E-COMMERCE: AN ANALYTICAL STUDY OF ONLINE BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS AND ITS ROLE IN PROMOTION OF RURAL ENTREPRENEURSHIP IN INDIA

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Abstract

This is an Analytical study which focus on E-Commerce and its Impact on Rural India with a basic objective to identify the role of ecommerce and its factors play incontributing to the promotion and coverage to Rural Entrepreneurship.

Electronic Commerce is the fast emerging as a, phenomenon transforming global trade. It is riding on the platform of fast IT business communication, altering the complete frame of doing business. India being a vast country with vibrant diversity, and major population is still living in rurban,mofussil, towns and villages where agriculture and allied activities are the main stay of their lives, and playing a significant role in its overall economy development. In this emerging scenario, ecommerce may play a major role to unfold and promote the untapped potential of rural India. This research will elaborate on how e-commerce can help in overcoming geographical limitations and ushering in strategic advantage for the rural places.

Further, paper gives an overview on how E-Commerce as a platform helps in sharing the business information, maintaining business relationship electronically thereby identifying the rural products which have potential for national and international markets ,hence widening the scope for Rural entrepreneurship.

Keywords: E-commerce, Rural-Entrepreneurship, Indian Economy, Agriculture, Business.

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Introduction

E-commerce, in simple terms just refers to the buying and selling of products or services electronically i.e. through Internet and other computer networks. Electronic Commerce, typically which means it uses the World Wide Web at least at one point in the transaction's life-cycle, although it may encompass a wider range of technologies such as e-mail, mobile devices and

telephones as well.

Electronic commerce is generally thought of the sales aspect of e-business. But it also facilitates the exchange of data and the financing and payment aspects of any business associated with

transactions.

Objective: The objective of this paper is

1. To identify the role of ecommerce and its factors play in contributing to the promotion

and coverage to Rural Entrepreneurship.

2. To study how it empowers the Agricultural Sector.

Genesis of E-Commerce/Electronic Trading

The Barter System was the ancient method that has been used long back for centuries in trading. In which people exchanged goods and services in return for other goods and services.

This Barter system was the best trading/business practice as money was invented at that time.

Today, barter-system has made a comeback with much more sophisticated techniques in trading.

The Internet has created a revolution in trading history, and has even offered a more inclusive,

global, efficient and transparent system for trading and business. In the ancient barter system

people involved in business were from the same place /area/locality or town,however because of

evolution in technology and internet today bartering has become global.

As barter system did not embroil money transaction, which is an advantage to the people

involved in trading as they can negotiate with the other party, the value of bartering item.

The internet has again revived the barter system, today the business that is carried out

electronically over the internet is generally known as Online Auctions and Swap markets.,

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where people can buy the item by exchanging the item that they have but no longer want or need it.

Early development

Invention of Ecommerce history dates back to the very old notion of "sell and buy" known as barter system. Initially Internet was opened for commercial transactions only. Electronic commercetechnology earlier was introduced in 1970's was known only to facilitate commercial transactions throughElectronic Data Interchange and Electronic Funds Transfer. The beginning of automated teller machines (ATM), telephone-banking, Debit & Credit cardsin 1980's was also contributing to the growth of E-Commerce. Airline reservation system (by Sabre, USA) and Travicom (in UK) were other form of e-commerce.

But business of all forms and dimension, for all types of commodities, goods and serviceschiefly began in the year 1994 when Mr Jeff Bezos started Amazon.com out of his own garage. Amazon.com has become the Web's largest retailer on a revenue front by focusing more on the customers then on the short term profit.

Amazon had become popular since it had offered the consumers with four fascinating reasons to shop online:

- (1) Selection from a large collection (i.ea database/catalogue of 1.1 million titles)
- (2) Handiness/approachability(shop anytime-anywhere, with simplified ordering system by Amazon's patented "One-Click" rapid shopping technology)
- (3) Charge (high discounts on price ofbestsellers)
- (4) Service/facility (telephone and e-mail buyer support, electroniccommand confirmation, tracing and pursuing and also provide shipping information etc.) Since then well-known electronic stores like eBay, Dell, Wal-Mart etc. had arisen online. And at the moment of time about 8 million customers are dynamically doing online shopping.

Technology had played the major role in the mid 1990's to the establishment of internet business through internet World Wide Web ,the development of security protocols and DSL allowed rapid access and persistent connections to the internet and as a result internet became

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popular among the general public. In 2000 a number of business companies particularly from U.S and Western Europe initiated their virtual presence to cater to the needs of the customers.

Importance in Present Era-This online coverage has a large potential to reach consumers globally. Internet has become the best and the cheap source to find out more information. The internet and online trading allows people from all over the world to get connected within minutes, communicate and transact in the most reliable and inexpensive manner. The advantage in purchasing from online stores is also the reduced information and transaction search cost

This is the reason why India and other countries in the world is showing tremendous progress in business through e-commerce. And technologies such as Wi-Max, Wi-Fi and 3G supporting ecommerce are growing and gaining rapid popularity.

Surveys had revealed that on an average per day, around the world almost 70 million go online,140 million people use internet to send e-mail, around 8 million had created a blog,4 million share music networks, and3 million people use the Internet to rate a product, service or a person(Pew Research Centre, 2005; Pew Internet & American Life Project, 2004).

Key reasons for the emergence and rapid growth of e-commerce trading are summarized below.

- 1. The customer can shop 24x7 at their own convenience, without physically going to the store.
- 2. Reduced operational cost as the brick & mortar stores have become obsolete which contrary yield more profit margins, and customers can hassle free purchase at item at reasonable cost.
- 3. Comparison of the related products can be made quicker via internet.
- 4. Customers can rely the online transaction to for online purchase/online booking for trains/airlines etc.(Which have govt. hold)
- 5. Has a global reach i.e. venture across the geographic boundaries/markets. Today it has penetrated even the under-developed places.
- 6. The changing social/cultural needs push the customers to be more global in approach.



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Benefits of E-commerce can be classified into three:Benefits to Organisation –(a)Expand the market place, (b) Reduce the inventory/ overhead cost (c)Decrease the cost of creating processing distributing and storing(d) Reduces the time between the outlay of capital and the receipt of products and services e. Reduces telecommunications cost, the Internet is much cheap than "value added networks" (VANs)

Benefits to Customers - The benefits that the customers appreciated and have made it popular are as follows: a. 24 hours a day, b. More choices c. Quick and convenient, d. Less expensive e. significant and detailed information f. Quick comparison

Benefits to Society - a. less travel less pollution, b. Global approach c. Create opportunities for the rural & social entrepreneurs.

Literature ReviewThe term e-commerce is popularly used to denote all types of business operations and transactions that are made electronically using the internet. In e-commerce internet plays the major role in searching for the product, making the comparative study, connecting to the virtual ecommerce store, placing an order, choosing payment option then making a payment and even tracking the good online until it reaches and get delivered at home. This all could be done at any time according to our convenience, relaxing in our garden or sitting on terrace having sun bath. The **World Trade Organization** defines e-commerce as, "e-commerce is the production, distribution, marketing, sales or delivery of goods and services by electronic means."

The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) defines "e-commerce as commercial transactions, involving both organizations and individuals, that are based upon the processing and transmission of digitized data, including text, sound and visuals images and that are carried out over open networks (like, the internet) or closed networks (like, AOL or Mintel) that have gateway onto an open network."

Greenstein and Feinmanhad said that "E-commerce is the use of electronic transmission medium to involve in the exchange including buying and selling of product and services, requiring transportation, either physically or digitally from location to location."

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Barua et al., 2001Quoted it as "E-commerce is fundamentally changing the economy and the way business are conducted today."

According to Jean Talbot professor at the Ecole des Hautes Etudes Commercials"E-commerce means using internet technologies for processes affecting clients and suppliers, in other words processes outside the business. E-business involves the both external and internal processes," such as business support system, human resource management and supply and management of stocks. E-business therefore has a wider scope than e-commerce (Communication Canada, 2001)"

Overall E-commerce can be interpreted as: "E-commerce is an electronic mode of technology in which digitally we search an item, place an order, make a payment and physically receive good/services".

E-commerce in India

The changing pattern of the society and consumer's lifestyle, specially embraced by the younger population base of India, and also the high disposable incomes is the boost to the e-commerce business.E-commerce has shown a notable growth in India, According, to a report produced by ASSOCHAM in India is among the fastest emergent online market, and has shown a growth of 41% in past years, and is estimated to record the highest growth rate in the Asia Pacific region for the duration of 2012–16. It has successfully changed the way people do business and make transactions. It has provided a platform which facilitated people to shop, literally universally and at any time within minutes, be it their office or homes, or travelling in train, or holidaying and most effective feature we can say is ,shopping can be done at any time of the day according to one's convenience. The online market space in the country is mushrooming in terms of the varieties, options and offerings ranging from booking for flights, trains, movies, reservations of hotels, to varieties and options for books/magazines, Apparel/fashion accessories, Health products, Jewellery and beauty items Gift articles, Computers, software's, peripherals and electronic gadgets, Vehicles, household appliances to groceries. It is also a good source of Employment, Matrimonial and Real estate services. Today E-commerce has become a necessity in Indian society and it has become an integral part of our everyday life.



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Online Travel (B2C) contributing to major sales and revenue.

Business-To-Consumer segment accounts for the majority of sales, and earns the maximum revenue. According to 2011 statistical data the online travel-industry captured the biggest share accounted for 84.4% of the entire ecommerce market in India. Indians are still sceptical about the virtual purchase, but for train and airlines booking majority go for the online booking. The portals IRCTC and *makemytrip.com* has been utmostleading and successful as it save buyers/customers time and from the travails of waiting in queues. Today, almost 40% of the total bookings are done through IRCTC.

According to an *eMarketer report titled-"BRIC Travel Markets in Transition:Trends Influence Overall Ecommerce*", India is expected to register a CAGR of 30.6% sales from online travel,30.6 per cent for online travel sales, exceeding sales forecastrate for South Korea(19.8%), for Brazil (18.2%), for China (14.1%), Russia (9.8%), Australia (7.4%) and the US(7.2%) during the period 2011–16.

Facilitators of E-commerce in India.

Few key facilitators are summarised below: (1)The internet/broadband connections/Wi-Fi, computers/mobile devices. (2)Net banking/phone banking facilitates online banking facility that is available for savings account and current account holders in the bank.

Example of Net-banking services are as below: (A)Demat A/c for sale and purchase of stocks and shares. (B)Foreign exchange services(C) Electronic funds transfer. (D) Instant bill payment on account of the behalf of account holder. (E) Credit and Debit cards are of utmost importance without which e-commerce would be impossible. The websites and the portals that had emerged with time to cater to the needs of the customers around the globe. In India the IRCTC, makemytrip.com, Flipkart.com, Jabong.com, myntra.com, snapdeal.com, Amazon.com and many more had been in presence to provide customer's needs. In a gist we can say that the chief driver of E-commerce in India and around the world is, the technology, internet-banking, internet-connectivity, computers /mobile etc. which has created an ecosystem fore-commerce to emerge as a platform and supported the evolution of online market place with models like eBay, flipkart, snapdeal, qnetindia.in,infibeam, and tradus and many more which facilitated the buying and selling,and clearing transactions electronically. Also the rising living standards with high

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disposable income, Paucity of time because of busy life style, urban traffic congestion, and hectic work schedule/office targets leaves no time for offline shopping.

Current E-commerce Market scenario in India 2014

Today the term "e-commerce" is a byword in Indian society, which grabbed attention and has become an integral part of our daily life. And the demographics of online shoppers are continuously getting broaden. There are hundreds of websites providing varieties of goods and services and also To mention few are: Apparel/accessories for men/women and children, fitness and beauty products, Books, magazines, Computers, Automobiles, peripherals, Software, Consumer-electronics, Entertainment stuff, Appliances, Jewellery, Gift articles, Real estate and Matrimonial services.

Two basic factors that are mainly contributing to the development of e-commerce system in India, and around the world are: (1). Versatile shopping experience(2). Rapid development of transaction facilities. But in developing nations like India still the other market segments are witnessing staggering growth rates as the majority of the market players are facing the dire shortage of funds. The major reasons that are the cause for the stagnant growth rate in other market segments that the researchers has studied is in raising the capital/funds to support daily business operations and the expenditure for online advertising. In online retailing especially the operators of the inventory based players are suffering from cost stack ups and the charges that are incurred against customers opting for 'cash on delivery' mode of payment.

Size of the e-Commerce market in IndiaIn e-Commerce market the Indian consumers from B2C-C2C segment had grown-up astonishingly at CAGR of 49.1% from the year 2007 to 2011 and had stretched to US market-size of \$9.9 Billion. And the online travel segment Shown in the above graph is the (B2C)the earliest form of e-commerce has been the biggest, accounted for 81% revenues in the year 2011, retrived from IAMAI.



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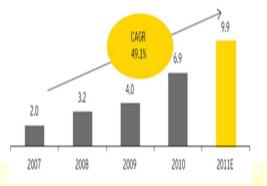
Refer to Fig1. (Consumer facing e-commerce marketsize(US\$ billion) Source:IAMAI)

Commodity distribution in E-Tailing.

Apart from online-travel services the most sort

Figure 1 afterpro

afterpro ducts



that the Indian consumer are searching in Google

are: Consumers Electronics (34%), Apparels and accessories (30%), books (15%), beauty and personal care (10 %)

E-commerce –An approach, to reach the customer beyond the traditional definition.

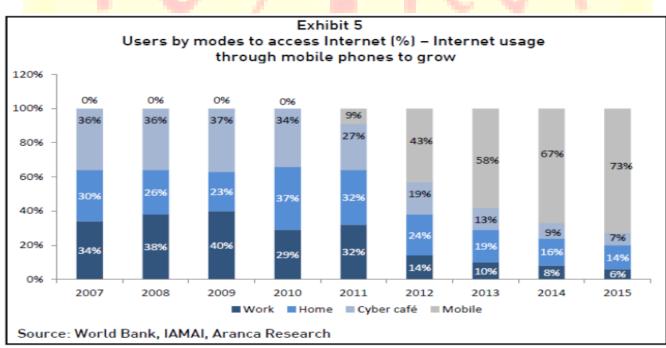
E-commerce is significant increased above geographical boundaries. The virtual stores reach the customers anywhere around the world and delivers at the very doorstep.

Though, the foundation of the e-retailing model is technology and logistical solutions that facilitates the virtual stores

to customer acquisition and the final 'reach' process. E-commerce further adds to the service of customer such as free delivery, command rescheduling, cancellation/withdrawal, returns and cash-on-delivery.

Impact of Ecommerce on Rural Entrepreneurship in India The rural region and undeveloped places offers equal opportunities to the ecommerce landscape the literacy is growing people are becoming more aware of the global products, they are getting more inclined towards the use of technology, towards the banking system, and as a result the number of urban households are increasing, internet use is getting more rapids and intense in smaller towns, villages and rural areas, propagation of mobile devices and evolving need for convenience and Suitability, choice and access towards the e-trading are acting as principal movers from the non-internet to internet users and increasing the demand side. It's true that Rural areas are considered too costly, for business development but have gradually become a focus for investment, market expansion, also for relocating the corporate offices. The Indian companies are realizing the growth potential of the rural places in India, and are therefore gradually incorporating the e-commerce activities in theirCommercial-trading models.Because of the brand- awareness created in the rural places through T.V, Internet and mobiles and as the attractive offline channels are unavailable as a result many people of rural places seems to prefer online channels. According to a survey, Around to 4000 cities in India were engaged in online shopping, out of around 1,200 were nonmetro cities, between the year 2010 to 2011.

It reflects how e-commerce has helped in overcoming discrimination across the cities and towns as it facilitates consumers with the same brand and quality product English as it is a world-wide language to serve the internet population, as only creamy layer used to shop online, but today people are more conscious and awake of the technology and its uses and hence created a demand even in smaller towns, and rural places and so the Companies are working more on providing the internet content in the regional languages such as Hindi, Gujarati, Marathi, Tamil and Telgu in



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order to penetrate and to widen the target market. One of the example of Rural e-ommerce is that in M.P the artisans of *Chanderi* have used technology as a means to sell theirs arees and yardage they produce directly and sell to customers on Net.And as a

result the rural people are facilitated and positioned to reap the benefits of commerce, branded global products, available low-cost technology, reduced ecommerce, branded global products, low-cost technology, reduced exposure to international language and product and also secure and easy mode of payment.

Mobile Phone has also been one of the major driver in establishing online market(not only to urban)but to rural places also, as mobile has become the "Must for today", it has no association with the grade and the strata, today the majority of the Indians are using mobile's and has easy compatibility with the internet. And so are more prone to virtual world, and has proved to be a significant factor for ecommerce. India has almost 900 million mobile users out of which 300 million uses the internet services and this data is expected to touch around 1200 million by 2015 and more than hundred millions are expected to use 3G, 4G connectivity in the coming years. As shown in the graph below retrieved from World Bank, IAMAI, Aranca Research

The Mobile phones and various applications in it has accelerated the transactions it helps in securely storing credit cards details, acts as a virtual wallet today has changed the face of commerce by empowering customers by merely make "tap and go" payments with their mobile devices, while growing trustworthiness at merchant locations.

E-commerce Boom to the economy. The e-Commerce industries have been a catalyst for economic development. And is seen as a boon, to the customers and the society at large, particularly to the small businesses, small merchants, and also to semi-urban/rural population, simply to whole Indian Economy.

Today e-commerce is emerging globally and has been intensifying cross border transactions and pushed India's Foreign Trade and offering opportunities to lots of enterprises, most of which are Small and Medium-sized Enterprises & MSMEs and continuously expanding beyond domestic market. In India over thirty thousand sellers sell their products annually on eBay.com, and cater to over 4million consumers across 3,311 Indian cities.



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Around 15,000 Indian sellers are exporting Indian handcraft products to over 190 countries in the world catering to 112 million customers. And it should be noted that this is just the tip of an ice berg, still many small businesses still do not have their own business websites and which is the cause for their inability to reach out to the broader and bigger markets. However, the third party B2B exchanges/ marketplace platforms is providing the requisite firepower for the growth and development of SMEs/MSMEs getting exposure to first-hand markets, by shortening traditional supply-chains, by reducing the costs of a product, in so doing, leading to greater revenues and profit margins. E-commerce is expected to contribute around 4% to the Indian GDP by 2020, while telecommunication services in India is expected to increase GDP to 15% by 2015, and IT-BPO is expected to contribute 10% according to NASSCOM report.

Empowering the Agricultural Sector

B2C E-Commerceis a platform to the International Federation for Alternative Trade (IFAT) which is an alliance composed of 100 organizations in 42 countries (out of which 70 organizations are in developing countries) to empower the agricultural sectors in the developing countries. IFAT provides aid to the developing country producers in terms of quality control, packing and exporting, logistical support etc. The members of the organization collectively market around 200-400 million dollars annually in agricultural products and handicrafts to lower income countries and also provides opportunities the firms in poorer countries to enter B2B and B2G supply chains. It also assist developing countries enterprises to operate more efficiently in providing specific services to the customers globally.

E-Commerce advantageous to developing country entrepreneurs

(a).e-Commerce facilitates and enable the access of artisans47 and SMEs to markets globally. (b).It also facilitates the advertisement/promotion, growth and development of tourism of developing countries on a global scale. (c).Provides exposure and facilitates the marketing/sales of agricultural products and trade of tropical products globally.

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Pitfalls /limitations

There e-commerce business has certain pitfalls which the management should take care of as apart from the growth story of e-Commerce, its other phase is that its image also gets tainted by the simultaneous progression and growth of online frauds, that hinders it way towards a success.

Pitfalls:[1].Indian consumers still hesitate to register themselves at a particular site, and also because they don't want to disclose their personal information to a website that they do not trust. [2].Indians trust more on traditional shopping where they can touch and see the product and hence studies have shown that 23% of the customers quit. [3].The delivery time is still unclear. [4].Because of slower internet speed the downloading takes long time, and so people are not interested to sit on computer and Google. [5]. As already majority of Indians don't trust virtual markets, and many have heard of the fake websites operating, henceforth this drawback can be removed when reputed & matured companies may enter in Ecommerce business.

[6].Indian consumers are known for the need driven where else the as compared with the US customers who are impulsive buyers/shoppers. [7].The Indian entrepreneurs especially lack in sufficient capital or resources and therefore they are not able to sustain in the ecommerce environment for long without immediate probability of any positive outcome.

Ways to eliminate the pitfalls

[1].Payment mechanism should be made safer quicker and transparent. [2].Strong government check system, and smooth policy against the cyber-crimes, frauds/scams and the hijackers. [3].Availability of internet/Wi-Fi connections and good speed of internet connectivity. [4].The time of delivery should be stated clearly and then the product should be delivered within the stipulated period of time without any failure to gain customers trust.

Limitations

As everything has two phases, similarly the technology has a great scope in the markets and is significant in our lives, makes life easier, just a push of button ,connect us to our loved ones, push of few keys explore us with unlimited knowledge on internet, and we can communicate, share, order and access global quality product, but then the technology has certain Cons as well. There would always be some technical limitations parallel to technology and advancement.

Technical-Limitations of Electronic Commerce

Flipkart the largest e-commerce website crashes.

Flipkart, India's largest online shopping-website offering different products across various categories, including electronics, lifestyles, clothes/accessories, books, media's and almost all sort of products. Flipkart the largest e-commerce player in India got-down and got crashed for

the first time opening for the 3(which was only be launched for opening the minutes after it



since inception, on 22 July 2014, when they were business and the mobile phone Xiaomi'sMi to be offered through site) priced at 13,999/- was to sale exclusively on flipkart, when within hours of website, the phone went out of stock within 39 went on sale and the website ultimately got crashed

, as millions of people/customers rushed to place an order, and due to the rise in traffic(internal server issue), which most probably occur because of the click almost at the same time for the particular product lead to the crash of the website. The site showed 404error, which means website was not found. And the customers got disappointed. (Later the flipkart site tweeted: "Apologies for the issues our customers are facing... the Mi 3 launch iskeeping our site very busy. Working on getting this fixed ASAP.")

The latest crash was on **06th Oct 2014** when the Flipkart had announced this day as a" The Big Billion Day" after months of continuous efforts of employees, they jam-packed their warehouses, scaled thousands of servers, provided attractive products with stunning deals and offers, and wanted to make the day a Grand Success. But could not avoid Technical issue. Early morning on 6th Oct when people read in newspaper the exciting deals and offers provided by flipkart, people hurried and logged into the website for placing an order, soon after the launch within minutes few products got sold and even become out-of-stock, and due to heavy traffic the website efficiency to response got reduced, few products displayed the old undiscounted cost and eventually the website got crashed. Even though it was a success for the company when they had received such an overwhelming response from the customers, but contrary to that millions of customers had unpleasant experience and left the website. Many tweeted Flipkart as the Flopkart.



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Companies in the E-commercesegment have been relentlessly innovating

The e-commerce segment initially started with a single product and then later tend to diversify their offerings and product portfolio. According to *a report by the IAMAI*, the current e-commerce marketplace in India has reached around US\$ 10 billion. Flipkart is the best example that has broadened its offerings to various products like mobile phones, baby products, apparels and fashion accessories, music, computers, books and many more.

Another largest e-commerce company in India is the Snapdeal.com which initially began its operations in 2010 as an online group discounting site and then later got converted into a big online market place. For sustained e-commerce the players need to make swift turnaround and should try to minimise the fixed cost. Different companies are resorting to different business models accordingly, but to operate in a competitive environment with low margins is not an easy task.

Certain Non-Technical Limitations are also affecting Electronic Commerce. To develop EC is not easy, as its cost is very high, inexperience may cause delays. There are many outsourcing opportunities, but there is also lack of management. Lack of skilled human resources and key technologies (i.e., inadequate professional IT workforce). There are security and privacy reasons attached to it.

Conclusion

E-commerce has evolved as a boon to customers, sellers and to the countries economy. It not only crossed the national and geographic boundaries and served customers across the globe but also facilitated people to purchase quality, branded and international standard goods which were once a distant dream for many anything and everything under the same umbrella of ecommerce with varied options with more and more companies offering free shipping.



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