OMNICHANNEL RETAILING: A NEED OF INDIAN MARKET

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Abstract:

Omnichannel retailing refers to the use of various sales channels (physical and digital storefronts) to create a unified, seamless brand experience for consumers on any platform, at any time. When done effectively, users should be able to move freely from one channel to the next, building a relationship that improves the overall buying experience and encourages brand loyalty. Advancement in technology and emergence of new technologies like artificial intelligence, IoT, chatbots, robotized customer service, augmented reality is uniting the physical and digital world of shopping. Further, in-store digital payment options are blurring lines between the brick-and-mortar and e-commerce model, leading to hybrid retailing and improved user experience. In addition to traditional physical and online stores, new channels, such as smart phones and social media, are changing user habits, shopping behavior and transforming their buying process.

Key words: Omnichannel, retailing, seamless, social media, retention.

Introduction:

Omnichannel retailing refers to transacting across multiple channels, which may include   market places, social media, bricks and mortars and more. Omnichannel has become a popular buzzword, but it's not just another way of saying that you sell on multiple channels. There are many different channels available for omnichannel organizations to participate in, from digital marketplaces to social media platforms. Omnichannel commerce is a strategy that provides a seamless shopping experience from the first touch point to the last. Consumers are discovering brands in brand new ways and seeking contemporary conveniences to guide their shopping decisions. Today, India's hyper-connected consumers are rapidly entering into an era where they expect brand owners to provide consistent and unparalleled service across all touch

points. They are not only looking for the right product that suit their needs but are also seeking a smooth journey in finding the product irrespective of various platforms that they use, buying it from and get it delivered at their doorstep. However, to better integrate in-store and online shopping experience, brand owners and retailers encounter multiple challenges to successfully execute the omnichannel strategy. This article covered the integration of online and offline channels.

Fig. 1: Scope of Omnichannel Retailing. Source: https://medium.com

Review of literature:

Banerjee M. (2019) states that omnichannel term originates within the business house and practitioners. However, of late, it has drawn more attention in the academic field as well. It has completely changed the retailing concept and perceptions of changing consumer habits and shopping manners of the prevailing retailing wave. Ozturk & Okumus, (2018) states that digital technology has provided many relevant success features, along with several opportunities and challenges to implementing with strategic use of omnichannel systems. With high-quality digital technologies, many omnichannel system initiatives, these issues have surfaced to provide values and importance of omnichannel marketing to achieve excellence in the omnichannel system.

Verhoef, Kannam & Inman, (2015) states that companies competing in the global scenario have already transformed the entire markets, with their new marketing concepts and advanced technology.

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Statement of Problem:

　　　Omnichannel retailing refers to the use of various sales channels (physical and digital storefronts) to create a unified, seamless brand experience for consumers on any platform, at any time. In India there are heterogeneous groups of buyers based on age, education, economically etc. Some persons are very much techno savvy and some persons are technically not sound. The people from different groups think differently, and therefore, the retailers adopt different selling techniques to reach to the customers and increase the sales. Therefore, there is need to study the omnichannel retailing.

Objectives of the study:

1. To know the concept of Omnichannel retailing.

2. To know the importance of Omnichannel retailing.

3. To understand the need of Omnichannel retailing.

Importance of Omnichannel Retailing:

　　　Omnichannel retailing refers to a multi-channel approach that allows customers not only to shop across channels, but also to interact with the brand. It provides them with a unique, complete and seamless shopping experience, breaking down barriers between virtual and physical stores, and offering exactly what they need, the moment they need it. According to a study by CMO Council, 94 percent of marketers believe that providing an omnichannel experience is crucial to business success and customers are retained by companies who work with such omnichannel engagement strategies. Advancement in technology and emergence of new technologies like artificial intelligence, Internet of Things(IoT), chatbots, robotized customer service, augmented reality is uniting the physical and digital world of shopping. Further, in-store digital payment options are blurring lines between the brick-and-mortar and e-commerce model, leading to hybrid retailing and improved user experience. In addition to traditional physical and online stores, new channels, such as smart phones and social media, are changing user habits, shopping behavior and transforming their buying process. Staying in the game will require a holistic approach by retailers and brand owners, where the focus will need to be on customer engagement and

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fulfillment. To serve their customer in a delightful manner, brands require creating customer personas and marketing products basis the personas. Integration of technology, in-store operations, omnichannel retailing and merging physical & digital experiences will provide customers an inclusive and interactive retail experience. Further, certain common consumer challenges faced by brand owners can be resolved through discussions under dedicated forums for retailers and FMCG companies. Going forward, given the strong consumer outlook and changing retail landscape, India is expected to witness redefining trends as the markets mature. The omnichannel strategy will not only make it easier for brands or retailers to converse with their customers but will also help customers to have better experiences.

Research Methodology:

This paper is based on the secondary data. Data is collected from various books, articles and through websites.

Need of Omnichannel retailing:

Omnichannel retail involves creating a consistent customer experience across mobile commerce, websites, social media advertisement and physical stores. Omnichannel allows retailers to achieve more availability, drive sales and traffic and integrate digital touch points. Omnichannel retail strategy improves the customer experience and provides more channels for customer purchase whether it is on mobile, web or in store. All a business communication and marketing channels feed into one another to provide the customer with a seamless and positive view of the brand. One of the main benefits of an omnichannel strategy is that it tracks the customer's journey and continues, rather than restarts it, across various touch points.

There are some crucial advantages of omnichannel retailing which one can capitalize these are:

1. High customer retention and loyalty.
2. Smoother customer journey.
3. Instant revenue growth.
4. More integrated business.

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5. Better customer insight.

The Omnichannel Retail marketing in India provides research insights on digital, Information and Communication Technology (ICT), displays Multichannel-Omnichannel concepts, sprouting retailing landscape and emphasizes on Multichannel to Omnichannel retailing transformation. The new-age Indian customer wants to purchase products from different platforms - all effortlessly and seamlessly. They are comfortable shopping directly from social media or in-store and expect retailers to adapt to newer technologies. That acceleration due to COVID-19 "has forced everyone to operate at a much higher level of digital maturity," said Sharon Gee, General Manager, Omnichannel at Big Commerce. "To succeed today, retailers need to put a stake in the ground and define a unified channel strategy from a digital and physical perspective."

Conclusion:

It is very important to know the concept, importance and need of Omnichannel retailing for betterment of business. In an era of pandemic situation it is necessary to adopt all the marketing strategies i.e. physical and digital storefronts. Several companies have already investigated the retail marketing technology very effectively and carefully. Companies using the omnichannel strategies assert that the company enhances the customer values by having the ability to remain in regular contacts with customers.

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