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ECOMMERCE AND ITS IMPRESSIVE PARTNERSHIP WITH INDIAN POST OFFICE

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The Indian Postal Office which is second to China is run by Indian government and is the most widely distributed postal system that has celebrated its 150th year. It is a part of Ministry of communications and information technology.

Though, Post Office has also celebrated its 150th year, in this event of Internet Era most of the traditional Post Office activities are put under siege with people in many parts of the world having gradually stopped writing letters, stopped writing checks, stopped browsing through catalogues and stopped heeding to paper-based direct-mail marketing. The spread of email, online advertising, online bill payment and other digital communication tools have put a real dent in postal service revenues.

Today, the even the exemplary activities of post office has invariable lead to have been focused predominantly on the mail and financial services

Furthermore, the growth in e-commerce has also outstripped growth in posts' parcel volumes, indicating that their market share is slipping.

Instead of totally cannibalizing the post office, and driving it to extinct, the ecommerce and Internet are actually offering variant opportunities for survival and growth. Post Offices with their armies of couriers and years of operational experience have a clear competitive advantage over private carriers, as they have the potential to generate huge new volumes of items especially when it comes to moving smaller parcels. The rise of e-commerce and online shopping, is grooming a newly emerging markets which is finding the post office, as the only viable way to send packages directly to consumers. Post offices are natural partners for the delivery of goods for micro, small and medium-sized enterprises and other businesses that traditionally have relied on low-cost services. Study says cross border retail will triple in the next six years sales, and will continue to accelerate, driven by the rising ranks of consumers in the developing world, where people are discovering they can buy all ranges of merchandise from ecommerce retailers and online marketplaces that ship across borders direct to their doorsteps. The opportunity is clearly well laid.

With global national postal departments taking advantage of the growth of online retail, Indian postal services have to reorient and adapt new ways to mould themselves to suit the emerging e-commerce needs thereby enabling a sound technology integration between India Post and e-commerce companies . The rapid growth of small parcel volume in cross-border trade already is testing the capacity of certain routes. Breaking bottlenecks and knocking down other formidable logistical barriers to global e-commerce will require investment in IT and physical infrastructure; improved partnerships and coordination between post offices, shippers and other stakeholders worldwide; and standardized customs, payment and delivery processes.

Taking cognizant of the role of the major players like Amazon, Flipkart and E-bay and their contribution to the growth of ecommerce, the postmaster general of Indian Post Office Mr.P N Ranjit Kumar, has quoted that Post Office is now scaling up from getting 70 ecommerce items a day to 7000 items. While adapting to the vagaries of the online shopping business, postal employees are not only helping their organization, breakout from their conventional routine but also reaping the benefits of its acquired sophistication. Ecommerce has opened their doors to new opportunity and greater feats. Postman now need to perspire less thanks to the sparkling new e-commerce parcel sorting hub, replete with conveyor belts and overhead scanners. Postmen are provided with better modes of commutation with dedicated tempos and working amenities. Fuel and mobile reimbursement for postmen as incentives is being proposed. The post office network covers about 25,000 pin codes.

Delivery is only one part of the e-commerce chain, and in the face of growing competition in the delivery sector, Indian Postal Service is envisaging to finding other ways to profit from e-commerce.

Known for its extensive network, with post offices located in metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas, the Postal office have adopted the "click and collect" solution for e-commerce, where customers can send their purchases directly to the post office to await collection. This gives certainty to the customer and removes the risk of a failed first-time delivery. But the click and collect offering is just another form of delivery. More interesting is the concept of pop-up shops or sharing retail space. E-commerce customers still like to see and touch products before they buy. With e-commerce expected to keep growing as a percentage of all retail sales, and with brick-and-mortar retail stores putting more emphasis on omni-channel service, the post office can benefit from being the main shipper of choice for consumers and retailers. By renting out space in post offices, the post can offer these retailers a physical presence.

With E-commerce revolving with the extensive range of the merchandise delivering everything from mobile phones to cow manure, is also penetrating the rural region and is paving the path to tap in more rural online shoppers leading to changing the lives of people in rural areas . This move is breathing a new life for the India Postal Service which is deploying around 460,000 employees across 155,000 post offices to take goods to customers in remote areas. Until recently, people in these rural areas had aspirations but no means to access the market, are relieved with India Post to stepping in to fill the gap that arose due to desperate need for reliable private delivery companies outside the big cities.

As stated in Rural market report India's per capita GDP in rural regions has grown at a Compound Annual Growth Rate (CAGR) of 6.2 per cent since 2000. The Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) sector in rural and semi-urban India is expected to cross US\$ 20 billion mark by 2018 and reach US\$ 100 billion by 2025@. Products made by rural artisans can be helped by postal operators to sell online and get the commission for online sales and delivery of parcel too by incorporating the technology to enable online payment.

Conclusion

Rather than falling into obsolescence, mail carriers stand to prosper if they can adapt quickly to meet the demands of this rapidly growing and evolving market. To have an edge in today's competitive market and to materialize on the partnership with post office, ecommerce can give online customers more flexible shipping options for their online purchases. Delivering to Post Office lets the customers choose to have their e-commerce orders delivered directly to a post office of their choice. They can pick up their packages where and when they want, which helps keep them coming back to the e-store in the future. India Post's network of post offices in India is incomparable. While the pan India network is impressive with its local knowledge and network, it is India Post's rural depth that gives it an edge to stand out as the unbeatable choice with rural online shoppers picking up tremendous momentum. Ecommerce being conscious of the growing demand in rural and semi-rural markets are in the process of augmenting technology, pick-up vans, warehouses and clearing systems — Delhi, Mumbai and Hyderabad have such systems and other major cities will get them soon. A more hi-tech environment and improved logistics could enhance India Post's competitive edge to drive revenue growth, experts feel, and boost the feel-good factor for employees. India Post, seen by many as a relic of a bygone era will soon gain importance when non-metro India's contribution to e-commerce sales surpasses that of metro India. The pendulum has already swung the other way for some e-tailers and may soon capture all. The ball has started rolling.

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