



COOPERATIVE EDUCATION REPORT
Branding the Digital Presence of Ekta Books Showroom

Written by:

Ms. Subhashna Timothy Lepcha

Student ID: 6008040094

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Title: Branding the Digital Presence of Ekta Books Showroom

Written by: Ms. Subhashna Timothy Lepcha (ID 6008040094)

Academic Advisor: Dr. Kanthima Kongsathitsuwan

Department: Bachelor of Business Administration (Marketing)

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We have approved this cooperative report as a partial fulfillment of the cooperative education program semester 2/2020.

Oral Presentation Committees



.....
(Dr. Kanthima Kongsathitsuwan)

Academic Advisor



.....
(Ms. Radha Sharma)

Job Supervisor



.....
(Dr. Parham Porouhan, Ph.D.)

Cooperative Education Committee



.....
(Asst. Prof. Dr. Maruj Limpawattana)

Assistant President and Director of Cooperative Education

Project Title : Branding the Digital Presence of Ekta Books Showroom
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By : Ms. Subhashna Timothy Lepcha
Advisor : Dr. Kanthima Kongsathitsuwan
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ABSTRACT

This Cooperative report entitled “Branding the Digital Presence of Ekta Books Showroom” incorporates details on the digital marketing department and brand for Ekta Books Distributors Pvt. Ltd. Ekta Books is established publishing house in the field of books having the largest educational store in Nepal with thousands of book titles. Its head office is in Thapathali, Kathmandu and it handles the functions and operations of Nepal.

The main objective of this report is to find out factors that are a hinderance to branding the digital presence of Ekta Books Showroom. The report also highlights factors that need to be considered for a legacy holding traditional company as Ekta Books to translate its brand in the modern era. Through the internship period, I got the opportunity to understand how the different level of the company operates in integration to give the best of the services to the customers. My main responsibility was to assist the Showroom team by utilizing the digital channels for communication of ESR’s brand through relevant content, to create an engagement and a connection between the customer and the brand.

In summary, the evidence from this study implies that there are indeed areas that Ekta Books needs to work on in order to increase the digital presence of its brand. Firstly, the company needs to communicate the brand to its employees consistently to avoid brand gap. If the company is able to reinforce its staffs according to the need of time in training them to use the data through the analytics while also having a strong integration in the backend logistics, the brand could attain greater success.

Keywords: *Digital Marketing, Branding, Books, Communication*

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Firstly, I would like to thank Siam University for providing us a wonderful opportunity to experience the actual business world, which has helped us to see and learn beyond the course content. I would like to specifically thank by academic advisor from Siam, Dr. Kanthima Kongsathitsuwan for guiding me through my report writing. I would like to extend my sincere gratitude towards Kathmandu College of Management and its directors and supervisors for facilitating us with all the support.

I would like to thank Ekta Books Distributors Pvt. Ltd. for accepting my intern application and having me work and learn in their organization. I would also like to acknowledge and thank my supervisors at Ekta Books and all the staff who have been very helpful and cooperative, especially, Mrs. Radha Sharma Rai and Ms. Subhekchya Timothy for their constant guidance and support. I believe I really learnt a lot and enjoyed my internship period in this organization. Without their support, guidance and cooperation I would have never been able to learn so much and produce this report. I value their sincere efforts the most. And also, I would like to thank my family for all the support and guidance and providing me with all the facilities required to accomplish this project.

Subhashna Timothy Lepcha
6008040094

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ACRONYMS

KCM – Kathmandu College of Management

ESR - Ekta Books Showroom

COVID 19- Coronavirus disease outbreak

PR - Public Relation

HBR – Harvard Business Review

CDJ – Customer Decision Journey

EI – Emotional Intelligence

B2C – Business to Consumer

B2B – Business to Business



CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1. Company Profile

Ekta Books Distributors Pvt. Ltd. was established in 1982 initially as an organization focused on distributing educational and sports materials under the direction of Mr. Ram Chandra Timothy. Gradually, it expanded its roots and entered a new phase of publishing and retailing academic textbook as well as general books for all levels.

Ekta Books has divided its business into two broad categories according to the type of products that they sell:

Publishing and Distribution - Under this category Ekta Books publishes and distributes its own textbooks (from Pre-primary level to bachelor level books), general books (dictionary, non-fiction, reference books), and children literature.

Showroom - Ekta Books has its own showroom which is the largest educational store in Nepal and has branches extended throughout Nepal. The main store is located at the heart of the Kathmandu, the capital city, at Thapathali. The showroom has an extensive collection of more than 150,000 academic and general titles of different genres for all ages ranging from NRs. 15 to NRs. 100,000 per titles. They are authorized distributors (as well as exclusive distributors for some publishers mentioned) of international publishers like Oxford, Pearson, Penguin Random House, Orient Black Swan, Taylor & Francis, and more.

1.1. Mission of the Company

To share learning materials at reasonable prices to alleviate the educational sector of Nepal.

1.2. Vision of the Company

To give purpose and growth to every learner in the world.

1.3. Strategies of the Company

The corporate strategy of the company is associated with the main reason for its establishment. In the recent past, Nepal did not have any or had very few publishers who too did not publish proper educational textbooks. Due to this reason the country's

educational system demanded to import Indian books. This was when Ekta Books started to import books from India and opened a small books store as a proprietorship business. However, most of the imported books were written in Indian context and all students had to study by using these textbook. Seeing this gap, the MD of the company took it into his calling to bear the responsibility of publishing quality and updated academic textbooks to contribute to the education sector in Nepal. The proprietary business expanded its services through backward integration in publishing books for Nepali schools. Ever since then, Ekta Books has always adopted the growth strategy by concentrating on its core business of books. While the company valued the right of every person to read, be informed, learn, and grow, they wanted to pave a way for all Nepali readers to explore the writings and information of the world. With the aspiration to grow Ekta Books broadened its boundaries in opening a book showroom in Nepal, with the largest collection of books nationwide, from academic to general books for all levels (children to adults).

2. Organizational Structure

After 40 years, Ekta Books now has reached out to 6 of the 7 provinces of Nepal (horizontal integration), having its showroom branches and a large network of dealers in each province. More to the mission of Ekta Books lies the goal of sharing the art and culture of the Nepali books and literature to the world. Consistent to this, Ekta Books also has a branch that operates in Siliguri, West Bengal of India. As of now, Ekta Books is currently prioritizing diversification to add more value to its growth strategies.

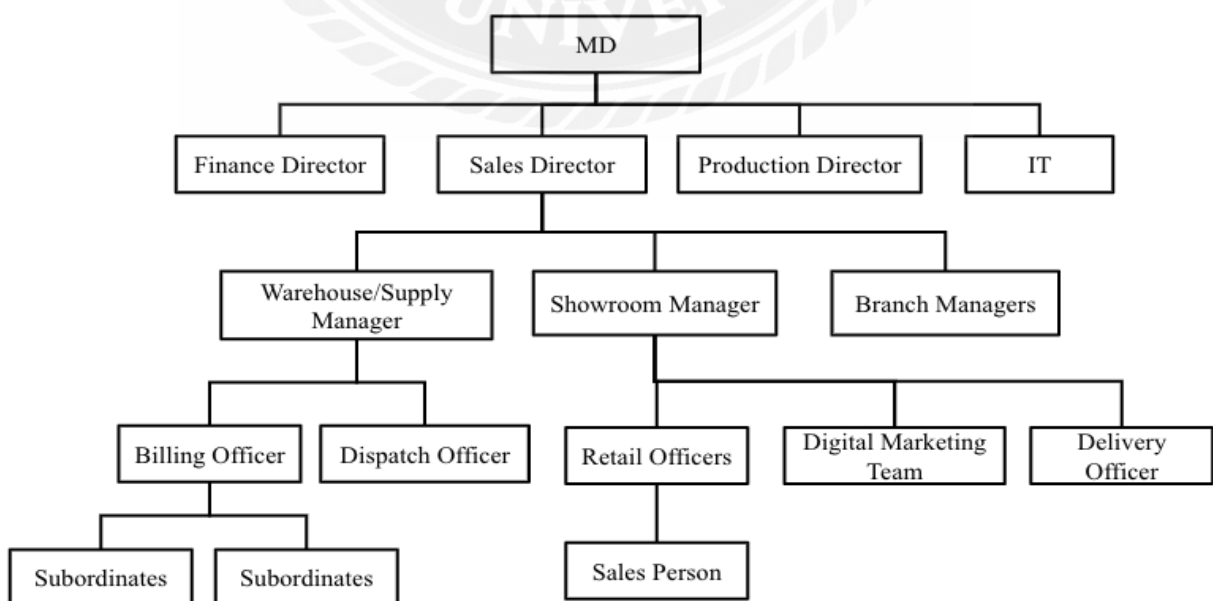


Figure 1: Organization Structure of Ekta Book

2.1. Job Position

For my internship I had the opportunity to work in the Ekta Showroom at Thapathali. I worked as an intern in the Digital Marketing Team which was a fairly new department for the entire organization.

2.2. Job Position in the Organizational Structure

The organizational structure of Ekta Books is such that there are directors under the MD: Finance Director, Sales Director, Production Director, and the IT department. The Sales Director has a responsibility over the national sales of the entire company. Under Sales Director are various branch managers and the main showroom manager. There are the retail personnel, digital marketing team, and the delivery team working under the Showroom Manager. I interned under the Showroom Manager as a part of the newly created Digital Marketing Team.

2.3. Intention and Motivation

In today's fast-growing world, every company makes a difference through their digital presence. So, Ekta Books which did not have a digital marketing team challenged the selling of volume, competitive advantage and company image. This caused Ekta, who is a book publisher leader over 40 years, to become demoted from the top. As I am majoring in marketing, I intended to apply my knowledge and experience which I learnt from my internship to improve my family business to face new challenges. In the coming future, I would like to lead and drive my company to be a modern business and be successful in applying digital marketing. On top of that, due to the financial crunch faced in the COVID-19 situation, companies in Nepal were either closing down or were laying off their staffs, and so most of them were hesitant to hire any interns. Even though there were academic restrictions of working at our own businesses, given the situation, I applied and received the approval from the principal and the vice-principal of KCM. Therefore, I was motivated to take this opportunity to work at my own family business, to understand the problems in reality and to come up with possible solutions with my team.

3. Strategic Analysis of the Company (SWOT Analysis)

SWOT MATRIX	S	W
<p style="text-align: center;">O</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in the reading culture • Growing interest of government schools, prescribing books of private publication. • Growth and expansion into new markets 	<p style="text-align: center;">S - O</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Penetrate new market by utilizing existing supply chain, supervising from Branches in the 6 provinces • Increase visit opportunities of the school students in form 	<p style="text-align: center;">W – O</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upgrade technology to improve forecast mechanism • Focus marketing strategies towards government schools and schools encouraging reading culture.

<p>domestically and internationally.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The growing e-commerce industry of Nepal. 	<p>of excursion, to the book facilities.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use the advancement in technology as an opportunity to digitalize the huge content of school books that they have • Partner with the government and other private institutions to increase the reading habit in the society. • Publish general books (fiction/non-fiction) while taking the advantage of the huge distribution network that Ekta has. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create digital system to keep records so as to use them as data for strategy making. • Use the booming industry of ecommerce to reinforce the brand in the online platforms for increased reach • Create a reading community of diverse people to sell the large number of books that they have.
<p style="text-align: center;">T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emerging concepts of E-books may disrupt physical books. • Substitution due to internet, Google, YouTube and other technological advancements. • Major institutional purchasers are seasonal buyers like schools. • Existence of unhealthy and unethical competition in the market. • Pirated version of copyright books available in the market. • Uncertain future due to political instability and uncertain provincial/ state system. 	<p style="text-align: center;">S – T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existence in 6 states will help better adapt to changing government structure. • Maintain import and export balance by using associate companies in India • Diversify in creating eBooks. 	<p style="text-align: center;">W – T</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve technology to adapt to emerging concepts regarding bookstore management • Increase market presence during off season by enhancing marketing plans • Have a concrete internal coordination to forecast the market so as to compete in the unethical market in their own ethical conduct.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Taxes on printing and importing • Pandemic lowering the disposable income reducing the demand of books • Dependency on India, as all imported books come via Indian borders. 		
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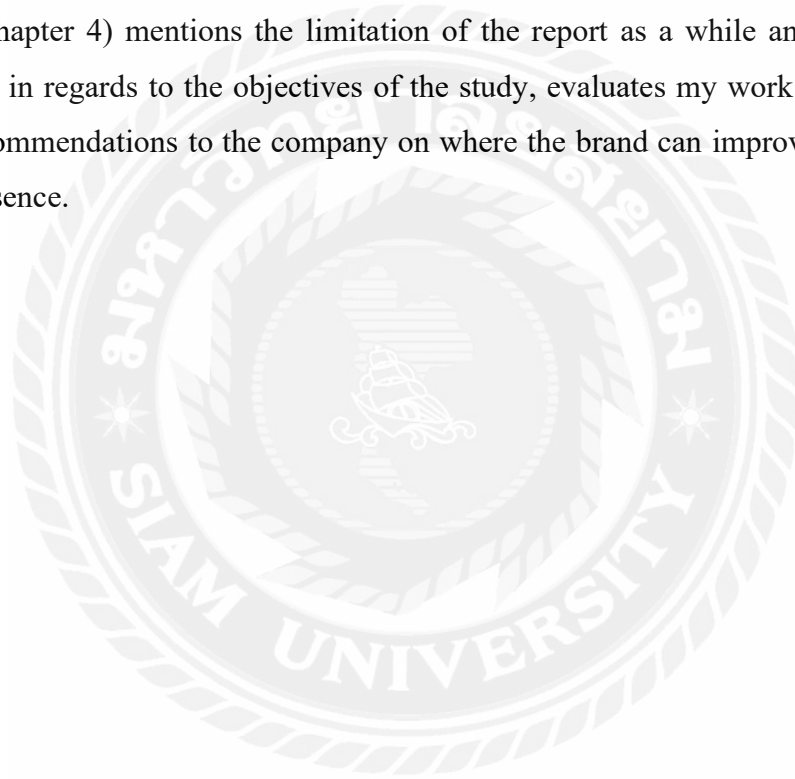
4. Objectives of the Co-operative Study

The study of marketing is undergoing a revolution on how it is carried out. Competitive companies these days are crossing the boundaries to market their product/service in order to associate with their customers. Many international brands have shifted their marketing campaigns/programs to unconventional ways to attract more loyal customers. Digital marketing is increasingly becoming a means and medium as well to market customized messages to the targets. Going beyond new product/service development, companies have started to invest more on “branding” both online and offline in every customer touchpoint to create a stronger association with their customers. However, there are still a large number of companies, especially in a developing country as Nepal, who are still traditional and have used very limited tools in marketing their services and products. In a globalized world, why are these companies still not able to transit to modern ways of marketing and creating more visibility? What is constraining their transition? How can a pioneer company still in the traditional system re-brand itself? How can traditional companies expand its roots in increasing its digital presence? What are the challenges and the advantages of (re)branding such traditional companies?

In theory we learn about the various types of marketing, the various tool in branding and techniques of doing the same. However, how viable are those when it comes to applying it practically when the organization has already been established without having any defined brand. Specific traditional elements of the brand are difficult to be translated and communicated digitally. The factors required for a traditional brand to have a digital presence is overlooked in many areas of study. Therefore, the main objective of this report is to address the issue of branding a legacy holding traditional company as Ekta Books, particularly the Showroom department, in the digital platform while analyzing the various factors at play. Therefore, this report revisits the constraints of ESR in shifting to the digital

presence. The paper takes a new look into factors to standardize the vague brand elements of the ESR in order to translate it to modern digital platforms.

This paper has been organized into four chapters. The first chapter gives a brief overview of the whole paper, introducing the company and the objective of the paper. The second chapter examines the job description and the roles and responsibilities I had as an intern in the company. It analyzes the various types of assignments that I had as an intern. Moreover, the chapter refers to the contributions I made in the company during my internship period. The third chapter explains the hands-on learning experience of solving the problems faced during the internship in reference to the core problem statement of the study and suggests some recommendations based on few literature reviews. The final section (Chapter 4) mentions the limitation of the report as a while and draws out the conclusion in regards to the objectives of the study, evaluates my work experience, and makes recommendations to the company on where the brand can improve to increase its digital presence.



CHAPTER 2

CO-OP STUDY ACTIVITIES

1. Job Description

I worked as an intern to handle the digital media of ESR. My responsibility was to utilize the digital channels to communicate ESR's brand to their target or potential customer via key messages, relevant content, and experience and dialogue, with the main aims to connect a customer directly with the brand and organization, thus creating valuable relationships with both online and offline supporters. I was stationed at the Thapathali headquarters where I worked closely with the Retail Showroom in Thapathali as well as with other branches in order to improve the customer service.

2. Job Responsibility

- a. Content Creation: Proactively create brand related editorial content (stories, photos, advocacy images, contests, campaigns, audio, video, infographics, etc.) in cooperation with Showroom Retail Team
- b. Social Media Handling/Management: Maintain a website and social media calendar and plans of content themes and all upcoming coverage schedules according to the calendar. Apart from that I looked after the correspondence of communication in the official email and Facebook page. While working as an intern, my team opened Ekta's Instagram account/page. I along with my team was responsible for creating content and handling the queries and the entire management of the Instagram account. We worked on creating synchronized posts to create a grid while arranging the posts accordingly. At the same time, the account was active in putting up content for stories.
- c. Website update and content management: I managed Ekta's website to continuously improve the design/layout of the website while working in line with the IT team (in-house department as well as the third-party agency). I also looked after the transition of the current "informative" website of ESR in turning it into an "e-Commerce" website which will aid the digital presence of Ekta. This included creating a website where customers can directly place order, pay and have their order delivered.
- d. Customer Service: In addition to the queries handling my team worked on the internal aspects of delivering the customer service in digital platform. This typically included the factors before the customer touchpoint: inquiry handling, order processing, payment/sales invoices management and the delivery of the goods to the customer. My major

responsibility was to mediate between the sales team, inquiry handling team and the delivery partner.

- e. Procurement: While handling the communication of the customer, we can forecast the demand of books. This information was crucial when it comes to ordering new books or restocking the books in the store. During my internship, I was involved in checking the most inquired for and ordered books online. With the information I worked with the procuring department to order a new books and restock the old titles in quantities that is most favorable according to the demand. This optimized the inventory management. On the other hand, after the books arrived, I had to inform the book availability and price to the customers who had reserved in advance.
- f. Additional Responsibilities: Along with all the organizational responsibilities in place, we at ESR started to have productive, informal meets where all the employees come together and have a gathering fortnightly. This was being carried out while considering the importance of informal communication to strengthen the team. I was responsible to organize every meeting and help in moderating questions of discussions per session.

3. Activities in Coordination with Co-Workers

As an intern in the Digital Marketing Team, I got a holistic view of how ESR actually works internally. We had three people in the team consistently working on post scheduling and customer corresponding. We would plan our post schedule and take our time to check the books and other content we needed to promote. We had to work in a team where one would click the post, the other would prepare other content and publish in the time required. While I was monitoring the entire journey of an online customer, I had to consistently work with the software/website/IT development team, the sales people, all the way to the delivery team as well. In case of the website development, we talked over the email and they would send the prototypes of the application over the internet. I was assigned a cabinet in the showroom itself, therefore I had frequent coordination with the sales people of all the three floors of ESR based on the online order. This coordination includes stock inquiry as well as feedback on which books need to be promoted on the online platform. Once a week I would ask my co-workers in the sales team to update me on which books had a potential of quicker conversion rate if they were promoted online. Moreover, I also kept in touch with the sales people of the branch in case the customers request orders from other branches. Mainly when there was a shortage of supply, we would re-transfer the required stocks to the main store incase there was an excess of those books in the branches. At the end of

every week or at least 10 days, I would sit with the procurement department to work on the “most asked books” which could require a re-order. In the beginning of my internship, we had outsourced a third-party delivery company. However, with the growth of COVID-19 situation we shifted to decreasing the delivery days and started doing it directly. In this case, we would accumulate the order until one day and delivery it on another day.

4. Job Process Diagram

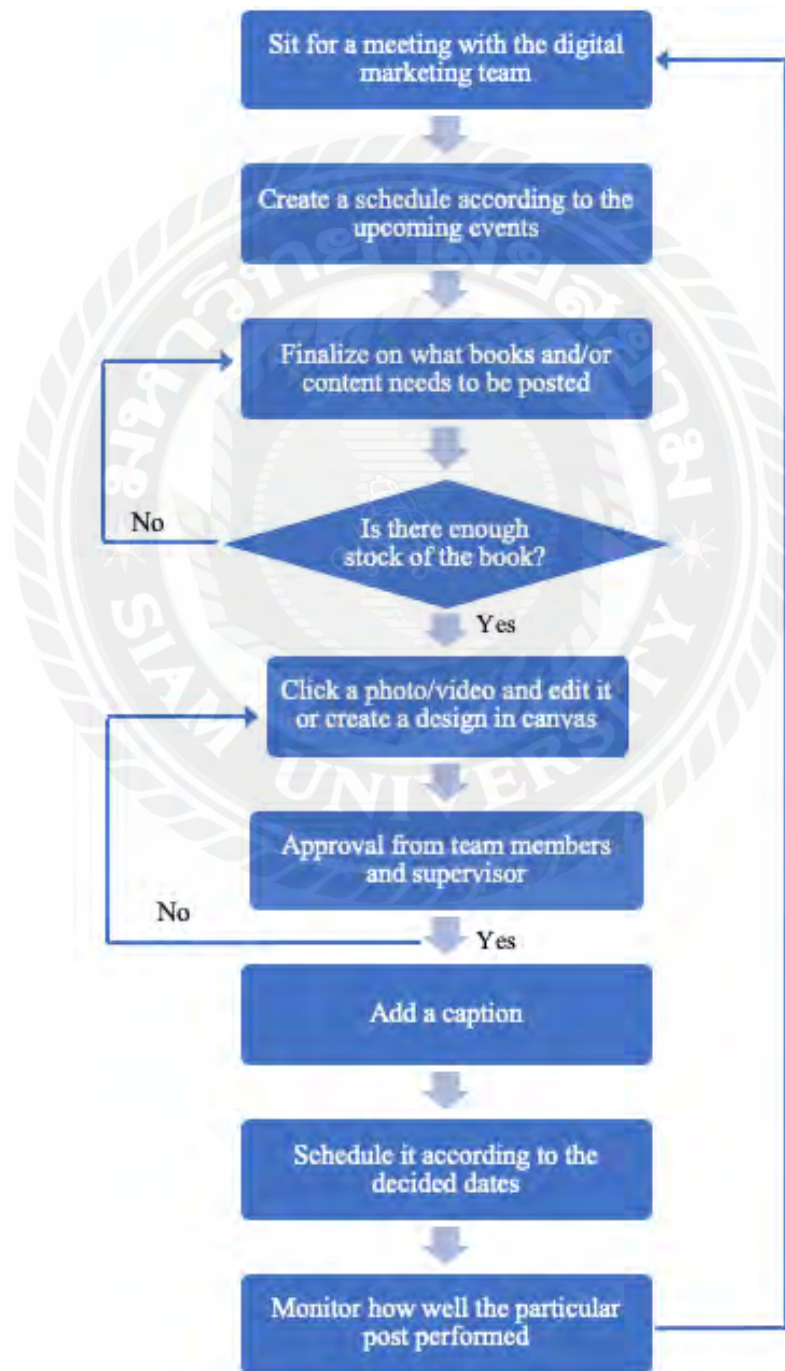


Figure 2: Content Creation Process



Figure 3: Website Update and Management

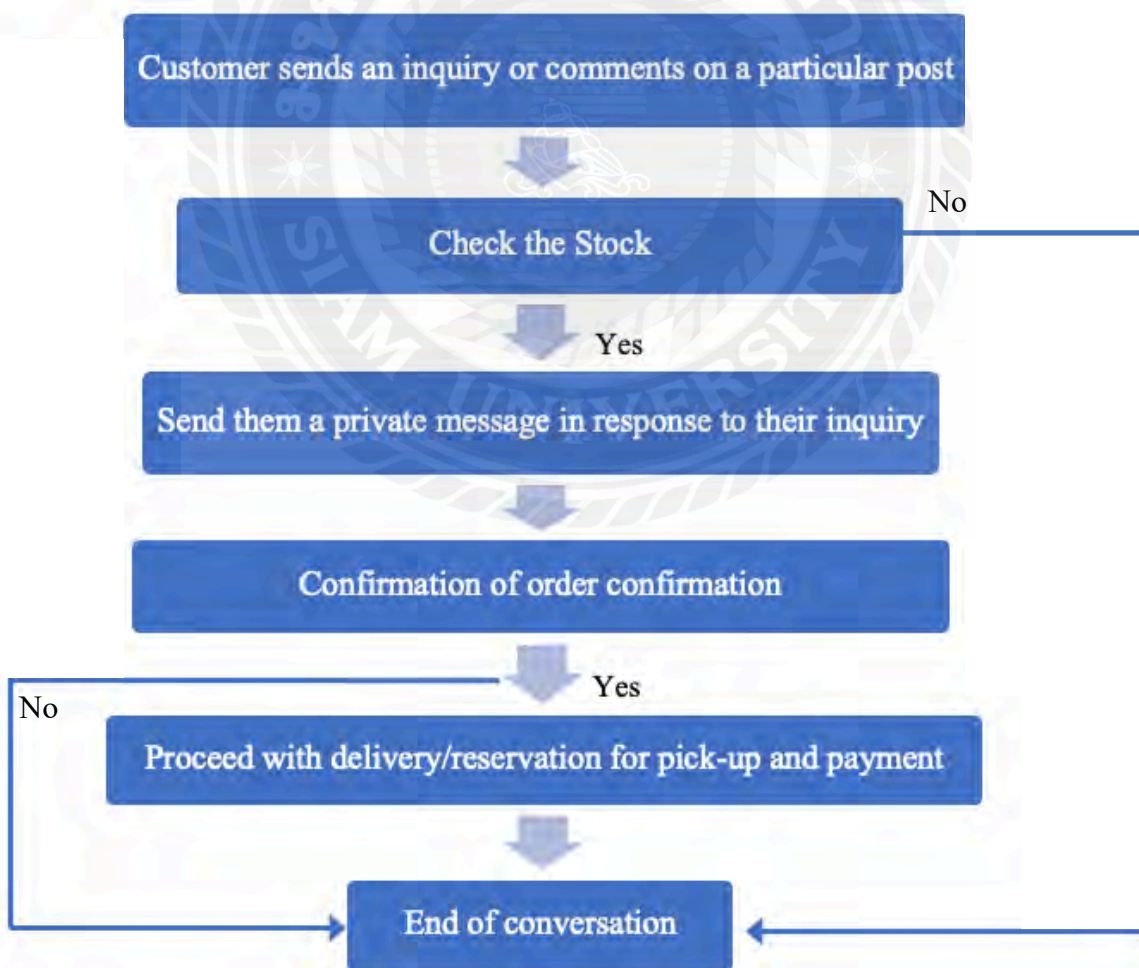


Figure 4: Social Media Handling Process

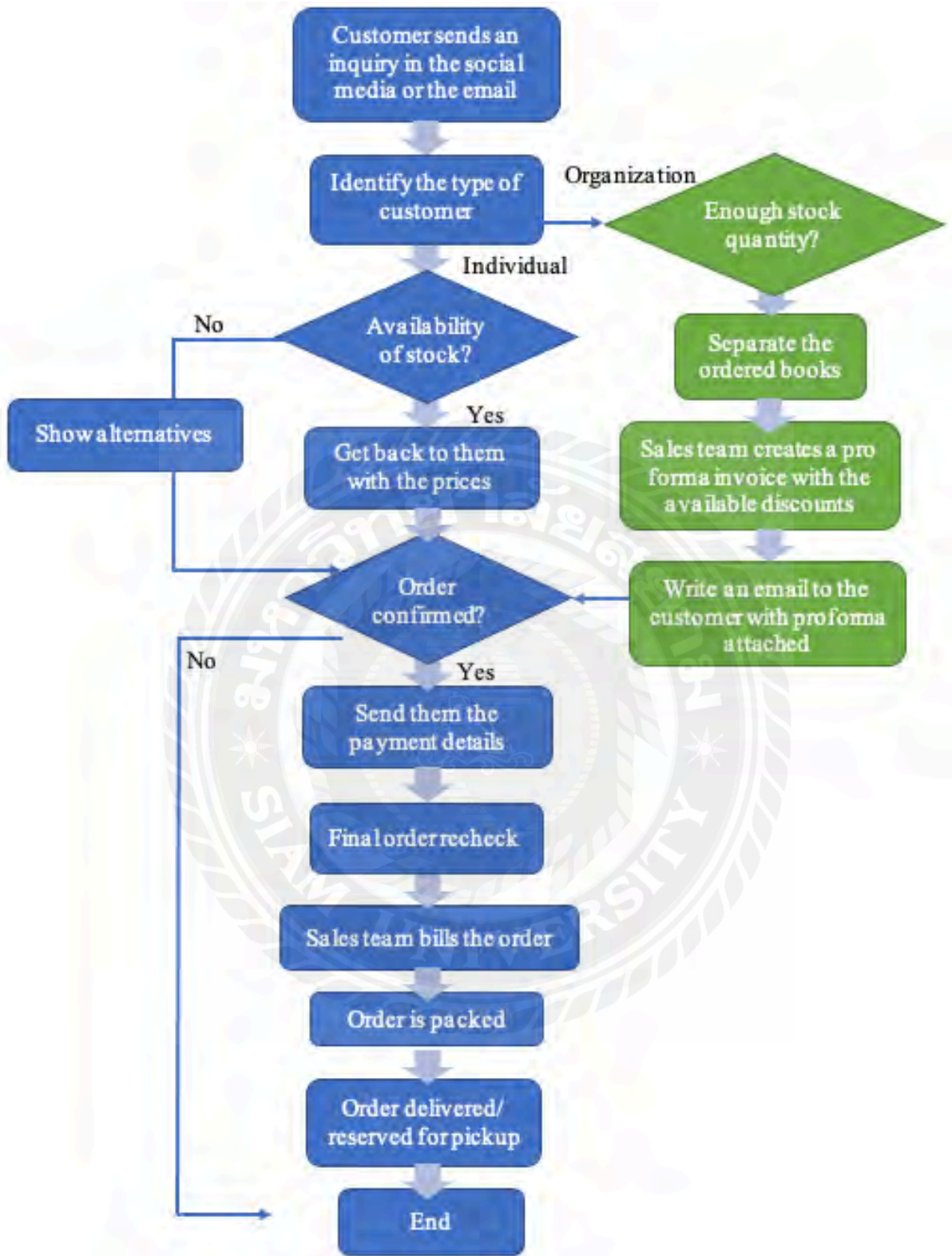


Figure 5: Customer Service Process

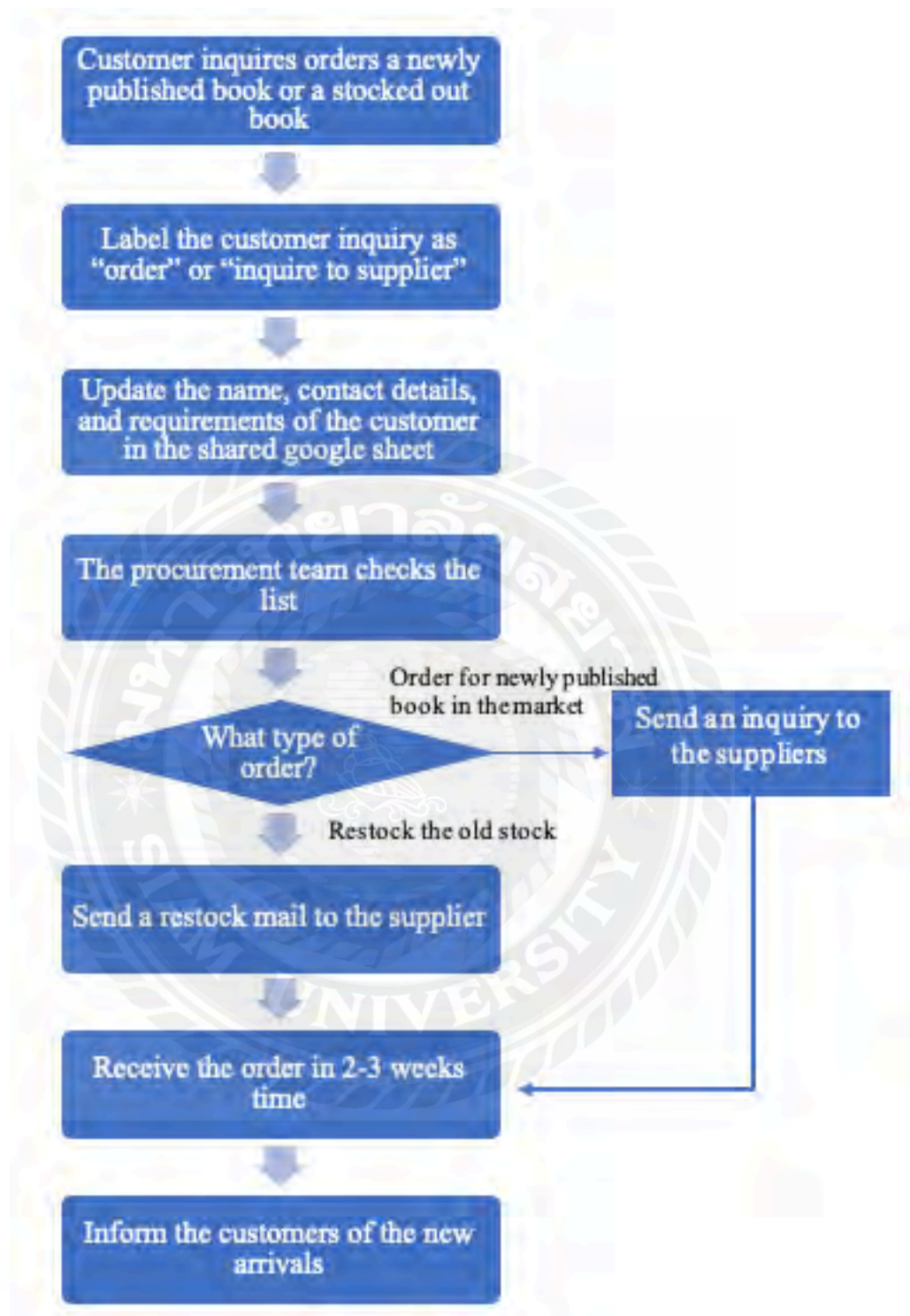


Figure 6: Procurement Process

5. Contribution as a Co-Op Student in the Company

The digital marketing is a fairly new department for ESR. We were a small team looking after the online as well as offline customer service. The most striking contribution I have made during my internship can be seen through Facebook Analytics. Since the beginning of my internship from July 15 until the end of November, the most remarkable results to emerge from the data are as follows:

- ESR started its delivery services for the first time
- Facebook “reach” has increased 43.5%
- Followers and likes of the Facebook increased from 4,337 followers and 4,304 likes to 4880 followers and 4828 likes
- Increase in reviews and recommendation of Ekta Books Facebook page
- Commencement of a new Instagram account of Ekta Books (<https://www.instagram.com/ekta.books/>)
- Searches in Google of our store has increased with the increase in digital content
- Optimized system of taking orders from the online customers and placing an order to the suppliers
- It is worth noting that all of these data are results of organic promotion as no posts were sponsored or pushed vigorously. Some of the analytics can be seen in the Annex of this report.

CHAPTER 3

LEARNING PROCESS

1. Problems of the Company

Edelman (2010) argues that the internet is making the traditional organizational structure, functions, and strategies obsolete, in which marketers can no longer use the old ways of conducting business. The pioneering business of Ekta Books like any other traditional company is challenged with the transitioning of the system in order to expand its brand. This challenge is most evidently seen in the digital platforms of the ESR.

During my internship, I witnessed some problems that were driven due to external uncontrollable factors, while some problems were caused due to internal factors as well. Some of these problems are the leading factors that is restricting ESR to transit to modern ways of marketing and creating more visibility. In other words, the problems identified here below are the challenges that I encountered while digitally branding ESR. Along with the problems are probable solutions that my team came up with to solve the matter at hand:

- a. **Backend Support/Integration:** Since the digital handling and online communication was centralized, there were people from different parts of Nepal that sent their inquiries. In such cases we are able to better deliver the service when my team was connected to the other branches of ESR in Nepal. There was a situation where a customer from Pokhara was inquiring about a book. In normal cases, we might have used the courier, however communicating with the branch and then connecting the customer with our branch at Pokhara was more cost efficient. This increased the response rate and convenience of the customer as well, to which the customer was satisfied. In another case, we would transfer the books to the branches and reserve the books for them there for the ease of customers to pick up their order. This requires an integration of all the branches and this integration is what made my role in handling queries easier. Having a digital presence solves only 50% of the problem, there needs to be a proper backend system to support it.
- b. **Planning:** While creating editorial content for the digital media, sometimes we were not able to meet the deadlines due to unexpected special events. This was usually the case when we overlooked the calendar and worked in a routine way. As the content generation team, we always had to be updated with the trends and news of the education and the book industry.
- c. **External Uncertainties:** COVID-19 was one of the biggest obstacles for every business. There would be re-lockdown every now and then, due to which all the deliveries were halted. When the Nepal government stopped all deliveries, we could not deliver the orders

of our customers. However, my team tried to avail as much as we could by corresponding and arranging a pick-up service for the customers. As such the customers who were able to travel could pick up their orders. Even after the lockdown, due to the strict regulations towards delivery inside valley, the delivery process was slowed down. This was where my team saw that most of our customers taking another alternative and leaving our service.

- d. eCommerce Website: Ekta Books still has an “informative” website that only states the types of books we have and gives a detailed information of the books. The customers cannot shop directly through the website. The defect of the existing website is seen most when dealing with children’s books, as ESR has a huge database of children literature. When customers ask for books for children online there are too many titles to look through as we have a large assortment of books. This sometimes would be time consuming.

My team concluded that promptness was the temporary solution to this problem. There was a case where the promptness of my team showcased in selecting over 25 children’s books to a foreigner while having continuous communication with her in her requirements, and then finally arranging a pick-up service for her, helped us earn a review in the Facebook page. She “recommended” Ekta Books which was a tangible achievement for our service. This justifies Christodoulides (2009) statement of digital branding being not only about push marketing messages but more about forming relationships through brand related conversations.

- e. Internal Communication: In a case of attending a retail customer with a huge purchase amount, the parcel of the customer in the first purchase was packed before a bill was issued. Due to lack in communication and information the items were packaged before the bill which made processes redundant and inefficient. In case of the same customer’s second order there was a miscommunication yet again. The reason was that there were too many hands on the single customer and there is no one who was actually taking the authority over or responsibility of the order. The communication team had informed the customer that there would be two parcels however, the packaging team packed all in one parcel and delivered it immediately. This was unprofessional from our side. On the hindsight, the main reason for this communication problem can be traced to the newly created digital marketing and communication team. This team was only recently created and therefore, lacked the integration it needs with the already existing sales team.
- f. Customer Expectation: In some cases, we encountered customers who were price sensitive, however, keeping in mind the brand and the legacy that Ekta Books holds for almost 40 years now, there are trade-offs of such customers. Some customers ask for price reduction

or have a problem with the delivery charge that go against the policy of the company. Lipiäinen and Karjaluoto (2015) state that digital branding should not only consider the consistent combination of the internal and external communication, but also the positioning of the brand. Therefore, making policy exceptions to price sensitive customers would be inconsistent to the professional and standard positioning and brand that Ekta has. Such cases cause Ekta to lose customers of the “price sensitive” tier, but then we make every effort not to carry out tasks that might degrade our brand value. We politely declined such requests while trying our best to deliver quality product and service to our customers.

- g. Process: The internal system of carrying out any process at ESR is still very traditional, and this consumes too much time. We tend to lose customers because of the lack of promptness caused due to traditional processes. For example, the new order for books were noted in a book and they were forgotten after some time, which lead to the lack of communication between the communication team and the procurement team. In regards to this problem, during my internship we started using Google Sheets and “Labels” in Facebook Business. We label books to “Order” and books to “Inquire to Supplier” and the procurement team can check the information from their own place of work and proceed accordingly. This reduced the time spent on sharing the information face-to-face and avoided the issue of overlooking any orders. The challenge though is bringing in new ways of doing things in a traditionally set up place. This is where I believe re-branding internally as well as externally should come in.

2. Problem Solving

With the given set of problems mentioned in the report, the possible solutions as per the review of literatures are as follows:

Internal Branding and Communication

According to Lipiäinen and Karjaluoto (2015), businesses that have a strong market orientation and a holistic branding method with integrated organizational function benefit the most from the digital era. They confirmed that while branding, a company should continuously accommodate, adapt, and react to the signals coming from the external environment. The robust integration of different operational functions should be in line with the core assets to help the firm build its digital environment. In other words, to strategically brand any company in the digital space requires consideration of the internal resources, capabilities, and core competencies of a firm. Only then will a brand be able to

exploit the opportunities that the new media environment today provides. Lipiäinen and Karjaluoto (2015) further studied the need to nurture the internal environment and communication that is consistent to the external delivery, so as to form a coherent image and identity of a brand. In addition to that, findings of the study made by Punjaisri, Wilson, and Evanschitzky (2008), and MacLavery, McQuillan, and Oddie (2007) highlights the importance of coordinating internal branding through training support programs, leadership practices, reward and recognition process, recruitment practices, and other sustainability factors.

Customer Expectation

In any business customer satisfaction is key. Companies cannot really manage customer expectation and satisfaction; they can only influence the process of generating these expectations through consistent communication and delivery. Lipiäinen and Karjaluoto (2015) suggests that a company first needs to be “present” and then “active” in different channels of communication to influence the consumer expectation towards the company’s branding. Edelman (2010) argues that at this point understanding the decision journey of consumers, their priorities, and how to leverage their touchpoints become important. Instead of the traditional way of using the consumer funnel to understand a customer, the HBR research by Edelman (2010) recommends companies to shift to Customer Decision Journey (CDJ). His study mentions the efficient way of using CDJ to strategize and re-strategize the use of media and organizational roles. According to the research, marketers should now consider digital channels that they can control such as websites as an “owned” media, as well as consumer generated content channels – such as communities for brand/product/service enthusiasts – called “earned” media. The next step then is resource allocation and redefinition of the organizational roles and responsibilities. This step includes directing people and technology that create, manage and monitor the various channels. In this, relevant budgets should be separated for the marketing team to collect and use the generated insights so that the company can become an intelligent brand in the competitive market.

EI Website

Cocoran (2007) writes in his book, *The Art of Digital Branding* that companies can acquire and retain their customers by simply creating an innovative and imaginative website that in return will have impact on the brand a company is trying to create in the digital space.

His book introduces concepts like online clubs and membership, online community, podcasts, and website designs that are emotionally intelligent. “Online Clubs and Membership” as described by Cocoran (2007) is a space that is designed to build a brand community and connect with customers on more than a business level. These memberships work on a subscription basis and will also provide an opportunity to the customers to feel “exclusive”, like they belong to the company. Similarly an “Online Community” can also be created where like-minded people can meet and share information. This way customers are given the empowerment to contribute to the digital brand of the company they want to be associated with. Both of these will increase the repeat-website-visit and customer loyalty, and on the other hand help the company collect consumer-generated content that can be later reused for other marketing activities. Other than plain content, websites can also add value through the integration of podcasts which is a growing trend in today’s world. This way the website will not just be a functional e-commerce page but also a positively associated go-to website where people can spend more time. Finally, Cocoran (2007) also argues that a website should be able to establish emotional factors that are associated with the brand’s personality. Such emotionally intelligent websites can influence the consumers to produce a positive result. For this, websites need to focus on their layout, design, positioning, e-commerce functionalities, promotions, and basic consumer interaction. In his book, he points out the importance of a website being relevant, reliable, and functional to give a human touch, which will induce desired outcomes.

Process Restructuring

(Hekkala, Stein, Rossi, & Smolander (2017) emphasize in their research about the need of an open communication and frequent meetings organized to discuss on the present issues and working status of various departments. This is required in order to build trust across various teams. The research also mentions that this trust will create better progression and confidence among the members while working in the same pace with the same objective. They finally talk about the probable managerial challenge to maintain the organizational structure and design while preserving the autonomy of every team and their members. Ireland & Webb (2009) concludes that process restructuring with the introduction of a new team can be challenging and uncertain. Their research examines the importance of a plan to resolve the internal as well as external uncertainties involved in the iterative, recursive, and dynamic process of transitioning.

3. Recommendations to the Company

Consistent to the review of literature, here below I have made recommendations to the company. These recommendations might help a pioneer company still in the traditional system re-brand itself by expanding its presence in the digital platform. Taken together, my learnings seem to suggest few factors that need to change/be considered in order for a legacy holding company such as Ekta Books to brand itself in the digital platform.

- a. **Internal Branding:** The internal system of carrying out any process at ESR is still very traditional, and this consumes too much time. We tend to overlook orders and lose customers due to lack of promptness caused due to traditional processes. This is where I believe re-branding internally as well as externally should come in. The old ways of doing things needs replacement. ESR will only be able to brand its digital presence when the brand meaning and objectives are communicated to the employees as well. At this point I would like to suggest constant meetings for updates and feedback. Along with that there might be a need for some sort of training to equip all the online as well as the offline employees to translate the brand to the customers in contact. The online employees especially might need trainings to learn how to handle and use the big data that they receive from the analytics.
- b. **Integration:** ESR having an integrated communication, it is important to not just maintain the online image of the brand but also the offline image of the brand. This includes having a consistent retail process and store atmosphere throughout all the branches of Ekta that translates the online brand image at the same time. With the increased online presence of Ekta, the branches also need to be equipped to be able to deliver the orders.
- c. **Use of Data:** During my internship, I saw the use of data in optimizing the procurement, inventory keeping and generation of lead sales. In an era where there is a gradual increase in the importance of data mining and big data, ESR has to use the huge data it receives from the Google Analytics and Facebook Analytics in order to make more targeted promotions and use the data to order the right books in the right quantity at the right time. This will decrease the inventory keeping cost and avoid shortage of best-selling titles.
- d. **Feedback:** There is no formal channel for customers to put forward their feedbacks. ESR should create a platform where they are able to monitor if their brand communication is reaching the target and if the target is able to decode their brand message correctly. With the feedback from the customers ESR might be able to generate more strategic leads in branding its digital presence.

- e. **Planning in Digital Platforms:** As mentioned in the literature review, I would recommend Ekta Books to not just work on creating an eCommerce website but an emotionally intelligent website which reflects the personality of Ekta's brand. The website as well as the other social media platforms that Ekta uses can start building an online club and community. Through membership, Ekta will be receiving indirect revenues apart from its main business. They can start looking at options of Reddit, Clubhouse, Discord etc. to create such communities and clubs. These communities can also be a medium through which Ekta can receive its feedbacks. On the other hand, Ekta will be creating brand advocates for itself through customer loyalty. Therefore, these concerns can be addressed by the digital marketing team in their future plans.
- f. **Familiarity with other Roles/ Teams:** Finally, I would like to recommend the digital marketing team to become more familiar with their co-workers in order to boost productivity and progression.

4. Learnings

During my internships I got to see how theories actually work in the practical life. Moreover, I have also gained new skills with my internship experience. My learnings are as follows:

- a. **Communication and Teamwork:** With the given role I have improved in my business communication and persuasive writing while corresponding in the digital field. The follow-up messages to the customers whenever we had reserved books for them or had newly restocked books been also an aspect of communication I improved at. On the other hand, while writing mails to bigger parties who were usually other institutions, I had to use formal writing. Writing frequent emails honed my formal writing as well.

In terms of face-to-face communication, I worked in a close coordination with the Showroom team and other third-party agencies as well, which developed my PR skills and teamwork. With the new plan of integrating eCommerce in the website I also had to stay in continuous connection with all the concerned parties that include the IT, logistics, procurement, and customer service. A proper communication between the logistics team and the digital marketing team would make the difference in the cost that it would take to deliver the order.

- b. **Adaptability:** Customizing communication according to the customers is a vital aspect that I learnt. Since Ekta Books is spread through-out the country we have queries from customers with different backgrounds. This means adapting to and customizing messages

according to the customers understandability which includes communicating in English, Roman Nepali, and even Nepali typing at times.

- c. **Research:** While creating contents to post I had to be updated about the current market and the happenings all around the world, especially those in relation to reading, books and education. More than acquiring a skill set here, this included researching on materials and news and translating them into tangible content material to be posted across the digital platforms.
- d. **Cross-Selling:** Due to the legal changes in the import of books as well as the pandemic there were a lot of titles that were out of stock. However, keeping in mind the current situation and the importance of sales, my team along with the offline retail team used the concept of cross-selling. Understanding what books we can sell instead of the out-of-stocks books that the customer want required a market/company/industry specific skill of knowing the product.
- e. **Product Knowledge:** While handling the customer service/inquiry online it was important to allocate time effectively to each inquiry. At this point having the knowledge of the available books was a real time saver.

5. Comparison of Theoretical vs. Practical Learning

In theory we learn various types of marketing and branding techniques but in practice all the techniques are subjective. Every technique has to be bended according to the need of the organization. What we learn are relevant for only new companies. However, many studies don't mention about the transition of a traditional company while adopting modern techniques to market the brand. Concerning this issue, here below I have mentioned some similarities and some difference in theoretical and practical learning while considering the transitioning company:

- a. **Branding:** The posts that we created was an operational level work for the overall branding of ESR. What we posted was directed by the objective of the entire brand. As Ekta is already an established brand, more than awareness, it needed engagement. We based this objective complementing the main brand essence of Ekta Books i.e., "everyone should get the opportunity to read and learn". Keeping these flavors intact we created posts that targeted different customer demographics scheduling at specific times and events. Each content then had to be watermarked with Ekta Book's logo in order to brand the content. It also included using the brand colors, in Ekta's case was blue and red. So, my team had

to be careful of what we upload as a photo or other creative content. What we post and when we post impacted on how the customers view our brand as. After that came the caption writing. We had to research on the trending hashtags and include the relevant ones with the post. We also inserted #EktaBooks and #bookstore in every post in order to connect our social media and brand to a specific theme/conversation in the wide web. When the hashtags were event specific, it would make the discovery of our presence easier through our posts. We even checked into our own location map in order to increase digital customer traffic.

However, even if my team was ready to push promotions and branding, because the procurement process was disrupted due to COVID-19 and legal issues on importing books, we were not able to push promotions so much. Increased promotions would mean more traffic, but after some time, there were no new books to cater to the increased traffic. Therefore, what I learnt through this was: when branding, the tangible product that we are selling should also be considered. It wouldn't make sense for a company to push the brand on the digital platform while not having the real product at hand. Hence, the backend should also be integrated in order to deliver the brand we are promoting.

- b. Research: While handling the online customer service it is important to have product knowledge. For this understanding the demographics of the customer and doing a quick research on what such demography might like was a challenge. My assignment was to research on the type of books that we have and which group might comprehend and desire for it. This was so that in the long term we could convert the customers in the “desire” tire to “action” in actually buying the books.
- c. Logistics: While working on my roles and responsibilities I realized the importance of the integration of the backend. When the correspondence in the digital platform would be overwhelming, I was able to manage all of them with the help of the backend people who would procure and package the products needed. After the order was ready, I was able to shift the customer's confirmation to delivery only when we had the delivery person ready. I was the communication and source of information to our customers, however, in order to really make sales, marketing - even if it is appealing - was not enough. My roles was only completed when the backend logistics was intact.
- d. Pricing Strategies: It was during my internship that ESR started its delivery. During the commencement, placing price for the delivery was specifically challenging. As e-commerce is budding in the Nepal market, there is a Red Ocean in terms of delivery

charges. When we put up the prices for the delivery, we had to make sure that it was competent enough while also considering the brand legacy of Ekta Books. As we had learnt in theory the purpose of strategic pricing is not only to create satisfied customers, but to price more profitably by capturing more value, not necessarily by making more sales. Placing a cheap pricing to make it more customer centric would be a traditional false practice, for the customers are not always right. It was not to simply process orders at whatever price customers are currently willing to pay, but rather to raise customers' willingness to pay to a level which would better reflect the service's true value.

- e. **Tangibility of Service:** Unlike a product, service is not tangible in most cases and this sometimes becomes a stumbling block in marketing a service. However, through my internship I learnt that the "physical evidence" of the 7P in service marketing is one way to show the tangibility of the service. The recommendation and review of the customer served as a physical evidence for the service that we provided online.
- f. **Retail Design:** Another aspect that I learnt while working at the main store and some visits to the other branches is the importance of retail layout. It is all about understanding the placement of books in order to find them conveniently while also generating sales through impulsive buying. On the other hand, how we place the products also say a lot about what kind of brand we are.
- g. **Persuasive Writing/Communication:** As ESR was making its digital presence more prominent, there was an increase in inquires and types of inquiries. There was thus a need to write persuasive messages for a better outcome of customer service. Having the product knowledge and using persuasive writing significantly increased the probability of repeat customers.

6. Special Skills and New Knowledge Learnt

Apart from the application of the theoretical knowledge and learning of some soft skills (communication, adaptability, etc.), I also got a chance to learn new technical skills and knowledge. Firstly, I received knowledge about the education and book industry of Nepal. I got a first-hand experience on how various political, legal, environmental, societal, and technological factors affect the industry from the procurement to the delivery as a whole. Moreover, I identified the core players who affect the entire system of the industry. I also understood the importance of understanding the upcoming trends to always be the leader in the competition. Apart from this practical knowledge about the industry, being involved

in the digital marketing team urged me to learn technical skills from handling the social media, analyzing the collected data, to using technical creativity as mentioned below:

- a. **Analytics:** Most of all, this internship has given me an opportunity to see the market, analyze them and customize information of promotions according to the target market. I was exposed to analytical tools such as Google Analytics and Facebook Analytics to create a targeted message. I also learnt how to optimally use the Facebook Business interface that makes communication all the more competent. This interface unlike the personal Facebook interface has a lot of pros to it and is designed specifically to handle businesses. It shows our target audiences by location, demographics and interest. In addition to that the interface gives an insight on our audience (page reach and engagement, new likes and more) and insight on our competitors as well. Using the information given by Facebook to post more content then became smart-work which increased the reach and engagement of customers with our brand drastically.
- b. **Creative Skills:** Developing creative content required working with Photoshop and other graphic designing software. While keeping up with trends and observing other such content creating new creatives are always challenging and yet always a learning. Other creative skills like photography, editing, designing skills, and content writing were also being developed. It has introduced me to the new concept of “copywriting” while keeping intact the aspects of Ekta’s brand. In terms of photography, I got to learn of “Flat Lay Photography” and “Stop Motion Photography” among the many new techniques of photo editing as well. We used “Stop Motion Photography” for a festival special content. This kind of photography is where a series of single images are shot at a certain interval by moving the subject itself and animating it. Unlike in a normal video/movie, instead of shooting all those frames in real-time, we shoot one image, then move the subject, shoot another image, move the subject again, and so on. The shots are then aligned and edited together to make one movie. On the other hand, we used i-Movies to edit the shots and to add the background music.
- c. **Report Writing** – Up until now we had only written minor academic reports for various subjects. However, the internship required us to write a biweekly report to our college supervisors. In this I learnt the formal way of keeping tags on events and jobs in order to write a structured job report. Further, writing this internship report that includes reflecting in all my learnings, experiences, and evaluations, had taught me the technicalities of writing a formal report.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

1. Summary

In summary, this report is created with the objective of identifying the challenges and requirements of branding the digital presence of Ekta Books, a legacy holding book business company. To understand the matter at hand, the report has been prepared based on my job position and responsibility in the digital marketing team of Ekta Books as an intern to fulfill the Co-Op Education requirement of Siam University.

This report presents an outline of the possible constraints a traditional company faces that restricts new branding strategy implementation, mostly in the digital space. It also describes how these constraints can be handled through a theoretical as well as a practical experience-based method. The main constraining factors were as follows:

- Weak backward integration to support the new digital branding objective
- Novice planning structure
- Basic level of owned medias like website and other social media platforms
- Lack of internal communication
- Process design of the workflow

Based on the recommendations of the literature reviews the possible solutions to these problems could be as follows:

- Frequent productive meetings to integrate all the teams in delivering the brand offline as well as online
- Internal communication and branding to create consistency
- Interactive and engaging media platforms to create a brand community
- Planned activities to create content as well as to integrate other teams for the overall design structure
- Understanding the consumer journey to gather information that can be used further to create impactful targeted branding strategies

2. Evaluation of the Work Experience

The Co-op studies gave me the opportunities I needed in order to implement the theoretical knowledge and go beyond that in experiencing matters practically. Working in the digital marketing team, particularly in branding of a company, has justified my courses in the marketing major. This first-hand experience has enhanced my capabilities, knowledge of

the marketing discipline, and skills required in the real world. I can see growth in my critical thinking, problem solving, and creativity abilities. Every content creation and customer dealing required apt persuasive skills and a level of creativity. While working at Ekta Books I have learnt to use various digital marketing tools and techniques from design creation to analytics. I also had the opportunity to understand practically how the market in Nepal works. Especially due to the COVID-19 induced problems, I could analyze the various factors in the industry that determines the productivity of any business. These external uncontrollable entities required of me to become more adaptable to create the best result in the efficient way. Moreover, while working within my team, and while collaborating with other teams in the company, I have also honed my leadership and communication qualities. Most of all, while working on the report, I have understood the various factors of brand management a company requires, to become strategically competent and to earn above average returns for the same.

Through all of the learnings during the internship and while creating this report, I have gained a wholesome amount of knowledge which will surely help me in my future career.

3. Limitation

This report has few limitations. Firstly, the problems are specific to Ekta Books and the recommendations are based purely on my 14-16 weeks of experience as an intern and some related literature reviews. In other words, the recommendations in the report are company and/or industry specific. Therefore, this report doesn't consider the rebranding of traditional companies in entirety, but just the book business industry in particular. Secondly, this report doesn't fully cover the entire organization in terms of the business line and the management control factors. In other words, this report doesn't consider the digital branding aspect of the Publication and Wholesale business line of Ekta Books. The problems, recommendations and solutions mentioned in the report might not necessarily be the same for the Publishing unit of Ekta Books. Moreover, the report has been prepared with very less consideration of the branches of ESR. The problems and recommendations might be different if we are to consider that part of the business. Finally, this report has focused only on individual consumers with very less consideration of the business customers. In other words, it only considers the B2C business and not the B2B aspect of the business.

4. Recommendations for the Company

The final recommendations that I would like to make to Ekta Books would be to create value innovation on the digital platforms. The newly established team has a high potential if the strategies are innovatively formulated and implemented. Firstly, every team must be in the same page, creating a consistent brand across the online as well as the offline platform. In case of branding digitally, and according to the review of literature, Ekta should be present in all the relatable digital platforms that justify their brand positioning, and then be active in it. They can look across other social media platforms while focusing on the owned and earned media. As much as possible, in a competitive market that Ekta is in, they need to be innovative in the way they brand themselves digitally. For this, they can create a brand community through their already existing 40 years of accumulated loyal customers. They need to analyze the customer's journey and find touchpoints that can help the customers associate with the brand digitally. The collected information from the touchpoints can be used further to increase the customer experience and satisfaction. If Ekta Books is looking to make it big on the digital space, they might have to start investing on having a bigger team and technology to monitor these matters. The other alternative would be for Ekta to exclusively outsource all these activities to another third-party. With consideration of these recommendations, Ekta Books might be able to revive their visibility and map themselves in the digital space.

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ANNEX

