

Teaching Case

Research Track : Marketing

“Super App” Salt-to-Software Conglomerate by TATA

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wrote this case solely to provide material for class discussion. The authors do not intend to illustrate either effective or ineffective handling of a managerial situation. The authors may have disguised certain names and other identifying information to protect confidentiality.

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Abstract

The Tata Group is a major player within the Indian economy and is consistently at the forefront of Indian firms' globalisation efforts. The role of Tata Sons and Tata Industries in coordinating financial and managerial activities and managing the Tata brand, furthermore because the heavy emphasis on corporate social responsibility, mostly but not exclusively through the Tata trusts, are some of Tata's distinguishing characteristics.

This paper first assembles available evidence on the Group's focus to expand its business to the newly thriving digital market business through acquisitions and integration of its inhouse brands. The new revolution in e-commerce in Tata group has collected information through secondary data. A case has been prepared for the super app and also the relevant studies for the case discussion are given to students. It then analyses how the plan looks on paper and what may be the foremost issues faced by the salt to software conglomerate in achieving growth in an industry overlooked by the normal companies for quite a while now. Last, the paper explores the implications of such expansions and portraits how the digital marketplace may look some years from now.

Keywords: Super-app, Technology, Digital, e-commerce

Introduction

The Tata Group intends to combine all of its services into a single "mega" app. According to a Financial Times storey, Tata Group is working on a new platform that will bring the company's various businesses together on a single platform, with a debut date of December 2020 or January 2021. The app's launch has been postponed many times, and it went on a trial basis in September 2021. Tata Digital has finally launched its much awaited super app Tata Neu for all users in India on 7th April 2023.

"It'll be a fantastic app, with a lot of apps within apps and so on." The app would eventually include services ranging from food and grocery ordering to fashion, lifestyle, electronics, insurance, financial services, education, healthcare and bill payments according to Tata Sons chairman Natarajan Chandrasekaran.

In Tata's example, these services are currently bundled into Tata Cliq (electronics) and StarQuick (e-grocery), with streaming alternatives available through Tata Sky and other platforms.

In other parts of the world, the concept of all-in-one mega applications has gained traction. However, apps like Amazon—most India's popular e-commerce platform—use the super app model to segregate its offerings; Amazon, Amazon Music, Amazon Prime Video, Audible, and Prime Now are all independent apps.

With Reliance Jio's rapid expansion, the Mukesh Ambani-owned company has reportedly expressed interest in establishing a super app that combines its e-commerce (JioMart) and streaming (JioTV) services with social media. The Tata-Walmart deal comes at a time when Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Industries, which owns Reliance Retail and JioMart, is making a significant influence in the Indian retail and e-commerce sectors. By selling interests in its digital division Jio Platforms, the company was able to raise more than \$20 billion from investors like Facebook, Alphabet's Google, KKR & Co, and Silver Lake Partners.

The news of Tata's interest in space comes as Chandrasekaran stated during the firm's 75th annual general meeting that the corporation aspires to be debt-free in three years. Reliance Industries, for example, recently reached its goal of being debt-free after a four-month fundraising frenzy that saw 14 transactions finalised.



TATA Group and E-commerce Industry

Founded in 1868, India's one of the largest, oldest multinational, and largest conglomerate companies. Tata Chemicals, Tata Communications, Tata Consultancy Services, Tata Consumer Products, Tata Elxsi, Tata Motors, Tata Power, Tata Steel, Voltas, Tata Cliq, Titan, Trent (Westside), Indian Hotels Company Limited, TajAir, TATA AutoComp systems Ltd, Vistara, Crom, and Indicash are some of the Tata companies and subsidiaries.

India's e-commerce business is expanding at a quicker rate, with sales estimated to reach US\$ 120 billion by the end of the year. The current digital transformation, as well as the rise of the e-commerce industry, has been prompted by an increase in the total number of internet users in India, which has reached 1.2 billion.

Companies in India with super apps

A super app is a company that delivers all of its services on a single platform. In India's already congested super app industry, the Tata Group will be a newcomer. Reliance Industries has unified several services and offerings under its Jio banner, including shopping, content streaming, grocery, payments, cloud storage services, ticket bookings, and so on. Paytm, an Alibaba Group investor, has also consolidated services such as payments, ticketing, games, online shopping, banking, consumer finance, and more under a single app. PhonePe, a payment app owned by the Flipkart Group, has partnered with Ola Cabs, Swiggy, Grofers, AJio, Decathlon, Delhi Metro, booking.com, and others to offer services.

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Super App Challenges

When Facebook invested in Reliance Jio, many experts believed that the coming together of the two giants would lead to a WeChat-kind of the super app ecosystem. While there are no indications of that happening yet, it appears that the Tata Group, one of India's largest business conglomerates, has been gearing up for a super app play.

While Tata Group's aspirations in the super app direction is an exciting move, it hasn't made any dent in the world's fledgling e-commerce market.

At present, the Tata Group runs two e-commerce portals: Tata Cliq that sells consumer electronics online via Tata Croma and StarQuik, an online grocery, dairy, meat and fruits and vegetable store which currently services Pune, Mumbai and Bengaluru. Despite its presence in the electronic and grocery segment, the group has not been able to scale them up to notable milestones.

Not just the Tata Group but traditional groups such as Birla, Godrej, ITC and new-age retail brand Future Group have also failed to find their footing in the e-commerce sector. Aditya Birla's fashion portals Abof.com and Trendin.com, Godrej's e-grocery shop EkStop, Kishore Biyani's Futurebazaar.com didn't take off because of poor planning and lack of understanding of the sector.

Super apps are a function of reach. While WhatsApp and Reliance Jio jointly have incredible reach in terms of users that suit the super app's ecosystem, Tata Group has no such advantage, why Tata Group is making this play on building a super app without strengthening its existing e-commerce play or partnering a suitable player with muscular reach in the digital or social media ecosystem.

Joint Venture and investment opportunities

Super app has great success in China and Southeast Asia. The reason behind the success is customers visit the app regularly as commerce is incidental. Tata group got a great opportunity where Walmart is investing around \$25 billion in a multipurpose online platform. Tata and Walmart are in joint venture with this super app service.



Due to Ambani's Jio 4G network, the Tata group was obliged to sell its mobile service company, but Tata has a greater consumer business heritage than Ambani. It would be extremely difficult for Tata to create a platform for its vendors to sell their products and even grow into B2C or C2B websites once Walmart joins the party. This new venture for Tata will have access to both the American retailer's India e-commerce website, Flipkart, which it purchased for \$16 billion, and the payment provider PhonePe.

Tata Group has a very minuscule online presence for direct retail and selling, and if this super-app is indeed launched, then it will be their biggest foray into the online space. Once launched, Tata Group's super app will directly compete against Reliance's JioMart, which has become India's #1 grocery app and Amazon, which is the world's biggest ecommerce platform and Walmart-owned Flipkart, which is the world's biggest offline retailer.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

- To develop an understanding about the emerging trend in the e-commerce industry.
- To be able to design a digital marketing strategy to increase walk-ins in offline and online stores.
- To understand the concepts of growth strategy and the opportunities in diversification strategy.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This case is prepared solely to provide material for class discussion. This case will be helpful for general management students at the postgraduate levels. This case is useful for the class discussion in courses such as 'Strategic Management', 'Marketing Management', and 'Digital Marketing'. The case is also useful for the students to understand about conglomerate diversification in software and the strategies. The Secondary data has been collected from various sources like magazines, newspapers, blogs, etc. The case has been analyzed in the class discussion. Relevant reading was given to the students before case analysis. MBA final year students of Nehru Institute of Technology, Coimbatore of around 45 students are involved in this case study discussion.

CASE ANALYSIS

This case is suited for an around 75-minute session.

Table 1 : Class Discussion Plan



Discussion Point	Time (minutes)
Setting the context: Walmart investment and E-commerce Industry trends	10
Q.1: What is a Super app and what are the super apps existing in India?	20
Q.2: What are the challenges in implementing super apps while existing players are more competitive in the market?	20
Q.3: What strategies can be framed to be ahead of the competition?	20
Conclusion and Key Learning	5
Total	75

RELEVANT READINGS

1. What is a Super app? An app within apps. Need for a Super app.
2. Successful super app which is existing already and its performance.
3. Trends in the e-commerce industry.

ASSIGNMENT QUESTIONS

1. Though Tata is the biggest and oldest company, will the Tata group succeed in the launch of a super app when already great giants are ruling the market?

The Tata Group plans to build an e-commerce app to compete with Amazon and Reliance Industries in India's burgeoning e-commerce market. For the first time, the Group hopes to combine its various consumer offerings with this app. The app seeks to provide its users with a wide range of items and services from several Tata Group platforms, such as the shopping app Tata CLiQ, the supermarket e-store StarQuick, and the online electronics platform Croma. Tata is the CEO of a conglomerate that includes steel factories and the Jaguar Land Rover car company. In Southeast Asia and China, "super apps" like Meituan and Grab have remained a popular and lucrative concept.



Fig 1 : TATA's Business Empire

2. Suggest few strategies for Tata group to take a competitive advantage and to succeed in the launch of Super app.

- Organizations should understand metrics and KPIs to trace.
- Staying sooner than the competition depends on sleek, efficient communication between all levels of worker stakeholders. Include key findings and proposals from Competitive Intelligence analysis in easy-to-access and often updated platforms.
- Maintain a Persona-Driven, Value-Based distinctive commercialism Proposition (USP).
- Monitor Competitors' Repetitive Behaviors. contemplate the core business domains and departments organization — further as competition — depends on attaining its day-to-day operations.
- Consider coming into a brand new Market. Proactive competitive benchmarking empowers organizations to increase into new business markets — markets it's already had visible further as those it should have undervalued.



- Perform Frequent Technology Audits. Technology audits permit organizations to survey the practicality of their current IT infrastructure.
- Support Continual client Feedback Loops. Organizations have additional ways than ever to support situational, structured or current activities to know customers higher.
- Support skilled Development Initiatives.
- Promote a Healthy work.

FINDINGS

- A super app is an application that integrates a host of services in a single platform
- Tata group got a great opportunity where Walmart is investing around \$25 billion in a multipurpose online platform.
- Super App under the newly formed Tata Digital
- During COVID-19 pandemic, Tata Group moved fast in creating new businesses like Tata Digital
- The E-commerce market is growing faster in India and expected revenue at the end of this year will be US\$ 120 billion
- India is considered to be one of the most promising tech markets with rising income levels and faster adaptation of smartphones
- India has 650 million active internet users and this figure is expected to grow to 850 million by the end of 2022 according to counterpoint research

SUGGESTIONS

Tata group is all set to roll out a pilot version of its 'super app' that will offer a wide range of products across ecommerce, financial services, fashion, lifestyle, among others under one roof in Bengaluru in September. The Covid-19 outbreak, the digital mode has gained acceptance in Tier 2 and Tier 3 cities.

Super app which will put tata group head-to-head against rivals amazon and reliance in the e-commerce battle who are big giants in the Indian Market. The main point of a superapp is that it first needs a persistent user need as the focal point. But once people use multiple times a day, then it is proven the utility value of that app.



The idea of a super app — where a consumer can access everything under one platform — is not new. It's been tried by multiple companies in many parts of the world, including India, but needs to frame a strategy to be ahead of competition. The integration of internal businesses structures and management into Tata Digital which is a new entity has its own challenges, but hoping to roll out the challenges.

CONCLUSION AND KEY LEARNING

The Tata Group intends to combine all of its services into a single "mega" app. In other parts of the world, the concept of all-in-one mega applications has gained traction. However, apps like Amazon—most India's popular e-commerce platform—use the super app model to segregate its offerings; Amazon, Amazon Music, Amazon Prime Video, Audible, and Prime Now are all independent apps. An increase in India's overall internet user to 829 million by 2021 has been spurred by current digital revolution and also the growth of the e-commerce industry.

While Tata Group's aspirations in the super app direction is an exciting move, it hasn't made any dent in the world's fledgling e-commerce market. Tata Group has no such advantage, why Tata Group is making this play on building a super app without strengthening its existing e-commerce play or partnering a suitable player with muscular reach in the digital or social media ecosystem.

Walmart and Tata as joint ventures, for Tata will have the opportunity to access both the U.S. retailer's India e-commerce website, Flipkart, which it bought for \$16 billion, as well as PhonePe, a payment service. Tata Group, if this super-app is indeed launched, then it will be their biggest foray into the online space.

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