

MMA Digital **Commerce Dialogues**

Decoding ONDC 2023



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Introduction

This report is a compilation of dialogues and discussions done by the partners of the ONDC and MMA who have been onboarded with the open network body to democratize e-commerce. The topics that were discussed at the MMA Digital Commerce Dialogues | Decoding ONDC 2023 include:

- ONDC Business Briefing
- Unveiling the Growth Path on ONDC - Perspectives from Potential Sellers
- Revolutionizing E-commerce in India: The Impact of ONDC on Marketers



Moneka Khurana

Country Head and Board Member,
MMA India



India is forecast to be a one-trillion USD digital economy by 2025. How do you think that's going to happen? It depends on the three key pillars- infrastructure, business transformation, and digital commerce. MMA is excited to have organized the MMA Digital Commerce Dialogues to enable growth. MMA remains at the forefront of bringing innovations and trends that shape the future of modern marketing and can emerge as revolutionary. We have dedicated this event to learning and understanding one such revolution which can future-proof digital commerce as we enter the era of the Open Network for Digital Commerce.

MMA would like to give a big shout-out to the vision of the MMA India Board to take this narrative head-on and help evangelize for the industry. MMA India Board has been the backbone to make ONDC a key narrative of the year (for MMA).

We hope that you join the MMA community and leverage the opportunity to learn, lead, and accelerate transformation and capabilities within your organizations and make sure you improve your digital scorecard. To revolutionize and democratize large-scale participation of businesses and consumers in e-commerce, the ONDC initiative was launched by the union government and aims to transform digital commerce in India. At the MMA, we believe that ONDC has the potential to impact all kinds of businesses, be it large businesses, micro-businesses, or small and medium enterprises.

We have curated this event to advocate democratizing and decentralizing e-commerce for a world of choice, convenience, and transparency and for an inclusive digital commerce world.

We are thankful to our partners Accenture and ONDC for collaborating actively to bring to you a 360-degree perspective on how we can make the most of the ONDC ecosystem to drive digital commerce. A special mention to Deepali Naair, Director, Digital Sales at IBM India for guiding us.

The sessions this afternoon have been carefully curated to bring a live a holistic understanding of ONDC from across the ecosystem. We've got you a few use cases that exist today in the ONDC ecosystem. The partners are actively working towards joining the ecosystem and there are a lot of you out there who are exploring the opportunity actively. Through the panel discussions, we try to capture all the life stages that are gearing up for ONDC. MMA is also thankful to Shireesh Joshi, Chief Business Officer, ONDC, for his generous participation.



Decoding ONDC

Shireesh Joshi

CBO, ONDC



ONDC's goal is to achieve population-scale penetration of e-com. Its genesis was during the first pandemic. The moment you bring 1.4 billion people of the country to a stop across the country, the question was how to ensure business continuity and make sure that people can still access necessities like food, ration, medicines, etc. That was the moment ONDC was born.

While it has implications for how e-com takes place today and that might need to adjust with the introduction of ONDC, its purpose was never to address anything about how e-com exists today. If we have to take something to population-scale, we have to do something different. India is now used to population scale, with Aadhaar and bank accounts going digital. This has become a part of our belief.

ONDC's goal is to take it to a population scale too. While e-com holds a lot of promise, especially of scale, it comes with a lot of business challenges. ONDC is going to address these. ONDC revolves around unbundling and interoperability.

We have six buyer apps live, contributing collectively 50 million buyers today which are present on the network. 21 seller apps and more than 20,000 sellers are live. With five delivery companies, delivering 19,000 pin codes collectively, ONDC has barely kick-started. Many kinds of organizations are joining, including large e-com players. The network is no longer dependent on the very few who have built the e-com solution. The network is now going to harness a much bigger power, and thereby, will be able to achieve a scale that was never dreamed of.

One of the fears about ONDC, and it is unfounded when you think about every single unbundled service or product, is that unbundling works just fine. No car-maker makes their own tires. So, unbundling exists everywhere - it's just not there in e-commerce. Just the way it works just fine everywhere else, it will work here too. For unbundling to work, you need interoperability.

Or, when you separate the activities into different entities, they have to still come together for the customer. The customers and the experience built for them can't be different - for that to come together, you need interoperability, and interoperability requires a protocol.

That is what ONDC fundamentally is. ONDC is essentially a protocol, and a mechanism to deliver that protocol. Everything else is going to be done by you.

We interact with protocols every day - one that we do every day is electronic mail. Email works on 'simple mail transfer protocol', so whether you're on Yahoo or Outlook or Gmail, it doesn't matter. You don't even think on which platform the other part is on. ONDC allows buyers and sellers to be on different platforms and yet be able to complete an e-commerce solution by talking to each other.

UPI is a protocol - it's either the mobile phone number (a 10-digit number) or the QR code. The idea about a protocol is it allows that interoperability and allows much broader participation, allowing them all to interact with each other. In e-commerce, because we are used to thinking 'scale', we always think - "who's big and who can we become a part of it?"



Decoding ONDC

A Conversation Between

Deepali Naair

IBM



&



Shireesh Joshi

ONDC
Open Network for Digital Commerce

A question-and-answer session where the audience was provided with an opportunity to get their queries addressed related to ONDC and the future of e-commerce in India.



Q. What is the customer redressal protocol? When things go wrong, what happens?



The terms and conditions are in terms of what kind of business you want to do. There are two components to the legal agreement - one is that every network participant signs a network participant agreement with ONDC that has certain behavioral rules and guidance. There are rules of what you do and what you don't do; then there are laws of the country which are applicable to the e-commerce industry.

Let's assume the Gupta kirana store says that it will not accept any returns for whatever it is selling. I'm selling when the buyer is buying; at the time of adding to cart, they can check those terms and conditions. If they have now selected and purchased that item, then they can't return it. If the item is wrong or damaged, they can get a refund, but there's no return available. Even today, in e-commerce, different products are on the same platform; some are returnable, some are replaceable, some are refundable, and some are none of the above. Whatever terms have been agreed upon the parties have to be fully aware. Everybody will respond to the entity they're dealing with.

When there is an unbundled sequence, you talk to your interface. So, a buyer will raise the question with their buyer application which is a registered entity; we require that there be a numbered ticket item that gets created automatically. If the issue is a buyer application issue, for instance let's say my password is not working or something, then the buyer application handles it. If it's a seller-related issue, then that has to be communicated and the protocol provides for that communication; and all this happens in milliseconds. And the seller application is also required to generate a numbered ticket item.

In most cases, because of the nature of the network, there is a lot of design-based nudge for people to do the right thing far more than there exists in closed networks. Having said that, while I do expect behavior to be better, it'll never be perfect. Let's say something will go wrong. Somebody decides to register to show genuine products. Once they got registered, they start selling fake products. Now when that happens, the legal responsibility comes on the network participant to ensure the right thing gets done. If the seller doesn't respond, then the network participant has to make that address. Now, let's say it was a non-returnable item but the customer still wants to return it, then the seller is fully within their rights to refuse it. If it gets settled, based on whatever action at them, the subject is closed. The protocol also provides for an escalation so if that is not acceptable then the issue becomes a grievance. The grievance is in the process of building an online dispute resolution so right now, entities are literally talking the old-fashioned way of emails and phone calls to resolve it but at a scale that can't work. An online dispute resolution mechanism wherever, it has been deployed, brings down the outstanding grievance. But if you're still unsatisfied, then there is still the court of law. All the mechanisms that exist today for redressal exist on ONDC as well.



Q. Let's assume that there are five or six different entities offering Atta (flour). What is the criteria on which they will get listed as number one two three four?



There is a big difference between an open network and a closed network. In a closed network, you have a two-sided entity profit is the objective of that organization. You have sellers and buyers both but your ultimate goal is your own business success. Sometimes you will side with a buyer, sometimes you'll side with the seller, sometimes you'll side with neither, and sometimes you'll side with yourself.

In this situation, the buyer has only one side. So, a buyer application can only win if you satisfy the buyer. Think about yourself as a buyer, application or as a buyer what would you do? For instance, for flight tickets, the seller universe is identical - all travel applications have the same airlines; you can't say that you know I have one airline that somebody else doesn't have. Now, how do they order it? Will any travel application gain by pushing - let's say - a 9 pm Vistara flight over a 7:30 PM Indigo flight? So, the behavior is different when you're operating with a common open pool of sellers. Good buyer applications will provide a good experience, which means helping the customer, finding what they're looking for the fastest, and making them happy by giving them what they want.



Q. So the protocols of - let's say - the search or the sort and the airline example that you gave will not get decided by ONDC?



No. We are requiring two things - that a request is broadcast to all the sellers (not selectively) that's digitally auditable and we will audit it. All the responses that come back must be displayed to the buyer, whether it is in two pages or two thousand pages. All of them must be part of the list that's digitally auditable. To show that we are leaving it to them and letting the open network design be the force ensures that people that buy our applications do the right thing.



Q. Do you have a customer rating system eventually which will also come into play?



Yes, we do. We're bringing a rating system for sellers and buyers and we are depending not just on the judgmental rating because a very small fraction of customers actually do it, and more often than not, the ones who are unhappy. This is objective network information that can also inform a customer. So if nobody has rated me but I've always shipped on time and nobody's ever complained, I will still have a good rating - not given by my customers but coming out of my performance. That's what I meant by inbuilt design incentives for people to do the right thing.



Q. Data sharing protocols - obviously in an e-commerce genre there are people who don't buy but put the things into the basket and then there are people who actually buy. What level of PI information comes from them, who shares it with ONDC, and how much will it share with the sellers?



Buyers' applications will have all buyer information through the journey as they do today; sellers will likewise be sellers. When the card gets confirmed and moves to the checkout stage, that's when the information about the customer is going to the seller, because it invoices us to make legal requirements and delivery has to be done.

So, data is compartmentalized. ONDC will not know that it was Vijay who bought Atta. ONDC will also not know whether it got shipped or did not ship unless a grievance gets raised. We are not going to keep any data that we don't either statutory need or isn't required for maintaining the health of information. We are however going to look at in-partnership with network participants to create anonymized without-PI aggregate information because all network participants will benefit.



Q. What is different from the store example that you gave where we walk in versus e-commerce's cart abandonment - who owns that bit of information and how do you reach out to that customer?



So, for the seller application, you know a search happened, but they will not know who searched; they will not know whether a sale happened because that sale could have gone to some other seller applications - so they will only know a search happened.



Q. Is that the reason why today, closed applications like Amazon and Flipkart are small and they don't have the bulk of 1.2 billion population? Because of digital proficiency and also the ability to read and write which is the bulk of India, and that's why they prefer shopping from Mom and Pop stores because they're more comfortable? How is ONDC solving for that, because unless and until you solve for that you won't be able to gain critical masses. Is this the seller at the end of the day who will have PI data? How are we going to prevent that PI data being misused both from financial fraud as well as marketing perspectives?



You can't solve for bad intent. Let's say I walk into a physical shop - I walk into Raymond's and buy a shirt. Raymond's has my information; I can't stop them from misusing it, and it's not a systemic failure if they choose to misuse it.

What we are ensuring is that people who have a legitimate legal right to have access only have it; everything else is with permission - only that we can control and are managing.

Today you can buy from eight weavers in Kanjivaram - their original - we've continued in silk without any intermediary; you can do that today on our network.



ONDC use cases and ecosystem views

Brainstorming session at the ONDC event

Why the organizations joined ONDC, how their business is evolving in light of the network structure, and what changes need to be driven at the ground level, particularly in seller behaviors, to adapt to the new way of commerce. Use cases will be presented by each panelist as possibilities for growth on ONDC.



PRADEEP KUMAR
CEO
 nStore



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SHAYAK MAZUMDER
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 Mystore



MODERATOR
SHIREESH JOSHI
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Open Network for Digital Commerce



Shireesh Joshi, ONDC

Q. Rajiv, please tell us about who you are as an organisation, and as an organisation, how do u see the opportunities in ONDC.



Rajiv Agarwal, CoFounder & CEO, StoreHippo & Mystore:

When you are becoming a part of such a big revolution, you really do not have doubts that it will be the biggest development in the history of e-commerce in India.

We have been working in the e-commerce industry for the last ten years, we have worked with small entrepreneurs to big organizations, and we have clients in 20 countries. When we heard about the ONDC, we knew this is the way to go and that it will fill the huge gap that has restricted us to 4.3 percent penetration in the last 10 years.

We wanted to be part of this revolution as early as possible and build a name for us because we also had the stack capabilities to support it and to make a contribution - so we decided to choose to join ONDC.

MMA is a marketing organization, and a lot of people who are part of it have marketing experience. Almost every channel has a cost associated with them but ONDC is probably an organic channel that has the least cost associated with it. At this point in time, ONDC is the most cost-effective sales channel for you to use and it does not have any cost associated. If you want to be part of ONDC, the returns on the ONDC channel might vary for different brands but they will grow gradually with time.



Shireesh Joshi, ONDC

Q. Did you have to adjust as an organization to be part of ONDC dramatically differently or slightly differently?



Rajiv Agarwal, CoFounder & CEO, StoreHippo & Mystore:

Not at all. It was seamless for what we were doing. The tools and the interface or onboarding remain very much like they are for all other marketplaces or channels. On Mystore, we have rolled out channels for other customers who are on Shopify or WordPress, or Magento, so we have given them one-click or few-click tools they can import and onboard their catalog and start selling on ONDC right away. So, the experience is the same.



Pradeep Kumar, nStore:

In a traditional marketplace, the ownership of orders or any kind of deliverables is being taken care of by the marketplace in a network. Actually, the ownership is not with the network, it is with the participants.

The participant actually decides to come and contribute and then collectively benefit from the whole network and that's the whole idea here.

Most of the time when I sit in front of the brands, the question that they ask is why should I be joining ONDC? The answer is why should you not, when you're going to get to know who your consumer is, which you don't get today: when you're going to get a standardized catalog on the platform which can be represented the way you want it to be represented; and when you get to be discoverable at a very hyper-local level.

I mean it is more incentive for you to join now than at a later point in time because this is when you will be able to contribute and create this network. It's not about somebody else creating and I will just come and write on it. We just jumped into this opportunity because it is for a cost that we were doing it.



Pradeep Kumar, nStore:

For us, it was because conceptually we were always ensuring that the consumer has got to be discoverable across multiple platforms. Even before ONDC came into the picture, we had an integration with WeFast and Dunzo and for delivery, we had integration with Google Shopping and PhonePe. I mean, even today, there are bilateral arrangements. So, when it came to an open network, it made it much simpler. We only had to adapt to the open standards and that's all about it; and the rest of the things were already built into the platform for us.



Neha Vats, PlotchAi:

If we look at how people used to shop 20 years back and how people do it now, there has been a very big change and a big shift, and it's only going to evolve further. The penetration of e-retail is very small and stands at approximately 4.55, which shows there is a lot of opportunity, and everybody wants to be part of this journey.

So, nobody wants to miss it. If you look at the banks, we see that there's a lot of commotion there, a lot of interest, and that is because they have existing customers and they are already buying and shopping things but maybe in a different way. Maybe it's not that convenient, or maybe the store is called a 'convenience store' but it's not since they have to walk all the way to it. Here, they just have to log into one of the buyer apps - it could be their own bank, so they go to the app and click on 'shop on ONDC' to buy anything like from insurance, booking a cab, or anything else, all at one place

This is an opportunity for all the businesses across sectors and industries which everybody is realizing; which is why we see that there's a lot of interest.

Being a buyer app, you have to have a customer base, or you should be willing to spend on promoting advertising and acquiring customers. This is something that one must consider.

So, by choosing the right kind of look and feel and by giving the right kind of assortment, you can definitely choose the categories that you want to promote and showcase- overall, the customer support that you are providing. These are the things that one must take care of, because overall, the whole ecosystem is at a nascent stage, and the way it will evolve is because of the inputs that are coming, and the kind of service that is being rendered.

Being a buyer app, I think it's important to look into all of these aspects as a technology service provider. We are helping them by providing a lot of analytics to them.

Even though 70 per cent of the population in India lives in rural parts, the penetration is low and language is a big barrier, which is why people - even if they want to shop - it becomes difficult for them. We are coming up with tools that will help people to do the search in different regional languages. We go through a lot of research studies and we have realized that in rural regions, every family has at least one smartphone. But, it's mostly used by the male member because women may perceive it as a miracle. We are working on voice search but that is still going to take some time. What we are looking at is a local regional language search to enable people to use the smartphone and do basic things like shopping.



Unveiling the Growth Path on ONDC - Perspectives from Potential Sellers

Panel Discussion:

Unveiling the Growth Path on ONDC - Perspectives from Potential Sellers

The discussion will focus on how some of the potential sellers on the ONDC network perceive it and their key questions/perspectives that can be addressed during this session.

Key Discussion Points:

- How are you, as a leader in your category, looking at ONDC as a growth platform? What are your expectations from ONDC?
- What are your apprehensions or what risks do you foresee?
 - Are you building or enhancing certain capabilities to maximize your returns from ONDC? How does it fit in your org?



SHIREESH JOSHI
Chief Business Officer



AMIT SARDA
Managing Director



PANKAJ RAUT
VP Supply Chain



MODERATOR
DEEPAK BAKSHI

Managing Director
accenture



Deepak Bakshi, Accenture India:

Q. Tell us something about SoulFlower and what you think about ONDC.



Amit Sarda, SoulFlower:

Soulflower is a farm-to-face company, as we grow our ingredients at our farm and use them in our products which go on to people's skin and hair. People might think everything about ONDC is about selling but I personally think there is something more interesting we could dig into. We are looking at two aspects with ONDC besides the selling part - one is the traceability because it's based on blockchain. Imagine when you get a soap of SoulFlower - you could exactly tell when this ingredient was harvested, from which place it was harvested, how was it made, at what temperature was it made - every detailed thing can come in because the network which ONDC has set up is based on blockchain shared ledger which makes us or our life easy to transmit that information to you.

Secondly, our challenge as a D2C company/ FMCG company is distribution and the supply chain. Now, with ONDC, not only is my brand getting onto the ONDC network but also all my warehouses; and not only can we do B2C transactions but also B2B. Let's say Shoppers Stop somewhere in Ludhiana orders my merchandise. Will my goods leave from Mumbai, or somewhere in Chandigarh or Lucknow? Depending upon the easy accessibility, we will create multiple stores of SoulFlower.



Deepak Bakshi, Accenture India:

Q. How do you see ONDC as an opportunity and how can it help you in growing the brand?



Pankaj Raut, BoAt:

BoAt started in 2015 and today we are India's largest consumer lifestyle electronics brand. On volumes, we are currently the world's second-largest brand. There has been tremendous growth in this category when we talk about wearables like smartwatches, neckbands, TWS earbuds, and so on. What is remarkable is this entire growth of BoAt has happened within India - that's the amount of market and scale we are talking about. That kind of segways into why ONDC is important because this growth has happened in tier-one and tier-two cities where a lot of the youth identify with the brand. We are yet to achieve full scale to reach out to rural India. How we can tap that market is important because there is tremendous untapped potential there.

The second part is obviously that a large part of BoAt's success has been raised because of its resonance with the consumers - the youth, the creators, and so on. Our constant endeavor is how can we be placed as close to the consumer as possible. These two areas are where I feel ONDC has an important role to play. We are today in the D2C segment as well as the online marketplace segment, and both their limitations apply. With D2C, I am closer to the customers but I can't achieve that one scale with online marketplaces. I can achieve the scale but I lose that customer connection. So, with the ONDC field we can address that gap.



Deepak Bakshi, Accenture India:

Q. What's stopping BoAt from joining ONDC? Are you having any apprehensions, or do you see any risks?



Pankaj Raut, Boat:

In terms of getting onto the ONDC network, there is a process of early learning involved and we are in that process right now. Even though we are a startup, we are used to a certain way of doing business - be it with online marketplaces or D2C. What we are trying to do right now is search for answers on how this will work when ONDC comes into the picture. If I take a simple transaction as an example in D2C, there's the payment gateway that takes in the money, the OMS that takes in the order, and then it sends the money to BoAt. Now, we are talking of a buyer app and a seller app.

Now, there are multiple modes that are coming in, so how does the payment travel to the seller? There could be multiple drop-off points. Even if those are handled, how would the refunds and the reverse order flow work? Obviously, all these are covered in the ONDC documentation but that's something that we will get clarity on when the rubber hits the ground. There are other issues like counterfeiters or unauthorized sellers that are a kind of burning problem. Even today, there are similar unauthorized sellers on bigger platforms also, but they have a mechanism to nip the problem in the bud. How would that work when we go with the ONDC is a question that comes to mind.



Deepak Bakshi, Accenture India:

Q. There are different ways of looking at ONDC to expand respective businesses, whether it's about traceability and logistics, reaching and penetrating the audience, having a personal connection, or an experience angle. Consumer goods, companies, and potential sellers which have brands and products are looking likewise for ONDC. Are these the right perspectives? Are they thinking in the right direction in terms of how to use ONDC?



Shireesh Joshi, ONDC:

Yes. Rather than inventing a reason, it's best to see – you already have the reason and you're now able to implement it effectively. All the D2C operations that brands have created were because they were finding limitations of the existing marketplace, proximity to customer first-party data, and full width of catalog. There were reasons that were not being met in the existing system which is why it needed to get created. But it came with that, you know; how do I acquire customers?

Now, you have the ability to sell your entire width of catalog with the richness that you want and still not have to incur the problem of either delivery efficiencies or reaching customers at scale.

It's helping you achieve that purpose. Even in terms of a future growth strategy - that you might have a product niche that you thought you could satisfy but you might not have an efficient go-to-market because the existing physical structure has certain limitations.

Use ONDC to extend the impact and the reach of your intended business strategies first and then, as you do those, you will discover more opportunities later. Do what is ready and bring it on to ONDC first.

Revolutionising E-commerce in India: The Impact of ONDC on Marketers

ONDC aims to democratize e-commerce by bringing multiple buyers, sellers, and gateway-service providers on an open network to perform rule-based transactions. In this panel, we would brainstorm on the opportunities and risks from the lens of marketers

Key Takeaways

- How the proliferation of online commerce is reshaping the international economy and levelling the playing field for businesses of all sizes
- How ONDC's construct enables broad-based innovation without acting as a central intermediary
- How ONDC will promote autonomy & democratize e-commerce
- What are the challenges that brands might experience in adopting the ONDC architecture & what are the probable solutions?
- What are the probable downsides? What might not work in the favour of the wide-scale adoption of ONDC?
 - Will ONDC revolutionize digital commerce in India to the extent being projected?



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Darshana Shah, Aditya Birla Capital:

Q. Do you feel that in this kind of an environment with such a big promise, we can see ONDC as a threat to large players? And because you, as GroupM, have Amazon yellow servicing to many of these guys, you also have Brands like Amazon, Flipkart, Big Basket; what is your take on that? Is there a threat for them or is it a boon?



Ritika Taneja, GroupM:

GroupM aspires to really nurture the journey of brands across e-commerce and we want e-commerce to get penetrated in India faster than our imagination and faster than it has grown in the last couple of years.

It is a wide misconception that ONDC is a threat to any of the large players across the country. In fact, it's the other way around - so how ONDC is democratizing the commerce landscape and how it is enabling the digital, or how it is coming up with the technology or a protocol-driven approach to enable digital readiness or commerce readiness for millions of sellers across India - be it SMBs, local kiranas, local brands? A lot of them will only add on to increase the market penetration of commerce in India from four to five percent to 15-20 percent. Everybody benefits and the democracy that now comes into play in terms of boosting sellers and customers will only add to the journey of these larger players.

When the market becomes 40-50% penetrated, that's when these players also will benefit, provided they also become a part of this journey and many of them are planning to. A couple of them are already there and many of them are planning to get into the journey with ONDC. It's about 'together we all win' instead of 'ONDC the Union government initiative planning to go against a couple of players' when the market size is just about four or five percent. This is the way forward.



Darshana Shah, Aditya Birla Capital:

Q. Asian Paints being the category leader in B2B and B2C, how do you look at it participating in this kind of a protocol or capabilities that are being built and where do you see yourselves?



Shailendra Sharma, Asian Paints:

Asian paints is in the home decor space segment. We are serving almost 1.5 lakh dealer shops on a day-to-day basis on a large commerce platform. It's a B2B commerce platform. Apart from a category perspective, we have launched whole interior home decor as a service. We have a large home modular kitchen sleek business. We are into bathroom fittings, furniture, and into doing that whole turnkey work for a house.

As a brand, I might put up a product, but to execute the services, if I get access to a service to a local house in a second-tier city, you can see how people who can come on such an open platform will be transforming. I look at the ONDC as more of a growth driver.

Reaching more and more households is still one part of the problem. If you see typical commerce, it's product selling, but when it comes to a product or a category like home décor, it has a many service elements to it right?

Today, what do you do in your new house? You get an interior designer, then he/she will bring in the executions, a carpenter, a plumber; so there's a whole ecosystem. If you must really leverage the power and scale and make that kind of a business profitable; if it becomes open, then there are opportunities, which you can play around differently.



Darshana Shah, Aditya Birla Capital:

Q. One of the things I wanted to ask you about - as marketers, we are used to advertising because we understand the cohort - they give us segments and we put our marketing money when we are partnering. How does that work -this whole advertising; and how will it work now in ONDC?



Shireesh Joshi, ONDC:

It's going back to the pre-digital era. You may have influenced the physical stores - you really didn't debate with the shopkeeper like "mine should be on this shelf and not that shelf", other than a few display points. You focused on driving brand awareness with your customer base and the customers then went and bought your product.

When you democratize commerce, in a similar fashion, the same thing will happen. Companies can now focus on spending on building their brands with consumers directly and not, in addition, spending in the channel.



Darshana Shah, Aditya Birla Capital:

Q. Ritika, how are your brands looking at this opportunity and how do you get them ready? How are you talking to them and taking them ahead on this new inter-protocol that is coming in India?



Ritika Taneja, GroupM

Brands are keen to understand what ONDC is and what opportunities they have and they are trying to firm-up their point of view. I am keen to partner with MMA and its e-commerce council to drive resources to form a playbook on how to really go about it.

There is a heightened interest; people want to decode and understand, and some of them have gone beyond intent. They are in the process of getting enabled on ONDC. At GroupM, we already have a plugin through which we can enable the technology on the ONDC network.

We've developed content and creative capability to help these brands go upload their catalog enabled with ONDC. Most of our brands are large and they have a large network of dealers and retailers across all nooks and corners of India. We intend to soon start working with them as to how, not only they can build an ONDC-compliant catalog, but also enable their distributors and retailers to be there.

One interesting aspect of ONDC is that it is hyper-local. With this open unbundled network, a whole lot of distributors and retailers and sub-distributors or brands can be there.

We are on that journey to really decode it for the brands, how could they get there, the technology enablement, the catalog, the pricing and inventory, and their entire strategy towards ONDC. In fact, we have a couple of brands in the FnB and FMCG space who've shown interest and with ONDC, we plan to even do some road shows and cater to about 400 clients that we have with GroupM.

Key Takeaways



Moneka Khurana

Country Head and Board Member,
MMA India



ONDC clearly signals a huge opportunity given that a significant part of retail is not digitally-enabled whilst is even more limited in smaller towns /rural areas in India. Its inclusive and decentralized nature allows buyers and sellers to sell and buy in an open environment across markets.

The interoperability and unbundling characteristics enable four key aspects that include a wide range of choices for sellers to be online, ease of discoverability for buyers and sellers from across markets, unbundling the same allows sellers to focus on their core strengths and seek the infrastructure available to stitch the value chain and reduces go-to-market efforts.



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