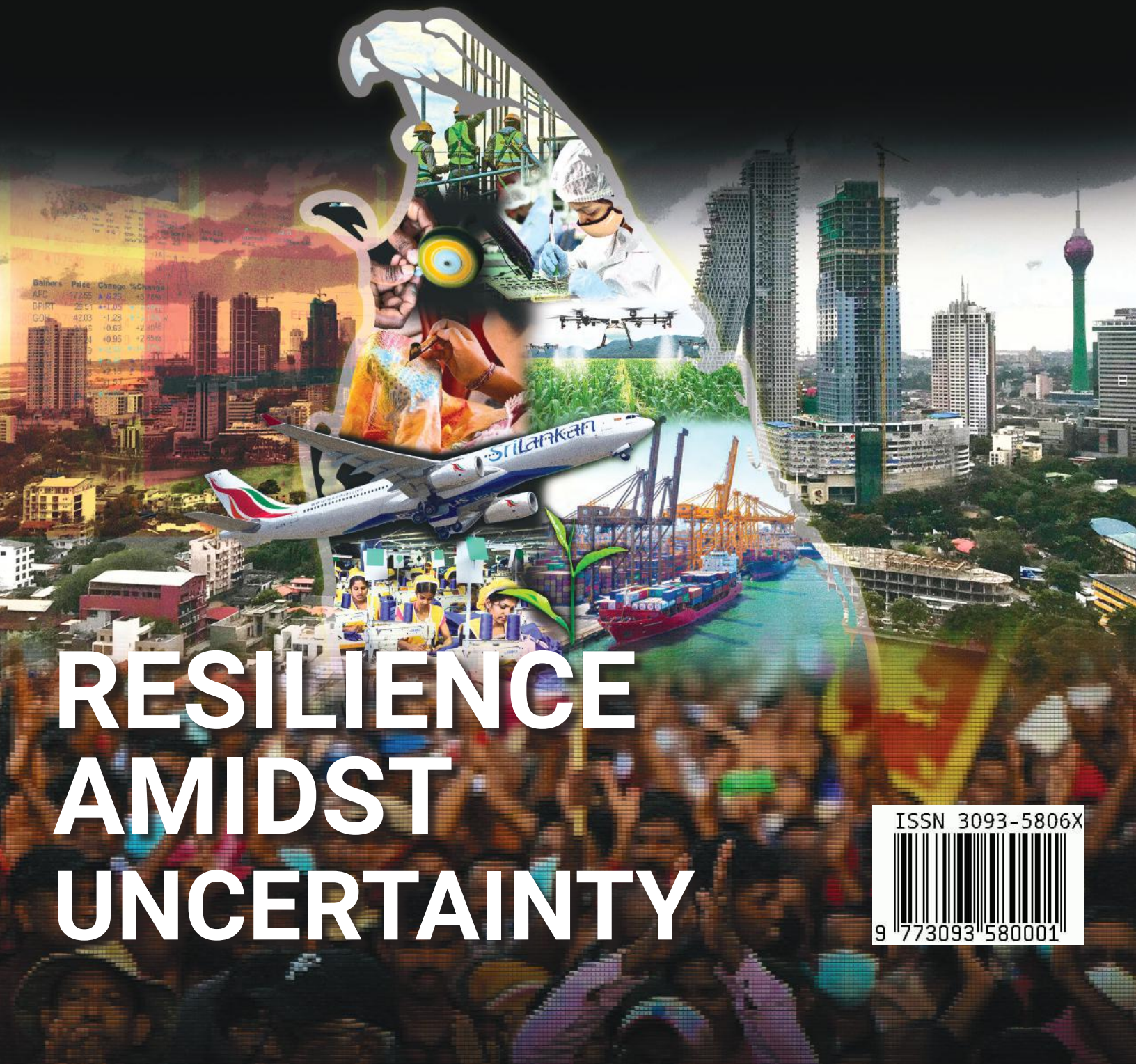


HORIZON BUSINESS

R E V I E W



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RESILIENCE AMIDST UNCERTAINTY

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OWN TOMORROW

Learn, Grow, Lead



ABOUT HORIZON

Horizon Campus is a leading private university in Sri Lanka geared to provide an inspiring learning experience to students within a holistic university atmosphere. The Campus opened its doors marking a cornerstone in the national educational sector of the country, with the aim of delivering a fully-fledged generation to the world of tomorrow.

Horizon Campus offers University Grants Commission recognised 32 accredited degree courses under the six faculties, Faculty of Education, Faculty of Information Technology, Faculty of Law, Faculty of Technology, Faculty of Management and Faculty of Science. Every year, more than 1600 students get enrolled in the academic programmes for Sri Lankan degrees as well as the degrees offered by top universities in UK, USA, and Asia.

We are proud to be approved by the Non-state sector of Ministry of Higher Education, Association of Commonwealth and Asia Pacific Quality Network. The TRIPLE ACCREDITED status of Horizon Campus and other recognition, guarantees you of a nationally and internationally recognized qualification.



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-  Cricket Ground
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Amenities

-  Accommodation
-  Canteen
-  Shuttle Bus Service
-  WiFi-enabled campus

Learning

-  Computer laboratory
-  Library
-  Science laboratory
-  Tissue culture laboratory



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CHAIRMAN'S MESSAGE

Education has always been more than lectures and certifications at Horizon Campus. It is a bridge between personal ambition and collective progress. From day one, our mission has been to empower Sri Lanka's youth to lead with skill, integrity, and purpose.

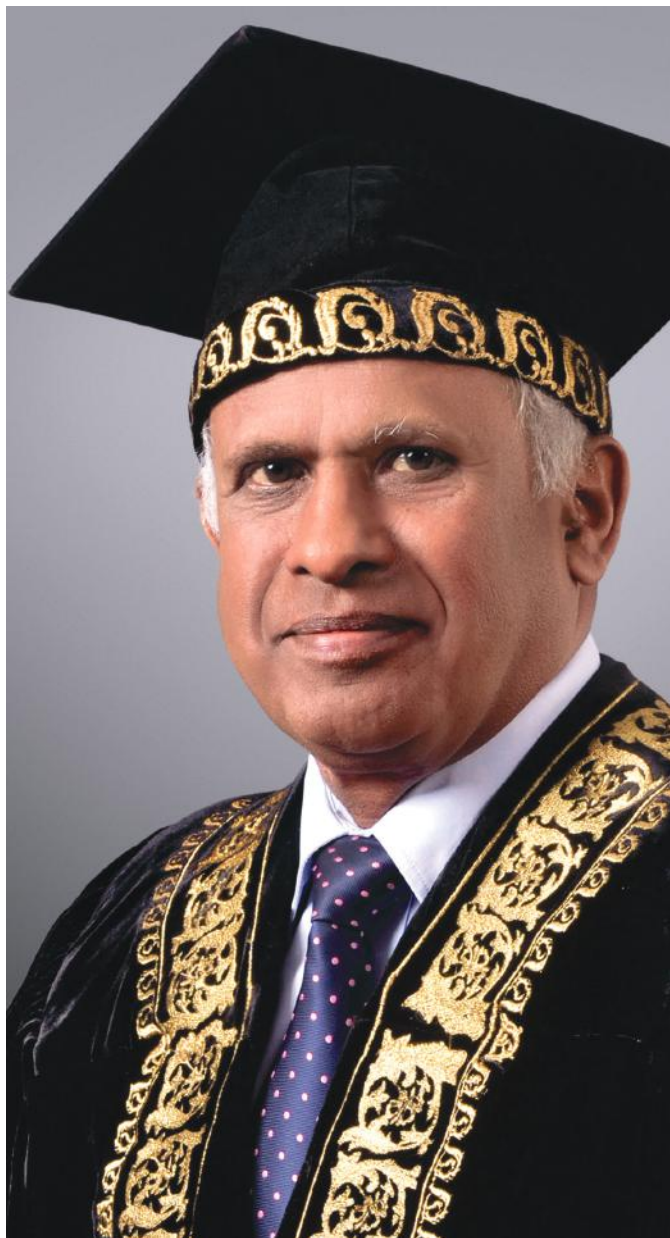
We are proud to be an inclusive institution, offering opportunities to students from across the country and ensuring that talent is never limited by financial or geographic barriers. Our focus extends beyond academics, equipping graduates to contribute meaningfully to society through innovation, entrepreneurship, and ethical leadership.

Horizon Business Review reflects these values. In this edition, you will find insights from business leaders on navigating challenging times, alongside highlights of the Faculty of Management's projects, events, and achievements. It is both a record of our progress and an inspiration for what lies ahead.

To our students, faculty, alumni, and partners, thank you for being part of the Horizon story and for helping us shape the future together.

Mr. Upul Daranagama
Chairman
Horizon Campus

VICE-CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE



At Horizon Campus, we are redefining what it means to learn, grow, and lead in today's world. As the Vice Chancellor, I am privileged to lead an institution where academic excellence goes hand in hand with social responsibility and forward-thinking leadership.

Horizon Campus is more than just a place of learning; it is a space for transformation. Our commitment to blended and inclusive education, research with national impact, and academic integrity defines who we are. We strive to shape well-rounded individuals through experiential learning, soft skills development, and mentorship.

We take great pride in our expanding research culture, especially within the fields of Management, Science, IT, Technology, Education, Law and Nursing. For us, research is not an abstract concept but a powerful tool to help solve the most urgent challenges facing Sri Lanka.

Our growing network of international partnerships offers students global exposure, academic mobility, and access to cutting-edge knowledge, all while being grounded in the core values of our nation.

In this magazine, readers will not only gain insights from business experts on how to navigate turbulent times, but also witness the range of impactful projects and events led by the Faculty of Management. These contributions reflect the resilience, creativity, and determination that define our academic community.

This magazine captures our progress, our passion, and our promise, and it stands as a testament to the collective vision we hold for the future of higher education in Sri Lanka.

Prof. S.J.B.A Jayasekera
Vice Chancellor
Horizon Campus

CEO'S MESSAGE



It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to Horizon Campus, a forward-thinking institution where academic excellence meets real-world relevance. Since our establishment in 2008, Horizon has grown into a hub of opportunity, offering globally recognized programs across seven dynamic faculties.

What truly sets us apart is our commitment to nurturing confident, employable graduates. From international affiliations to leadership workshops and industry-linked internships, every element of the Horizon experience is designed to prepare students not just for careers, but for life.

In line with our Strategic Vision 2025, we continue to expand our digital innovation, strengthen research, and deepen our impact through community outreach and scholarships.

This magazine reflects the spirit of that vision. Inside, you'll find insights from business experts on navigating turbulent times, and highlights of the innovative projects and events led by our Faculty of Management. It stands as a celebration of collaboration, resilience, and progress.

We invite you to be a part of this journey, one shaped by ambition, inclusivity, and excellence.

Mr. P. Saravanan
Chief Executive Officer
Horizon Campus

DEPUTY VICE CHANCELLOR'S MESSAGE



I'm delighted to mark this milestone for Horizon Campus with the launch of the Faculty of Management's magazine. At the campus, we take pride in fostering an academic environment where students and staff grow together, not just through lectures and textbooks, but through real conversations, collaboration, and shared experiences. This magazine is a reflection of that spirit.

Inside, you'll find insights from industry experts on how businesses have responded to economic challenges, as well as highlights of the events, projects, and achievements of the Faculty of Management. The content showcases both student and staff contributions, making it a true community effort.

I hope this publication will serve as a source of inspiration and learning for all who read it, from current students and staff to prospective learners and industry partners.

Congratulations to everyone involved in bringing this edition to life!

Dr. Ruwan Perera
Deputy Vice Chancellor
Horizon Campus

DEAN'S MESSAGE



Education is more than the transfer of knowledge, it is a shared commitment to inspire, guide, and cultivate a thriving, supportive community. At Horizon Campus, we don't simply teach; we mentor, inspire, and prepare students to thrive in uncertain times.

Our programs are designed to cultivate analytical thinking, ethical leadership, and cross-disciplinary understanding. We take pride in seeing our graduates leave with not only knowledge, but also clarity, confidence, and compassion.

Horizon Business Review captures this spirit. In these pages, readers will find expert perspectives on navigating turbulent business environments, as well as stories of the Faculty of Management's projects, events, and achievements. It is a celebration of our collective journey, marked by challenges faced, lessons learned, and milestones achieved.

I extend my gratitude to our students, faculty, and partners who make this vibrant community possible. May this publication inspire fresh ideas and continued growth!

Mr. Terence Kahapola Arachchi
Dean – Faculty of Management
Horizon Campus

MESSAGE FROM THE HEAD OF DEPARTMENT



At Horizon Campus, we believe education is more than knowledge, it's about transformation. As Head of Department, I am proud to lead a team of passionate educators committed to shaping not just minds, but futures.

In the Faculty of Management, we foster a learning environment built on curiosity, critical thinking, and practical experience. Our goal is to equip students not only with qualifications, but with the resilience and confidence needed to thrive in an ever-changing world.

This magazine reflects that mission. It brings together expert perspectives on navigating business challenges, while also showcasing the many initiatives, projects, and events led by our faculty. From industry collaborations to student-led activities, these pages celebrate the work we've done and the journey ahead.

A heartfelt thank you to our students and staff for contributing to the energy and excellence of our academic community. We hope Horizon Business Review becomes a lasting source of insight, inspiration, and pride for our community.

Mr. Priyanka Darshana
Head of Department – Faculty of Management
Horizon Campus

MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF



I'm delighted to unveil the inaugural issue of Horizon Business Review at a time when the business environment continues to be shaped by uncertainty, volatility, and rapid transformation.

It is precisely in such moments that the theme of this first issue, "Resilience amidst Uncertainty" becomes not only relevant but vital.

At Horizon Campus, resilience has been a defining thread in our own story. From humble beginnings to becoming a recognized institution of higher learning, we have weathered shifts in the educational landscape, economic challenges, and societal changes, always keeping our mission clear and our commitment to quality unwavering. That journey has taught us that resilience is not an act of endurance alone, but one of intentional reinvention.

This first issue is both a reflection and a celebration of such journeys. It brings together a diverse range of voices, academics, professionals, and students each offering unique insights on leading through chaos, responding to crises, and building sustainable systems. Their stories are evidence that uncertainty, though daunting, also opens space for transformation.

I am deeply grateful to the editorial board, contributors, and interviewees who made this publication a reality. May this be the beginning of many meaningful dialogues to come.

Ms. Thisuri Jayathilake
Senior Lecturer (Grade II) – Faculty of Management
Horizon Campus



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RESILIENCE AMIDST UNCERTAINTY

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Digital Transformation as a Survival Strategy

During Economic Crisis

Mr. Dhanika Perera

Changemaking Entrepreneur, Founder of Helakuru, PayHere, HelaPay & Esana, CEO of Bhasha

Could you walk us through your professional journey and milestones up until current level?

I started the company while I was a university undergraduate at the University of Moratuwa. It was my university project that was commercialized as a software product and that gave me an opportunity to start my own business. And after that, the first product was Sinhala reading solution for mobile devices at a time where it was not possible to read Sinhala on mobile smartphones.

After that first product, I got the idea to come up with my second product which is Helakuru, which is well known for everyone, to give the Sinhala writing capability also. And that's how the company started, and my entrepreneurial life started. And for two years we operated just as a virtual company without having any office or you know any physical place.



But, I formed a team with my colleagues, me and my team worked for it while studying at the university. And the first milestone is after that, during that university time, we could win several awards.

And then after passing out from the university, I started an office in Kalutara back in 2013 and we began the full-time operation, right.

So that's where I became a leader to a company or a CEO. I started my career as a CEO also for my own company. And after that, we started making more and more products and gaining more and more recognitions.

And few of the other milestones is, after Helakuru, we expanded into this FinTech area, financial technology area and built another spin-off company as PayHere, offering payment gateway services for Sri Lankan merchants.

And then actually, we expanded our Helakuru-based product portfolio and launching several products like Esana, real-time news service, HelaPay, Sri Lankan digital payment method. And likewise, my entrepreneurial life expanded into several areas.

In 2017, we moved to a new office and right now we are in that office. And throughout those years, I have won several entrepreneurial awards and have won more than 25 awards for our products. And that's how the entrepreneurial life continued.

To better understand about your business, could you share a summary of the service you provide to your customers?

We are a digital innovations company where we develop, market and provide customer service for our own software products that we produce and market it to the Sri Lankan audience. Those software products or software innovations, we provide to the market, serve to the market in three different segments.

One is targeting the consumers. Products like Helakuru, Esana, HelaPay, those are targeted towards consumer audiences. And then, from them, we provide different kinds of services like single input and real-time news, digital payment facilities, likewise.

And then there's the second segment, the B2B segment, where we serve businesses. That is done through a different set of brands like PayHere, ShopHere, Events Here. There's a product portfolio there where we cater the business demands, especially to facilitate online payments related needs.

And then there's our third segment, the kids' segment, where we provide digital education or online e-learning kind of solutions for the kids. So, those three are our target markets where we offer software products or digital products. And we handle, our team handle the entire process behind that.



Coming up with new ideas and designing them, developing them, and then marketing it, launching and marketing it to the relevant segment, the target audience. And then after they started using our products, providing the necessary customer service for them to help using our products. Those are our products and services that we offer as a company.

Many companies and businesses used digital transformation strategies to survive the business in the digital economic crisis. So, what point did you realize that digital transformation was necessary for your company and business to survive in the economic crisis?

When it comes to digital transformation now, we didn't have nothing much to do because since we are a digital company providing digital services and solutions for customers. Anyways, almost all our processes were digitalized already.

We were aligned to the digital transformation from the day one of the company. But during the economic crisis, we realized that we must be more flexible and use more digital transformation to improve or to work out our processes which were somewhat, they were due to some dependencies. We had some paper-based processes at that time.

For an example, now from Payhere, we facilitate Sri Lankan merchants to accept payments online. They are the onboarding process. Registering a merchant with Payhere was done through mostly online.

They must go to our website and sign up online. But since it is a financial service, we had to work with a partner bank to provide that service. That partner bank always required the hard copies of the application or the signed agreements to be handed over to the bank.

But during that COVID season and due to the challenges faced at that situation, we could bypass that and completely digitalize that which reduces our cost as well and improve the efficiency and reduces the time taken to do that process. Even during the economic crisis, while we embrace digital transformation in many aspects, we actually



paid more focus on adding more value to our products. Because what happened with the economic crisis was people's affordability got very lowered down so that they started spending only for the very necessary stuff but cut off their extra expenditure.

So, that it was a very tough time for us as well because most of the product services we provide are not necessities but value-added things for their lives. We noticed a severe drop in our revenues, our sales and all that. But what we had to do is to reduce our cost, to use more digitalization and keep our cost at a minimal level.

And then we focused on adding more value to our products so that at least even though we cannot leverage or capitalize it at that moment due to the people's unaffordability, but at least when the economic crisis returns back or reset to the normal, we would be able to leverage the value additions that we do to our products

and services during that time. That was the strategy we followed to minimize our cost and to survive in that economic crisis period.

What challenges did you face when implementing digital transformation strategies and how did your business and company employers face it?

Maybe it is different for many of the other companies but since we were a digital-first company from the very beginning as all our products and services are also digital and we serve in this digital environment.

As an IT company who is familiar with digital technologies and digital processes, it was not much hard for us to embrace digitalization at that period. There was nothing new for the team and the employees, the digital transformation because we started not doing it due to the economic crisis. But from the day one, since we are a digital technology company, we were used to that. There were not many challenges in that case.

Considering that digital literacy and technical access can be a limitation for someone in Sri Lanka, how did you manage to bridge this gap? And what strategies did you use to implement to make your platform user-friendly and accessible for any users including those with lower digital proficiency?

From the very beginning, from the start of Helakuru, one of the strategies that we followed was to make their lives easier as possible by making our products, making our software user experiences as simple as possible. Simplicity is one of the core strengths that we have.

Our products are much user-friendly than the other digital services or digital products out there when it comes to the Sri Lankan context. And we always actually enable them to interact with our products and services in their own local language, Sinhala or Tamil, so that we could, in one side, we could bridge the language barrier.





We could overcome the language barrier and bridge that digital divide which happened due to not much of the technicalities but because of the language. For an example, many of the other software solutions, products, apps, they are mostly available in English language, even though person who can manage operating this technically are hesitant to use those kinds of services because of their language barriers. We bridge that gap by localizing everything and giving a very user-friendly experience to our own language and when we introduce new stuff, we always try to reduce the steps that they must do to get something done. Making it simple motivates them or encourage them to more and more use our digital services and that strategy worked very well. And, in another aspect, we always actually set up our, customer feedback channel where the users can directly give feedback to us.

We provide our customer service through live chat, through work lines, through WhatsApp likewise. We made it so easy for them to get our support or contact us very easily and get our human support to get something done. That worked as a successful feedback loop where if people have any difficulties in using our services, if they face any issues, they contact us, they provide us feedback.

That feedback was very much helpful for us to improve our products and services to make them more user-friendly, there is also another strategy we followed, getting user feedback as much as possible from the users who use our products and services and combine them to our value chain and improve our products and services based on that feedback, those two are the main things that we did, offering them very simplistic user experience in their own language and then collecting their feedback and improving our products continuously, not just actually releasing one product and keeping it forever but continuously evolving, continuously improving our products with the customer feedback.

What benefit did your business get after the digital transformation and how it impacts to employers and overall business performance and how customer respond to it?

Now since we are a digital technology company, we didn't have anything new to do to bring digital transformation into the organization because we were already used to that. All the employees were familiar with that, it was not much new to them, but due to the

economic crisis, we introduced little bit more stuff to be digital, not actually follow the manual rails and manual processes but to make it more digital. It impacted in more efficiency when it comes to the performance of the team, they could achieve more outcome within a very short time of period that means their efficiency went up and customer satisfaction went up because when we use digital transformation to provide our users quality service, right? And you know digitize all these customer feedback channels, we could provide more satisfactory service to our users. Their satisfaction level, the customer satisfaction also went up due to that.

How does your business see its role in the future of Sri Lanka's digital economy?

We believe that we have a very major role to play because we always actually played the role of a digital facilitator for the masses of Sri Lanka. Not only the tech savvy people, not only for the English people with English literacy, but we are a technology provider or technology facilitator who could bridge this gap between the rural areas and everyone. Even our vision, we have always set our corporate vision as empowering masses digitally. All our products, all our services what we do is aligned with that vision to empower masses digitally.

In this journey to transform Sri Lanka into you know a digital economy, we contributed to it in various aspects. One thing is digitalizing the communication, you know due to Helakuru right now everyone in Sri



Lanka irrespective of their geography, race or anything they have been able to freely communicate in digital media. Social media and all that, that is one aspect. And then when it comes to digital economy, the digital transactions, we have been able to facilitate billions of transactions through our PayHere payment gateway facility and then Helapay, the digital payment method. We have been able to empower masses to digitalize their payments, digitalize their transactions in that sense and, we have been able to empower them with information when it comes to our Esana news service. Right now, people get access to information in real time, they don't have to wait until the night to see news or tomorrow morning to see the newspaper. Right now, everyone gets updated of what's happening in the country, the information is delivered to them in real time, that's another part that we are empowering our masses.

And, as one of our upcoming projects, we are expanding to the mobility sector as well, digital mobility, the transport sector. So there also we are planning to digitalize that to eliminate this you know cash-based taxi hailing and digitalize it as much as possible. So, with all these aspects, I think as an organization we have a bigger role to play in our country's journey towards a digital economy.



What advice would you like to provide for anyone interested to start a new business or company under the term of digital transformation strategy?

Now Sri Lanka is way behind the world when it comes to digital transformation. There are so many things to be happen, there are so many things to be digitalized when it comes to how our organizations, how our government and how our consumers get things done. Still all these three parties, governments, consumers and businesses, all these three parties use more manual stuff than digital processors.

The world has gone so long, everything has been digitalized, and they are enjoying the benefits out of that, more efficiency, more productivity, more satisfaction, everything. Since we are way behind but we can see, nowadays we see a lot of traction or a lot of hype towards digital transformation and everyone is trying to that including the government. So that I think it's a great opportunity for the new entrepreneurs, new startups to leverage those opportunities and fill those gaps in the digitalization journey of our country.

Because it is us that must provide solutions to digitalize all these processes, how businesses deal with customers, how government deal with businesses and citizens, how citizens deal with buy and consume stuff. For all these things, there are so many more gaps or more opportunities in the market to help digitalizing all these places. It's a great opportunity for startups and entrepreneurs so that they can leverage them and come up with new ideas to do it better so that they have a bigger opportunity to run a successful startup, run a successful business in the digital transformation aspect.

So that is my view.

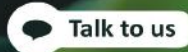
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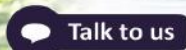
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A Model of Compassion, Communication & Care

Mr. Dakshith Fernando

LOLC -Rajagiriya Head Office



**“Inside LOLC’s
Compassionate
Response to Crisis -How
LOLC Protected Its
People and Proved
That Care is More Than
Just a Policy”**



***“During the lockdown, we didn’t just protect operations
— we protected our people.”***

When the world shut down in early 2020, uncertainty loomed large across every sector. But for LOLC Holdings PLC, one of Sri Lanka’s largest and most respected financial service providers, the moment called for more than business continuity — it demanded human-centered leadership.

While many organizations made tough cuts, reduced staff, or halted benefits, LOLC chose a different route. They doubled down on compassion, communication, and care — with a crisis response strategy that not only safeguarded their operations but became a benchmark for employee well-being in times of uncertainty. We sat down with a senior member of LOLC’s management to understand how the organization responded — and more importantly, how it stayed true to its values when it mattered most.



Essential, but Not Exposed: A Thoughtful Approach to Operations

"In a branch of 25 people, we only brought in 5 — just the essential staff."

Recognizing that financial services were considered an essential sector, LOLC remained operational during national lockdowns — but with caution and careful planning. Only a small percentage of employees were physically present at branches to ensure critical services continued. These individuals were carefully selected based on one key factor: mobility.

"We prioritized those who had personal transport. It meant fewer people relying on public transportation and lower exposure risks."

The company went the extra mile to obtain government-issued travel passes for these staff members, enabling them to commute safely and legally. Meanwhile, non-essential employees were immediately transitioned to remote work, with systems and processes established almost overnight.

This balance between safety and service was the first of many thoughtful decisions made during an incredibly volatile time.

Responding with Compassion: Health, Support & Immediate Action

"If someone tested positive or had close contact, we didn't wait — we reimbursed PCR tests and delivered dry rations to their doorstep."

At a time when healthcare infrastructure was strained and private testing was expensive, LOLC provided full reimbursement for PCR testing through private hospitals. But their care didn't stop at medical expenses.

Employees diagnosed with COVID-19 were immediately supported with food parcels and dry rations delivered directly to their homes — a gesture that provided not just practical help, but also emotional reassurance. LOLC also covered quarantine accommodation costs, including stays at recognized facilities like the Hotels, which offered a safe space for employees to isolate without financial burden.

"These weren't exceptions — they were standard practice. If you were part of LOLC, you knew you were being looked after."

Financial Stability: Protecting Pay, Preserving Dignity

"We never touched salaries or benefits — in fact, we gave bonuses."

While much of the private sector faced layoffs, salary reductions, or the suspension of perks, LOLC stood firm. The company maintained 100% of employee salaries and allowances during the lockdown, making it one of the few financial institutions in the region to do so.

"We understood that stability was mental well-being. People needed to feel secure, not worry about their next paycheck."

In an extraordinary show of solidarity, LOLC even issued bonuses during the lockdown periods — a move that was both generous and strategic. It reinforced the message that employees were valued, not expendable, and helped to retain morale and loyalty during an emotionally and financially draining time.

Communication that Cared: Beyond Memos and Mics

"HR wasn't just sending emails. They were sending care."

One of the most striking elements of LOLC's response was its communication strategy. Rather than formal corporate messaging, the company focused on empathetic, consistent, and human-first communication. The HR department sent out regular internal memos, informative flyers, and WhatsApp updates that weren't just about logistics — they were about connection. These communications were often shared with employees' families as well, acknowledging the extended circles affected by the pandemic.

"We knew that behind every employee was a family — a spouse, parents, children — all equally anxious and uncertain. Reaching out to them made a difference."

This level of transparency and inclusiveness helped reduce fear and build trust across the organization, especially when misinformation and panic were common outside the workplace.

Flexibility in Action: Adapting the Workday, Supporting Mothers

"Flexibility was already in our DNA — but we adapted even more."

Before the pandemic, LOLC already offered flexible hours, allowing employees to arrive between 8:00 and 9:00 a.m., with the workday adjusted accordingly. During the crisis, they introduced further flexibility, ensuring only critical staff reported on-site, while others worked from home. For employees in vulnerable groups, including expecting mothers, remote work was fully encouraged.

"We made sure they didn't have to take the risk. Their health came first."

Even after the height of the pandemic, LOLC retained many of these flexible practices — including



remote access systems and transport facilities — demonstrating a shift from reactive policies to long-term well-being strategies.

Leadership and Culture: The Real Backbone of the Response

"This isn't over — we're still building for the future."

The success of LOLC's crisis response wasn't just about policy — it was about people and culture. Decisions were made by top leadership but executed seamlessly through HR and experienced branch managers, many of whom had spent years understanding the people they led.

"That's why we put senior, capable individuals in leadership positions — they know the people, the work, and the reality on the ground."



This deep trust in middle and frontline leadership enabled quick decisions, empathetic actions, and meaningful support at every level of the organization.

Conclusion: A Legacy of Leadership and Humanity

LOLC's response to the crisis stands as a powerful example of what happens when corporate values are lived, not just written. While many organizations pulled back to protect their bottom line, LOLC leaned into its people — protecting their health, their income, and their peace of mind.

Written by,

**Githmi Maneka
Dulangana A.V.I
Thimalsha Gamage
Anoja Dineshika**



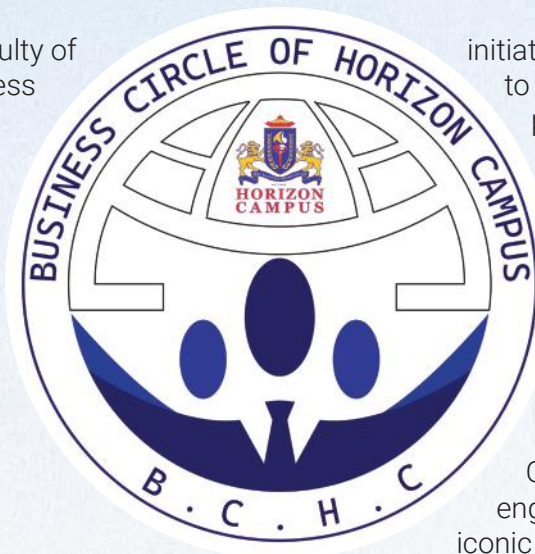
BUSINESS CIRCLE OF HORIZON CAMPUS

The Faculty of Management at Horizon Campus is committed to nurturing future-ready leaders by equipping students with the right blend of knowledge, practical skills, and values required to thrive in today's competitive environment. With a strong emphasis on innovation, critical thinking, and holistic growth, the faculty continuously creates opportunities for students to learn, lead, and contribute meaningfully to society.

Carrying this vision forward, the Faculty of Management established the Business Circle of Horizon Campus. Since its inception, the club has been more than just a student organization; it has been a platform where young minds share ideas, sharpen their talents, and gain exposure to real-world business practices. By extending learning beyond the classroom, the Business Circle helps students bridge the gap between academic theory and professional application.

Over the years, the club has introduced initiatives across the core disciplines of management—finance, marketing, and human resources. These programs broaden perspectives, provide real-world exposure, and prepare students for the demands of the global business landscape. Each activity is carefully designed to ensure participants are informed about emerging trends while building the confidence to lead in the future.

This year was no exception, with the Business Circle continuing its tradition of meaningful engagement. From exploring the complexities of finance to discovering marketing innovations and the future of HR, every



initiative reflected the club's commitment to nurturing well-rounded, future-ready professionals. These programs were further enriched by professionals and industry experts, who shared valuable insights into trends, skills, and diverse career opportunities.

While academic and professional development remain central, the club also values creativity, entertainment, and togetherness. Over the years, it has hosted many engaging events, with one of the most iconic traditions being Numba Haa, the annual musical evening celebrated since the inception of the Business Circle, adding rhythm, talent, and community spirit to campus life.

Together, these initiatives and events have made the journey of the Business Circle truly remarkable. By combining academic enrichment with creativity and collaboration, the club continues to empower students to grow both personally and professionally. As it looks ahead, the Business Circle remains committed to creating more opportunities for learning, leadership, and growth, while contributing to the vibrant spirit of the Faculty of Management at Horizon Campus.

Highlights of the Year



Annual General Meeting (AGM)

The year began with our Annual General Meeting, where new leaders were appointed, ideas were shared, and a fresh vision was set for the club's journey ahead.



Future Finance

Designed especially for finance students, this session featured industry leaders Mr. Shervin Perera (Head of Finance, Hayleys Advantis 3PL) and Mr. Dulip Yapa (Partner, Deloitte Sri Lanka), who shared insights into the evolving world of finance and future career opportunities.



Amante Session

An exclusive session on feminine hygiene and wellness, designed to empower students with knowledge while building confidence and comfort in everyday life.



Next Gen HR

An engaging session by Mr. Heshron Siriwardena (Marketing Officer) and Mr. Aravinda Lorensuhewa (Assistant Manager – Business Development), highlighting skill development, evolving career paths, and HR's role in shaping future workplaces.



Crafting Legacy

This powerful session inspired students to think beyond academics and focus on shaping their personal identity. It highlighted how building a strong personal brand can open doors to opportunities, create lasting impressions, and pave the way for success in an ever-evolving business world.



Numba Haa

Our signature musical evening, "Numba Haa" lit up the campus with rhythm, talent, and unforgettable performances. The event brought together renowned artists and showcased the creativity of our students, reminding us that shared experiences are just as important as academic achievement.



Poson Celebration

The Business Circle came together in the true spirit of Poson, serving a kadala dansala, illuminating the night with a handmade Poson kudu, and uplifting everyone with soulful bakthi gee.



Content Marketing Workshop

Conducted by Mr. Naushad Zarook, Founder and CEO of Hope Digital, this workshop equipped students with practical strategies in content marketing, helping them stay ahead in the fast-changing digital world.

While most of the articles in this magazine would have taken a corporate perspective, in this article let me hold on to an individual perspective of sustainability and resilience. An individual is expected to be environmentally sustainable, socially sustainable and economically sustainable. Choosing reusable products is an example of environmental sustainability. Being "fair" on labour usage and a societal concern. Economic sustainability deals with the aspects of savings and what you choose to buy once you get your salary from the bank.

Individual-level resilience is the ability to adopt, recover and thrive in the face of adversity. Stress or major challenges. Individual level resilience is quite important to an undergraduate who is moving away from home. Some students do work part time and manage the hectic study schedules, budgets and also get into relationships.

Sustainability & Resilience for Undergraduate Students

Chrishankar Janathanan

Senior Lecturer (Grade II)

Faculty of Management, Horizon Campus

A student enrolled into the programme in 2020 would have seen some of the crises that are straight out of Hollywood movies. That could bring a complete stand still to the future that they imagined.

- Economic instability and hyper-inflation
- Fuel shortage
- Aragalaya protest
- COVID 19 pandemic
- Agricultural collapse

Though we shouldn't hope for a crisis in life or the environment, we are going to often face change. Change is a necessity and in an individual's life you will need to balance your: Relationships & Family, Health (including mental health) and career track. As the Intake 11s move into their corporate roles their focus might shift and be prioritised towards a career - either entrepreneurial, NGO or corporate oriented.

Consider these comments from an academic with over a decade of teaching. Apply if it fits you! Let go if it doesn't!!!

Jackson, T. (2005). *Motivating sustainable consumption: A review of evidence on consumer behaviour and behavioural change*. Sustainable Development Commission.

Shove, E. (2010). *Beyond the ABC: Climate change policy and theories of social change*. *Environment and Planning A*, 42(6), 1273-1285. <https://doi.org/10.1068/a42282>

Gifford, R. (2011). *The dragons of inaction: Psychological barriers that limit climate change mitigation and adaptation*. *American Psychologist*, 66(4), 290-302. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0023566>

Masten, A. S. (2014). *Ordinary magic: Resilience in development*. Guilford Press.

Don't go after certificates from Diploma mills!

Some students have a grudge with time. Enroll in a number of courses. Spend a lot of money with unrecognized institutions which undermine the learning hours and intention of an undergraduate programme. For example, an undergraduate in HR will go ahead and do another short Diploma course in HR from another institution. From a recruiter's perspective it will show the student is decisive and has gone course shopping.

The best alternative is - invest in yourself! - Join Toastmasters. If you are a marketing special student - SLIM has a Toastmasters programme. Same with CIPM. Take up positions, projects and community engagement. Let us come out of our shells and start working on key soft skills - leadership, negotiation, grit, hard work, people management, motivation etc. There is a lot, but let's try it out. Rotaract, Leo and AISEC at Horizon have great opportunities for all the undergrads.



ChatGpt should help you, not destroy you!

Generative AI chat bots help us with a number of automations. Reminders, translation work, interpreting diagrams and best of all has extra capability to create materials for you. An undergrad could use it to reflect on the questions.

It is common to notice that over 90% of our undergraduates become photocopy machines

replicating the same answer. This is mainly due to language difficulty. The second factor is that the friend sitting is more interesting than the question that is given. A generative AI platform can translate the same to Sinhala or Tamil. Challenge the Generative AI. Ask different perspectives from the AI. Can the AI change its answer? Ask multiple generative AIs for answers - Gemini, ChatGpt, Deepseek, Qwen Chat, Meta ai etc.

Going ahead with a disciplined schedule

We often meet two distinctive groups of students. One group goes after academics exceptionally. The other group becomes the famous back benchers who have other interesting work to do such as relationship management, building relationship and finding means, ways to make the class interesting. In an adult education set-up, the mentor has to allow for the exploration and self-discovery.

The individual level resilience is at play here. Some students with their tough schedule of work and relationship commitments might miss out the dedicated hours for study. Unlike school, there is no tuition teacher, a teacher to check your homework. A university works with the model of independence, exploration and discovery by the student. Given the freedom, often students realise too late that they have not made the best use of their time at the University.

Set up your Google calendar. Add your friends, lecturers, boarding aunt's birthday. Set up a schedule for your study. A day for movies. A slot for sports or any health-related activity.

Mental health, seeking counselling and building mental strength with mentoring

A core component of individual resilience is the ability of the individual student to seek mental health with confidence. Seek counselling for the problems and challenges that are beyond your control. Build mental strength as much as possible with the personal level challenges.

It's good to have a mentor or a group of mentors to guide you. Having mentorship in multiple dimensions of life can help us get through the challenges set. In video games we always need a guide to help with a quest. Now you need mentors. At University level you are allocated mentors. Mentors are available. Get the best leverage with the mentor guiding the hassles and buzzles of university life and beyond.

"What is the bravest thing you've ever said?" asked the boy.

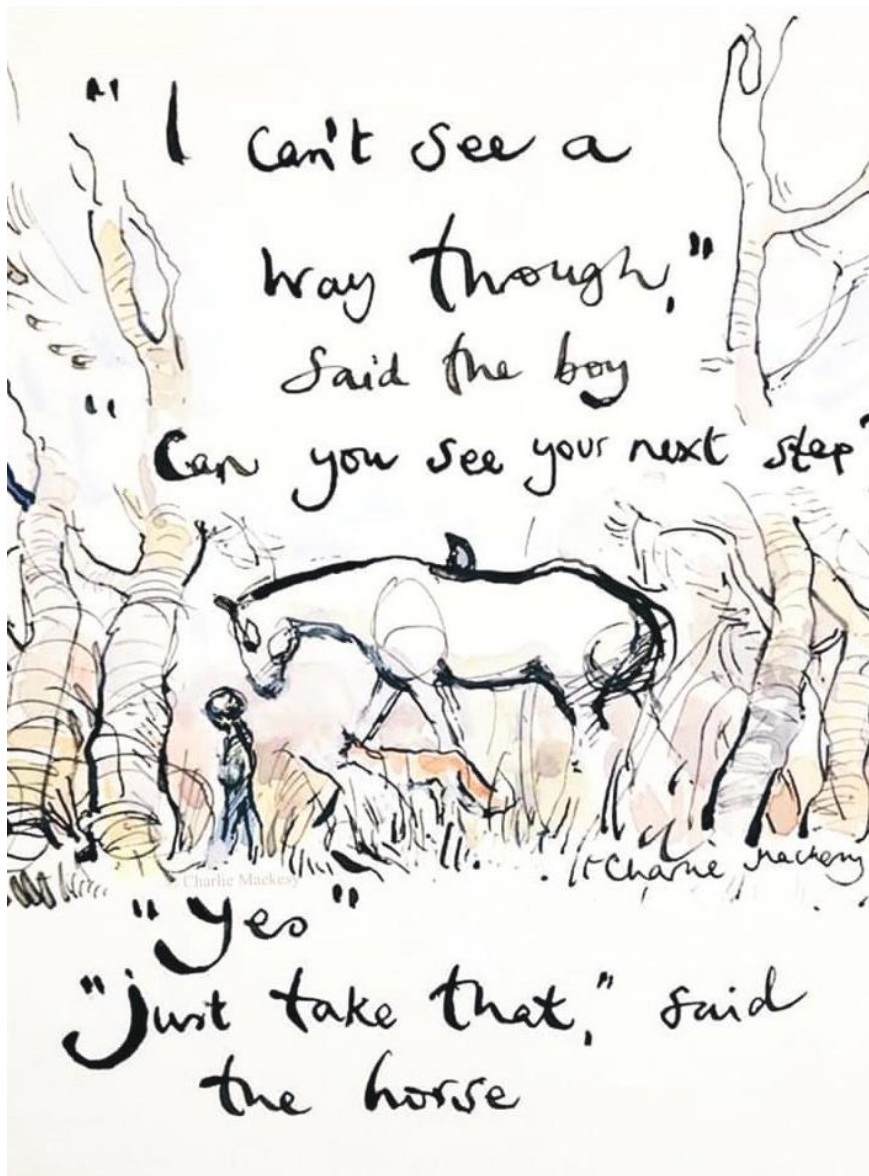


"Help," said the horse.

Are you investing your time on building your English knowledge, +2 languages can help you!

This point is on both resilience and sustainability frontier. We have a lot of K fans in our class. But all of us are subtitle champions. Let's download Duolingo. Let's push our boundaries to learn a couple of languages. Compared to the previous generation we have the blessing of technology. Let's leverage it.

The 4 years spent on a degree is a big investment. Apart from



Time and focus are two commodities in your life, if not capitalized will lead to regret!

financials it is also the opportunity cost of probably - doing a job. The time that you are spending on a degree is 1461 days - 35064 hours. Are we going to let Apps and unwanted distractions take it away? All the social media app's intention is to capture the audience hours. They will send notifications, give you engaging videos, your friends are all there! We are more virtual! We worry about criticism, bad comments and some gossip going around. When we keep absorbing negativity, our mood goes down, our productivity lags. Be happy! Spend some hours nature walking, doing community work!

If you do take up the above steps, you are bound to become a sustainable and crisis resilient graduate! I couldn't find a better conclusion that leave you with four images inserted that summarizes and synthesizes the article. One is from a book called The Boy, the Mole, the Fox and the Horse.

Turning Challenges into Loyalty



Mr. Jayampathi Mawilmada

Head of Sales & Marketing
Prima Ceylon (Pvt) Limited

Do you think customers lost trust in Prima products during COVID and the economic crisis?

Yes, it is likely that some customers temporarily lost trust in Prima products during the COVID-19 pandemic and the economic crisis in Sri Lanka. The pandemic brought widespread uncertainty in all areas of life, including food and essential goods. Supply chain disruptions, increased prices, limited

availability, and concerns about hygiene all influenced customer trust. During the crisis, many customers had limited income and began comparing brands for value and affordability. While Prima has been a long-standing and reputable brand in Sri Lanka, the economic crisis challenged even the most trusted companies. Price increases and stock shortages, even if unavoidable, could cause customers to feel frustrated or concerned.

However, it is also important to note that Prima maintained its presence in the market, and many customers remained loyal due to brand familiarity and consistent quality. Although trust may have fluctuated, Prima's strong foundation helped it to retain a large part of its customer base.

Trust, once affected, can be rebuilt through clear communication and dependable service, which Prima seemed to prioritize.

Share your thoughts and experience about how Prima, as a brand, feels about customer behavior during the crisis.

During the crisis, customer behavior changed significantly. People became more conscious of spending, focusing on essential goods over luxury or non-essential items. Prima likely observed a rise in demand for small pack sizes, value-for-money offers, and core staples like wheat flour, noodles, and bakery ingredients. Customers were less likely to experiment with new products and stuck to trusted brands.

This behavior reflects a shift toward affordability, necessity, and

Why do you think it's important to be honest with customers during hard times?

Being honest with customers is essential, especially during hard times, because it builds long-term trust and loyalty. When customers are going through difficulties—such as financial stress or fear of health risks—they expect transparency from the brands they depend on. If a company like Prima communicates clearly about price changes, production issues, or availability problems, customers will understand and appreciate the honesty, even if they are unhappy with the situation.

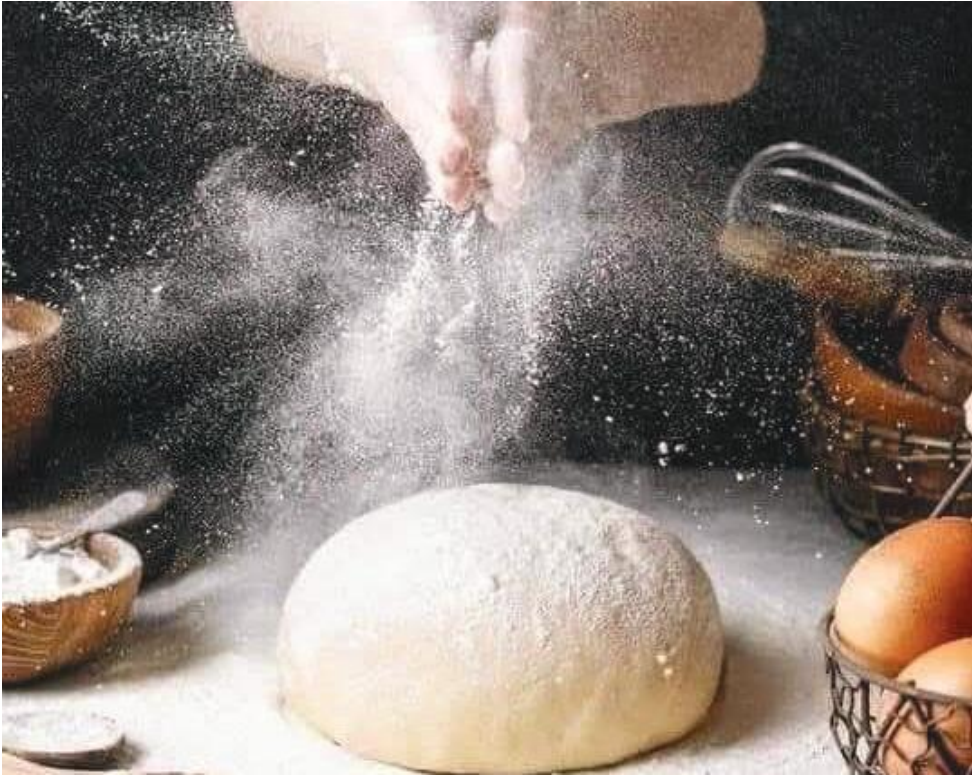
In contrast, hiding the truth, giving false information, or ignoring customer concerns can break trust and cause permanent damage to the brand image. Honesty reflects responsibility and care. During a crisis, people want reassurance, and brands that provide clear, honest messages show that they are reliable partners, not just profit-seekers.

For example, if Prima had to increase prices due to rising import costs or fuel prices, being upfront about the reason through packaging or official announcements could prevent misunderstandings. Customers prefer knowing the truth rather than feeling cheated. This approach helps build a deeper emotional connection with the brand.

quality assurance. Prima may have responded by adjusting its packaging, improving supply consistency, and increasing communication efforts. For example, they may have prioritized basic product lines and ensured availability even in rural areas. This shows Prima's sensitivity to customer needs and ability to adapt quickly.

From a brand perspective, observing this shift in customer behavior would have reinforced the importance of brand trust, consistent supply, and affordability. Prima likely used these observations to strengthen their marketing strategies, focus on customer care, and ensure their products remained available and affordable across the country.





Do you think Prima is honest with its customers? Why? Can you share an experience where you were honest with a customer?

Yes, Prima is generally seen as an honest and transparent brand in Sri Lanka. Over the years, it has built a reputation for maintaining consistent product quality and availability. Prima has communicated with its customers through packaging updates, press releases, and advertising, especially when changes are made. For instance, when prices had to increase due to economic conditions, Prima did not silently change the price but explained the reasons behind it. An experience could be: "A customer once asked me why the price of a 1kg flour pack had increased suddenly. Instead of just saying 'it's not our fault,' I explained that global wheat prices

had gone up and Sri Lanka was facing import restrictions and inflation. The customer thanked me for the honest explanation and said they would continue buying Prima because they trusted the brand."

This example shows how honesty at the individual level can reflect the brand's broader values and help maintain customer loyalty even in difficult times.

How can online tools like social media help the brand rebuild trust after an economic crisis?

Social media and other online tools are powerful platforms for rebuilding trust. Brands can use these tools to communicate directly with their customers, share updates, respond to complaints, and provide reassurance. After an economic

crisis, when many customers may feel uncertain or hesitant, brands like Prima can use Facebook, Instagram, or even WhatsApp to stay connected. For example, Prima can post behind-the-scenes videos of their hygiene practices, explain price changes, or showcase community support efforts. Sharing customer testimonials, success stories, or CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) activities creates a positive brand image and shows commitment to the people.

Engaging content like recipe videos using Prima products or educational posts about food quality can also help keep the audience engaged and connected. Moreover, social media offers two-way communication—customers can ask questions,



give feedback, and feel heard. Responding to these messages politely and promptly helps rebuild confidence.

In today's world, a strong online presence is essential not just for promotion but for building long-term customer relationships and trust.

In your opinion, do you think changing the brand's appearance (like logo or symbol) helps customers trust the brand?

Changing a brand's appearance—such as its logo, packaging, or design—can have both positive and negative effects. In some cases, a refreshed look can signal

progress, innovation, or a new direction. For example, after a crisis, a new look may help the brand seem renewed and re-energized. It can attract new customers and show that the brand is adapting to change. However, it's important to do this carefully. For long-standing brands like Prima, which have strong recognition and trust, sudden or major changes can confuse or upset loyal customers. They might feel disconnected from the brand if the new image does not reflect the same values they trust. Therefore, if Prima were to change its logo or appearance, it should also communicate clearly why the change is happening and ensure that the quality and core values remain the same.

The appearance alone does not

build trust—trust comes from quality, consistency, and communication. A change in branding should be done only if it adds value and is backed by real improvements in products or services.

Written by

R.P. Hiruni Thimashi

K.P. Nithini Himaya

G.K. Nethmi Nikeshala

R.M. Imandi Nimthara Bandara



AI Won't Steal Your Career, Unless You Let It !



In this fast-changing, uncertain world, one question keeps coming up; “Will AI take my job?” Whether you’re a student, a fresh graduate, or a working professional, the rise of artificial intelligence (AI) has sparked anxiety. Headlines scream about robots replacing humans, and it’s easy to panic. But here’s the truth:

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**AI won't replace people;
it will replace people who don't adapt!**



And if you're a management student, you're actually in a great position. Why? Because management is about soft skills: leadership, empathy, strategy, and decision-making, things AI can't replicate (at least not yet!).

So instead of worrying, let's focus on what really matters. Here are four reasons why you shouldn't fear the future of work and how you can stay ahead.

AI Cannot Replace Human Judgment

Yes, AI can analyze data faster than any human. It can predict trends, automate reports, and even draft emails. But can it:

- Mediate a workplace conflict?
- Inspire a team during a crisis?
- Make an ethical business decision when the rules are not clear?

Certainly not.

Management is not just about numbers; it's about people. The best leaders combine logic with emotional intelligence, something AI lacks. Your ability to understand motivations, negotiate, and build trust will always be in demand.

The Jobs of the Future Will Be "AI + Human" (Not Either/Or)

Think of AI as your super smart assistant, not your replacement.

- Doctors will use AI for diagnostics but still need empathy to deliver tough news.
- Marketers will rely on AI for ads but still need creativity to craft compelling stories.
- Managers will use AI for data insights but still need vision to guide their teams.

The future workplace will not be "humans vs. machines." It will be "humans + machines."

Soft Skills are the New Hard Skills

A decade ago, "hard skills" like coding or accounting were the golden ticket. Today? Automation is eating those jobs first.

But soft skills are future proof.

- Communication (Can AI give a persuasive pitch?)
- Collaboration (Can AI navigate office politics?)
- Adaptability (Can AI pivot when a crisis hits?)

For management students, this is your superpower. Companies will always need leaders who can motivate teams, think strategically, and drive culture, not just crunch numbers.

The Most Successful People Will Be Lifelong Learners

The biggest risk is not AI; it's standing still. The jobs of 2030 do not even exist today. The skills you learn now will not stay relevant forever. But if you commit to continuous learning, you'll always stay ahead.

How to Future-Proof Your Career in the Age of AI?

The best way to thrive in the AI era is to do what machines can't. Sharpen your critical thinking so you question, not just accept. Build conflict resolution skills and learn to work with all kinds of people. Communicate, persuade, and inspire because leadership is human work. At the same time, master AI tools to boost your performance, not replace it. And never stop learning; curiosity and adaptability are your ultimate career insurance.

So instead of asking "Will AI take my job?" ask:

"How can I use AI to do my job better?"

If you're a management student, you're already on the right track. The world will always need leaders who can navigate change with resilience, creativity, and emotional intelligence.

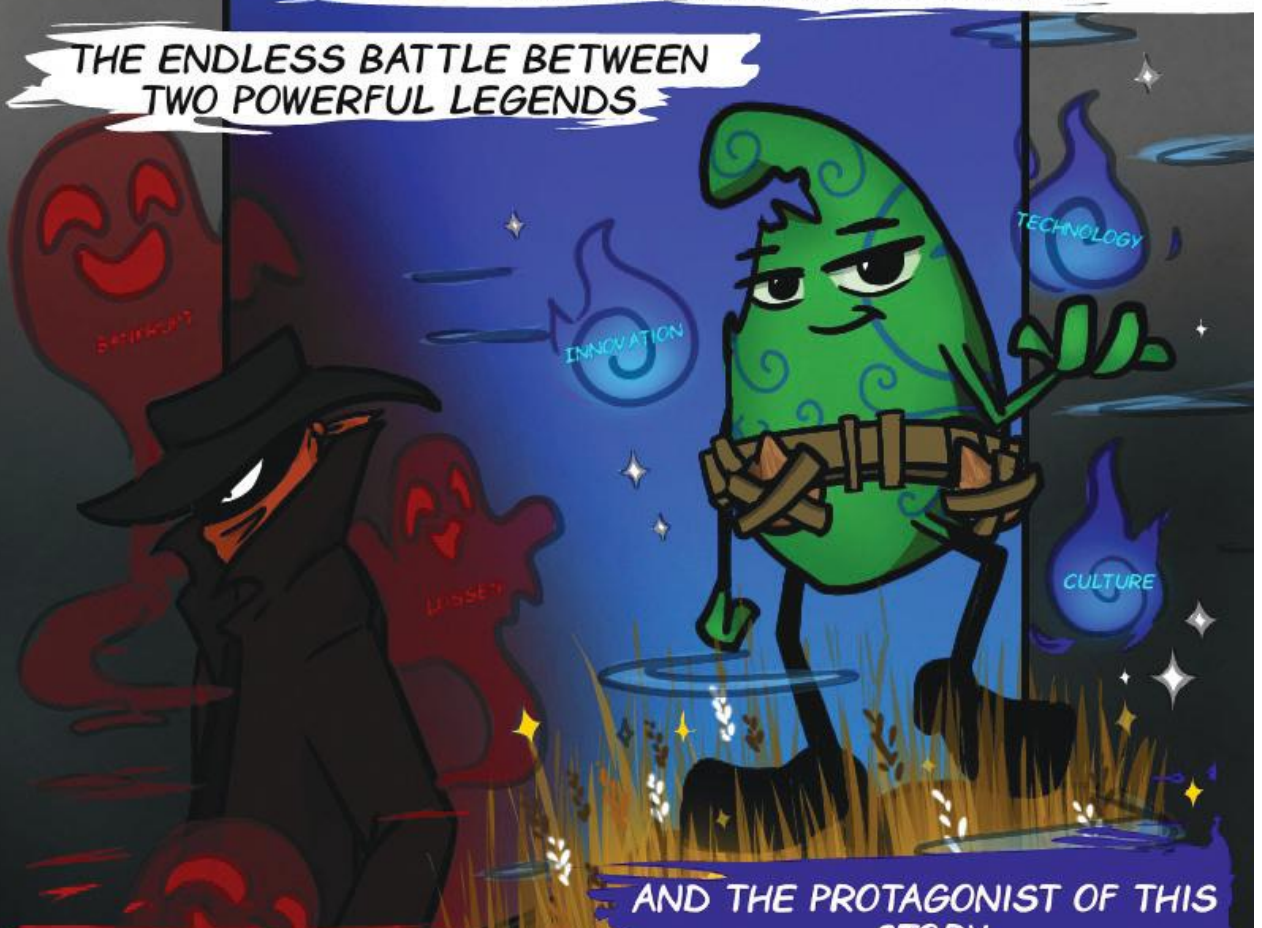
Your future is not at risk; it's just getting started.

_ Fight 4 Tomorrow _

**THERE'S ALWAYS A WINNER & A LOOSER
AT THE END OF A BATTLE**

**BUT FOR THIS BATTLE ,IT'S HARD TO GUESS
WHO'S GONNA BE THE WINNER**

**THE ENDLESS BATTLE BETWEEN
TWO POWERFUL LEGENDS**



**IT'S THE WORST ENEMY THAT
A COUNTRY COULD EVER
HAVE!**

**"THE SHADOW OF ECONOMY!"
BORN BY THE OBSTACLES &
DARKEST HISTORY OF
WORLD'S ECONOMY**

**AND THE PROTAGONIST OF THIS
STORY,**

**"SRI LANKA"
ENERGETIC LITTLE COUNTRY
WITH A JAW DROPPING
MIRACLES & WONDERS THAT
ALWAYS KEEPS HIM
INFRONT OF THE LINE!**



@COCOMOOISHERE

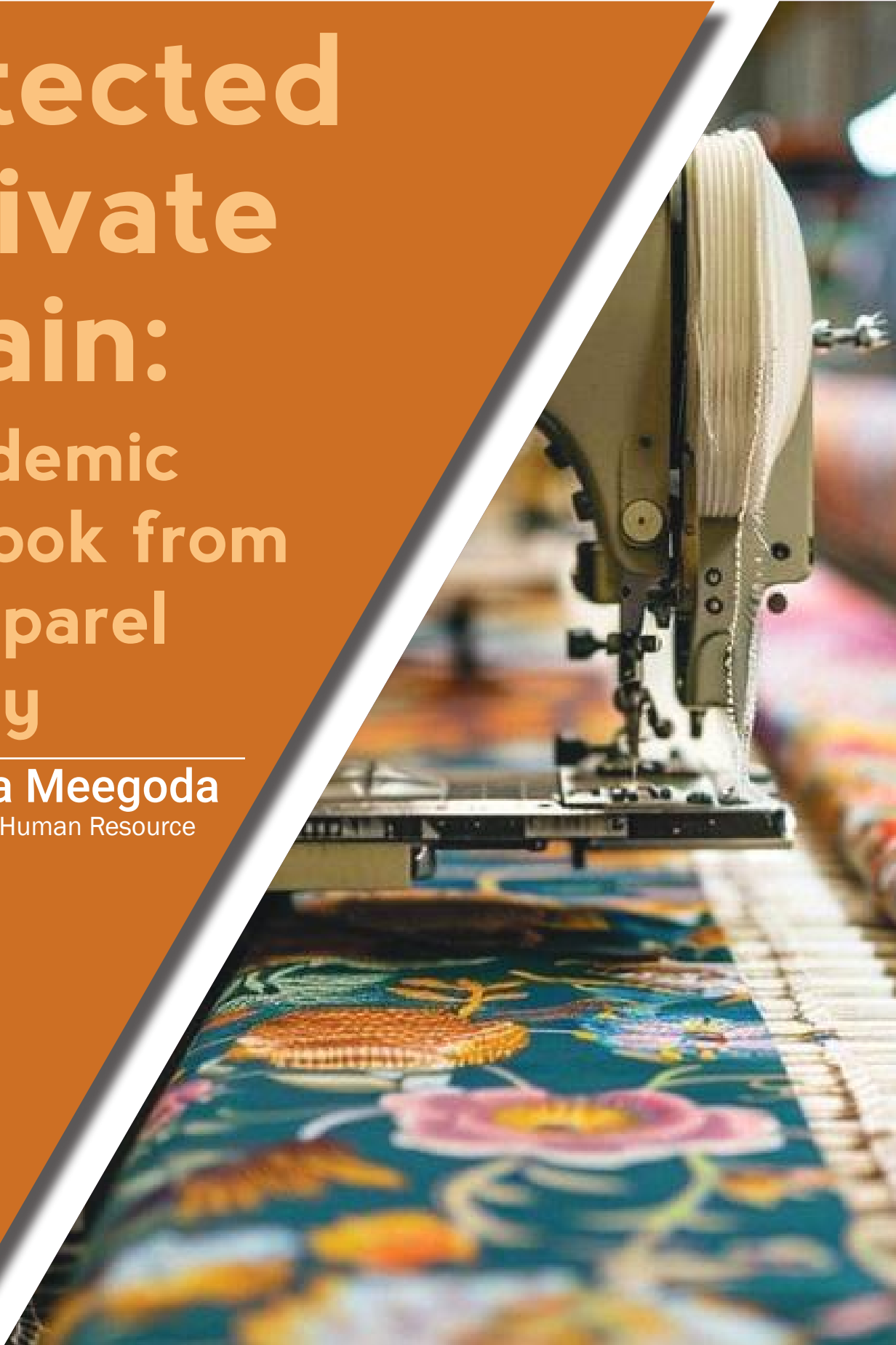
LAKSHIKA WIJESINGHE
14 TH BATCH
MANAGEMENT FACULTY - MARKETING

Protected Motivate Retain:

A Pandemic
Play book from
the Apparel
Industry

Mr. Yashika Meegoda

Assistant Manager Human Resource





When COVID-19 swept across the globe in 2020, it didn't just disrupt business—it reshaped how we think about employee well-being, motivation, and retention. In Sri Lanka's apparel sector, known for its labor-intensive operations and export-driven demands, the pandemic presented an enormous challenge. Yet, for one leading textile company, it became a defining moment of transformation—where care, creativity, and commitment to employees took center stage.

Prioritizing People During a Global Crisis

"We all know that during the COVID-19 pandemic, employees in every institution went through psychological and financial hardship. As a leading textile organization, we ensured nothing added to that burden," a senior representative of the company shared.

From the outset of the crisis, the company acted swiftly and compassionately. Any employee showing symptoms of COVID-19 was immediately referred to in-house quarantine centers, where they and their close contacts were given food, drinks, dry rations, and timely vaccinations in several stages. Financial stability was also maintained—basic salaries were continuously paid throughout the pandemic, ensuring that employees did not have to worry about survival.

Crucially, the company made sure no one felt isolated. "There was always a staff representative assigned to check in with our employees, encouraging them to stay connected and letting them know they were not alone. That emotional reassurance made all the difference," the spokesperson added.

Flexibility as a Lifeline, Not a Luxury

Flexible working arrangements played a pivotal role in retaining employees. While many factories across the region were forced to shut down and lay off staff, this company chose innovation over resignation. "Our company was operating at a break-even level before the pandemic. But it was COVID-19 that pushed us to take a new step forward," said the company leader.

In a bold move, the team experimented with new production lines—most notably, the manufacture of certified face masks. These masks were exported to both local and European markets, quickly becoming a successful product line that helped the company turn a profit at a time when others were struggling to survive.

To manage health risks, the company did not bring all employees to work at once. Instead, staff were organized into rotating groups. This strategy minimized exposure while ensuring uninterrupted production. Even when some employees needed to quarantine, the system allowed work to continue seamlessly.

Motivation Through Meaningful Measures

Keeping morale high during a global health crisis required more than financial support—it demanded action, reassurance, and innovation.

One of the first steps the company took was revamping employee transportation. New traffic plans and seat separations were introduced to ensure physical distancing from the moment employees left their homes until they arrived at work. Inside the factory, a strong focus was placed on health and safety. Special PCR testing programs were rolled out, and vaccination drives were organized—sometimes even before state-level programs began.

“We prioritized employee well-being with visible action. From sanitization stations to disinfection procedures, we created an environment that showed our staff: you are safe here,” the spokesperson said.

Additionally, the company provided small but meaningful incentives, such as extra performance marks, to acknowledge employees’ commitment and build morale.

Clear, Compassionate Communication

In a time filled with uncertainty, clarity and communication became tools for trust.

The organization made it a priority to maintain transparent, two-way communication with its workforce. Channels such as WhatsApp groups, email updates, and notice boards were utilized to keep all employees—whether on-site or at



home—informed. Regular briefings, both virtual and in person, were conducted by team leaders to discuss safety protocols, schedule changes, and organizational updates.

Importantly, feedback loops were built into the system, allowing employees to raise concerns directly with HR or their supervisors. “We made sure that health guidelines, transportation arrangements, and salary-related communications were shared in simple, clear language,” said the manager.

“That helped reduce confusion and fear.”

A Lasting Shift in HR Thinking

The challenges of the pandemic became a catalyst for change in long-term HR practices.

Realizing that traditional structures needed to evolve, the





A Lesson in Humanity

One enduring insight from the COVID-19 experience is that employee well-being extends far beyond physical health.

“We learned that people need more than safety—they need to feel cared for, heard, and supported emotionally and financially,” the spokesperson shared. As a result, the company has continued to invest in health education, flexible scheduling, mental health resources, and consistent communication.

This holistic focus has led to a more engaged, loyal, and productive workforce, even beyond the peak of the crisis.

Advice for Future Leaders

Reflecting on their journey, the company offers simple but powerful advice to others in the industry: put people first.

“In times of crisis, leadership must go beyond keeping operations afloat—it must be about protecting and uplifting people. Prioritize safety, support mental health, communicate with empathy, and innovate fearlessly. When your employees feel safe, valued, and informed, they will stand with you—even through global disruption.”

The apparel industry, built on human effort, craftsmanship, and care, must remember that its greatest strength lies not in machines or profits—but in its people.

**Written by
Nilu Dissanayaka**

company adopted new policies that emphasized flexibility and well-being. Health and safety protocols were strengthened and formalized. Remote and hybrid work arrangements, once rare in manufacturing, were considered and implemented where feasible. Mental health support was embedded into company programs, including employee assistance options and access to counseling.

Digital transformation became a priority. Attendance tracking, performance monitoring, and employee engagement were digitized, allowing for more responsive and remote-friendly HR operations.

“Our HR approach has shifted,” the leader stated. “It’s now more employee-centered, more resilient, and better equipped to handle future disruptions.”

How Economic Crisis Reshape Consumer Behavior

Mr. Dinuka Sanjaya

National Sales Manager- Ranamoto Motors



Could you explain what an economic crisis is and how it impacts everyday consumers?

The most severe economic crisis in recent memory was the COVID-19 pandemic, which deeply affected Sri Lanka and the rest of the world. It was an unprecedented shock for consumers and businesses alike. Initially, people were uncertain about the future—would the economy collapse? How would they survive? During the first wave of COVID-19, consumers shifted their focus

entirely to basic necessities like food and medicine, abandoning luxury purchases. As someone who earned a monthly salary at the time, I was fortunate, but daily wage earners faced extreme hardship. This drastic change in priorities was evident in our business, Ranathunga Motors—the distributor of Ranamoto vehicles—which saw a sharp decline in sales. I'll elaborate further on how we navigated these challenges.

When a crisis hits, what immediate changes do you observe in spending habits?

COVID-19 remains the clearest example. During economic crisis, consumers avoid non-essential purchases and prioritize survival needs. In our case, as a vehicle seller, demand plummeted because motorcycles were no longer a priority. People stockpiled essentials due to uncertainty—fuel shortages and lockdowns created panic. This behavior reflects a fundamental shift in consumer psychology during crisis.

Do you believe people are now more focused on basic needs? How has this impacted Ranamoto Motors?

Absolutely. Basic needs take precedence, and since vehicles aren't essential, our sales dropped drastically—from 900 units per month to just 10. The lockdowns paralyzed the economy, but we refused to give up. Through strategic discussions with investors and rigorous SWOT analyses, we identified ways to recover. Today, Ranamoto remains a leading Sri Lankan brand because we adapted rather than surrendered.

Are psychological factors influencing spending decisions during crisis?

Yes. Fear and uncertainty dominate consumer behavior. During COVID-19, people worried about survival—questions like “Will I have enough to eat?” overrode all other concerns. This mindset severely impacted businesses like ours, where products are discretionary.

How do these spending shifts affect the broader economy?

The ripple effect is severe. Businesses like ours, which deal in non-essentials, suffer directly, while sectors like agriculture, pharmaceuticals, and hygiene products thrive. With reduced spending, unemployment rises, exports decline, and economic activity slows. At the peak of COVID-19, some of our branches operated with just five employees—a stark contrast to normal times.

What role does social media play in shaping spending behavior during crisis? Has it affected Ranamoto Motors?

A: Social media has dual effects. On one hand, misinformation fueled fear, convincing people the crisis would last years and deterring luxury spending. On the other hand, it provided a low-cost marketing platform. Since Ranamoto bikes are locally manufactured, we avoided import hurdles and leveraged social media to rebuild demand.

How are businesses like yours adapting to these behavioral shifts?

A: Adaptation is key. Initially, COVID-19 shocked us, but we quickly pivoted. A SWOT analysis revealed our strengths: locally made, affordable bikes with low fuel consumption—critical during a crisis. We partnered with Laugh Gas to distribute cylinders via our bikes, offering flexible loans. We also expanded service centers and spare parts production, catering to consumers repairing old vehicles instead of buying new ones. Government support was instrumental in stabilizing operations.

Written by,

M.R.M. Ramsan

INNOVATING TRUST AND VALUE IN A CHANGING MARKET



Could you please give us a brief overview of Hemas and its key market presence?

Hemas Consumer Brands (HCB) is a leading player in the Sri Lankan FMCG sector, operating across key categories such as Baby Care, Oral Care, Home Care, Feminine Hygiene, Hair Care, Fragrances and Beauty. As a home-grown company with a rich legacy, Hemas takes pride in being the house of market-leading brands like Baby Cheramy and Kumarika, which have earned consumer trust across generations.

While the portfolio includes some of the country's most loved brands, HCB also continues to compete



Ms. Aamina Ismail
Brand Manager
Hemas Consumer Brands



robustly with other players, pushing the boundaries of innovation and consumer relevance. With an evolving mix of heritage and modernity, the company constantly reinvents its brand offerings to meet the dynamic needs of Sri Lankan households.

How has the recent economic crisis affected consumer behavior in your key markets?

The crisis significantly impacted consumer behavior across all key markets. One of the most noticeable shifts was the movement toward value for money (VFM)—a trend that extended beyond just price to include product relevance, pack size, and perceived efficacy. Consumers became more cautious and intentional about their purchases.

They began seeking more affordable options, often opting for smaller SKUs, comparing price points, and choosing products that gave them the best return on their spending. The product or brand's value proposition became even more critical—consumers still wanted reliable quality, but now within a tighter budget. This mindset influenced both what was purchased and how often it was bought. It also impacted brand loyalty, as consumers became more willing to try alternatives—especially when discounts or offers made them more attractive at shelf.



What specific changes have you observed in consumer preferences and buying behavior since the crisis?

There were several tangible shifts. Smaller pack sizes gained popularity across most categories, enabling more frequent but lower-ticket purchases. This allowed consumers to manage their household budgets while continuing to use products from trusted brands. We also saw a rise in promotional sensitivity—consumers were more likely to act

when they saw offers that improved price perception or value.

However, while trial increased due to affordability, brand stickiness was tied to quality. Consumers may have opted for lower-priced products in the short term, but if those products didn't deliver on performance, they were quick to move on. This revealed that while pricing was important for entry, retention was still quality-driven. Across the board, the ability to deliver quality at the right price became a winning formula.

How has Hemas adapted its brand strategy to respond to these changing consumer trends?

At HCB, we believe that change is the only constant in the FMCG landscape. Our strength lies in understanding the consumer pulse and adapting with intention. In response to these evolving trends, we optimized our SKU mix and pricing strategies, ensuring we had the right formats available at the right price points without compromising on quality.

Product innovation was central to our response. We introduced timely solutions that addressed current consumer needs—whether through new functional benefits, better value propositions, or on-shelf impact. We backed these innovations with effective communication that reinforced trust, safety, and relevance.

Throughout this, one thing remained non-negotiable: quality. While affordability became a key decision driver, we ensured that our product standards remained high. This balance between value and performance helped us stay resilient during a time of significant consumer flux.

What role has digital transformation played in your post-crisis brand strategy?

Digital has grown to become one of the most prominent platforms for brand engagement—especially within HCB's brand portfolio. Even before the crisis, digital was playing an increasingly important role in

how consumers interacted with brands, but the post-crisis phase saw a significant acceleration.

We recognized the importance of staying ahead of the curve in a rapidly evolving digital landscape. Digital innovation, backed by creativity, helped us execute clutter-breaking, award-winning campaigns across multiple platforms. These included app launches, AI-powered consumer experiences, chatbots, and other tech-enabled touchpoints that made consumer interactions smoother and more personalized.

We also leveraged our e-commerce platforms to ensure convenience, especially when physical access to products became challenging. The role of digital now goes far beyond advertising—it is an integrated part of our product discovery, engagement, and purchase journeys.

How does Hemas maintain customer loyalty and trust during uncertain economic times?

A core value at Hemas Consumer Brands is uncompromised quality. Even in difficult market conditions, we made it a priority to maintain our product standards—starting from sourcing raw materials to delivering a safe and effective final product. Consumers were actively looking for quality at the right price, and we remained committed to offering just that.

Trust is also built through consistency and purpose. Staying true to our brand propositions and values helped reinforce consumer confidence. Our brands didn't





just meet functional needs—they delivered emotional and social value too. Several of our brands have active purpose arms: from promoting child safety through Baby Cheramy, to working to eliminate period poverty through Fems, and driving women's empowerment via Diva.

These initiatives showcased our commitment to community upliftment and long-term impact, further solidifying brand trust even in a challenging economic climate.

What challenges has the company faced in implementing these new strategies?

In an FMCG environment, challenges are constant. Adapting to crisis conditions required speed, resilience, and unity. One of the main challenges was balancing cost pressures with consumer affordability expectations, while still delivering products that met high standards.

Another was adapting to rapid shifts in consumer behavior, particularly as digital channels gained more traction. We had to quickly align internal teams and processes to think and act in a more digitally agile way. This included upskilling teams, fostering cross-functional collaboration, and making the most of our external partnerships—which continue to play a key role in achieving shared goals.

What made the difference was the strength of our people. A dedicated and passionate team that worked together across departments helped turn obstacles into opportunities.

What future plans does Hemas have to continue evolving with consumer trends in the post-crisis market?

Our strategy is centered on staying closely connected to the consumer. Every innovation, campaign, and brand decision begins with a clear understanding of what the consumer needs and values.

We will continue to offer functional, relevant, and affordable innovations—solutions that make life easier while maintaining safety and performance.

At our core, Hemas will continue to build brands with purpose, resilience, and emotional relevance, ensuring we stay ahead of the curve as consumer expectations evolve

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