



Evolution of Online shopping in India & its Unparallel Growth

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Abstract:

Indian retail industry is growing at a good pace and that too online shopping which has started since last decade has taken up a good pace. For retailers in India, online shopping is gaining appreciation as it demands many benefits for them. Some of these include, there is No real estate costs, Enhanced customer service, Mass customization, Global reach, Niche marketing and specialized stores. We have seen that many websites have started celebrating mega sale days and selling their products in huge quantity. In this paper I have studied about the Evolution of online shopping in India and their pros and cons of online shopping in India. I have also studied about the various factors which affect the growth of online shopping in India. In the coming years online retailing would even strengthen further due to the changing markets, development in Information Technology, owing to the increased penetration of credit cards and easy and secured payment gateways and easy access of computing.

Keywords: Credit card, Information Technology, Online shopping, Retailing

1. Introduction

When you buy a product or a service through internet, instead of going to a traditional brick-and-mortar store, it is called online shopping. This trend from buying through internet is growing not only in India but, globally we see an increasing number of people are buying over the Internet because of its convenience. This year, holiday shopping for Christmas and New Year is estimated to be over \$20 billion.

In current scenario you can buy anything from net. You can purchase almost anything online starting with groceries, medicine, apparels, furniture, electronics, books, greeting cards to cell phones and ringtones for the cell phones, everything can be purchased online and what not. Still many people find it convenient to buy their groceries from the neighborhood shop, many people are purchasing rail, air tickets and their holiday destinations over the Internet. Not only this but many people and corporate as well, are also purchasing a variety of services online such as a broking service, banking service and job search service.

2. Objectives

1. To study about the Evolution of online shopping in India and how it has been growing continuously.
2. To study the pros and cons associated with online shopping in brief.
3. To explore the factors that amount for the growth of online shopping in India.

3. Research Methodology

Coverage of the Study: This research paper is restrained to the study of online shopping in India.

Source of Data: The study is based on secondary data collected through various journals, newspapers, internet web sites, books, business magazines, and research papers.

Data Analysis: Analysis of data and the information collected from the secondary sources were made keeping the objectives of the study in mind.

4. Evolution of online shopping in India

Online shopping had a rather slow and disorderly journey in India, it has not picked up as much as it should have primarily due to the fact that internet penetration itself was quite low and secondly (and importantly) the customers were not aware about it as well. Moreover the customers are not ready to take the risk of buying a product without seeing it physically. Traditionally, Indians are conservative in their approach to shopping. They want to touch and feel the products and test its features before buying anything.

Online shopping started early in 1995 by the introduction of internet in India. Online shopping became popular during the Internet boom in 1999-2000 with the well know auction site know as bazeem.com. Soon amazon.com, the online bookstore founded by Jeff Bezos, created history by becoming the first bookstore with a presence only on the Internet. Later on following the success of Amazon, many other bookstores with a physical presence also created an online presence on the Internet. Thereafter in 2005 bazeem.com was taken up by ebay. The trend of online shopping took a good pace and many new portals started like amazon, flipkart, snapdeal, yebhi, gadgetsguru, myntra, iBibo, makemytrip, yatra, craftsvilla and so on. Many home portals such as Yahoo.com, Indiatimes.com and Rediff.com came up with online shopping options for the Indian consumer.

It is convenient, faster and sometimes also cheaper than the traditional buying. Now a day's buying train ticket, bus ticket, air ticket all of them have gone through online option as well. Rather than standing in a long queue and waiting for your turn to purchase a ticket, people are finding it simpler to log on to a website and buy it. In some instances, you may have to pay a premium for an online purchase but it is still preferred because the convenience factor is much higher. For example, if you want to buy movie tickets online you may have to pay extra amount over the actual price of the ticket but because of its convenience, people are opting for it. Buying or placing an order online is also useful when you need to send a gift to a friend who is staying in a different city or country. For example, you can send flowers, cake and chocolates to your friend in New York on his/her birthday by placing an order for it on the Internet from your home in Mumbai.

Table: 1. Evolution of Online Shopping

1 Jan 1995	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Indiatimes, Yahoo, Sify, Rediff set the ball rolling!!
16 Jan 2005	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • website giant ebay acquired Baazee.com, it was doing good business at that point of time
15 Jan 2007	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Flipkart!!(nobody knew it would grow so BIG)
1 Jan 2010	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niche websites like Yebhi , gadgetsguru, myntra, iBibo, makemytrip, yatra, craftsvilla joined the fleet
1 Jan 2011	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Groupon bought the Indian deal-of-the-day website sosasta.com point of time
1 Feb 2012	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Amazon has entered the online market with Jungle.com

4.1 In mid nineties: Introduction of E-Commerce

The year 1991 was noted as a new chapter in the history of the online world where e-commerce became a hot choice amongst the commercial use of the internet. Later in 1995 e-commerce started in India. At that time nobody would have even thought that the buying and selling online or say the online trading or services that we enjoy today will become a routine trend in the world and India will also share a good proportion of this success.

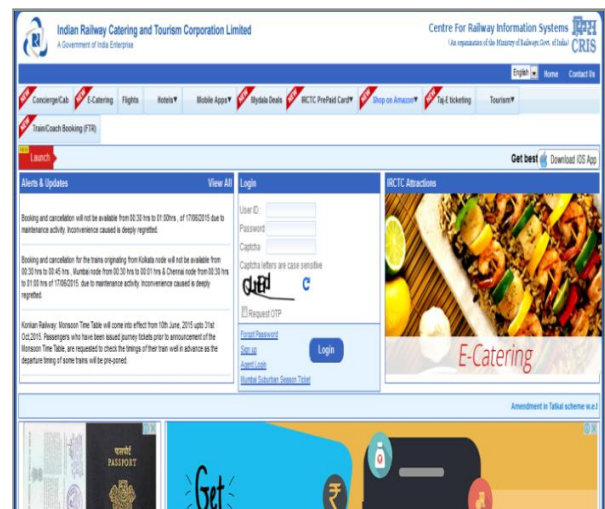
4.2 Around 2002: IRCTC teaches India to Book ticket online

India first came into interaction with the online E-Commerce via the IRCTC. The government of India took the initiative and experimented this online strategy to make it convenient for its public to book the train tickets online. Because of this initiative passengers were first time encountered with the online ticket booking from anywhere at any time. This was a great boon to the common man as now they don't have to wait for long in line, no issues for wastage of time during unavailability of the trains, no burden on the ticket bookers and many more. With the advancements in the technology as the years passed on have been also seen in the IRCTC Online system as now one can book tickets (tatkal, normal, etc.) on one go, easy payments, can check the status of the ticket and availability of the train as well. Moreover you can see there are lot many things are available on the irctc website like hotel booking, planning your tour destination, flight booking, cab booking, best deals and discounts in mydala site, you can make payments using paytm as well as booking tickets using cash on delivery facility and all these things you can operate thorough your smart phone as well. This is a very big achievement in the history of India in the field of online E-Commerce. Both the snapshots you can see how the site was in 2002 and how it appears in 2015.

Figure: 1. IRCTC Website in August 2002



Figure: 2. IRCTC Website in June 2015



4.3 Around 2003: Introduction of Low Cost Airline with Air Deccan

After the astonishing success of the IRCTC, the online ticket booking system was followed by the airlines (like Air Deccan, Indian Airlines, Spicejet, etc.). Airline agency encouraged, online booking to save the commission which was given to the agents and thus in this way it made the major population of the country to try online air ticket booking for the first time. Today, the booking system is not just limited to the transportation rather hotel bookings, bus booking etc. are being done using the websites like Makemytrip, Yatra, Redbus.in and so on.

4.4 Around 2007 and later on: Heavy Discounted Model of Flipkart

The recognition of the ecommerce on a large scale by the Indian people influenced other business players also to try this technique for their E-businesses and gain high profits. Though online shopping has been present in India since the 2000 but it gained attractiveness only with deep discount model of Flipkart. This was in a way re-launching of online shopping in India. Very soon other portals like Amazon, Flipkart, Jabong, Rediff, Indiatimes etc. started hunting India for their businesses. Earlier the

site in 2000 contains lot many information regarding the news and happenings. Presently if you see the website it has got various link for shopping and various promotional activities. Xiaomi (pronounced she-yow-mee) is one of the fastest-growing tech companies in the world. It's the sixth-largest handset maker on earth and No.3 in China, behind Samsung Electronics and Lenovo Group, according to research firm Canalsys. In India they have joined hands with flipkart to sell their products. Xiaomi's Mi3 smartphone went out of stock on e-commerce retailer Flipkart, after just 39 minutes of going on sale on 22 July 2014 at 12 PM, and this they have continued their sale which went out of stock just in few seconds. They went on with the same strategy for their many other brands like Redmi, mi4 and so on. They found this strategy very attractive. Many other companies like Lenovo and micromax also followed this same strategy. The strategy was to make the mobile models exclusively available only on the flipkart website and nowhere else. Those who are interested need to register for the same within the specific time limit and then they would be eligible to buy that model.

4.5 Around 2014: Current Scenario

Online shopping in its early stage was a simple medium for shopping with fewer options. The users can just place an order and pay cash on delivery. But, in last few years this field has been renewed to a high extent and hence captivated many customers. Today, the online shopping has become a trend in India and the reason behind the adoption of this technique lies in the attractive online websites, discounted sales, user friendly interface, bulky online stores with new fashion, easy payment methods (i.e. secure pay online via gateways like paypal, net banking, credit/debit card or cash-on-delivery), no bound on quantity & quality, one can choose the items based on size, color, price, free home delivery, etc.

Further, the addition of discounts, coupons, offers, referral systems, 30days return guarantee, 1-7 days delivery time, even some companies have started same day delivery in the metros, etc. to the online shopping and the E-Market have added new flavors to the e-commerce industry.

5. Pros of online shopping in India

- **Saves Time & Money:** Online shopping can save your time and money. As you can do your shopping by sitting at your home or office without moving outside to the specific destination to buy the product and you save that time as well the cost which is incurred in travelling. Firstly Travel costs are saved since you in your comfort zone and you get the products at cash on delivery facility. Secondly there are often great discounts and offers available while you shop online and that saves you some money. Moreover sometimes you get more benefitted by adding extra discount / coupon codes.
- **You can do it 24/7:** You can shop whenever you want as per your own convenient time. If you want to buy a new Mobile at 3 a.m., you can go for it.
- **Comparative Shopping and Reviews:** You can compare the features, price, etc. of the products while shopping. You can compare the products and look into the reviews of the buyers and then decide whether to buy or not.
- **Wide variety of stores within a few clicks:** You get wide variety of products available at just one click an even you get the options to search the products by size, price, design and so on.
- **No nagging Sales guys:** While online shopping you can do it on your own without any pressure as no one is behind you trying to sell the stuff you don't need. There are of course certain recommendations and all, but there is no person talking to your face and giving the irritating sales talk. You are free that way.
- **One can shop in private:** There are times when privacy really matters for many people. For example, let's say that someone needs to buy condoms, or undergarments. Many people would be too embarrassed to buy these items in a store where they have to face at least one other person who knows what they are buying. When you buy these items online, that awkwardness is minimized. There is no one to judge you and no one to watch around as to what and why you are buying it.

Even when the package is delivered to you, it has no mention of what is inside it. There is complete respect of privacy.

- **Discount coupons are more readily available online:** If you are looking for some garments, footwear, electronics, etc. you get them at the discounted rate as well you can search for some coupon codes and get additional discounts.
- **Online shopping is very perfect for buying gifts that are to be sent to far-away friends or relatives:** This is very perfect as you can send the gifts to your friends or relatives by wrapping it which is being done by the service provider itself.
- **No lines to wait-in or cranky people to deal with:** This generally happens during the festive season when there is a heavy rush at the stores. But for online shopping you don't have to worry about it. You can do the shopping without a worry to stand in a line to pay the bill as well.
- **You can listen to whatever music you like while shopping online:** You can do online shopping in your own mood. You can listen to any music of your choice while shopping. Rather than hearing someone else's kid screaming, hear boring music or hear stuff you just don't want to listen to.
- **You don't have to drag kids all over the place:** It could be a pleasant shopping when your kids are sleeping or they are out to play. Instead of taking them to the shopping mall where they used to drop all the things and you need to pay attention to them rather than shopping.
- **You can use anyone's credit card or even COD:** The benefit over here is you can use anybody's credit card (assuming that they have authorized you to use it). Moreover you have an option of paying it after receiving the products.

6. Cons of online shopping in India

- **Surprise, surprise:** There are lot many good things about online shopping but still there are certain disadvantages as well. One of them is a Surprise factor. It means you have placed the order looking towards the images and features mentioned on the site but when it actually comes to you find it to be different from what was mentioned on the site. There can be a lot of more surprises if you are ordering from relatively lesser known online stores whose credibility can be in doubt.
- **Chances of delay in delivery:** This happens very rarely but still there are chances of delay in the delivery of the product and as per their communication.
- **You can only see what will fit on one page at a time:** When you walk into a Local store, you can see many more items at a glimpse.
- **Chances of Substandard Good:** In terms of products particularly electronic items like chargers and accessories etc, there are chances of duplicate and sub-standard items existence. You may have ordered a Samsung mobile Charger and you may get the same, albeit made in China which is a duplicate one. These things do happen and while the seller may give you replacement warranty, the question is once you receive a bad item, would you trust a replacement? Hence it is sensible to shop from trustworthy stores and also read user reviews about the seller and the product before buying it.
- **Poor internet connection:** Poor internet connection may eat up your time and still you may not be able to browse the products and when we talk about buying if the speed is slow the payment gateway gets expired and it becomes a horrible experience.
- **You can't touch the items:** You can't have that actual shopping experience of touch and feel about the product.
- **Fittings may be weird:** You may be able to get all sizes when shopping online, however the fittings of the clothes may at times be weird and different from what you expected. The size of the garments varies from company to company. This can be worrying and while you can always return in under the seller's terms and conditions, but still it is a disturbance and the time saved while shopping is contradicted while trying to send it back and shopping again for something else.
- **Returns of the good are more difficult in online shopping than the traditional store:** While most sellers offer replacement of return guarantees, they may not cover the cost of shipping it

back. So if you are returning something to the seller, you may have to bear that expense from your own pocket. So you need to be clear with the terms and condition of online shopping.

- **Payment frauds:** Even though online payment is getting easier and secure day by day, still it is not foolproof. Credit card information can be hacked, there could be frauds on your debit card, or bank accounts can be hacked if you are not careful while making online payments. Keep certain things in mind while online shopping, like always check for the words 'https:' before the site's url while making payments. Use online virtual keyboards for entering passwords. OTP or One Time Password is also an added layer of security to stop the fraudulent activities. Lastly, make sure the computer you are using has updated antivirus software giving you real time internet protection and avoid using public computers like cyber cafes, etc for shopping online.

The growing trend online shopping is a great thing for a lot of people for various reasons. More and more things will be available online in the future and though it has its fair share of pros and cons, if you are careful about it, the experience of online shopping can be pretty pleasant.

7. Factors responsible for the growth of online shopping in India

The Key drivers of in Indian ecommerce have been:

- Increasing broadband Internet and 3G penetration.
- Growing Living standards
- Increase in affluence
- Availability of much wider product range
- Busy lifestyles and lack of time for offline shopping
- Increased usage of online categorized sites
- Increase in usage of smart phones
- Evolution of the online marketplace model with websites like eBay, Flipkart, Snapdeal, shopclues, etc.
- Technological advancements
- Improving the delivery experience
- Improving the payment options and making it more secure
- Increase in the range of products
- Enhanced shopping experience

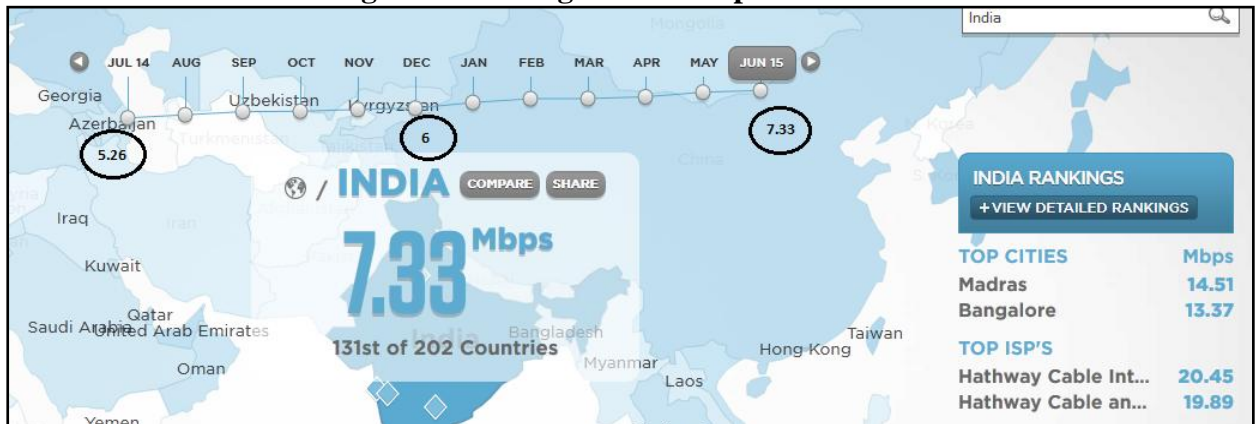
There is a visible shift from the inventory model to the market place model in e-commerce business in the current scenario. Let's take a look at some of the events that defined the e-commerce industry in last few years. According to a Google India research, every third shopping search (from the country) on the world's largest search engine is fashion related and the queries in the category are growing at 66% year-on-year. Bawankule said the number of online shoppers in India is set to grow from 40 million now to 100 million by 2016 and 250 million by 2020. By 2018, the country is set to witness 500 million Internet users, whereas 280 million smart phone users could be the key drivers for e-commerce portals, he added.

Flipkart co-founder and chief executive officer Sachin Bansal said the e-commerce business in India is expected to reach around \$50-70 billion by 2020 with the very fast growing internet-connected population and development in related infrastructure like payment and delivery systems. The size of India's e-commerce market in 2013 was around \$13 billion, according to a joint report of KPMG and Internet and Mobile Association of India (IAMAI). The online travel segment contributed over 70 percent of the total consumer e-commerce transactions last year.

Over 90% of all internet users in India are also active internet users on their mobile devices and this percentage actually continues to rise. All legitimate online retailers in India have a mobile elevated site and many have an app for smart phones to make the mobile commerce experience better for consumers.

The data about the internet usage and speed in India is from Internet world statistics website. From this website it is very clear that India is ranking far behind many other countries in Internet service. From the below figure it is very clear that the current average speed of India is 7.33 Mbps and it ranks at 131st position out of 202 countries. We can see that there is an improvement in the service in the last one year i.e from average speed of 5.6 Mbps we have increased to 7.33 Mbps but still we are very far behind in terms of Technology development. If we look into the table of top ten countries in the world in internet service provider we see that Singapore is at no. 1 speed with 124.38 Mbps followed by Hong Kong with 103.35 Mbps and at 3rd position is Japan with 89.8 Mbps. Looking at this we can say that we need to improve our IT infrastructure to a greater extent. In India if we see the best cities which have very good IT infrastructure are Madras with 14.51 Mbps speed followed by Bangalore with 13.37 Mbps speed.

Figure: 3. Average Internet Speed in India



Source: <http://explorer.netindex.com/maps>.

Table: 2. Average Internet Users Data in India

 INDIA
IN - 1,251,695,584 population (2015) - Area: 3,166,944 sq km
Capital City: New Delhi - 11,279,074 population (2012)
243,000,000 Internet users for Dec 31, 2014, 19.4% penetration, per IAMIA.
62,713,680 Facebook subscribers on Dec 31, 2012, 5.1% penetration rate.
7.29 Mbps Broadband download speed on June 2015, per Net Index

Source: <http://explorer.netindex.com/maps>.

Table: 3. Internet services (Top 10 Countries in the world)

Countries	Speed (Mbps)
1. Singapore	124.38
2. Hong Kong	103.35
3. Japan	89.8
4. Macau	79.37
5. Saint Pierre and Miquelon	73.23
6. Romania	70.69
7. Sweden	60.89
8. Lithuania	59.54
9. South Korea	58.88
10. Netherlands	52.81

Source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

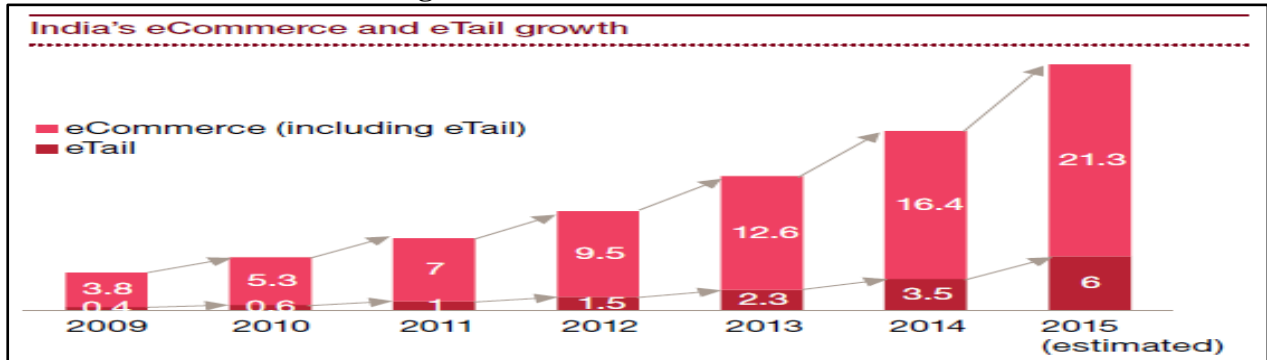
Table: 4. Asia Internet Use, Population Data and Facebook Statistics

ASIA	Population (2014 Est.)	Internet Users, (Year 2000)	Internet Users 30-Jun-2014	Penetration (% Population)	Users % Asia	Facebook 31-Dec-2012
Afganistan	31,822,848	1,000	1,877,548	5.9 %	0.1 %	384,220
Armenia	3,060,927	30,000	1,800,000	58.8 %	0.1 %	362,000
Azerbaijan	9,686,210	12,000	5,737,223	59.2 %	0.4 %	963,100
Bangladesh	166,280,712	100,000	40,800,000	24.5 %	2.9 %	3,352,680
Bhutan	733,643	500	219,359	29.9 %	0.0 %	82,040
Brunei Darussalam	422,675	30,000	318,900	75.4 %	0.0 %	254,760
Cambodia	15,458,332	6,000	927,500	6.0 %	0.1 %	742,220
China*	1,355,692,576	22,500,000	642,261,240	47.4 %	46.3 %	633,300
Georgia	4,935,880	20,000	2,188,311	44.3 %	0.2 %	911,900
Hong Kong*	7,112,688	2,283,000	5,751,357	80.9 %	0.4 %	4,034,560
India	1,236,344,631	5,000,000	243,000,000	19.7 %	17.5 %	62,713,680
Indonesia	253,609,643	2,000,000	71,190,000	28.1 %	5.1 %	51,096,860
Japan	127,103,388	47,080,000	109,626,672	86.2 %	7.9 %	17,196,080
Kazakhstan	17,948,816	70,000	9,850,123	54.9 %	0.7 %	700,020
Korea, South	49,039,986	19,040,000	45,314,248	92.4 %	3.3 %	10,012,400
Kyrgyzstan	5,604,212	51,600	2,194,400	39.2 %	0.2 %	109,060
Laos	6,803,699	6,000	850,425	12.5 %	0.1 %	255,880
Macao*	587,914	60,000	386,847	65.8 %	0.0 %	210,040
Malaysia	30,073,353	3,700,000	20,140,125	67.0 %	1.5 %	13,589,520
Maldives	393,595	6,000	173,575	44.1 %	0.0 %	136,760
Mongolia	2,953,190	30,000	635,999	21.5 %	0.0 %	515,080
Nepal	30,986,975	50,000	4,121,268	13.3 %	0.3 %	1,940,820
Pakistan	196,174,380	133,900	29,128,970	14.8 %	2.1 %	7,984,880
Philippines	107,668,231	2,000,000	44,200,540	41.1 %	3.2 %	29,890,900
Singapore	5,567,301	1,200,000	4,453,859	80.0 %	0.3 %	2,915,640
Sri Lanka	21,866,445	121,500	4,788,751	21.9 %	0.3 %	1,515,720
Taiwan	23,359,928	6,260,000	18,687,942	80.0 %	1.3 %	13,240,660
Thailand	67,741,401	2,300,000	20,100,000	29.7 %	1.5 %	17,721,480
Uzbekistan	28,929,716	7,500	11,914,665	41.2 %	0.9 %	152,900
Vietnam	93,421,835	200,000	41,012,186	43.9 %	3.0 %	10,669,880
TOTAL ASIA	3,996,408,007	114,304,000	1,386,188,112	34.7 %	100.0 %	254,336,520

Source: <http://www.internetworldstats.com/stats.htm>

Since the e-commerce industry is very fast rising, changes can be seen within a year. From the below figure you can clearly see that this sector in India has grown by 34% (CAGR) since 2009 to touch 16.4 billion USD in 2014. This sector is anticipated to be in the range of 22 billion USD in 2015. Books, apparel, electronics, mobile accessories, etc are the largest selling products through E-tailing, constituting around 80% of product distribution. The increasing use of smartphones, tablets and internet broadband and 3G has led to increasing a strong consumer base likely to increase further in the coming future.

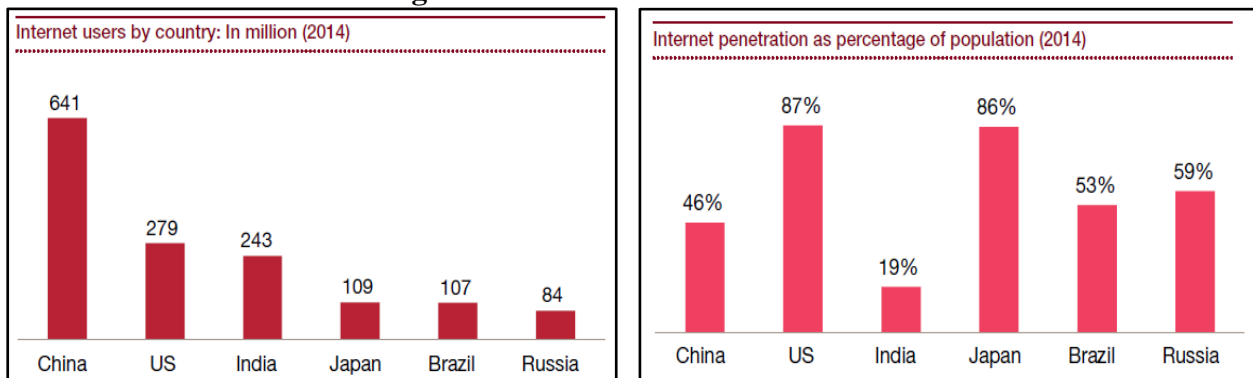
Figure: 4. E-Commerce Growth in India



Source: IMAI, CRISIL, Gartner, PwC analysis and industry experts

From the above table of Asia internet use, population data and Facebook statistics it is very clearly visible that China has 641 million internet users i.e 47.4%. Whereas India has very significantly low (19%) but fast-growing internet population of 243 million users in 2014 is an indicator of the sector's huge growth potential in India.

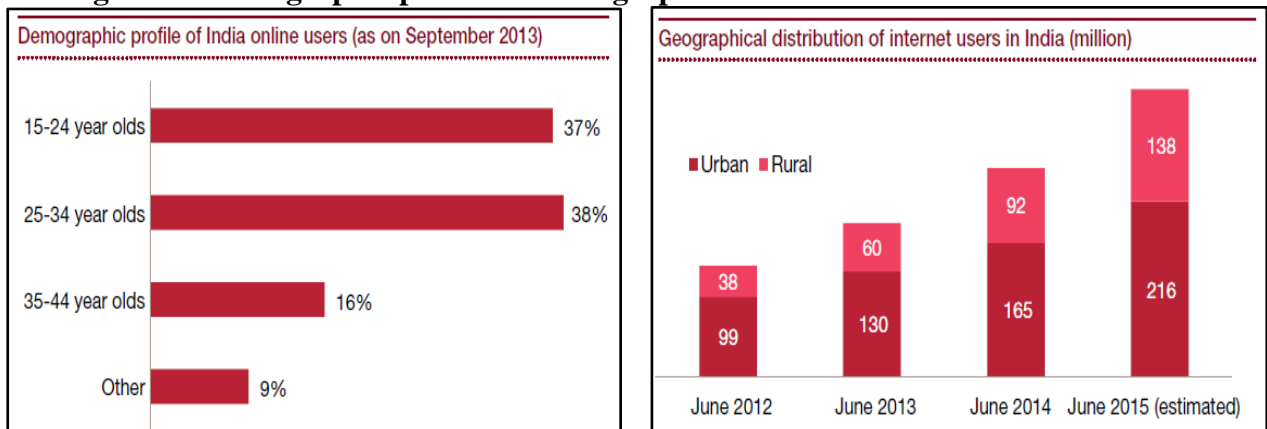
Figure: 5. Internet Users and Penetration



Source: Internet Live Stats website

From the below graph it is clearly visible that the major users of internet in India is in the age group between 15 to 35 which accounts for nearly 75%.

Figure: 6. Demographic profile and Geographical distribution of Internet Users in India



Source: Statista website

Source: IMAI-IMRB

From the above graphical presentation you can clearly see that there is in total 37.74% growth of Internet users in Rural & Urban put together from 2014 to 2015. There is around 50% growth in Rural from 2014 to 2015 whereas in Urban there is nearly 30 % growth. This clearly states that the increase in usage of Smartphone and awareness about the internet is increased in rural and urban as well.

9. Conclusion

From this study it has been found there is a huge potential for the online shopping in the future with the advancement in Information Technology infrastructure and awareness about the usage of internet in the rural as well as the urban areas. In the modern scenario, e-retailing and online shopping which will be the integral part and parcel of the people in India. Online shopping and e-Retailing in India can be a great success if the e-Retailers change their business models and understand their consumer more because consumer are the real kings. As India is having huge population and that too majority of them in their age group between 15 to 35 which could be the prime customers for this e-commerce sector so the developed countries have their eyes on India as a business opportunity.

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