Chapter 8: Conclusion

In this concluding section, the author echoes on the overall value-add of this thesis by means of summarizing the key findings of this research. The author assessed the current landscape of literature in SCM, competitive advantage business information systems, big data and analytics, thereby arriving at the gap and leading to the research objectives.

The introductory chapter gives a background and motivation to this research and explains the research objective. The theoretical underpinnings that helped establish the research gap are detailed in the theoretical background section. This section covered the various drivers of competitive advantage since the inception of SCM, through the development of various performance measures, business information systems like ERP, CRM, to the new age digital revolution attributed to Internet.

The researcher adopted the philosophy of pragmatism and used mixed methods in this research and the justification of choice of this method is explained in section 4.0.

Since the research focusses its attention on traditional consumer products companies in India that sell their products through traditional distribution network and modern trade, the research findings give evidence that such firms lack access to end-consumer knowledge as they do not sell direct-to-consumer. This way they lose out on the edge that their online retail counterparts have due to their sheer nature of business.

As we’ve seen, the research states multiple times that e-commerce has already transformed several industries, including consumer. The Internet has changed the dynamics of the game between competition across industries. Internet enabled multiple players to come up with various business models to transact with consumers. The mass adoption of digital technology has led to fundamental changes in consumers’ shopping behaviours. Tablets and smartphones are making it easy for consumers to shop for products whether they are on the couch, on the go, or in the aisle. These devices are blurring the line between browsing and shopping by allowing consumers to access information, compare prices, and make purchases almost instantaneously.

With multiple devices like laptops, mobile phones, tablets gaining and exponential adoption globally, volume and variety of information—called Big Data, being created thus is massive. Companies have already started making their presence on web for trading purposes. Platforms like Amazon and Flipkart have made a strong footing into the Indian market that propelled the growth of online retailing in India. Large companies have started using Business
Analytics for data-driven decision making around all their processes. Theory has enough evidence that Internet driven businesses are more advantaged than their traditional counterparts as the former has tremendous access to granular consumer information like attitudes, behaviour, purchases etc. that they can make use of to tailor their offerings using business analytics.

Research shows that these online intermediaries get their products in front of shoppers earlier than ever before — in some cases, even before consumers explicitly express their intent to buy something. Not just this, in fact, the Internet intermediaries exploit data to gain information asymmetry driven advantages such as performing first degree price discrimination. While there is much research done around online intermediaries on how information rich they are and their capability in using analytics to drive competitive advantage, there is very little research done on Indian traditional consumer goods segment on this subject.

Existing literature in business analytics and information as a source for competitive advantage was used to develop the research questions and formulate the survey and interview questions. This research took a pragmatic stance and used mixed methodology to study the research objective. Both qualitative case studies and a survey driven quantitative descriptive study was used to answer the research questions. The outcome of the research clearly implies that traditional consumer product companies in India fall very short on the research themes viz. customer knowledge measure and analytics measure. The thesis contributes to the discussion on organizing the way forward for traditional businesses and sets them on the path towards competing on analytics and further contributes a framework called ‘Analytics Edge’ that lays the structure for gaining on both customer knowledge measure and becoming an analytics competitor. The framework is highly recommended for traditional Indian companies and SMEs in the consumer products segment as it aligns with the Government of India initiatives on “Digital India”. The thesis proposes going the omni-channel way to the traditional consumer products companies that will help them combine all channels and get a unified 360 degrees view of their customers. By integrating all the channels into one omni-channel ecommerce strategy the traditional businesses in consumer products segment will be providing a smoother, more beneficial experience for their customers. This will help them increase customer loyalty, driving up sales as well as word of mouth marketing of their business.