

E-Commerce

A revolution has taken place in the last few years in retailing and business. Many companies are now seizing the opportunity that the Internet provides in selling, and advertising goods and services. Usually this involves having a website which allows customers to find a good or service they desire and then pay for it – the product or service then arriving on their doorstep a few days later.

More and more people are deserting high street shops to buy things on the Internet – this home shopping is essentially e-commerce.

E-commerce sites mostly work in the same way: customers search through lists and descriptions of products; they add items that they want to their "Shopping Basket"; they can remove unwanted items from their basket at any time; when they want to confirm their order, they click on a "Checkout" button; they must then enter their credit card details to pay for their goods. The goods are then (hopefully) delivered, although the customer will have to wait several days (or even longer) for the goods to arrive.

E-Commerce has its advantages but also disadvantages. With ecommerce the user has the ability to search for their product without having to look around shops in a time consuming manner. In fact the information is at their finger tips and can be accessed within minutes without even having to leave your home unlike shopping on the high street.

A further advantage of e-commerce is also the ability to look at reviews of the products or services that you are interested in buying, these reviews are often from a neutral perspective as the reviewer is usually a previous customer who would achieve nothing by lying about their view of the product.. Unlike a shop assistant or sales rep who would gain commission by selling you a product and will try anything to sell.

Another major advantage of E-commerce is its ability to take orders at any time anywhere, as long as you have access to the internet and a form of payment at hand. A potential customer can use the service at any time 24 hours a day because all you are doing is feeding information into a system which will sort and process it and a computer doesn't need to sleep or be paid so profits can be gained with minimal costs such as electricity and internet costs.

On the other hand retail shops and companies often close around 6-7 O'clock which is the time that many workers may need to place orders for products that they require and so the internet is ideal because delivery can be quick depending on the product and with the wider use of the internet in mind the customer can also search on sites such as www.kelkoo.co.uk to get the lowest price of the product that they require.

Furthermore E-commerce has other advantages for people who are require computers to perform tasks for their jobs. This is because instead of going to the shops to buy software that they need they can sometimes download it from a website and pay for it with a credit card. This system is not in large scale use but is an excellent use of internet and eCommerce technology combined into one. Downloading the software can often be quicker than going to the shop and having to purchase it..

E-commerce also has another potential use for more profits; companies can and often do give the customer a questionnaire to fill in about products, identification of their clients' tastes, fashion, and their demographical change (sex, education, location etc).

Also services and goods over the internet are often cheaper because they have may have more customers and a larger base into which they can supply their products. This means like any shop as they gain more customers they can start to buy in larger bulk and also decrease the price of products because this in turn would mean more customers and so the cycle continues.

Also those less able such as elderly and possibly disable could take advantage of this opportunity as they would only have to learn the skills and then they could shop for all their needs without having to depend on others.

Another advantage of E-commerce is that as it becomes a bigger business all things to do with the internet and computers will be in demand this means programmers, software designers and developers and also manufactures of computers and software's will be in demand creating a huge number of jobs in the computer industry.

Lastly the advantage that may be most helpful for the average person is that many everyday items can be ordered. Mundane tasks such as doing the shopping are made quick and easy, the process is often speedy but you may have to wait a couple of hours for it to be delivered but this means you can carry out other tasks as opposed to waiting in a queue wasting time.

There are also many disadvantages to ecommerce and these are mainly to do with the exchanging of information over the internet and the security measures that this entails. As the internet is accessed by millions and possibly billions of people every day the information that is exchanged can be accessed by people who know how to.

This information can be protected with the use of certain software and the advice of people who are experienced in this field, but this costs money and more than often small companies who have tight profit margins do not always give the customers the protection that they should be entitled to. This leads to millions of pounds of credit card fraud and putting of potential customers from using e-commerce.

Other disadvantages fall upon those who compete with e-commerce websites and these are normally high street shops. These shops will face falling profits as many customers opt into a cheaper faster and less stressful method unless they are able to broaden their horizons, and this isn't really a problem for large chain shops but for smaller more traditional family run shops this isn't an option as they would lose that relationship with the customer that they enjoy.

And this leads onto another disadvantage to ecommerce as this type of shopping means that customers don't have to leave their house this means that customers don't interact with shop owners and also other shoppers and this lack of social interaction could have huge impact on a country that has very few high street shops and more E-commerce websites.

Furthermore as shops are forced to close due to lower profits this means that many jobs could possibly be lost and these people may not have the skills necessary to work in a changing and more computer related world.

And lastly as internet shopping gets bigger this means that the prices from these websites will become cheaper compared to high street shops and this will mean that those who access to the internet will be able to take advantages of these savings and poorer families will not so that the richer-poorer gap will increase in society.

In conclusion ECommerce is and huge subject and many aspects of it are yet to be looked at. Many facets of it are debatable and for nearly every advantage there is a disadvantages to cancel it out but overall if a system can be introduced that speeds up shopping and makes lives easier then it is a step forward. Because people have moved on from small town shops to huge supermarkets that supply products globally and maybe E-Commerce is just another step in the evolution of shopping.