

Chapter VI

Public Perception— A Newspaper Medium Perspective: E-Commerce in Australian Manufacturing (Revisited)

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Abstract

This chapter will present evidence to show that there is an absence of informed, broad, media discussion on e-commerce initiatives in Australia. As pointed out by several authors (e.g., Gittins, 1995), the newspaper medium is one of the main vehicles through which advisers and policy makers seek to influence society. Thus this medium takes on the role of a public forum on national issues. However, it was found that newspapers in Australia have failed in their role of preparing manufacturing industries for the impact of new technologies. In this interpretive study, major Australian newspapers were examined for public discussions about e-commerce in manufacturing industries. The political-legal, economic, social, and technological (PEST) framework was used as a lens to subdivide issues, problems, and opportunities

identified in the academic e-commerce literature. This lens was then used to examine 103 newspaper articles identified using the keywords Australian manufacturing and e-commerce in what was believed to be all the major Australian newspapers. It was found that some articles merely report vendors' promises of potential cost savings while overlooking the need for investment in technology, training, and maintenance costs, while other discussions focused on "users as victims" issues such as security and privacy. In-depth issues such as reliability, communication protocols, bandwidth availability, and integration problems were overlooked. In particular, the problem of business strategies was ignored.

Introduction

Background: E-Commerce is Growing

The emergence of e-commerce and Internet technologies means that organisations have changed the way in which they conduct their business. Gunasekaran and Ngai (2005) suggest that the e-commerce concept and related technologies, essentially offer an open communication platform and a globally interactive marketplace.

The rapid growth in e-commerce has been attributed to the presence of the Internet as an integrated distribution, financial, and communications infrastructure (Haley, 2002; Kalakota & Whinston, 1996). E-commerce may transform business in ways similar to industrialisation, electricity, the telephone, the internal combustion engine, and numerous other infrastructure inventions and has a great impact on our daily lives (Roehl & Standifird, 2001). This transformation process takes time, but it seems safe to agree with Prasad (2000, p. 26) that e-commerce is "here to stay" as one thread in the overall fabric of commerce as both businesses and individuals are showing signs of appreciating the advantages of using the Web to buy and sell in a global marketplace.

Many Problems to Overcome

Adopting e-commerce is a complicated issue and is not a risk-free investment. For example, while acknowledging the benefits of e-commerce, Chen, Lee, and Mayer (2001, p. 139) suggest that there also exists a "dark underbelly" to e-commerce that is becoming more of a concern as the Internet becomes increasingly competitive and congested. However, Qimei (2000) asserts that the question challenging today's entrepreneur is not whether to have a Web site but how to win in the Internet competition.

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