

## RELEVANCE OF DIGITIZATION FOR BUSINESSES IN THE NEW NORMAL ERA

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### ABSTRACT

*“Change is the law of nature”*

*In many times, crisis has played a role in shaping the economies of the world. With rising competition, improved techniques of production, more innovative products, companies across the world have been struggling for sustaining themselves. Then came a time of pandemic in late 2019 when the entire world was shaken from multidimensional aspect including physical, economical, psychological and social aspect. The trends of doing business altogether changed. For some industries, the sales reduced rapidly and for a few it was increased dramatically. But both the situations posed a challenge for the Companies. All the industries were required to develop strategies with utmost care in accordance with adaptation with the 'new normal' era. The tastes and preferences of consumers have changed. With more need of masks and considering the social distancing norms, there is a need of restructuring the layout of the stores. Retailers also opted for online retailing options in order to retain sales. One of the major tools which has been and which will assist in adjusting with the 'new normal' era is to invest maximum in information technology. The digitalisation of production techniques, marketing techniques, workforce management is a solution for converting the challenges of pandemic into a fruitful opportunity for the organisations. Many companies like Tesco, UPS, Hyundai, Uber, General Motors have been evolving innovative ways of doing business which have been discussed in this paper. As soon as a business organisation understand the relevance of flexible mode of working and innovates as per the requirements of the changing environment, it will assist in survival as well as growth of a business.*

**Keywords:** Business Strategies, Dynamics of Business, New normal, Pandemic.

### 1. Introduction

Business houses across the globe have always been coping with the dynamics of the society and the environment. During the liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation policies in 1991 in India, the existing business organisations developed new strategies to face the cut throat competition. Multi National Companies customised the products and services depending upon the preferences of the consumers of different nations. Already coping with innumerable challenges, the business organisations had to face a very strange challenge in early 2020s. The pandemic has brought a change the way economy works. With more stringent stay at home laws and lockdown in India, the footfall in the brick-and-mortar stores did not just reduce but landed to zero. But was it the end of everything? To be precise, certainly it was not an end but rather a direction for beginning with a new approach for conducting business. Organisations strived for a semblance of normalcy. And for adapting to the new normal era situation, Companies modified their ways of offering products and services to the customers. And while the manufacturers, retailers and traders across the world were making an effort to develop strategies, digitalization came out to be a great aid for them. Excessive use of digital assets is changing the requirements and working parameters of modern-day organisations.

### 2. Strategies to be adopted in routine

“Necessity is the mother of invention”. In order to adapt to the new normal situation, organisations need to make certain changes in the routine working style in order to ensure sustainable growth.

- **Investing in technology to support home office**

During the period of lockdown, majority of the industries came to a standstill. But still some industries like Information Technology industry, pharmaceutical industry were working at war footing in order to meet the needs of the situation. Some

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business houses encouraged and adopted “work from home” mode of working to sustain the organisation. Numerous companies invested in technology for supporting the home office.

- **Focussing on communication**

Companies established continuous communication even during lockdown in order to stay connected to their existing and potential customers [6]. Social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram were actively used by Companies for maintaining a relationship with their customers.

- **Leveraging investment in E-Commerce Companies**

Numerous business houses have leveraged investment in E-Commerce domain [2]. Besides the establishes big players on E-commerce industry like Amazon and Flipkart, existing business organisations resorted to online business.

- **Innovations in product portfolio:**

Organisations have been responding more actively to the dynamic environment by innovating new products and services. Apparel manufacturers extended a helping hand by manufacturing face masks on a large scale, some distilleries provided raw material for sanitizers.

- **Reinforcing collaboration:**

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, with changing scenarios, employees of the Companies are being treated as an asset and more efforts are undertaken to improve employee satisfaction also. During pandemic, many people working from home faced the problem of emotional distress. To reduce this, many companies resorted to online collaborative projects for their employees. Working in a team helped the employees in developing confidence and in staying connected with their colleagues along with new ideas for the business development.

- **Valuing online training and online education**

Online training courses have never been a very active part of training programmes of Companies. But during pandemic, online training sessions were conducted for business executives to develop strategies for dealing with the falling demand and changing preferences.

### 3. Transforming massive challenges into opportunities

Despite of loss of lives and livelihood, the pandemic of 2020 has left a deep impact on different industries as well. The time of Pandemic has been a massive challenge for the manufacturing sector [3]. The availability of raw material, workforce, customer base has been very low. Consequently, for transforming such a massive challenge into an opportunity, it is needed that the organisations work on war footing in every direction.



Figure 1 shows the areas where companies need to focus during the times of Pandemic:

- *Business strategy:* The focus on agility has increased for business organisations of different sectors. With changing regime, companies are trying to establish connection with customers using cloud-based operations and other technologies [4].

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- *Human Resources:* The global giants have been focussing on the workforce to sustain growth. The working parameters have been more flexible for employees during the lockdown. Companies switched to technical alternatives aggressively during pandemic and are planning to stay the same for a longer period of time.
- *Customers:* The changing tastes and preferences of customers have changed during COVID 19. For instance, the loyal customers of fine dining restaurants are now looking forward for safer dine in options [5].
- *Marketing:* For staying in the race of captivating new customers and retaining existing customers, companies need to resort to new promotion methods. Digital marketing techniques like search engine optimization, social media marketing, web advertising have gained more importance [1].
- *Production:* The supply chain of manufacturing industries has also been disrupted with nation wide lockdown in many countries. Consequently, the production process was also affected. In response to it many manufacturers resorted to alternative techniques of production. Also, some companies tried to integrate backwards during the pandemic in order to be self-sufficient for the availability of raw material.
- *Information Technology:* The unprecedented growth in the Information Technology sector has been most advantageous during the times of Pandemic. All the industries adapted to new mode of working for adapting to the new normal era and encouraged work from home culture. All the physical meetings switched to online platforms, collaborative team software were used to a greater extent and every possible task switched to online mode. In order to convert the challenges of the pandemic times, investing in Information Technology is one of the best initiative an organisation can adopt.

### 4. Initiatives by some Companies

- *Google Arts and Culture:* The online platform of high-resolution images and videos of artworks and cultural artifacts partnered with museums around the world to organise virtual tours. To honour all the corona warriors, it created a segment named as Healthcare Heroes.
- *Burger King:* Flexible solutions were offered for customers who were dealing with financial challenges. There were many families who formerly relied on school lunches to feed their children, so one of the American Multinational chain made an effort in this regard. Fast food restaurants chain Burger King offered to provide two free kids meals to Americans who make any purchase through the Burger King app.
- *Tesco:* British multinational groceries Tesco introduced a campaign to encourage families to bond over food during lockdown while sharing and dedicative dishes to friends and acquaintances via Instagram. The campaign of Tesco was both a motivating and imbibed the products in the mind of the consumers.
- *Amazon Prime:* When all the business houses were thinking of something new, even Amazon Prime joined the league and promised customers to deliver grocery in just two hours.
- *Hyundai:* South Korean multinational automobile Company Hyundai accepted the new normal changes with open hands. They introduced a digital Ad campaign where they emphasised that safety is of prime importance for Hyundai.
- *UPS:* The supply chain management Company United Parcel Services initiated a new concept during pandemic where they UPS Lab Specimen Pickup Point for shipping patient's specimen being tested. This gave more business to UPS in terms of the number of customer base.
- *General Motors:* Michigan based Multinational General Motors announced that they have partnered with Ventec Life System to produce Critical Care Ventilators. When the automotive industry was facing a stagnation in the sales, they opted for different routes of keeping the business alive.
- *Uber:* The ride sharing service provider Uber modified the Mobile Application which was used for booking rides across different destinations. After considering the rules for social distancing and safety norms, Uber share services were likely to be discontinued in 2020. Uber adopted an alternative and ensured the safety of the customers by adding few checklists in the mobile application like whether the driver is wearing masks and maintaining social distance etc. In addition to it, Uber also did not charge fee for cancellation of trips in order to increase the number of riders during and after pandemic.

## **5. Conclusion**

Adaption to a new era cannot be done overnight. Organisations have been striving hard to adopt to the new needs. As the business world changed, acceptance of survival strategies in new normal were comparatively easy for companies who were more transparent and flexible. But traditional business houses need longer to adapt to change. Companies need to be sensitive to the needs of the audience. Apparently, all the industries, be it Information technology industry, automobile industry, FMCG industry, insurance industry, iron and steel industry, cement industry are on a pathway of adjusting in the 'new normal' era. Moreover, the its not only a concern at producer end but also a cause of concern at consumer end. Consumers are also making efforts to accept the new ways of buying products and availing services.

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