CO42011
Computing and Society
Coursework

Dec 2002

Introduction

Since the early 90's, the Internet has taken an important place in our life. New markets have appeared providing several opportunities for lot of people and businesses to develop their activities. In our document we will investigate the impact or influence of the Internet in the small business and the minority cultures.

Throughout the following parts, we will attempt to enumerate the positive and negative points of the Internet regarding to small business and minority cultures, providing examples and criticisms.

Contents

1 Definitions

- Positive: to have a good meaning.
- Influence: to attempt to persuade, convince or influence others in order to have a specific impact or effect (good or bad).
- Internet: a worldwide collection of computer networks connecting academic, governmental, commercial, and organizational sites. It provides access to communication services and information resources to millions of users around the globe.
- Empowering: to make more independent, make stronger. It includes access to information, ability to make choices, and to increase self-esteem. It can have also a negative aspect.
- Small business: owned or operated by a person employing 100 or fewer individuals.
- Minority cultures: a group, which is smaller in number than the rest of the population of a State, whose members have ethnic, religious or linguistic features different from those of the rest of the population .

From these definitions, we can reformulate the question:
What is the impact of the Internet in small business and minority culture?

Keywords: financial perspective; flexibility and accessibility; competition; profitability and efficiency; discrimination; censure;

2 The Internet is a positive/negative influence in empowering

2.1 Small business

Nowadays the apparition of the Internet has changed the way of conducting business, giving to small business innumerable opportunities to generate more profits. The question is how does Internet influence small busine ss?

After the globalization of the 90's and the extremely fast development of the Internet in the world, it became obvious that the new trend was to incorporate its business "**ON-LINE**", no matter its size. That was achieved by either creating web sites, in order to expand the customer catchment area, or by elaborating new ideas of carrying out business such as creating new type of company called "Start Up".

Today most of small businesses seam to find in the Internet a means of empowerment, let us analyse the different factors that could be convince a future small business manger to use Internet for his/her business :

➢ **The cost**: It seams to be relatively low in comparison to a traditional business. For instance, On-line sale companies reduce the outlays in comparison to standard business since the requirements are different such as the human resources, we do not need to use the same nu mber of employees (sellers etc). Basically planning to build an On -Line small business requires a good marketing strategy, reliable computers with all security software running and efficient website maintenance. From this you can get you business started.

Furthermore, advertising cost is considerably reduced. Advertising a product on the web is much cheaper than on TV or radio. Thanks to the Internet, advertising becomes reasonably priced. Registering its website in search engines or adding an advertising panel as a link in other websites would boost your business.

➢ **Accessibility and Flexibility**: Wherever your customers are located in the world and as long as they have got an Internet connection, they are susceptible to deal with you. For instance, a French wine grower may sell its wine to anyone in the world, just by providing a description of its products; this solution will avoid him/her to call upon a distribution company that would certainly reduce its prices (increases benefits).

Flexibility acts as a form of empowerment. The small business can choose to work at its own pace as well as set its own working hours. The products and services are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week without having a retail location.

➢ The **competition** becomes easier to overcome since you have a direct access to you competitor's website, you can compare your current products and services with the ones provided by other competitors.

➢ The **easiness of upgrade** is also a form of empowerment, if the trends change and you wish to be up to date or just make your small business better; you just have to set up or upgrade the software and the computers.

➢ The **facility of extension:** One day you will be able to financially expand your small business to a large business; this task may be easily achieved by replicating your strategy and organisation within several areas. A good example of successful business is www.amazone.com; this company is now available anywhere in the world.

We will now investigate the negative points of Internet in small business by criticising the advantages listed above.

➢ **Financial Perspective:** As the Internet belongs to new technology, the peripheral's price remains still expensive (PCs, servers, software) . Sometimes the software lasts only 1 or 2 years, afterward, you will have to buy another license to reuse them. Furthermore, upgrading the system may be expensive. To remain up to date, you will have to provide training to employees when new systems are released. The cost of employing or hiring computer specialists for different installations and maintenance is quite expensive in comparison to others specialists.

➢ **Security** and **delivery issues**: Lot of people do not want to take a risk of buying something over the net as long as the security will not be guaranteed 100% and some delivery issue will occur. Moreover, regarding overseas purchase, the delivery cost may be very expensive in com parison to a traditional purchase from a local store.

➢ **Currency issue:** Buying an item from other country may generate currency problem, that it is because of the taxes and change rates, especially when purchasing with a credit card, your bank may over char ge you.

➢ **Competition:** Competition is already very strong – why take the risk to build a small business website? Investors will ask the business owners. What is the unique selling point of the business? And how can this feature be protected against existing and new competition in the marketplace? What if the competitors are financially stronger? I.e. so that they can produce a better website therefore more people are likely to come back to it. Meaning a good website can only get more popular, while a poor website will disappear very quickly.

The Internet is not only a business tool; it is used today to allow people to correspond and pass any form of information such as email, press papers, video, music etc. It is a new means of communication that help people to gather and to express their ideas across the world. Moreover there are no longer cultural, political and geographic barriers. Through the second part, we will investigate the role of the Internet in empowering the minority cultures .

2.2 Minority culture

World **W**ide **W**eb, three words that talk about themselves, an extremely large network interconnection that allows people to communicate whatever the information's type exchanged. Internet is a remarkably powerful communication tool that is available to anybody, no matter its cultural environment, social background, or political position.

Through this paragraph, we will demonstrate the advantage of using the Internet for minority culture.

➢ **Free speech:** Minority cultures can proclaim their needs and freely talk about their ideas without any censure, the information is spread out over the world. A small minority such as the Australian Aborigines, today this population is in trouble, many of them have left their traditional lifestyle and still do not have equal rights. Thanks to the Internet, they are able to let the world see what is happening there, segregation, unemployment etc.

➢ Internet allows minority culture to **get together**. People with different culture or religion can keep in touch with each other, using emails, chat rooms and forums. Moreover any type of information can be retrieved from the web, such as news papers, cultural and religious events, different associations etc.

➢ Internet does not make any **discrimination**, whatever your culture, your skin colour, you will always find people who think like you do, and you will be able to share your thoughts and opinions.

➢ **Language diversity:** The Internet represents a universal library that provides any sort of information in several languages. Despite the English's predominance, with the aid of "On-Line" translators, it becomes quite easy to translate any document or even more a whole website. We find also on-line courses to learn new languages, if we settle in a new county; we would get integrated faster in that country. Internet could be considered as an integration tool that accelerates the process of socialisation .

Unfortunately, Internet may sometimes be used for illicit purpose either by minority cultures or against them.

➢ **Persecution:** Some people use it for malicious purpose; some weird minorities such as Nazis and others dangerous sects use Internet as propaganda tool in order to attract more members in their ideology. Despite the international law about Internet which has been controlling and regulating lot of websites content for the last couple of years, illegal and hateful information are still being exchanged over the web, doing harm to minority culture.

➢ **Social discrimination:** Getting "on-line" is not free, you still have to pay for a computer, phone line, Internet service provider (BT, Telewest, AOL), even if that could be reduced by using the Internet Cafés access that have appeared everywhere, however Internet access is still with a charge.

➢ **Isolation:** Sometimes, instead of gathering people, the Internet may isolate them from the rest of the world. Selecting the individuals you want to meet and mate may take off some natural human behaviour, such as meeting and making new friends from the street or any place (shops, pubs etc) the minority culture may stay minority forever.

Conclusion

The business's strategy elaborated in the past has been changing since the apparition of the Internet in the 80's. Mentalities have been transformed and the e-business becomes usual practices. In 2002, the total number of businesses is estimated (buy and sell) $327 billion worth of goods over the Internet. The consequence of the Internet in business seams to be positive.

The cost of computing peripherals is getting cheaper and cheaper through the years. Internet access points are more frequent, people are getting on-line younger and younger. The user friendliness of the software allows any kind of individual experienced or unskilled to use a PC and surf over the web.

With the European Union, the currency and delivery issues are being solved, in a couple of years ahead, we will have only one European currency and perhaps a unique world-wide currency.

Despite the computing hacking and the security networks, today we can see that new software for secured online payment has come up.

The use of Internet as a business tool seams to reduce phone charges, fax charges, printing costs, and postage costs, which will increase profits.

Regarding minority culture, the Internet participates in the build of a better world breaking culture differences and gathering people. Today's mentalities have radically changed; we are inexorably going towards unification of the countries, people are being encouraged to immigrate abroad either for a professional or social circumstances, this phenomenon increases the number of minority cultures throughout the world.

Nothing can cope with the lack of censure in the web; lot of efforts have been deployed to prevent such malicious utilisation of Internet by small minority cultures or other people, but today the computing law is getting stricter, many international computing laws have been voted to reduce and control the activities over the web, since those laws being admitted and voted several punishments have been taken against illegal exploitation of Internet.

Noticeably the new generations are more sensitive to Information technology than the last generation; this is due to the market expansion and the vulgarization of the products. We have to admit that Internet is going to be omnipresent powerful form of communication in our life. Therefore, it has to be regulated and controlled to avoid any malevolent utilization.

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