

The Internet Boom in India : Affecting Trade : Offline & Online : Whys & Hows : Self Learning : A Primer : Tips & Tricks : Ins & Outs : Refer to Brief Blog : Value Addition : Brand Management

(Visibility vs Reach)

As far as the potential reach of this medium is concerned, ask the old timers who didn't adapt to this platform sooner than their competitors, and you shall know their woes. Or simply ask any smartphone bearing prospective purchaser whether they check for prices online prior to actual purchase; and you shall have your answer. You can reach the entire market there is with unheard of detailing of products as much as you invest in brand visibility. The saying goes that there is not much going around and the sooner and more often someone sees your brand, the more likely they are prone to trust it while making their final decision. The customer is always right! ...and in this case it is their instinct which relies on your sense of presentation. Proper use of a given language to convey your message alongside appealing videos and aesthetic pictures to seal the deal is the end content, very much king, with a good product to boot!

There was a time when there were only a handful of manufacturers and countless distributors but the times have changed in the favour of the pure marketeers, as it is now extremely easy to get production done for your private label with minimal quantities while maintaining levels of quality assurance and delegating most of your time concentrating on sales and keeping a safe profit margin, keeping the scope of expansion in mind with all of this being highly scalable as per revenues generated.

All the above mentioned goodwill is lost in arbit waves of information overload that goes with web development companies throwing jargon at you for being a novice; and is not so daunting if you do a fair bit of research for yourself, and the results for which are very much achievable if you trust your way through to not rather be spending aimlessly as per somebody else's whims and fancies.

These set of tools are as indispensable to your business' welfare as timely innovations that keep the biggest companies afloat to the masses, and are well within your reach given the effort; as any other, and just as integral.

Kindly read and research further:

Hi!

My name is Amit Jain, Proprietor of a trading firm, fourth-generation businessman from a post-partition refugee family, and a self-proclaimed guru of all things Net.

Allow me to introduce myself through this story of how my unplanned splash into the big bad cyber world turned profitable as an ongoing journey of self discovery.

First and foremost, you need to let go of hearsay; this and that; all things being equal, all (of this) change is good for the system as just about any other value adding technology out there. The word of mouth theory puts up a stand every time!

As I tell the kids, "we never had the Internet or Google or Facebook back then", and the resulting look of disbelief is an expression in itself. Seriously, when I first sat in front of a computer in middle school, I knew it was so very capable, but wasn't so sure about myself, so like most of us, followed instructions, and did as we were told. A proactive teacher with an excitable attitude works wonders; and in our case it was the dumb monotony of typing in code and watching the output on the screen that made it just another class.

The Internet is here! But what do we do with it?

My first glimpse of the brilliance that is the web occurred when we got a connection to it at the family business premises for the sake of emailing! I actually didn't know what to search for, due to my limited exposure, apart from varying interests that had no infrastructure in place where I was.

So I thought to myself, let's build a website!

HTML is easy, said one blog. HTML is not all, said one agency. Visibility is king, said another.

So how do we proceed? And how did we? Like any other sensible family business back in the day!

Budgeted a few Lakhs for an all-in-one package, not to mention the dreaded AMC; god forbid something went off track and off line.

Cut to 2015; I had by now travelled across the globe and with much experience and that much more confidence, I signed an Exclusive Distribution Agreement with a foreign company for their line-up of high quality sports goods for India.

You know how acquaintances say they'd help if they could? Turns out it is a complete sentence by itself! The murky depths of the trade reveal itself only as and when you have the stock in hand and at the disposal of the trade to do as they please with the MRPs and the discount structure to suit their greed.

Lessons learnt: No MRP is low enough and No discount is high enough!

Tips to ponder: If you want to survive and save the day, go with the flow, the replica market is it! That's a 90% share!

But what do I go and do? I go ahead and offer a free sample to each and every trading company that showed up in the top 10 pages of google for my keywords and they loved it. Free of charge!

The next hurdle was convincing the big dealers of all things replica. Sorry this wall can not be climbed. Don't even ever bother. Why would they ever even consider breaking their own product replacement due cycle of profit generating trash!?

Beats me. But of course we don't just give up, esp. when we have paid for stock in the warehouse, now do we. Word gets out soon enough on your peculiar and all too familiar situation and you have offers to trade stock-lots at below cost price. Seriously, what was the point? Happens to a lot of us as a result of naive hope in the ability of the Internet to sell untested and untried products of superior quality, for which there is no ready-made market here in India, as there seemingly is in the west, and most of that is due to much higher spending capacities and collective purchasing power.

The insider story here is... Do as your instinct tells you and never mind the naysayers.. And that is precisely how I proceeded from day 1.

So I signed this agreement, and I ordered the stock, and I tied up with an e-fulfilment company for warehousing and logistics, and I gave INR 10,000 as advance to a well presented guy who explained e-commerce like a pro and made me wait a few weeks for nothing.

I trusted my gut, and sincere words of advise from a family friend, that to be dealing with a few Lakhs and a Bank and the legal obligations associated with this kind of setup, I had to do this myself and not be found wanting at the last mile of everything involved.

So what else is there to do after a few beers and a round of introspection. I deduced a headache alright but the stress I was getting a hang of enabled me to go ahead and just do it!

It took me a laptop, Google, searching for known topics, then searching for unknown topics, bookmarking like a maniac; and the eventual thorough reading of each and everything present on the first few pages, till I felt like I knew my bit through the well rehearsed propaganda of the desi versions of the scope of work involved... as the agencies presumably would; say, the reluctant ones, the not so reluctant ones, and the all too well rehearsed; as seemingly proposed and promised within all those so called knowledgeable meetings with Business Development Managers with no hands on experience themselves ...but ever so confident that they'd be able to deliver: that they'd always tend to forget that they were dealing with a seasoned individual who'd never had any one even suggestively have a competing say regarding business and what is to be possible!

Here's what I did in a nutshell:

1. Website Designing : WordPress + WooCommerce = A bit by bit by trial and error, and I thought I did a good job.
2. Website Hosting : FastComet = one of the sturdiest for money, compared to resellers that advertise heavily.
3. SEO : Wasn't easy to grasp, but Google help pages explained where I wasn't paying attention.
4. Social Signals : I had understood the importance of Facebook, Twitter, etc even before the project had taken shape.
5. Backlinks : Undeniably the most important factor that search engines consider, for eg. quality Gov, Edu, Wiki links pointing to your site.
6. Content : If you want to rank, make sure you have content worth sharing and make sure you have the buttons to enable the sharing of that content. The more the merrier.
7. Media : Videos + Pictures + PDFs etc go a long way if tagged right.
8. Categories : Make sure you do your research well enough to categorise your range.
9. Advertising : Go for niche products that require niche advertising and you shall rank sooner than SEO.
10. Groups + Pages : Facebook groups are the millions you can reach for free via a product page.
11. Rankings : Organic traffic is what the aspiration should be aimed at, mine currently first page for my keywords.
12. Trust : Unknown domains need to be SSL and show HTTPS.
13. Time : 3-6-9 months for proper indexing worldwide.
14. Contingency Plan : Amazon came to my rescue!
15. Asset Value : Now my asset is worth more than the money I put in as per website resale channels.

Ps. Not necessarily in that order. In tandem rather. Simultaneously.

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