

Impact of Digital Platform Subscription Fees on SME Buyer Seller Engagement

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Abstract

This study examines how subscription fees on B2B digital platforms influence buyer-seller engagement among Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), specifically investigating whether paid subscription features provide measurable value in terms of lead generation, customer interaction, business visibility, and overall return on investment. The research adopts a descriptive and analytical research design with a quantitative approach, collecting primary data from one hundred SME respondents using a structured questionnaire distributed through Google Forms, email, WhatsApp, and direct visits, employing convenience sampling and analyzing data through descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and t-tests. The findings indicate that the majority of respondents represent small enterprises, with Trade India being the most preferred B2B platform and the standard subscription plan being the most popular, as most users prefer moderate investment and subscription durations of six months to one year. Correlation analysis reveals that ease of use is the most critical factor, positively influencing business visibility, customer interaction, and engagement. The study concludes that B2B digital platforms significantly contribute to SME business performance by enhancing visibility, generating moderate leads, and facilitating customer interaction, and while users generally perceive subscription costs as reasonable and valuable, improvements in lead quality, conversion support, and flexible pricing strategies could further enhance satisfaction and long-term platform commitment.

Keywords— B2B Platforms, Subscription Fees, SME Engagement, Buyer-Seller Interaction, Digital Adoption, Return on Investment, Platform Satisfaction.

Introduction

Today, many small and medium businesses are moving from traditional selling methods to online B2B platforms to promote their products and find new customers. These platforms help SMEs reach more buyers, save time, and reduce marketing costs. To use advanced features on these platforms, SMEs usually pay subscription fees. These paid features often include better visibility, more product promotions, and tools that help businesses connect with buyers. However, many SMEs are not sure if these subscription fees actually help them get more inquiries or improve their connection with buyers. Some businesses feel the subscription is useful, while others think it does not give enough results for the money they pay. Because SMEs work with

limited budgets, it is important to understand whether paying for subscriptions truly helps them increase engagement with buyers.

Statement of the Problem

Small and medium enterprises are increasingly using B2B digital platforms to promote their products and connect with buyers. Many of these platforms charge subscription fees for better visibility, promotional features, and enhanced business support. However, SMEs often struggle to understand whether these subscription fees actually help them gain more buyer inquiries, improve communication, or increase engagement. While some businesses feel that paid features bring positive results, others believe the money spent does

not provide enough value. This uncertainty creates confusion for SMEs when deciding whether to subscribe, continue, or renew these paid services. Therefore, there is a need to study the real impact of subscription fees on buyer-seller engagement and to find out whether the investment made by SMEs leads to meaningful business benefits.

Objectives

- to examine whether SMEs feel that B2B platform subscriptions provide good value for the money they spend.
- to measure the impact of B2B platform subscription features on SME engagement and usage.
- and to analyze the satisfaction level of SMEs regarding the subscription services offered by B2B platforms

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive and analytical research design to investigate how subscription fees on B2B digital platforms influence buyer-seller engagement among small and medium enterprises. A quantitative approach was employed using a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection tool. The sample consisted of 100 SME respondents selected through convenience and purposive sampling techniques from businesses using B2B platforms such as Trade India and IndiaMART. Primary data was collected through Google Forms, email, WhatsApp, and direct visits, while secondary data was gathered from research articles, reports, and websites. The questionnaire captured demographic information, subscription details, platform features, engagement levels, and satisfaction indicators using a five-point Likert scale. The key variables examined included Digital Adoption, Platform Features, Trust and Security as independent variables, SME Usage of B2B Platform as a mediating variable, and Business Performance as the dependent variable. Data analysis was performed using Microsoft Excel for descriptive statistics including frequency distributions, percentages, and charts, and SPSS for inferential statistics including correlation analysis and independent sample t-tests. A cross-sectional time

horizon was adopted, collecting data at a single point in time to understand current SME perceptions and platform usage patterns. This methodology enabled the researcher to examine cause-effect relationships among the variables and test the proposed hypotheses regarding subscription value, engagement impact, and satisfaction levels.

Findings

B2B platform subscriptions provide good value for the money they spend.

Findings:

The majority of SMEs perceive positive value from their subscriptions. Seventy percent of respondents agreed the subscription cost is reasonable, 73% believed the platform provides good value for money, and 75% expressed satisfaction with their return on investment. This confirms that most SMEs find subscriptions financially worthwhile.

B2B platform subscription features on SME engagement and usage.

Findings:

Platform features positively impact SME engagement and usage. Ease of use emerged as the most critical factor, strongly correlating with improved visibility, customer interaction, and lead conversion. Usage patterns showed 55% weekly and 29% daily platform use, with 72% receiving moderate leads and 56% generating 10-30% of revenue from the platform.

satisfaction level of SMEs regarding the subscription services offered by B2B platforms.

Findings:

Overall satisfaction among SMEs is high, with 70% satisfied with subscription services and 70% satisfied with the platform overall. However, t-test results revealed that Standard plan users reported higher satisfaction across all dimensions compared to Basic plan users, indicating that satisfaction levels vary significantly by subscription plan type.

SUGGESTIONS

1. Improve Lead Quality and Conversion Support

While most users receive a moderate number of leads, a significant portion (41%) remained neutral

regarding lead-to-customer conversion. B2B platforms should provide better lead filtering mechanisms, CRM integration, and follow-up tools to help SMEs convert inquiries into actual sales.

2. Offer Flexible and Affordable Pricing Plans

Although the majority found subscription costs reasonable, approximately 20-25% expressed dissatisfaction. Platforms should introduce tiered pricing with more flexible options, including pay-per-feature or short-term trial plans, to accommodate SMEs with varying budgets and needs.

3. Convert Undecided Users into Committed Customers

With 33% of respondents unsure about renewing their subscriptions, platforms should engage these users through personalized support, performance reports, and success stories demonstrating tangible ROI.

4. Encourage Long-Term Subscriptions

Only 3% of users committed to subscriptions beyond three years. Platforms can offer loyalty discounts, extended feature access, or annual payment benefits to incentivize longer commitment periods.

5. Provide Tailored Support for Small Enterprises

Given that small enterprises dominate the sample (57%), platforms should develop specialized training materials, dedicated customer support, and simplified dashboards designed specifically for smaller businesses with limited digital expertise.

6. Continuously Enhance Platform Usability

As ease of use emerged as the most critical driver of engagement, platforms should regularly update user interfaces, streamline navigation, and incorporate user feedback to maintain high usability standards.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that B2B platform subscriptions provide positive value for small and medium enterprises, with the majority of users expressing satisfaction with subscription costs, return on investment, and overall platform performance. The findings confirm that platform features, particularly ease of use, significantly

enhance business visibility, customer interaction, and engagement. Trade India emerged as the most preferred platform, while the Standard subscription plan delivered higher satisfaction than the Basic plan. However, challenges remain in lead-to-customer conversion, with a significant portion of users remaining neutral or uncertain about renewal. Overall, B2B digital platforms effectively support SME growth, but improving lead quality, conversion support, and pricing flexibility will further enhance long-term user satisfaction and retention.

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