commerce is a paradigm shift. It is a “disruptive” innovation that is radically changing the traditional way of doing business. Electronic commerce is a type of business model, or segment of a larger business model, that enables a firm or individual to conduct business over an electronic network, typically the internet. E-commerce is the buying and selling of goods and services, or the transmitting of funds or data, over an electronic network, primarily the Internet. These business transactions are business-to-business, business-to-consumer, consumer-to-consumer, or consumer-to-business. The term e-tail is used in reference to transactional processes around online retail. E-commerce is conducted using a variety of applications, such as email, fax, online catalogs, and shopping carts, Electronic Data Interchange (EDI), File Transfer Protocol, and Web services. It can be thought of as a more advanced form of mail-order purchasing through a catalog. E-commerce is the movement of business onto the World Wide Web. The effects of e-commerce are already appearing in all areas of business, from customer service to new product design. It facilitates new types of information-based business processes for reaching and interacting with customers like online advertising and marketing, online order taking, and online customer service.

There has been a rise in the number of companies taking up e-commerce in the recent past. Major Indian portal sites have also shifted towards e-commerce instead of depending on advertising revenue. Many sites are now selling a diverse range of products and services from flowers, greeting cards, and movie tickets to groceries, electronic gadgets, and computers, etc.

1.2 Impact of COVID-19

Since the official announcement from WHO declaring the COVID-19 a global pandemic, many countries have put restrictions and lockdowns. This has left businesses to work from home, which is possible for IT-related and e-commerce companies. It is the only option business owners have and has put e-commerce under pressure due to the COVID-19. Due to its fast spread, the brick mortar shops are closed down since the end of the second month, which has left people to shop from e-commerce stores.

- This has suddenly spiked the number of orders coming to e-commerce stores exponentially. And fulfilling those orders has become a headache due to disruption in the supply chain. Also, the behaviour of online shoppers has changed.
- Ecommerce sectors like grocery, food, health care, and entertainment websites have seen a spike in traffic. The e-commerce sales have increased by 52% YOY. Also, the number of shoppers has been increased by 8.8%. Travel and airline sectors along with other sectors such as apparel, sports goods, arts and crafts, toys, and other e-commerce sectors have been suffering due to the alleged COVID-19.
- According to data from Unicommerce, an e-commerce solutions provider, online shopping volumes dipped 11% in April from the month ago. That's in line with what executives told ET—the effects of the current wave of Covid-19 have hit consumer demand for non-essential segments, both in urban and rural markets.
- Expectations of a demand revival are driven by the belief that consumers will continue to avoid offline shops and malls. Unicommerce data further showed fashion and accessory sales were down 22% in the same period while eyewear and accessories were down 16%. Only fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) and agri, and health and pharmaceuticals, saw growth of 33% and 18%, respectively.

1.2.1 Impact in Europe and North America.

In October 2020, the company questioned about 100 e-commerce decision-makers from Europe and North America.

➤ **6%: e-commerce revenue decreased during lockdown**

Of course, there were questions about Covid-19. It seems that most e-commerce companies saw their online revenue increase during the global lockdown in the spring of 2020. According to the survey, 90% of companies saw their online sales increase at least a bit, with 50 percent of respondents claiming it grew by over 100 percent. But still, 6 percent say their e-commerce revenue decreased during the lockdown.

After the lockdown was over, many consumers started shopping at brick-and-mortar retailers again. Still, 86 percent of respondents say their online revenues increased and only 4 percent say it decreased.

➤ **Online profit margin increased by 38%**

Generating online sales is one thing, the whole COVID-19 situation has also led to things like disrupted supply chains, poorly staffed customer service, and more. This directly affects the online

profit margin. It seems that for 38 percent of e-commerce decision-makers their online profit margin grew during the global lockdown, while for a similar percentage (40 percent) the situation stated about the same. Only 15 percent claimed that it decreased.

➤ **The impact of COVID-19 on the workforce**

The pandemic has, of course, also led to some changes in companies' workforce. About 44 percent said they had to relocate staff, while three in ten hired more people. The other side of the coin is that 26 percent had to fire some people and 15 percent say they had to reduce their employees' salaries. And maybe a bit surprising for some, but 5 percent managed to increase salaries. And even more surprising: 21 percent of companies didn't adjust their workforce at all.

➤ **23% of Omnichannel players saw offline sales increase**

Another interesting finding from the study is that for retailers that have both online and offline stores, 23 percent say their offline sales increased and 16 percent managed to keep it similar. Unfortunately, for 43 percent their offline sales took a hit.

➤ **Measurements for physical retailers**

Many brick-and-mortar retailers had to drastically change their business if they wanted to avoid going out of business. So, many new practices were introduced last year. Among the participants, 31 percent introduced in-store pickup, while 26 percent chose to introduce home delivery. Unfortunately, about one in five had to shut down some physical stores for good.

All in all, the coronavirus has heavily impacted online retailers on different levels. Among the main challenges for e-commerce businesses, disrupted supply chains and fulfilling demand for products were the most mentioned ones. But limited operations due to the lockdown, managing inventory, and overall lack of employees were also some key challenges for online retailers. And 17 percent said it was challenging because they need to close their physical stores.

➤ **Shifted strategies**

Last year, many respondents said they would mostly implement, improve or change personalization, site-search, and Omnichannel. This year, the strategic vision has, of course, shifted due to COVID-19. Most of the companies (45 percent) will now have more focus on the digital part of their business, by adjusting assortment, investing in new e-commerce software, or focusing more on online marketing channels.

One in five said they would intensify actions, meaning they need to execute their strategies and act faster. One in ten say they are now focused more on physical stores adjustments, and 8 percent went for supply chain adjustments, from minor ones to completely new supply chain or logistics.

➤ **Financial consequences**

Despite all the bad things happening due to the outbreak of the coronavirus, financially 2020 wasn't so bad for many e-commerce companies. Most of them (63 percent) say the year (up to October) was successful. And 28 percent claim their e-commerce business was doing well, while their physical stores didn't. And a surprising 2 percent said the opposite!

1.2.2 Impact in India

Owing to its large population, India has always been an attractive e-commerce market, even if a relatively small percentage of its residents have access to the internet or adequate income. Only 3% of the population has a credit card, according to the World Bank.

But e-commerce is now surging in India. COVID-19 has devastated the country in the past year with high numbers of hospitalizations and deaths. Consumers stayed home and learned to shop online.

➤ **Demographics**

Statista estimates India's 2021 internet penetration rate at 45%. With a population of 1.4 billion, that's 630 million internet users - a massive number, 45 million more than in 2020.

India's population is heavily dependent on mobile devices, with 96% of internet users between the ages of 16 and 64 owning a Smartphone. About 79% of the population has a mobile connection, according to research firm GSMA Intelligence. Conversely, only 56% own a desktop or laptop computer, according to Global Web Index, a data provider. India is one of the least expensive countries for mobile internet access. Indians who have internet access increasingly use mobile payment services such as Samsung Pay for e-commerce purchases.

The largest category for online spending is travel, rideshares, and accommodations, with expenditures of \$35.2 billion in 2020, although those purchases fell 54% between 2020 and 2021 due to pandemic, while food and personal care grew by 55%. Electronics and physical media — the largest category for physical goods — collected \$14.6 billion in revenue in 2020.

➤ Sales

Retail e-commerce sales in India should reach \$66.76 billion in 2021, up by 27% from 2020, according to eMarketer.

In Q4 2020 alone, e-commerce grew 36% year-over-year. The biggest beneficiaries were the personal care, beauty, and wellness categories, which together grew by 95% year-over-year according to Kearney, a management consulting firm. Brands took advantage of the pandemic to focus on direct-to-consumer strategies, bypassing retailers. As a result, DTC's e-commerce revenue grew 94% in Q4 2020 compared to the same 2019 quarter.

➤ Start-ups Thrive

The number of Indian start-ups that have reached unicorn status (a value of over \$1 billion) has expanded since the start of the pandemic. Many of these are in the e-commerce logistics sector.

Zomato, a food delivery start-up, had a successful initial public offering in July 2021. It raised \$1.3 billion for a total valuation of \$12.2 billion.

Restaurant and food delivery platform Swiggy's latest funding round was last month. In total, it has raised \$3.7 billion and is now valued at \$5.5 billion. Grocery deliveries make up about 25% of the company's revenue, with plans to increase to 50% in the next few years to compete with Zomato, according to a Swiggy founder. Delivering groceries helps increase revenue because the average restaurant delivery is just \$5 in India.

Delhivery provides transportation, warehousing, freight, and order fulfillment services. It has raised \$402 million in three funding rounds since December 2020. FedEx participated in the last round in July.

In July, e-commerce platform Flipkart completed another fundraising round, for \$3.6 billion, valuing the online retailer at \$37.6 billion. The majority owner Walmart joined other worldwide investors. Flipkart, which now has more than 350 million registered users, said it would use the latest funding to increase investments in technology, supply chain, and infrastructure as it focuses on fashion, travel, and groceries.

1.2.3 Impact on Global Scale

The acceleration of e-commerce throughout the globe over the course of 2020 was hard to ignore, as consumers shopped online often out of necessity, and brands were forced to rapidly change their strategies as a result.

From consumer behaviour to demand prediction to retention, the events of the last year have altered or sped up almost every facet of online retail. On the basis of e-commerce penetration worldwide observed in e-commerce industries are as follow:

- Charged Retail reports new Adobe research that shows UK online retail sales reached £10bn in the month of July 2021. This marks a record for the highest e-commerce sales ever for the month of July, as well as the largest figure reported so far this year.

It is thought that increased online spend has been somewhat caused by the continued reluctance of UK consumers to return to in-store shopping, as well as a 'back-to-work spending boost'. Overall, the data indicates that online spending has risen by 18% to £64bn in the year to date, or by 56% versus the same period in pre-pandemic 2019.

- Salesforce's Q2 Shopping Index reveals digital commerce growth has begun to stabilize in the second quarter of 2021. In the three months to June 30th, global e-commerce revenue growth slowed to low single digits (3%) year-on-year after seeing a 63% uplift in the first quarter of 2021.

In contrast, the UK appears to have retained some of the momentum it gained from the onset of the pandemic. Results from Q2 2021 show the region has experienced a 17% growth in the same metric compared to a year before, well ahead of the US which saw a 2% drop over the same period.

Despite a global slowdown in growth, consumers 'remained online and continued to grow revenue for retailers', Salesforce says. This can be evidenced by an increase in Average Order Value, up 17% year-on-year to \$90.64, even as the number of products purchased declined by 1%.

- Shopify posted revenues of \$1.12bn in Q2 2021, a 57% rise year-on-year and a better result than estimates from experts predicted (\$1.05bn). The company's Gross Merchandise Volume (GMV) also rose significantly, up 40% to \$42.2 billion.

Perhaps most impressive of all was a 67% increase in Shopify's Monthly Recurring Revenue (MRR), meaning the amount of revenue the brand can expect from recurring payments of users that are billed monthly. In its financial statement, Shopify's MRR was recorded at \$95.1m up from \$57m. Subscription solutions, meanwhile, were also 70% higher, thanks to a wave of new merchants joining the platform since Q2 2020.

As brands and businesses continue to make the most of the Covid-19 e-commerce boom, which is slowing only slightly for now, so it is reflected in the financial results of e-commerce tech providers like Shopify. For the remainder of the year, the company predicts its revenue to continue to grow 'rapidly, but at a lower rate than in 2020'.

- Data from Adobe indicates online retail prices rose 2.3% year-on-year in June 2021, or 0.6% month-on-month, following several years of consistent deflation. Between 2015 and 2019, prices fell on average 3.9% annually, while prices steadily rose for products in in-store environments. In recent months, Adobe says, 'the gap between the two has narrowed'.

Covid-19 changed the demand for certain kinds of products, as well as what was trending online before the pandemic. Some of the items that saw a notable flattening or decrease in online pricing between June 2020 and 2021 were those most coveted by consumers when the virus first hit – computers, groceries, and office supplies.

- A July 2021 report from Pi Data metrics reveals the most prominent changes in UK consumer search volumes as life returns to normal. Of the five major categories analyzed, search volume across the electrical category fell the sharpest between April/May 2020 and April/May 2021, at -28.9%, declining to -44.3% in the computing subcategory now that most have purchased their WFH supplies. In contrast, the fashion category saw a welcome boost as many prepared to begin socializing again in the spring. The number of fashion search terms entered in the two-month period was 30.2% higher than it was during the same period of 2020, with luxury fashion searches up 15.8%.

Clearly, 'e-commerce isn't as vital as it was last year to many consumers', Pi Data metrics explains. However, data shows search demand is still higher than rates seen before the pandemic, suggesting there is some permanence to the new online shopping habits we have formed over the past 18 months.

- Net imperative reports research findings from Channel Advisor and Census Wide which reveal 91% of 304 e-commerce CMOs surveyed believe their brand's revenue will grow over the next 12 months beginning August 2021.

An additional 92% said that they are also more confident in their company's ability to attract new online customers than they were before the pandemic began, with nearly one-third claiming this will become 'much easier for them'.

Drilling down, digital marketing efforts have mostly been dedicated to enabling D2C opportunities for consumers, with 36% of CMOs saying their ads were driving traffic directly to their brand websites. Meanwhile, almost three in ten said their clickable digital advertising directed customers to marketplaces like Amazon, and another 20% said they were pointing traffic to retailer partner websites.

As a result of continued expected e-commerce success, the data found e-commerce expertise will be the most in-demand type of talent for the sector during 2021 and early 2022. This is followed by marketing talent, while demand for web developers ranked third and senior strategic expertise fourth.

- A study by management consultancy Alvarez & Marsal, in partnership with Retail Economics, has found that pre-tax profit margins for retailers in six European countries (France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the UK) have fallen from 6.4% to 4.5% in the last 10 years, and is forecast to drop to 3.2% by 2025. The chief contributing factor? Likely e-commerce. The study found a negative correlation between the share of sales made online and margins. The study also forecasts that, if the pandemic hadn't happened, the profit margins in the countries studied would be 3.7% by 2025, half a percentage point higher.

- Analysis from Global Data shows that 9 out of the top 10 global e-commerce companies (by revenue) experienced double-digit growth in 2020 as new consumer habits swayed in their favour.

Pinduoduo came close to triple-digit year-on-year revenue growth at 97.6%, raising its total 2020 sales to \$8.6 billion, while South Korea's top marketplace Coupang saw a 90.8% growth, ranking it 7th overall for 2020 revenue at \$12 billion. Amazon unsurprisingly topped the list at a reported revenue of \$386.1 billion, although its growth was far lower at (a nevertheless impressive) 37.6%.

Other top performers included US-owned home furnishings marketplace Wayfair, which saw a 55% year-on-year revenue increase thanks to a jump in interest from consumers looking to carry out home improvements, and Alibaba which posted 40.9% growth. Meanwhile, Zalando, eBay, and Rakuten experienced a 25.4%, 18.9%, and 18.9% rise in annual revenue respectively.

VIP shop Holdings, owner of China's VIP.com, was the only company on the top 10 rankings to have gained a less than double-digit growth over the course of the year (at 9.6%), but maintained a position of fourth place regardless, with total sales just shy of \$15 billion.

- The IMRG Capgemini Online Retail Sales Index has found that online sales in the UK fell by 9.1% in May 2021 versus a year earlier, Charged Retail reports – the largest drop on record since the Index's inception in 2000. It is worth noting that this most recent comparison is being measured against a 61% boom in growth recorded in May 2020, which was driven by the first peek of the pandemic. Sales growth across most retail categories is now flatlining, with some such as health and beauty declining by 29.2% year on year. Multichannel retailers saw the largest rate of drop-off, -13.9%, as consumers increasingly opted to shop in-store instead. Online-only retailers, however, experienced a much smaller decline of -1.34%. Also, hit hard were budget retailers, seeing a -12.8% drop off in sales, in contrast to a +0.2% growth for their luxury counterparts. Despite this news, online sales overall remain significantly higher than those reported in 2019, before the coronavirus outbreak shifted the landscape of the retail sector. In fact, sales volumes for May 2021 are 46% up compared to May 2019.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

An attempt has been made to put forward a brief review of literature based on a few of the related studies undertaken worldwide in the area of e-commerce as follows.

Bhatti et al. (2020) examine that e-commerce grew due to coronavirus. E-commerce is becoming a substitute source and considered top in this condition and consumers bought in superstore traditionally. Coronavirus impact on whole e-commerce. Meanwhile, we want to comprehend their efficiency to stability both cost and benefits as well as connected actions in the coming upcoming.

Tran and L.L.T. (2020) study adopted uses and gratifications theory to base the conceptual model while adding a boundary condition of pandemic fear. The primary research method of this study is a quantitative survey and analysis. Using a sample size of 617 online consumers with PLS analytical technique. This study finds a positive moderating effect of pandemic fear on the relationships among PEEP, economic benefits, and sustainable consumption.

Hasanat et al. (2020) the key purpose of this research is to determine the impact of coronavirus on the online business Malaysia. The results illustrated that as the maximum of the products come from China and the maximum of industries are lockdown which means that there are no import and export of the product. Therefore, it is assumed that this deadly virus will severely impact the Malaysian online business especially Chines products.

Pantelimon et al. (2020) study consist of two parts, the first one analyses the impact of mobile commerce's growth on the Gross Domestic Product for both a West European country-Germany and an East European country-Romania from 2014 to 2019. The analysis aims to understand mobile commerce's importance in the pre-COVID-19 era, in the context of stable economies. The second part studies the general consumer behaviour towards classic commerce and electronic commerce in the context of COVID-19 pandemic state. In this regard, we analyzed data for January-April 2020 and studied the main changes for the countries which were either early affected by the pandemic, severely affected, or both.

M. A. Salem and K. Md Nor, the study empirically assessed the factors that affect consumers 'intention to adopt e-commerce during Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19) in Saudi Arabia. The 10 factors examined in this study are perceived usefulness (PU), perceived ease of use (PEOU), subjective norms (SN), perceived behavioural control (PBC), perceived lack of alternatives, perceived risk, perceived punishable infractions, risk-taking propensity, perceived external pressure, and government support. Data were collected online among social media users by employing the snowball sampling technique. A total of 190 valid responses were obtained. The data analysis showed that PU, risk-taking propensity, PBC, perceived lack of alternatives, and government support significantly influenced consumers 'intention to adopt e-commerce during the COVID-19 outbreak in Saudi Arabia. Meanwhile, PEOU, SN, perceived external pressure, perceived risk, and perceived punishable infractions exerted an insignificant effect on consumers 'intention to adopt e-commerce.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research conducted research using second-hand data listed in different databases of books, research papers, and related articles on the internet on e-commerce.

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

- To know the concepts of E-commerce.
- To study the impact of COVID-19 on e-commerce on a Global Scale.
- To study the overcome from COVID-19 situations.
- To study the future scope of e-commerce.

V. OVERCOME FROM COVID-19 SITUATION

As the COVID-19 pandemic reshapes our world, more consumers have begun shopping online in greater numbers and frequency. According to new data from IBM's U.S. Retail Index, the pandemic has accelerated the shift away from physical stores to digital shopping by roughly five years. Department stores, as a result, are seeing significant declines. In the first quarter of 2020, department store sales and those from other "non-essential" retailers declined by 25%. This grew to a 75% decline in the second quarter. The report indicates that department stores are expected to decline by over 60% for the full year. Meanwhile, e-commerce is projected to grow by nearly 20% in 2020.

In Walmart's case, the pandemic helped drive e-commerce sales up 97% in its last quarter. Target set a sales record as its same-day fulfillment services grew 273% in the quarter. Both retailers have also invested in online grocery, with Walmart today offering grocery pickup and delivery services, the latter through partners. Target has also just now rolled out grocery pickup and runs delivery through Shipt.

According to the Q2 2020 report from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. retail e-commerce reached \$211.5 billion, up 31.8% from the first quarter, and 44.5% year-over-year. E-commerce also accounted for 16.1% of total retail sales in Q2, up from 11.8% in the first quarter of 2020.

The crisis has presented a great opportunity for brick and mortar businesses to go digital and benefit e-commerce businesses. The closure of brick mortar retail shops has significantly affected the revenue of their business negatively. But with certain investments, they can revive their business digitally. With a smart PR strategy and focus on sales, they can increase their sales and generate some revenue from their e-commerce business. There will be challenges due to supply chain disruption and delays in delivery, which can affect your reputation and customer loyalty. But as the situation is changing continuously, these issues can be dealt with on a rolling basis.

- Monitor the situation from the ground and see what's possible. Ramp up your inventory because the supply chain can disrupt again at any time.
- Maintain good relations with your suppliers and also sympathize with your consumers.
- Know the rules, regulations, and laws applicable to businesses nationally and locally.
- Prepare a team for solving any queries of customers.
- Expand the supply base so that your business doesn't have to rely on one supplier.
- People all around the world are bound to stay at home due to the fast spread of COVID-19 disease.

Also, most countries have put down restrictions for people to come out, which leaves you to sell virtual digital products on your e-commerce store. And the best thing is that you don't have to rely on the supply chain. there is no fear of selling virtual products as there will be no in-person contact and products will get delivered online. Come up with e-books, tutorials, e-classes, music classes, learning classes, etc. virtual products that sell like a charm.

- **Come up with a cost-effective shipping method.**

People are mostly staying at home, and most of the people have little money to spend on important items. So, allow people to order products online and pick it up from the store. This way they don't have to pay much for shipping charges and save their money to spend on important items. Also, you need to manage your orders during this COVID-19 situation. And to do that you have to heavily rely on the supply chain to ship orders with proper management of logistics. Therefore, order online and pick up in-store models works best in this scenario.

- **Try to revive the Supply Chain for Business.**

In these hard times of COVID-19, the supply chain is getting disrupted due to the restrictions and lockdowns put up by most countries. To revive and restore the supply chain is very important, so alleviate the seriousness of the problem before it gets worse for your business.

Get in touch with manufacturing units and try to expand their operations if possible. And on the other hand, try to build up fulfillment units. The manufacturing of the goods will take up the most time. But fulfilling orders can be achieved faster, which helps to mitigate the surge of demand.

- **Sympathize with Customers and Employees.**

Your customers as well as your employees both are going through tough times. With the increase in the spread of the COVID-19, fear and panic are also spreading among them. So, it is your responsibility to sympathize with them. Don't make it hard for them. Communicate with them on all possible channels. Spread the right information because other sources are not helping to curb the issue.

Spread optimistic and positive messages on social media and other channels of communication. Show them that you care about them. If possible, then offer a discount on your e-commerce products. Because people will remember the good and bad things both. If you try to take advantage of the

situation, then you will lose your loyal customer in the long run. Because it will only benefit you for a short period. So, be a responsible e-commerce business owner.

➤ **Sell Products Important for Human Survival.**

The unfortunate events have unfolded themselves, which is threatening the survival of the human race. To help curb the issue, sell essential items that are important for the survival of humans. Products like grocery, food items, and healthcare items are a necessity in the wake of a global pandemic.

Sell those products at minimum profit margins on your e-commerce store. Because in these trying times people are stranded without much money to spend and without any job to work. And they have little money to spend only on essential items. So, it will be beneficial for your business as well as the people of your country, if you sell those essential items.

VI. FUTURE SCOPE OF E-COMMERCE

Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers across the globe have been heavily reliant on e-commerce to purchase everything from essential goods to holiday gifts. Combined with widespread stay-at-home orders and concerns over the virus, the pandemic accelerated the adoption of e-commerce by consumers and businesses seemingly overnight.

According to **McKinsey**, 10 years of e-commerce adoption was compressed into three months. And, not only did the shift to an e-commerce-first mindset happen in countries where online shopping was already widely accepted, but it also happened in cultures where in-person, local, cash-reliant and daily shopping is the norm.

This is not just an e-commerce acceleration – it is a massive shift in consumer behaviour, the type that traditionally takes decades to achieve. The impact of these changes will shuffle down through all the supporting industries, like shipping, technology, brick and mortar, and governments as everyone tries to keep pace with consumer preferences that just leapfrogged ahead. By pressing the fast-forward button on e-commerce adoption this year, we have created a number of opportunities, challenges, and norms that will dictate how we buy and sell goods for the time being.

➤ **Leapfrogging e-commerce has impacted the supply chain.**

The pandemic's forcing function meant change happened fast. There were no alternatives — contactless shopping or moving online happened virtually overnight just to keep businesses open. It wasn't a strategy. It was survival. Usually, these types of decisions are done over time with careful planning and transition periods, but adopting e-commerce so fast meant that many had to bypass the usual steps in expanding their business and trying new channels. The impacts of this leapfrog effect in business to business (B2B), business to consumer (B2C) and marketplace sales are shaking out now as we anticipate major shipping disruptions this holiday season — just one example of a supporting aspect of commerce that couldn't scale fast enough to keep up with change.

The impact on the supply chain has also increased the need for accuracy and transparency throughout the checkout process. To avoid further delays or disruptions to shipments and deliveries, B2C and B2B sellers have had to optimize all line items at checkout. Sellers need to worry not only about collecting payment but about ensuring that shipping costs and taxes are accurate at checkout to get transactions out of the door in a timely manner.

➤ **Consumer behaviour is here to stay.**

With all of the impacts and changes to consumer behaviour during the pandemic, when our society is eventually able to return to normality and storefronts begin to gain back confidence, how much of a correction will we see in consumer behaviour? It might be too soon to tell for certain, but it's likely that the changes brought on by the widespread use of e-commerce during the pandemic will shape the fabric of consumer behaviour for years to come. Many of the behaviours that consumers have adopted during the pandemic were already taking shape in recent years.

Consumers have been prioritizing convenience and personalization when it comes to shopping for several years. Due to the number of options available when making purchases, consumers have already become accustomed to being able to make purchases from nearly any channel, any device, and any seller they choose. The pandemic-fueled acceleration of e-commerce has simply served as a catalyst for behavioural change already in motion. As a result, it's likely that consumer behaviour will never return to what it was pre-pandemic, but rather take form under a new normal driven by convenience, flexibility, and personalization — all of which can be accomplished through e-commerce.

➤ **Look beyond the pandemic to the greater trend.**

The influence of e-commerce will continue to reign strong in the coming years. While brick-and-mortar shopping will never cease to exist, we should expect the in-person shopping experience to continue to evolve to increase convenience for customers. Offerings like buy online, pick up in-store and grocery delivery are likely to grow in popularity throughout the pandemic and become standard operating procedures across households.

Moving forward, consumer behaviour will err on the side of convenience and options even after the pandemic is long over. Businesses will need to catch up with consumer behaviour and e-commerce adoption to effectively serve customers and scale their operations. To do so, the adoption of technology throughout the supply chain will be necessary to support an e-commerce-enabled business and maintain customer experience throughout the shopping journey.

VII. CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The COVID-19 has affected many people around the globe and disrupted their lives for two years now. And there will be after-effects of the same when all of these things are over. But one thing we can do is to help each other out during this pandemic. Small businesses are the worst affected by the spread of COVID-19. But you can take the necessary steps to lessen the blow on your business. Being transparent, optimistic, and positive will help your e-commerce business and the people around you.

COVID-19 forced shops around the world to shut for months and recently reopen under strict new guidelines. The time in lockdown has caused an e-commerce boom, with the pandemic accelerating the shift away from physical stores by roughly five years. While department stores are expected to decline by over 60%, e-commerce was expected to grow by nearly 20% in 2020. The pandemic has also helped refine which categories of goods consumers feel are essential, the study found. Clothing, for example, declined in importance as more home improvement materials, accelerated, by 12%, 16%, and 14%, respectively. Amazon, naturally, has also benefited from the shift to digital with its recent record quarterly profit and 40% sales growth. The growth in e-commerce due to the pandemic has set a high bar for what's now considered baseline growth.

As per the National Association of Software & Services Companies (NASSCOM), India's e-commerce market continues to grow at the rate of 5% with estimated revenue of \$56.6 billion in the financial year 2021 despite COVID-19 challenges, says the government. Changes in Indians' purchasing behaviour as a result of COVID-19 include new demand for low-value products and a boost in first-time online customers.

Pandemic COVID-19 from the socioeconomic side has changed people's behaviour in the shopping activities of people who originally shopped conventionally or offline, to shop online through various entities providing e-commerce and mobile commerce services. This is possible because each individual has a shopping model platform through e-commerce and mobile commerce communities and has the capacity and competence in the use of these tools even though only doing activities from home. E-commerce and mobile marketing provide a lot of convenience and comfort for customers to get the desired product during the COVID-19 pandemic. Even e-commerce and mobile commerce use the COVID-19 pandemic issues to get increased transactions by conducting free shipping promos, discounting products for basic needs and health, and updating information about COVID-19. In addition, there is a change in customer motives for online shopping, which at first was a desire to become a necessity because of COVID-19. So it is understandable that the highest demand from the public at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic was for products that are directly related to health, work support products when done from home, and supplementary food products.

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