

Striking a Balance between Online and Offline Utility Services with VOSO

• VOSO stores are helping online services retailers to revamp their businesses • Providing an umbrella of utility services to people in an offline setting



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VOSO. Even before the Coronavirus lockdowns affected the economy gave the business a tough time, digitisation had taken its toll on small e-services retailers such as cyber cafes, travel booking centers, Aadhar centers, insurance brokers, etc. who found doing business much difficult amidst all these facilities being made available on phones.

On the other hand, people who were not as tech-savvy as to avail these services online such as the elderly who trust cash more than any online mode were left with little options than to physically reach out to their vendors, who were soon closing down.

In a bid to kill two birds with one stone, Indore's Jitendra Soni conceptualised a platform, which would help these small retailers revamp their business to become all-inclusive centers for a variety of online services, and for the non-tech savvy people to be able to avail services such as recharges, bill payments, insurances, etc. all at one physically accessible center.

This hybrid experience of shopping online at an offline store was termed **VOSO** store, with the aim to reach the remote parts of the country and offer online services to people at a physical location. This balance of online and offline services has also played an important role in providing equal opportunities to the retail ecosystem.

The idea was also to help businesses survive with the operational expenses of running a physical shop, especially when the retail industry saw two back-to-back lockdowns leading to a reduced footfall in physical shops.

The concept of the **VOSO** store also helped retailers build a wider customer base by offering a wide range of services not just limited to one or two services.

Speaking about this initiative, **VOSO's** CEO and director Jitendra Soni said, "VOSO is a B2B platform

wherein we are roping in retail business owners to come on board our platform and offer their customers a wide variety of services. VOSO stores are helping these small retailers revamp their business models while addressing the issue faced by people who wish to have the offline experience of buying things, paying bills, applying for PAN card, booking travel tickets etc.”

Started in June 2019, VOSO currently has more than 2000 stores across India. These stores offer a wide variety of services which includes utility bill payments such as Mobile, DTH, electricity, gas bills, broadband, water bills, Fastag recharges, subscriptions, credit card bills, loan payments, municipal taxes, and prepaid mobile recharges, domestic money transfers, travel booking insurance, ordering online medicines, etc. The retailers who offer these services are not only provided the product knowledge of these services but are also trained and suggested products that would help them earn the highest commission and would be the most beneficial for the customers. Another added benefit for VOSO retailers is that they can accept payments through cash for all their services.

“We have a dedicated team of key account managers who guide the retailers on the fine print of insurance policies and other such services so that they are able to sell the best products to their clients. We are also offering in-shop branding to the retailers and are also offering promotional SMS services to the retailers which can be utilised by retailers to reach out to their customers. This helps in developing and reshaping the overall technical convenience of the retail business ecosystem. Other than this, we also have a separate vertical for quality control which ensures that the best products and services are offered to the retailers and all their queries and concerns are addressed,” Mr. Jitendra Soni added. The organisation hopes to also encourage budding entrepreneurs to start their own business setups with minimum investment. The company, located in Indore, has a staff of 150 people led by its two founders Mr. Jitendra Soni and Mr. Sumit Chordiya.

VOSO store now aims to expand their network to reach out to remotest parts of the country and also to launch their B2C mobile application through which people can check the location of their nearest VOSO store to avail insurance and other services at the best possible prices.

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