

DIGITAL STREET



Regional Consultation

DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION OF STREET VENDORS

Jointly hosted by



Venue

IBS | **ICFAI Business School**
Bengaluru



July 1, 2 & 3, 2022
9.30 am onwards

Curated by



Center of Excellence for Digital Transformation

(ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education)

ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education (IFHE)

The ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education is a deemed-to-be-University established under section 3 of UGC Act, 1956. IFHE's comprehensive student-centric learning approach provides relevant knowledge, imparts practical skills and inculcates a positive attitude among the students.

Today, IFHE is one of the largest multidisciplinary universities in the country. The Faculty of Management, Faculty of Science and Technology and Faculty of Law are the three main building blocks of the university. The University is a member of the Association of Indian Universities (AIU) and Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU).

ICFAI Business School (IBS), Hyderabad

ICFAI Business School (IBS-Hyderabad) is a constituent of the ICFAI Foundation for Higher Education (IFHE). Established in 1995, IBS-Hyderabad has been consistently ranked among the top business schools in India. It is one of the few business schools in India to have AACSB accreditation for undergraduate and doctoral programs also along with its flagship MBA program. The school has been re-accredited by South Asian Quality Standards (SAQS), and has the following ratings: A** by CRISIL, EB2 IN by ICRA and Excellent Business School by Eduniversal.

The programs offered at IBS, Hyderabad include Ph.D., MBA and BBA. The MBA program of the school is one of the largest programs in Asia with a student intake of around 1,200 per annum. In addition, its BBA program has an annual intake of around 1000 students, and over 60 scholars are pursuing Ph.D. Program. Faculty members of IBS-Hyderabad have published around 500 research papers in reputed National and International journals. The school has two dedicated research and content research centers, IBS Center for Management Research (ICMR) & Case Research Center (CRC), managed by a team of intellectuals from the academic and corporate worlds. The cases developed by these Centers are used by elite B-Schools and premier consulting firms around the world.

Centre of Excellence for Digital Transformation (CeDT)

The Centre of Excellence for Digital Transformation (CeDT) at the IFHE has been established with an agenda of leveraging the information and communication technologies for the benefit of the underserved.

We, at CeDT, believe that constructive interactions between actors in an ecosystem shapes various aspects of business

and social practices and technology. Thus, continuous engagement with key human and non-human stakeholders across industry, academia and society to advance our agenda, is the guiding principle of the centre.

The activities through which we plan to engage with key stakeholders include research, consultancy, training/teaching and outreach. The tools that we plan to use for the aforementioned activities include experiments (both field and laboratory), surveys, digital gap analysis, content creation and curriculum design.

About Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) India

The Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (FES) is a non-profit German foundation committed to the values of social democracy and social justice. Widely acknowledged by the German and Indian governments for being an important actor in the promotion of dialogue (people-to-people contacts), FES established its India country office in 1983 in New Delhi.

About Future of Work

India is in the midst of a transformation. Spurred on by the economic liberalisation in the 1990s, the country has gradually moved ahead on a path of industrial and technological modernisation and a further integration into the global markets. Presently, the core question is: how can India's economic development be charted in a way that it becomes a socially-balanced, sustainable and resilient economy. Digitalisation assumes particular importance in this regard, especially in overcoming economic, ecological and social conflicts. The FES aims to engage diverse stakeholders in developing transformative concepts on the future of work, by identifying elements for socially and ecologically sustainable, gender-equitable value chain and consequently formulating policy recommendations on inclusive digital transformation.



Introduction

India is witnessing an interesting phenomenon-growing informalisation of work and simultaneous increase in digitisation of informal work. Rise of gig economy has led to millions of informal workers having their work determined by an algorithm and advent of cheap internet enabled smartphones has pulled many of the younger informal worker into an increasingly digital world.

Digital Technologies

The advent of Information Communication Technologies (ICT) has impacted the world around us in a big way. As a result, digital transformation is an integral part of the discourse around transforming the lives of masses. Digital Transformation “encompasses the profound changes taking place in society and industries through the use of digital technologies¹ (Vial, G., 2021). These changes are especially needed across sectors that serve/employ the marginalised. Retail is such a key sector that can be benefited by digital transformation to uplift the underserved and lead to a country’s overall growth. This is particularly relevant in the context of a developing country like India. Around 42.6 % of the total people employed were in agriculture².

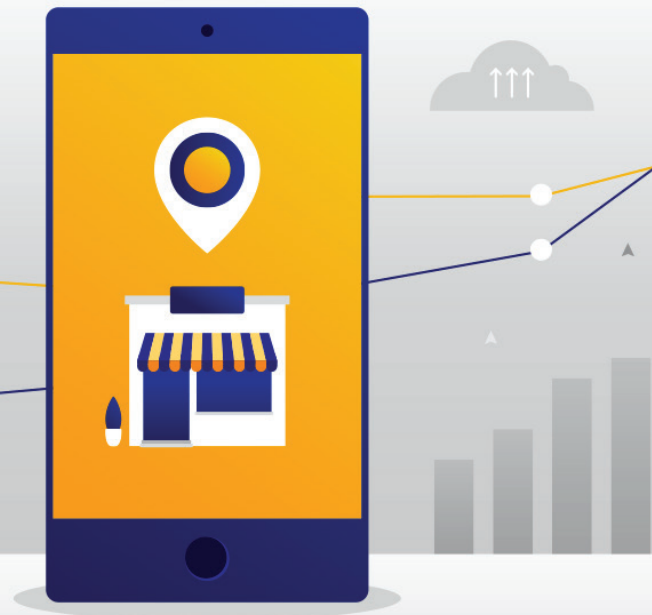
Informal/ Unorganised Retail Sector

This sector is one of the largest employers in India. The retail sector contributes 10% to the Indian GDP and generates 8% of employment³. Globally, the retail sector is dominated by informal/ unorganised businesses. In India, around 90% of all retail businesses belong to the informal category⁴. In the financial year 2020, the retail and allied sector has been found to be the second highest employment generator after agriculture in India⁵. Informal retail can be further divided into two categories: those who operate from fixed shops (e.g. kirana shops) and the others who don’t (e.g. hawkers). Generally, it is the latter category of street vendors/sellers that is closer to the bottom of the pyramid for want of resources. This study on digital transformation focuses on such underserved contributors to the Indian economy who can benefit from this effort.

According to the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) “A street vendor is broadly defined as a person who offers goods for sale to the public at large without having a permanent built up structure from which to sell. Street vendors may be stationary in the sense that they occupy space on the pavements or other public/private spaces or, they may be mobile in the sense that they move from place to place by carrying their wares on push carts or in baskets on their heads⁶.”

Digital Technologies and Street Vendors

Emergence of digital technologies has created new business models and innovations that can be used by both informal and formal sector enterprises. Almost all digital innovations are sector agnostic. They can have more inclusive impacts thus benefiting people who may have been excluded from the formal sector in unprecedented way. We anticipate that the convergence of emerging/existing digital technologies and informal sector solutions can create effective hybrid innovations thus enabling informal entrepreneurs including street vendors to optimise their business practices.



Digital Street Project

In this context, we aim to develop a framework for facilitating digital transformation of street vendors which is based on social dimensions of development and modernisation. We are also aware that there are myriad issues that compound the problem at hand. Therefore, we want to progress systematically step-by step. In absence of any published review in Indian context, our understanding of these issues largely remains intuitive, anecdotal and presumptuous based on our informal interactions with the people in the sector and our insights emanating from our study of extant literature published in the West.

That is why, as a first step we propose to organise a consultation with sector experts to know about the existing digital technologies known to/experienced by the experienced practitioners/researchers working in this area. We also want to gain insights into the likely challenges in adoption of digital technologies by street vendor and other stakeholders. We would like the thought leaders and practitioners to reflect on the following questions.

1. Vial, G. (2021). Understanding digital transformation: A review and a research agenda. *Managing Digital Transformation*, 13-66.
2. <https://www.statista.com/statistics/271320/distribution-of-the-workforce-across-economic-sectors-in-india/>
3. <https://www.thehindu.com/business/Industry/25-million-new-jobs-in-indian-retail-sector-by-2030-study/article34020291.ece>
4. <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/small-biz/sme-sector/indian-unorganised-retail-key-to-worlds-third-largest-consumer-market/articleshow/86222834.cms?from=mdr>
5. <https://www.financialexpress.com/jobs/on-the-job-retail-hires-on-the-rise/2091283/>
6. <https://nasvnet.org/overview-of-street-vendors-a-little-history/>

General: Setting the context

1. Understanding the Informal sector: What is “informal”?
2. Could digital technologies work differently for informal sector?
3. How are street vendors different from other informal businesses?
4. Who are the key stakeholders (individuals/institutions) in this sector apart from the central actor (the street vendor)?

e.g., the government/regulator, the law-enforcement (which, depending on the context shares a love-hate relationship), the supply chain actors like the supplier and the customer(s), the informal infrastructure actors like the local business/non-business associations who have real/notional power (on multiple issues like real estate occupancy, quality etc.), the real/notional competition both in the informal sector (e.g., fixed shops) and the formal sector (e.g., supermarkets), the technology providers (both state and non-state), technologies like that of financial transaction, identity, location, communication etc.

Challenges:

5. What are the key challenges for the central actor, the street vendor?
6. What are the key challenges (with regards to the issues related to the central actor, the street vendor) for each of above identified stakeholders?
7. Would digital technologies bring location independent enterprises or intermediaries thus reducing opportunities for local street vendors?
8. Would there be differential access and thus benefits of digital technologies within the street vendors thus exacerbating existing inequities?

Opportunities:

9. Given the understanding of the context and the ecosystem, what are the key opportunities for the central actor, the street vendor?
10. Given the understanding of the context and the ecosystem, what are the key opportunities (with regards to the issues related to the central actor, the street vendor) for each of above identified stakeholders?
11. Is it possible that digital technology adoption improves productivity and the working conditions of the street vendors thus impacting overall quality of life?
12. Would adoption of digital technologies accelerate street vendors' transition to digital economy?



Our Experience so far

The inaugural Digital Street consultation titled “Digital Technologies for Street Vendors” was held in New Delhi on 19th May 2022. We were privileged to hear from street vendors, street vendor unions, academicians, technologists, policy researchers, development professionals and corporate leaders. The challenges identified by the participants related to the perception of technology being used more for regulation than empowerment of informal sector workers in general and street vendors in particular. Challenges in adoption of digital technologies, specially the most vulnerable amongst street vendors like women vendors, was highlighted as a major barrier for digital transformation of the informal sector. Anxiety about loss of street vendor identity coupled with financial risk and fear of disintermediation by the tech platforms was shared by street vendors and other stakeholders.

We have visualised the digital transformation of street vendors through the lens of **RISE Framework - Risk Mitigation, Income Generation, Skill Building and Empowerment**.

Risk Mitigation should be the first priority. The biggest fear of street vendors is “eviction” and loss of livelihood/identity. Multiple government agencies and development sector organisations are working towards creating processes and platforms to ensure that the street vendors’ right to livelihood are protected. One interesting perspective shared by Lt Gen Anil Kumar Bhatt (Retd) from Indian Space Association (ISpA) was the use of geographic information system (GIS) technologies and platforms for effective mapping of vending spots for urban planning thus creating an inclusive space for all. Street vendors, specially in mountains and other natural disaster prone regions, can definitely benefit from advanced information using SpaceTech platforms about weather events thus preventing loss of lives and livelihood.

Income Generation may be a very straightforward outcome of digital transformation of street vendors. Access to better markets, better credit and other financial products and efficiency in scaling businesses can be facilitated through platforms. The Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs (MoHUA) through Prime Minister Street Vendor’s AtmaNibhar Nidhi (PM SVANidhi) Scheme collaborated with FoodTech platforms like Swiggy and Zomato for home delivery of street food in six cities. Such initiatives can help bring street food vendors on platforms to increase their customer base and lift them out of poverty.

Skill Building through platforms can help street vendors to improve their business skills, and to help vendors conduct their daily businesses more efficiently. Use of technology in their business processes can help reduce the drudgery associated with many manual processes. For example, Skill India along with Pradhan Mantri Kaushal Vikas Yojana (PMKVY) 3.0 implemented a skill building program for street vendors on health and safety standards, safety provisions under COVID-19 protocols, effective communication techniques with staff and customers, new-age skills such as digital literacy, financial literacy, digital payments and e-selling.

Empowerment through digital transformation can bring profound change to our society. Street vendors are amongst the most vulnerable sections of the society and even within them women, disabled and migrants bear the brunt of the oppression and drudgery of being on the street. Neighbourhood E-commerce Digital Platforms can help them to connect better their local patrons in communities and be treated with respect and dignity. Many platforms are onboarding small vendors on Open Network for Digital Commerce (ONDC) thereby helping them use an open source platform and remain independent of big tech algorithms. Similarly, innovative use of digital technologies can help street vendors overcome their digital and financial illiteracy.



Tentative Agenda for 1, 2 & 3 July, 2022

Day 1: July 1, 2022 (Friday)

NOON	Arrival of participants and registrations Short Exhibition of the Digital Transformation Initiatives in the region
1300 - 1400 Hrs	Lunch
1400 - 1410	Introduction of the Participants
1410 - 1420	Welcome by G V Muralidhara , ICFAI Business School, Bangalore.
1420 - 1430	A short introduction to FES and its Future of Work project by Mandvi Kulshreshtha , FES India What is CeDT? A short introduction by Sanjay Fuloria , ICFAI Business School, Hyderabad
1430 - 1445	Why Digital Street? by A V Vedpuriswar , Senior Advisor, ICFAI Group
1445 - 1500	Methodology of the Project Introduction to the program for the regional consultation by Bharathi S Gopal , ICFAI Business School, Bangalore. Introduction to the Methodology for the Digital Street project by Shailendra Singh Bisht , ICFAI Business School, Hyderabad
1500 - 1530	Leveraging Platforms for Social Good by Bhaskar Enaganti , CEO & Founder, Sociallygood.com Vote of Thanks by Anurag Shanker , FES India
1530 - 1600	Tea / Coffee Break
1600 - 1800	Open Space Dialogue A fishbowl conversation used as open space dialogue will be played out in this session. The idea is to have an open dialogue and develop understanding of the terms used in digital transformation. Two main components: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Shared Experiences coming from the leadership in the ecosystem • Lived Experiences from the grass root participants at multiple levels

Day 2: July 2, 2022 (Saturday)

0900 - 1100	Focused Group Discussion The participants will be divided into multiple groups. A research team member will host each group. The participants will be asked to share information from their digital transformation journey to be documented as case study under the project. These sessions would be audio-recorded
1100 - 1130	Tea / Coffee Break
1130 - 1300	Focused Group Discussion contd...
1300 - 1400	Lunch Break and departure of participants
1400 - 1530	In-depth Interviews The research team will conduct personalised in-depth interviews with the selected participants to extract more information about their digital transformation journey.
1530 - 1600	Tea / Coffee Break
1600 - 1800	In-depth interviews contd....

Day 3: July 3, 2022 (Sunday)

0900 - 1300	Field visit by core team to tourism related vending spots in region
1300 - 1400	Lunch Break
1400 - 1800	Summary and next steps for Digital Street

RSVP

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