Revised MBA Project Proposal

**Project Title:** Responding to Covid-19 disruptions: an omnichannel retail planning and implementation strategy.

**Submission:** September 2021



**Scope of the Project:**

Titas Footwear is a regional footwear retailer with presence in the state of West Bengal in India. Pre-covid-19 the company operated 34 retail outlets in the state. The Covid-19 pandemic saw a sudden lockdown implemented in India. On 23rd March 2020, the entire country was placed under strict lockdown for several months. The company’s activities were completely halted, and entire operations was left on an uncertain outlook. The restrictions were gradually eased in the month of month of June. When the markets started to eventually start the management witnessed an unprecedented drop in footfalls and billings. The company which operates on both franchise and direct retail model had to close fourteen active stores. The general business volume in the now open stores remains interrupted due to the deadly second wave and remains much below the adequate breakeven level.

The management decided to develop a strategy to plan a transition to omnichannel retail. The pandemic has accelerated the change in the overall retail landscape. The current effects of the global pandemic continue to be disruptive and unpredictable. The sudden closures and interruptive decline in public activity demands brands to position themselves between pure brick-and-mortar and pure digital. The company decided to engage a consultant to help them scope the requirement towards implementing an omnichannel retailing strategy.

The consultant will scope a business model innovation process by understanding the impact of the pandemic on the evolving customer behaviour. Through their research they will identify the factors influencing customer’s experience. They will build a case for transition towards the omnichannel strategy and identify service and efficiency challenges across the multiple channels. They will explore the potential of cross-channel integration through multiple and integrated touchpoints. The consultant will take a multistage approach to enable them to assess the firm’s current position, identify gaps in their strategy and develop appropriate actions to transition to the next level.

**Deliverable:**  To analyse the strategic and customer priorities and evaluate the underlying drivers of value to enable the retailer’s omnichannel marketing strategy in response to the current covid-19 disruptions.

**Benefits & Impact Statement:** True omnichannel approaches place the customer at the core by creating a seamless and connected experience. Innovations in information delivery and product fulfilment are crucial. Covid-19 has dramatically driven consumers to adopt both on-and-offline channels in tandem and these purchasing behaviours will become engrained among consumers. Online channels will remain an essential way to research, compare and hunt deals before choosing to shop in store or online.

The report will deeply investigate brand familiarity, customisation, perceived value and technology readiness at Titas footwear. It will evaluate the organisational factors for omnichannel management success and through a cross-functional alignment across the multistage four-level pathway, develop a strategy to transition to omnichannel marketing. The impact will be measured through like-period comparative reporting by the sponsor's C-suite executives at the end of the consultant's engagement.

**Intervention Question:**  How can a footwear retailer transition to an omnichannel retail strategy to mitigate the disruption caused by challenging market conditions?

**Methodology:**  The objective of the project is to evaluate an implementation plan to transition to omni channel retail. The scope of the project encompasses delivering a business model transformation by understanding the consumer and market scenarios, revamping the internal organisation, and aligning the business processes to suitably delivery the planned transformation.

The research methodology of the management project will be primarily influenced by the interpretivist paradigm. It will, however, use mixed-method methodology using a concurrent triangulation design strategy. The use of two different methods will be applied to corroborate and cross-validate project findings.

For this purpose, in-context interview and online survey methods will be employed. Understandings garnered by these observations will provide context to the management team. The quantitative data will be generated through semi-structured interviews. Interviews of four managers in the company from the marketing /sales and logistic departments will be conducted to understand the enterprise readiness to deal with the channel integration and logistic challenges in the Covid-19 impacted environment. This will be supported by 6 interviews of consumers selected through typical case type of purposive sampling. The interviews will aim to understand and create a customer journey pre- and post-covid.

Since the research is based on mixed-methodology method, data will be collected from close-ended online surveys selecting participants using stratified random sampling. These consumers will be probed to understand brand familiarity, technology readiness and varied aspects of customer experience. The findings of both methods will be analysed, corroborated, and applied to create a retail store network reassessment and optimization that suits Titas Footwear business model, which has been badly affected by Covid-19 pandemic.

**Data Sources**

Primary Data

1. Face to face interviews with 4 Titas Footwear managers,
2. Online interviews with 6 individual customers.
3. Online surveys of 30 customers.

Secondary Data

1. MIS Reports (people, business processes, and transaction)
2. Commercial Marketing Research Data.

**Aspects of MBA Syllabus Used**

The project will draw knowledge from the Strategic Management, Operations Management, Supply chain management and Digital Marketing and Strategy modules

**Proposed Chapter Headings and Sub-Headings**

1. Introduction
   1. The Company and its Operations
   2. The Impact of Covid-19 Disruptions in Modern Retail.
   3. The Operational Challenge & Project Objectives
2. Literature Review

2.1 Omnichannel Business Model and Foundational Capabilities.

* 1. Selecting Digital Transformation Path.
  2. Channel and Integration Issues.
  3. Retail Supply Chain and Fulfilment

1. Methodology
   1. Methodological Approach
   2. Data Collection
   3. Ethics
   4. Validity, Reliability and Generalisability.
   5. Summary.
2. Research Findings
   1. Changes in Customer Shopping Journey before, during and after Pandemic.
   2. Strategic-centric, Customer-centric, Organisation centric and Technologic centric views on delivering Digital Transformations.
   3. Factors influencing omni-channel experience.
   4. Key Capabilities to Support the Omnichannel Ecosystem.
3. Discussion
   1. Framework for measuring Omnichannel Performance.
   2. Channel Integration Model
   3. Retail Store network reassessment and optimization
   4. Performance management framework for Omnichannel Retail Supply-chain.
   5. Resilience and Sustainability through Enterprise Modernisation.
4. Conclusion
   1. Recommendations
   2. Limitations
5. References

1. Appendices

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