

An investigation into Transformation of the business strategies to meet post Covid Challenges

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Abstract

COVID has affected the global economy, businesses and people across the world. However, digitisation is helping a lot of businesses for adapting themselves and overcoming this situation which has been causing havoc. The growing use of technological advancements in the day to day lives of businesses and people for facing this unexpected situation shows the process of digital acceleration. There are a lot of studies which study the effect of a digital transformation process in different businesses. The effect of globalisation is being expected to transverse to every domain and would continue to encourage the emerging digital tools and services on the basis of the principles of flexibility. Also, new ways to work would help in fostering the need for more talent irrespective of the geographical location of people. Moreover, privacy as well as cyber security would become the main elements which would support an integrated development of internet of things solutions, big data, robotics and artificial intelligence. A sample of 191 respondents in which 54.97% “male” and 45.03% “female” has been considered by a “structured questionnaire” created on five-point interval scale.

Keywords: COVID-19, impact of COVID on business, global economy, pandemic and its effect on global economy

Introduction

This pandemic has led to a number of challenges for businesses in different sectors. A lot of businesses have been compelled to adapt themselves to the new internal work procedures and have felt a very strong pressure for offering commodities through the digital means. Businesses are experiencing profound Transformation and within a very short span of time have implemented solution with the help of digital tools and technologies. Also, it's become very important to redesign and realign management as well as collaboration models for ensuring that no one within the business lags behind or feels left out from the process of digitisation (**Fernando and Monteiro, 2020**).

Experts state that the main factor responsible for teamwork being effective for fighting this pandemic has been inclusion of the team members in facing the major challenges in the business. However this process has become even more complex now with information flow which naturally flows in same physical segment. It's becoming more and more difficult to reach people in an efficient and an agile manner.

The digital Transformation of businesses is mainly characterised by a fusion of sophisticated technologies as well as an integration of the digital and the physical systems. Innovative models of business, new processes of production and development of knowledge based commodities prevail. Even though the process of digitisation isn't new, the opportunities and the challenges which are related to it are continuously evolving. Before this pandemic, the challenges which were posed to the digital Transformation were mainly focussed on the 4th industrial revolution which was associated with concepts of Industry 4.0, Web 4.0 and IoT or Internet of Things. The challenges were related to disruption of technologies and disruption of the concept and the pace of digital Transformation.

In times of COVID, the challenges have been completely exposed and it has become crucial to involve the whole organisation as well as stakeholders for this process. Further, the speed at which these changes are happening is also exponential. The businesses had to forget their previous position and just do it. Inevitably, the businesses are now moving along path of a digital revolution. However several studies show that the businesses even the ones which are considered to be advanced in terms of digital Transformation aren't yet prepared completely for facing the challenges related to digital Transformation (**Almeida, 2017**).

Literature Review

When everything becomes a priority, nothing remains to be a priority. And with business executives struggling to figure out the post-pandemic business environment, a lot of them are finding themselves leading from the grey spot of indecision.

2 years back, relatively very few business executives considered the competencies of crisis management, cost management, enterprising agility, innovations, workforce resiliency and cash flow management to be critically important for their business. However, today top business executives are following a different suite altogether (**Hasanat et.al. 2020**).

New researches state that business executives are prioritising all such efficiencies. In the coming 2 years, the findings of these researches depict that we can expect another exponential shift in terms of prioritisation. The business executives are clearly stating that they are planning to stress on the safety of their workforce and their security, enterprise agility as well as cost management (**Maresova, 2018**).

The leaders however are expecting a lot more from the transformation efforts being made. They have identified workforce resilience and competitiveness as some of the main benefits they wish for from the ongoing digitisation. The Transformation is picking up pace amongst most of the businesses. However, strikingly, a better focus on the Transformation looks to be happening at the expense of client relationships as well as other opportunities of partnering with the customers (**Rachinger et. al., 2019**).

Whether reflecting on the current situation or the future plan, the top business leaders need to speed up the process of Transformation. They also need to increase flexibility and need to amplify it dramatically. The previous barriers are also being brushed up under this pressure of disruption, which is rapidly evolving the expectations of the customers and an unexpected speed of change is being witnessed. There also seems to be renewed clarity in terms of customer's perspectives. Motivation isn't so aspirational, it has become existential.

The researchers suggest 5 key epiphanies from the top business executives for post pandemic environment of business, providing new perspectives regarding digital Transformation, future of the work, sustainability as well as transparency. Together, they would offer the playbook for the proactive leaders who are trying to understand that working the old ways won't work now (**Grewal et. al., 2020**).

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This pandemic has sped up the digital Transformation. Most of the businesses state that they have adopted the initiatives which were previously not welcomed by their teams. This huge cultural shift is quite defensive. It is reducing the costs which is one of the biggest benefits of transformation initiatives.

Dependence on the technical platforms has become more acute. These platforms along with corporate teams using them are delivering results. It is not true that the new technology has been discovered all of a sudden or implemented all of a sudden. Rather these tools have been already in use and they had been deployed to their fuller capacity. The previous barriers for implementation used to be shoved apart unceremoniously and people who moves initially realised results immediately (**Kim, 2020**).

COVID has changed the way organisations across the globe are operating now. Some of the businesses consider that this pandemic has caused a permanent change in the organisational strategies they are following. Other have adjusted their approach to the change management and an accelerated automation of process. Some of these businesses also acknowledge that a shift towards more cloud business activities is inevitable (**Hongwei and Lloyd, 2020**).

The business executives have now become even more trusting about the efficiency of technology. Thus, they are now moving ahead with the digitisation. They also indicate that they plan for recovery post pandemic for including investing in technologies such as IoT, AI, cloud and block chain. The benefits have long extolled by the technophiles and they are being embraced across business leaderships. For stacking the deck, the businesses have to be absolutely ensure that their teams are resilient, capable, adaptable and efficient to compete with the technologies in the future (**Castro-González, Bande and Fernández-Ferrín, 2021**).

While the business executives are planning for an expansion of all of their technical competencies during the upcoming digital Transformation, their success depend on their human resources. Some researchers have confirmed that business competencies which account for maximum portion of a business's expected success are the ones which revolve around their employees as well as customers like training of the workforce and client experience management.

However, remarkably, such factors might have eluded the business executives. Most of the business executives are expecting transformed customer behaviour for continuing post COVID, trading the person to person contact for extended shopping and interactions with the customers online. Towards that end, maximum business executives consider that user experience management would be the first priority in the next couple of years. And yet, better and improved customer service would sit in bottom half of benefits which the business executives are seeking from the digital Transformation (**Caballero, 2021**).

More than half of the business executives consider that they would choose the AI based client engagement tools for achieving their goals. In some of the businesses, chatbots are managing upwards of maximum consumer assistance traffic now during this pandemic. How they're going to enhance the customer experience is a matter of concern. In case the business executives conflict as to how they would connect with the customers, they are not doing justice with the employees either. While the safety of the workforce, their skills as well as flexibility are considered to be important, satisfaction of the employees has been simply deprioritised. The business executives are recognising that employees need to be under immense pressure. Thus, they are contending that the wellbeing of their employees is amongst their top priorities (**David et. al., 2020**).

It wouldn't enough for the businesses to recover the revenues gradually with the crisis deepening. They will have to rethink fundamentally about their revenue profile, for positioning themselves for long term and for getting ahead of their competitors. For doing it, the businesses need to shape up (**Nicola et. al., 2020**).

Something most important here is identifying the primary sources for revenue. On this basis, make never or now moves which need to be realised before the start of recovery phase. This might include the introduction of the targeted campaigns for winning the loyalty of the customers back, developing better customer experiences concentrated on improved safety and health, adjusting the pricing, promotions strategies on the basis of the latest data, reallocation of expenditure for proven sources of growth, reskilling and training of the workforce for supporting remote selling, developing flexible terms of payments, digitisation of the sales channels and automation process for freeing up the sales representatives for selling more.

Once in place, all these measures will have to be prioritised for reflecting their effect on the earnings and ability of the company for executing quickly (**Hamilton, 2020**).

Driven mainly by urgency, sales and marketing leaders are ready to embrace the agile techniques. They are adapting to quick video calls for solving issues and giving remote team's additional authority for making

decisions. It is also important for the cross functional employees to not lose their sight on long term and for avoiding panic reactions (Virginia, and Barragán-Quintero, 2020).

Objectives

1. To know how business strategies are transformed to meet the post COVID challenges
2. To know what transformations are made in business strategies to meet the challenges post COVID.

Methodology

Present study is exploratory in nature. A survey method was used to collect the primary data from the respondents, for which a structured questionnaire was developed and used to validate the hypothesis of this study. A sample of 191 respondents has been considered. The sampling method was purposive sampling. Mean and t-test was applied to find out appropriate results of the study.

Findings of the Study

Table 1 shows that number of Male respondents are 54.97% and female respondents are 45.03%, respondents. With reference to the income of respondents, 5 to 10 lac were 36.13%, 10 to 15 lac were 26.70% and 15 lac and above were 37.17%. Regarding Size of business, Small-scale business were 38.22%, Medium-scale business were 35.08%, and Large-scale business were 26.70%.

Table1 Demographic profile of the respondents

Variables	Number of respondents	%age
Gender		
Male	105	54.97%
Female	86	45.03%
Total	191	100%
Income		
5 lac to 10 lac	69	36.13%
10 lac to 15 lac	51	26.70%
15 lac and above	71	37.17%
Total	191	100%
Size of business		
Small-scale business	73	38.22%
Medium-scale business	67	35.08%
Large-scale business	51	26.70%
Total	191	100%

Table 2 Transformation of Business strategies to meet the post COVID challenges

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean Score
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1.	Business must be restarted and reset, not just opened	4.33
2.	Adoption of Omni channel integration to initiate contactless services	4.26
3.	Future workforce must be reshaped to achieve required digital fluency	3.71
4.	Non-core tasks must be digitalized and automated	4.22
5.	Flow of the products must be made flexible and distribution disruptions must be avoided	4.39
6.	Maintain close contact with the customers would increase sales	3.63
7.	Especially dedicated team for crisis management	4.11
8.	Collaboration with public relation, legal and regulatory teams	4.27
9.	Stabilizing supply chain, reducing costing and increasing productivity	4.01
10.	AI backed tools and conversation platforms to deal with the course	4.20

Table 2 shows the Mean value for the statements with reference to the “Transformation of Business strategies to meet the post COVID challenges.” With reference to the first statement, “Business must be restarted and reset, not just opened” has recorded the mean value of 4.33; next statement “Adoption of Omni channel integration to initiate contactless services” the mean value is 4.26. Third statement is “Future workforce must be reshaped to achieve required digital fluency” the mean value for this statement is 3.71; another statement is “Non-core tasks must be digitalized and automated” the mean value for this statement is noted as 4.22. Fifth statement is “Flow of the products must be made flexible and distribution disruptions must be avoided” 4.39; next statement of the topic is “Maintain close contact with the customers would increase sales” the mean value is recorded as 3.63. Seventh statement is “Especially dedicated team for crisis management” the mean value is 4.11; statement “Collaboration with public relation, legal and regulatory teams” has the mean value of 4.27. The mean value is 4.01 for statement “Stabilizing supply chain, reducing costing and increasing productivity” and the last statement is “AI backed tools and conversation platforms to deal with the course” the mean value is noted as 4.20.

Table 3 Transformation of Business strategies to meet the post COVID challenges

Sr. No.	Statements	Mean Score	t Value	Sig
1.	Business must be restarted and reset, not just opened	4.33	13.886	0.000
2.	Adoption of Omni channel integration to initiate contactless services	4.26	17.723	0.000
3.	Future workforce must be reshaped to achieve required digital fluency	3.71	2.997	0.002
4.	Non-core tasks must be digitalized and automated	4.22	10.598	0.000
5.	Flow of the products must be made flexible and distribution disruptions must be avoided	4.39	10.309	0.000
6.	Maintain close contact with the customers would increase sales	3.63	1.820	0.035

7.	Especially dedicated team for crisis management	4.11	10.040	0.000
8.	Collaboration with public relation, legal and regulatory teams	4.27	12.375	0.000
9.	Stabilizing supply chain, reducing costing and increasing productivity	4.01	7.172	0.000
10.	AI backed tools and conversation platforms to deal with the course	4.20	9.259	0.000

Table 3 shows that all the above statements with reference to the Transformation of Business strategies to meet the post COVID challenges are found to be significant, as the t-value for all the statements are positive and significance value is less than 0.05.

Conclusion

The repercussions as well as speed of the technological disruptions in businesses are increasing. They have sped up due to the pandemic.

Businesses need to prepare themselves for this huge challenge and towards this end, it is also important for them to foster the culture of technological innovations which include the employees of the businesses too. In fact this pandemic has accelerated process of digitisation not just in the businesses but even in people as well as public entities. The huge challenge for the managers is getting themselves involved in the change while trying to run their business facing different types of uncertainties. Further, it's also important to highlight here that the 3 main aspects concerning the society and the labour, sales and market and technology are inter connected with each other. "Mean" and "t-test" been applied to identify the Transformation of Business strategies to meet the post COVID challenges.

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