

The Resurgence of E-Bookstores Amidst Pandemic: Evidence from The Philippines

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Abstract—In the face of economic crisis due to pandemic, bookstores all over the country are experiencing an ambiguous and unquestionably challenging fate. Since the current pandemic is still menacing to take everything to halt and foot traffic is still low due to prevailing community quarantine, bookstores are finding ways to transform their companies or to innovate their business dealings to cope with Covid-19.

It is vital that bookshops must remain relevant to the market it caters not only in terms of delivery services to its clientele but also to engage in the conversion of its books and other publications in digital format. This is most relevant during these times that the electronic transformation of educational methods in all stages has introduced a new approach to teaching and learning techniques called e-learning.

Index Terms— Bookstore, E-Books, E-Learning, Online Shopping, Pandemic

I. INTRODUCTION

CA Bookstore is one of the most popular bookstores in South-east Asia. It offers a wide assortment of educational and professional products which include books, writing instruments, filing and paper supplies, measuring and technical supplies, school essentials, and gifts and occasion supplies. Their products are mostly intended for necessary school and office supplies needs of customers as well as for other leisure productivity requirements of target consumers. The Bookstore also offers products for kids and kids at heart such as coloring books and materials, toys, bags, and crafting supplies.

The bookstore started near the middle of the twentieth century. It rented a small space in a downtown city and sell novels, textbooks and supplies. Several difficulties

were encountered by the company while starting-up, such as fire which burned down their building during World War II, and destruction of the store due to typhoon in mid-20th century.

Since nothing can stop the business from developing and because of the unwavering perseverance and determination of its founders, from being a small business stall, currently, CA Bookstore is one of the biggest bookstores in Asia with over a hundred branches throughout the country along with some mini-outlets and specialty stores.

CA Bookstore captured the heart of its customers by offering them with extensive selection of products that are of good quality with affordable prices. Aside from their own product line, they also offer branded supplies for those consumers who are willing to pay extra.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

CA Bookstore is the most in demand bookstore especially when another school year is near to start. Almost every branch of the physical store of CA Bookstore is crowded with students and/or parents who are trying to complete the school requirements list.

But there was a complete turn-around of events when the Covid-19 Pandemic happened. The bookstore has a number of non-performing branches which may be deliberated for cessation or trimming. There was great decline on the number of customers visiting the physical store due to quarantine and even the scare of getting the virus when going outside.

The other problem for the bookstore is the decline in the sale of books. CA Bookstore is experiencing a reduced number of sales when it comes to actual books since a massive portion of the market which tagged as

loyal retail customers were snatched away by use of online stores. For this reason, one of the departments is on the verge of phasing out, and might have to lay-off a significant number of employees due to redundancy.

The problem now lies on how the bookstore company will cope-up with the online mode during these pandemic times.

III. CAUSES OF THE PROBLEM

- Challenges posed by COVID-19 Pandemic

These days, various challenges are affecting bookstore business. However, the shutting of face-to-face classes contributed to slowdown the economic activity of the bookstore retail industry. It was then aggravated when the pandemic started due to lockdown and the continued community quarantine wherein movement of people are being restricted. E-learning has become vital part of education wherein various technologies are being used, which means less demand for traditional school materials.

There is also a prominent shift in buyer's attitudes and spending behavior, which most of them will likely to continue even after the pandemic. The lockdown on various places has compelled consumers to examine their purchasing practices including price awareness, product preference and the openness to shift towards e-commerce business.

- Onset of online stores

Even before the pandemic, consumers started to shift to buying e-books and online shopping of school and office supplies. Currently, bookstores are dealing with adversity as Amazon and other e-bookshops and online retailers are offering inexpensive items with much more convenience, thus improving their shopping experience. Online retailing has become the modern trend which offers consumers a new channel for obtaining products and services. According to Meshram (2016), generation today finds online shopping more convenient than the conventional method. Also, based on her study, online shopping creates a positive impact on the consumers thereby they end up spending more when they are online and

thereby lessening the footfalls to traditional retail stores.

- New generation learning tendencies

Today's generation is the era of digital age. They are the ones who are completely unperturbed with the use of technology and adept in making it useful for them. According to Mamula (2015), Digital media pushes educators and students alike to shift to new ways of thinking about teaching and learning and the innovative manners of e-Learning are refreshed with development of technology. Consequently, to the millennial people, innovative technology is necessary since they function best when furnished with gadgets. In terms of education, millennial individuals depend greatly on computers to learn. For this reason, the use of traditional books and research materials has been greatly affected since technology has become the top priorities for today's generation in educational system.

IV. COURSES OF ACTION

Despite the substantial difficulties brought by COVID-19 pandemic, CA Bookstore is operating diligently to adjust to the problems posed by the current situation. The majority of branches countrywide should remain operational to serve homeschooling, online learning and work from home essentials, with strict health protocols in place to guarantee safety of customers.

CA Bookstore should also reinforce its business through the use of online platforms as an alternative way for customers to shop safely during the pandemic since there's already a big shift to home delivery and e-book downloads.

Since the pandemic caused the cancellation of face-to-face classes and required educators and students to shift to online classes, bookstore should as well adapt to this situation wherein the learning system is dealing with the challenge of digitalization. Hence, bookstores should offer products and services that will suffice the new generation's demand for the use of technology in e-Learning.

CONCLUSION

In this case study, due to the effect of pandemic, it is shown that consumers now prefer to buy online. The online stores serve as a balancing source of goods and may not be as a full replacement for physical books stores. It is greatly used to promote and trade products of numerous varieties since it is inexpensive to use, accessible and convenient to use.

Digital shopping is the on-going trend for consumers at the present time. Because of the continuous development in online transactions such as the diversity of products and ease in the mode of payment and delivery, the practice of shopping via e-commerce has become even more popular. Electronic Commerce has facilitated businesses to present and sell goods and services inexpensively to consumers and companies globally. In this situation, several customary businesses like the bookstore retail industry may possibly feel threatened by the shift in purchasing behaviors of consumer who have become daring in their demands for products quality and excellent customer service.

The only challenge left for traditional bookstore is to shift to online platform and to deliver customers with the highest quality of services while still keeping their physical store.

RECOMMENDATION

Although CA Bookstore has been doing online business for the past ten years and has already activated several e-commerce platforms, Bookstore-School partnership should also be considered. It is significant that bookstores businesses should start collaboration with schools which include setting up and providing and/or converting the traditional books to e-books that can be accessed online. Also, it is advantageous to arrange relations with teachers and school administration staff by giving them special rebates and other incentives.

The predominant matter of this concept proposes that bookstores may not only collaborate with schools, but also to keenly tied up with school owners and administration for the resolution of cultivating students and teachers' capacity and advancement

despite the challenges encountered during pandemic. With this partnership idea, it will help the bookstore to drive more customers to their business. This will also address the logistical knowledge needs of our post-millennial learners.

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