

Click and Collect: The New Retail Trend

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Retail is an industry which is ever dynamic and evolving. In the past decade we have seen a lot of changes in terms of organized market, infrastructure, product offerings and their delivery. The online retail industry is not to be missed upon; growing at an even faster pace the online segment has offered everything, almost everything, through just one window to the customers.

The West, being further technologically advanced, has been practising the trend of 'Click and Collect' since a few years now. This practise allows the customer to complete the purchase online, select a pick-up point from the listed pick-up stations and then collect the same from their selected store at their convenience after intimation of collection.

The lines between online and in-store shopping are getting a whole lot blurrier and the complete practice is getting more simplified and convenient for the shoppers. This new trend makes our society a multichannel society where the market shrinks into their desktop, laptop or even smartphone.

The practice of Click and Collect has offered the advantage

- To customers who don't have a fixed address
- To customers who don't have anyone at home to receive deliveries or wish to receive it themselves only
- To the customers who make last moment purchase and don't wish to wait for the delivery of the consignment.

The practice of Click and Collect has offered the advantage

- Of bearing no shipping cost,
- No queues or waiting lines for payment and

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- No time to be spent in collecting goods at the superstores; the collection of products is done by the personal shopper appointed by the superstore in question.

Walmart launched its Same-Day Pickup of Online Orders in 2011. It called it “Pick Up Today”. The company beta tested this program in 20 markets in approx. 750 stores after which it was to be put in practice across the country. This service offered the same-day pick up of online purchases, at no additional cost. The waiting time was a minimum of four hours after which the order could be picked up. The maximum holding time was of 48 hours till when the orders were kept or else taken cancelled. The orders for the same day pick up were taken till 6 pm, and the orders placed later than that could be collected the next day. Walmart did not offer all the products for online ordering because of certain features like, their limited shelf life, storage properties or the products which are generally tried or tested before purchase. Therefore, certain apparels, beauty products and grocery were left out from online ordering. Walmart Grocery is a separate lineout of Walmart which provides for groceries only, products which have less shelf life, and says ‘We’ll do the shopping for you....We’ll even load your car.’; it gives the provision of ordering fresh groceries online with free same-day pickup.

Other retail chains like Sears and Kmart had also been offering similar facility, wherein they offer the curbside pick-up too. The customer is just required to send a text message that he had arrived and the order would be delivered by the employee out to the customer at the curb only. The senior vice president Sears had quoted, "You never have to get out of the car, or take the kids out of the back seat". Sears is offering the same day pick up service at roughly 90% of its stores.

Another retail chain, Best Buy also offers the same day pick up service, with shorter pick-up cycles, but Walmart is definitely the largest chain to do so. It would give an estimated time for pick up to customers, depending on the type of items and its quantity; though the minimum time is 45 minutes. It stores the goods for a period of 8 days, after which, if uncollected, it would stand cancelled.

Toys"R"us, the US toy company, also provides the Free Store Pickup service for the online orders. As per their availability in the store, they can be picked up in under an hour or later, as processed by the system. The benefit of pickup is the savings of shipping cost and the time spent in shopping. .it works best for the customers who know exactly what to buy.

There are numerous stores which are facilitating such shopping mode to its customers, making it easy and time saving. Various retails chains in the west are using this model of 'Pickup your online orders'. They have created a synergy between their online shopping portals and their stores. This provision has proved to benefit the stores and the customers as well.

Things Remembered is a chain store in US which offers products for gifting purpose, artefacts, office stationery and stuff, Wedding gifts and essentials and various products for home decor. It also started with the concept of Click and Collect for its customers. Another chain store, Staples, offering all kind of school and office stationery and consumables is also offering Click and Collect service to its customers.

Benefits to the customer

- Place your order anytime
- Place your order anywhere, sitting at home or on the way to office
- Spend no time collecting the goods at the store
- Pay no delivery charges
- Collect it as per your convenience, while driving through the store

Benefits to the store

- Customers become more adapt for the shopping portals or mobile apps of the store
- To an extent, it puts a check on the habit of customers to surf numerous websites, thus creating a loyal customer base
- Builds loyalty
- Increase of sales
- Reduces too much of crowd at the store
- Increased convenience to customers spreads the positive word of mouth

Click and Collect in India

The shopping arena has gone ever more dynamic in the past few years, facilitating the shopper has become the key motive for every company to stay ahead in the market. Umpteen modes of delivery and modes of payment are offered to the shoppers. These days, quite a many customers are not willing to wait for days for the delivery of their purchase and are comfortable picking up their orders themselves. The giants of Indian e-commerce, including

Amazon, Flipkart and Snapdeal are experimenting new logistics permutations and other inventive techniques of product delivery, to attract more shoppers.

One of the challenges for online shopping companies is the unavailability of customers at delivery times, which leads to adding on to the cost of logistics for the company and the intermediaries too. Collection centres or pick-up points help resolve this problem to quite an extent.

In India, Amazon launched 'Store Pickup' service in collaboration with Bharat Petroleum's In & Out Stores in Mumbai and Delhi. Flipkart enabled 'Click and Collect' feature across 10 Indian cities, in 2015, with 20 'experience zones' across the country. Currently this facility is available in 20 cities. Decathlon, a brand offering sport clothes and accessories has its 39 stores offering the click and collect service with the lead time ranging from 24 hours to 15 days, depending on the availability of stock.

Conclusion

The trend of Click and Collect could be here to stay for long, provided the companies plan for its efficient implementation. This practise is working decently fine in the western countries. A report by cognizant for a quarter of 2015 in UK, after analysing the online shopping pattern, concluded that Click and Collect was the third most widely offered delivery option by the retailers; whereas 24.68% of online customers across segment used Click and Collect. This shows a good percentage of shoppers opt for this mode. The rising popularity predicts the growth to approximately 76% of online shoppers opting for this mode by the end of 2017. Though the underlying issues couldn't be ignored either; even though a small proportion, the customers have complained regarding orders not being ready for pickup at the given time or wrong orders being delivered. Thus, for the successful implementation of the process it would be essential to have coordination between the company and service providers to provide for timely delivery of the right goods to the customer within the stipulated time.

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