

E-Commerce: The Effect of the Internet and Marketing Evolution

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INTRODUCTION

The Internet has revolutionized computing and communications like no other invention (Zoot et al., 2011). In fact, it represents one of the most successful examples of the benefits of an investment as well as an ongoing commitment to research in and development of information infrastructure.

Currently the Internet is a tool of global emissions, a mechanism to disseminate information and a medium for collaboration and interaction between people and their computers, regardless of their geographic location. And in the field of economics and business management, Internet has opened the doors to a new reality, where organizations and individuals interact constantly, continuously and dynamically (Patton & McMahon, 2014).

This article aims to provide an approach to the study of the phenomenon that is the Internet and how it has changed the reality of companies and consumers in regard to trade.

To do so, we start by analysing the development of the Internet from its inception, with the birth of the World Wide Web, up to now, with the so-called 3.0 technologies.

We then dedicate a section to establishing the opportunities with which Internet currently provides businesses as a means of communication and relationship and, ultimately, as a context in which to launch original and innovative business models.

We also study the evolution of marketing, checking its parallel development with technology, finally turning our focus on examining the business model based on trade via electronic commerce, illustrating its history, highlighting its main advantages and detailing the most important types that can be deployed.

We conclude with the main idea that companies that want to sell online have to adapt to the reality of this medium, offering the user a number of benefits to ensure and improve continually his experience during the purchasing process.

1. THE INTERNET EVOLUTION

The present. The user has the power. He gets information, reads and shares content, relates, buys products, recommends them or advises against through the social media (Sultan & Rohm, 2004). He is the centre. But it has not always been this way. During the last two decades the configuration of the Internet and its possibilities have evolved. To understand the real meaning of electronic commerce, we must first know how the Internet has involved.

1.1. Web 1.0

Following the birth of the Word Wide Web (WWW), a network of “sites” that can be explored and displayed through a protocol called HyperText Transfer Protocol (HTTP), the period of the Web 1.0 emerges, which spans from 1994 to 1997.

Web 1.0 is a basic form of unidirectional communication designed to reach a large number of people who can only read content.

Static websites (which are not updated regularly) are generated, developed in HTML by people with programming skills. And the results are simply informative sites, which do not foster collaboration and user interaction.

Tanaka (2009) lists the main features that define this type of website, highlighting in particular:

- The existence of static websites, built in HTML.
- The production of content by the webmaster only.
- The dominance of text over image, usually in a GIF format.
- The presence of hypertext linking a web document to another.
- Low or no updating of content.
- The impossibility of users’ interaction, who are limited to being mere readers of the documents and who may only be somewhat involved through a forum or guestbook.

In the realm of business, companies can be seen gradually taking part, developing passive websites, limited to providing information unilaterally to users (Hepp et al., 2005). Companies turn the information in their catalogues into websites and add some additional information about the company, of a corporate nature. The websites are very poorly designed, because of the lack of tools, technology and connection needed to manage it better. Content also becomes obsolete quickly, because of the complexity of updating it.

1.2. Web 1.5

This develops from 1997 to 2003. *Websites* become *dynamic*, and content is updated from one or more databases.

It is the era of the “dot com”, developed through more advanced techniques than simple HTML, such as DHTML (Dynamic HyperText Markup Language, a new capability incorporated in modern servers, through which more control is given over the design site than with HTML, ie a set of techniques to create interactive pages) and CSS (a markup language that defines a style sheet, a “Cascading Style Sheet”, with the set of rules or styles that you want to apply in the format of the document or web page, separating, in this way, the document structure of its presentation).

1.3. Web 2.0

Coined by Tim O’Reilly in 2004, the term describes the Internet evolution toward greater degrees of interaction and collaboration between users, and a simpler and more intuitive performance of the website (O’Reilly, 2007).

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