Social implications of e-commerce on society

Changing customer perspective

With e-commerce, some customers may be afraid of using e-commerce sites (because of issues such as fraud, and internet scams, identity theft etc.) to purchase products online. Issues like these effect e-commerce websites as they would have to change their customer’s perspectives on buying products online, as well as just their specific e-commerce website. In order to attract customers to e-commerce websites such as eBay, Amazon, or Play.com, the website should promise to **provide added value** – products that the e-commerce website sells could have lower prices than in original stores, for example, a book can be £7.99 in an traditional store, but on the e-commerce website it can be sold for £4.99, but should also offer to sell products that cannot be bought in traditional stores, luring customers in to buy these products from their website. An e-commerce website should also change a customers’ perspective by **providing good service** as a traditional store would. The e-commerce website should offer a 24-hour delivery time along with a small additional cost. When it comes **to ease and security**, an e-commerce website is open 24/7 which benefits customers as this means 24/7 trading, a customer can shop using this website as any time of the day when they wish to. E-commerce websites make it easier to search for products customers want to buy as they offer a search tool, allowing customers to search and select which products they’d like to buy, whereas in a traditional store this process would be longer as customers would have to walk up and down the store searching for items, but e-commerce websites are easier to shop with.

Economic and social impact due to speed of changes

As e-commerce becomes more popular, and is threatening traditional businesses, some e-commerce websites release products before they’re released in traditional stores, for example customers are able to pre-order items before they come out, and when they do come out they would get them on the day released. The speed of change impacts customers as prices can easily be changed on e-commerce websites as promotions are provided and sales take place, benefiting the customer.

Bricks & Clicks – integrating high street and online presence

Before e-commerce was introduced, people were used to shopping at traditional stores in order to do their shopping. Nowadays as e-commerce if highly popular, people are able to go online on those specific shops and purchase their items online and have it delivered to their doors, for example Sainsbury’s have an online store for customers to process groceries as well as other products such as toiletries and other items and could pay for them to be delivered to their homes. As Sainsbury’s has both a traditional store and e-commerce site it is a brick and click organisation.

Benefits for customers

As customers no longer have to leave their homes in order to do shopping because they have e-commerce websites to use in order to shop, this is called remote shopping, customers can purchase items online instead of going out to buy them in traditional stores. This is a benefit for a customer who (for example) lives in a distant place from their local stores and finds it difficult to travel to the stores to carry out their shopping, this could go by people who are housebound or simply do not have cars to travel to distant places.

Being able to purchase products online 24/7 benefits customers as this means they can shop at any time of the day, this could benefit those especially who have tight schedules at work and wouldn’t have time to visit traditional stores, and so instead they are able to purchase items online, even exactly where they are whether it is at home or if they are ordering it from their workplace.

Most e-commerce websites have plenty offers such as online discounts that wouldn’t usually be found in physical stores. For example in a clothes store such as New Look, if in a physical store a customer were to view clothes in that shop, some of the prices would be their original price, whereas if they were to look for that item online, they could see that that item has “50% off” or has been reduced from “£18.99 to £12.99”. This can be a massive benefit as customers tend to save money by these discounts.

Drawbacks

When it comes to drawbacks of e-commerce, **payment security** can be an issue as some customers feel that the website is unsafe and that they cannot trust it. Customers may feel awry of inputting their personal details into e-commerce website as they may be afraid of issues such as identity theft or fraud and even their purchased items not being delivered to them. Moreover, when it comes to **accessing quality and fit without actual product**, customers may feel that not being able to try their purchased items such as clothing may be an issue as they would be unsure if the piece of clothing would fit them. This goes the same for products like food; some customers would prefer to view their products before buying them. Further drawbacks could be reliance on deliver services. As customers place their orders online and expect their goods to be delivered, they have to rely on the **delivery service**. At times deliveries could be delivered to customers late or their items could be damaged, making customers think twice about relying on e-commerce sites for shopping. As their items have to be delivered, some customers may want their deliveries posted at specific times such as for Christmas or a special event, and if their items are delivered late it disappoints the customers. **Impact on employment** is a drawback as less staff is hired for the business, an ecommerce business would only need to hire staff to deal with the deliveries, therefore hiring big amounts of staff is unnecessary. With **social divide**, although it may be a benefit as customers have access to 24/7 trading, some people don’t as they can’t afford to buy a computer or afford to access the internet therefore creating a social divide as not everyone can access and use ecommerce websites.