



Impact of Digital Marketing on ITC's Brand Image: A Study of Digital Transformation

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ABSTRACT

Digital transformation has become an important component of modern business strategy, particularly in the FMCG sector, where efficient supply-chain management, sales operations and stakeholder engagement are essential for sustaining a strong brand image. The present study, titled “Role of Digital Marketing in Building ITC’s Brand Image,” examines the role of ITC’s digital platforms, particularly the Vajra and Unnati applications, in improving order-taking, delivery processes, supply-chain efficiency and retailer engagement. The study aims to understand the contribution of these digital tools to ITC’s growth strategy and evaluate how digital transformation enhances its sales and supply-chain operations. A descriptive research design was adopted for the study. Primary data were collected through a structured questionnaire administered using Google Forms from 101 retailers associated with ITC’s FMCG distribution network, selected through non-probability convenience sampling. Informal interactions with selected respondents were also conducted to obtain additional insights into the practical benefits and challenges of digital platforms. Secondary information was obtained from company-related sources, published reports, online articles and other relevant materials. The study examines users’

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experiences regarding application usage, ease of ordering, operational efficiency, delivery tracking, communication and overall satisfaction. The findings indicate that digital platforms have contributed to improved convenience, efficiency, communication and user satisfaction. The study concludes that effective digital transformation can strengthen stakeholder relationships and contribute positively to ITC's image as a modern, technology-driven and responsive organisation. Continued improvement in digital services can further enhance ITC's competitive position and brand reputation.

Introduction:

The rapid advancement of digital technology has significantly transformed the way businesses operate, communicate with stakeholders and build and maintain their brand image. In the fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) sector, where competition is intense and consumer and trade-partner expectations are constantly changing, digital marketing and technology-enabled business platforms have become important tools for improving communication, engagement, efficiency and brand visibility. In this context, the present study, titled *"Impact of Digital Marketing on ITC's Brand Image: A Study of Digital Transformation"* focuses on understanding how digital initiatives contribute to strengthening the image and market presence of ITC Limited.

ITC Limited is one of India's leading diversified companies, with a strong presence in the FMCG sector. Its extensive distribution network connects the company with retailers, wholesalers, distributors and consumers across different markets. Traditionally, sales and distribution activities involved considerable dependence on manual processes. Sales representatives visited retail outlets to collect orders, which were recorded manually and subsequently communicated to distributors or warehouse personnel. Billing, payment collection, record maintenance and sales reporting also involved substantial paperwork and physical interaction. Although this system supported business operations, it often resulted in order-entry errors, delays in communication and order fulfilment, difficulties in maintaining accurate records and limited availability of real-time information about inventory and sales performance.

The adoption of digital technology has enabled ITC to gradually transform these traditional processes into a more efficient, transparent and data-driven system. Digital platforms such as Unnati and Vajra have played an important role in this transformation. These applications have helped extend technology beyond internal



business operations to retailers, wholesalers, distributors and field sales personnel. The Unnati application provides retailers with a convenient digital platform through which they can access ITC's product portfolio, place orders and track deliveries. This has reduced dependence on intermediaries and improved convenience, transparency and communication between ITC and its retail partners.

Similarly, the Vajra application supports sales representatives and field personnel by enabling digital order booking, sales reporting, performance monitoring and access to real-time market information. It reduces the dependence on manual reporting and helps sales personnel manage their activities more efficiently. Features such as automated bill generation, digital records, sales analytics and performance dashboards improve accuracy and save valuable time. The availability of timely information also enables better decision-making and sales planning.

The use of these digital platforms has implications beyond operational efficiency. By providing faster services, greater convenience, improved communication and enhanced transparency, ITC can strengthen its relationships with trade partners and create a more positive perception of the company. Thus, digital marketing and digital engagement can contribute to building a modern, reliable, accessible and technology-driven brand image. The present study therefore examines the role of ITC's digital initiatives in influencing stakeholder engagement, ease of business operations, service experience and overall perception of the ITC brand.

Statement of the Problem

This study explores the influence of ITC's digital platforms, mainly the Vajra and Unnati applications, on the efficiency of order-taking and delivery among retailers in Guwahati. The aim is to understand how these technology-based systems have transformed retailer operations, focusing on both the advantages and difficulties experienced during their use. The research further emphasizes evaluating user satisfaction and identifying potential areas where ITC's digital sales process can be improved.

Objectives of the Study

- To understand the role and impact of key digital tools like Vajra and Unnati in ITC's growth strategy.
- To evaluate the role of digital transformation in enhancing ITC's supply chain and sales operations.

Literature Review

Godey et al. (2016) examined the influence of social media marketing on brand equity and consumer behaviour. The study found that social media activities such as interaction, entertainment, customization,



trendiness and word-of-mouth positively influence brand awareness and brand image. The study highlights the importance of digital engagement in strengthening brand perception.

Kim and Ko (2012) studied the effect of social media marketing activities on customer equity. Their findings showed that effective social media activities can improve customer relationships, satisfaction and behavioural intentions. The study demonstrates that digital communication can contribute to a stronger and more favourable brand image.

Masa'deh et al. (2021) examined the impact of social media activities on brand equity. The study found that interaction, customization, trendiness and electronic word-of-mouth significantly influence brand awareness and brand image. The findings indicate that digital engagement plays an important role in developing positive perceptions of a brand.

Shadiardehaei et al. (2021) investigated the relationship between social media marketing and customer responses. The study found that brand awareness and brand image can mediate the relationship between digital marketing practices and customer outcomes. The findings suggest that digital marketing can strengthen brand equity and customer commitment.

Lyu and Ding (2024) studied the impact of digital marketing on the brand image of new retail companies. The study highlighted the importance of digital communication, customer service, information availability and trust in developing a positive brand image. This finding is relevant to ITC's digital platforms that improve communication and service convenience for retailers.

Rana and Daultani (2025) examined the impact of digital transformation on supply-chain performance. Their findings indicate that digital technologies can improve supply-chain efficiency, coordination and performance. The study is relevant to ITC's digital initiatives, which support better information flow, order management and coordination with trade partners.

Jing and Fan (2024) examined the relationship between digital transformation, supply-chain integration and performance. The study found that digital transformation can improve supply-chain performance through better integration and information sharing. This supports the importance of platforms such as Vajra and Unnati in improving ITC's distribution network.

Ishfaq et al. (2022) developed a framework for understanding digital supply chains in omnichannel retail. The study emphasized real-time information, visibility, speed and flexibility as major benefits of digital



supply chains. These aspects are relevant to ITC's digital applications, which enable retailers and sales personnel to access information and manage activities more efficiently.

Daniels and Jokonya (2021) reviewed factors influencing digital transformation in retail supply chains. The study found that technological factors play a significant role in digital adoption and can help overcome traditional supply-chain limitations. The findings provide a useful basis for understanding ITC's transition from manual processes to digital platforms.

Kumar et al. (2026) examined the impact of digital marketing on customer engagement and brand loyalty in the Indian market. The study found a positive relationship between digital marketing, customer engagement and brand loyalty. The findings indicate that effective digital initiatives can strengthen long-term relationships and positively influence brand perception.

Overall Research Gap

The literature reviewed indicates that digital marketing and digital transformation have become important mechanisms for strengthening brand image, brand awareness, customer engagement, loyalty, supply-chain integration, operational efficiency and stakeholder relationships. Existing studies largely focus on consumers, social media platforms, luxury brands, airlines, banking, new retail companies, or broad supply-chain systems. Comparatively limited research has examined how company-specific digital platforms used within an FMCG distribution network influence the brand image of the company from the perspective of retailers and trade partners. Therefore, the present study attempts to address this gap by examining ITC's digital initiatives, particularly Unnati and Vajra and their role in improving digital engagement, business operations, stakeholder experience and the overall brand image of ITC.

Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine the role of digital transformation in ITC's supply chain, sales operations and brand image, with particular emphasis on the use of digital platforms such as Vajra and Unnati. The study primarily relies on primary data collected through a structured questionnaire administered using Google Forms. A total of 101 retailers associated with ITC's FMCG distribution network were selected as respondents using a non-probability convenience sampling technique. The respondents provided information regarding their frequency of digital platform usage, ease of order placement, operational efficiency, delivery tracking, user experience and overall satisfaction. In addition to the structured survey, informal interactions with selected retailers were used to obtain qualitative insights into the practical benefits and challenges associated with ITC's digital platforms.



The study also makes use of secondary data gathered from relevant company information, published reports, online articles and other reliable sources to provide supporting information and contextual understanding. The questionnaire was divided into sections covering the Vajra and Unnati applications, focusing on their features, usability, efficiency, communication and contribution to business operations. The collected data were systematically organized, analysed and interpreted to assess the effectiveness of ITC's digital transformation initiatives and their contribution to stakeholder engagement and brand perception.

Analysis and Discussions:

The demographic and occupational profile of the respondents provides useful insights into the adoption of ITC's digital platforms, particularly the Unnati and Vajra applications. The age distribution shows that the majority of respondents belong to the younger and middle-age groups, with 48.6% between 18–30 years and 35.1% between 30–40 years. Thus, 83.7% of respondents are within the 18–40 age group, indicating a relatively young and digitally adaptable user base. Respondents above 40 years account for 16.2%.

The gender distribution indicates that 70.3% of respondents are male and 29.7% are female, reflecting the predominantly male participation in the surveyed retail and distribution network, while also indicating growing female involvement. Respondents were selected from several locations, including Milan, Ghograpar, Nalbari, Chamata and other surrounding areas. This geographical diversity indicates that ITC's digital platforms are being used across different towns and rural areas.

In terms of educational qualification, 56.8% of respondents are graduates, while 29.7% have completed Class XII and 13.5% have completed Class X. This suggests that most users possess adequate educational backgrounds to operate digital applications effectively. Occupationally, retailers constitute the largest group at 73%, followed by wholesalers (18.9%) and distributors (8.1%), confirming the importance of digital platforms at the retail level.

A significant finding is that 89.2% of respondents use the Unnati App, whereas only 10.8% use the Vajra App. This substantial difference indicates that Unnati has achieved considerably higher adoption among ITC's channel partners in the surveyed region. Overall, the findings suggest that ITC's digital initiatives have achieved broad acceptance, particularly among younger retailers and digitally capable stakeholders.

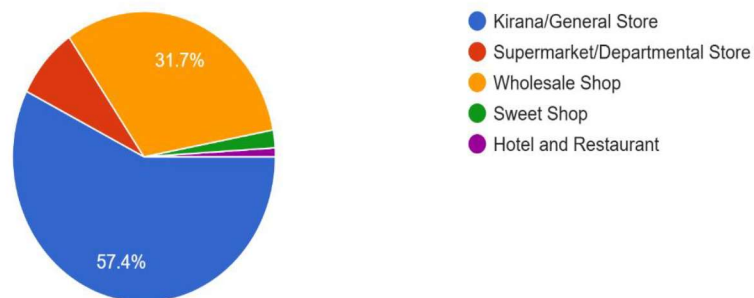
Type of Stores:

Particulars	Respondents
Kirana/General Store	58



Supermarket/DepartmentalStore	8
WholesaleShop	32
Hotel & Restaurant	1
Sweet Shop	2
Total	101

Type of your store
101 responses



The distribution of respondents by business type indicates that the majority, 57.4%, are associated with Kirana/General Stores, followed by 31.7% from Wholesale Shops. Supermarkets/Departmental Stores account for 7.9% of the respondents, while 2% are from Sweet Shops and 1% are from Hotels and Restaurants. This distribution indicates that Kirana/General Stores constitute the dominant category among the surveyed businesses, highlighting their significant role in ITC's retail and distribution network.

Frequency of ordering through the Unnati App

Particulars	Respondents
Daily	0
Weekly	0
Monthly	15
Rarely	74
Never	12
Total	101

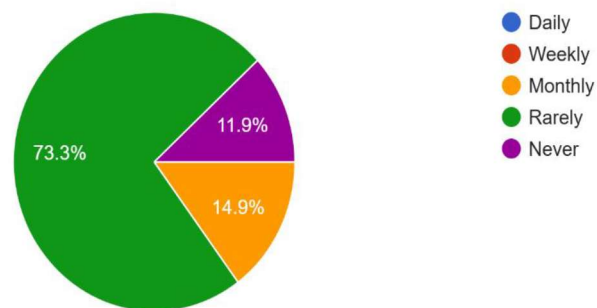
The frequency of Unnati App usage for placing orders indicates that 73.3% of respondents use the app rarely, suggesting that most users rely on the application only occasionally for order placement. 14.9% of



respondents place orders monthly, reflecting a relatively small group of users who engage with the app on a regular but infrequent basis.

How often do you order the product through the Unnati App?

101 responses



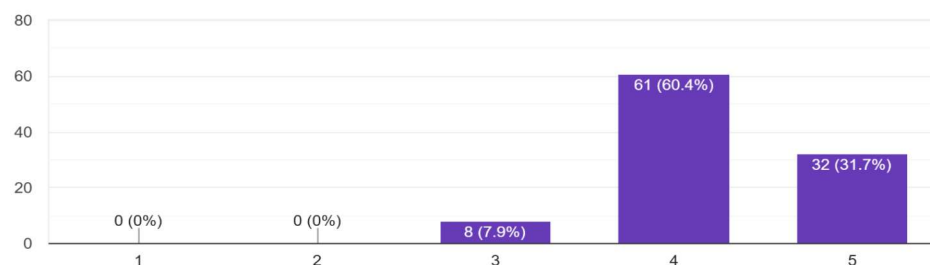
Meanwhile, 11.9% reported never using the app for placing orders. Notably, none of the respondents reported using the application either daily or weekly, indicating that frequent usage of the Unnati App for order placement remains very limited among the surveyed respondents.

Ease of ordering

Particulars	Respondents
1 Star - Not easy at all	0
2 Star - Slightly easy	0
3 Star - Moderately easy	8
4 Star - Easy	61
5 Star - Very easy	32
Total	101

On a scale 1 to 5 how much has technology made your order process easier?

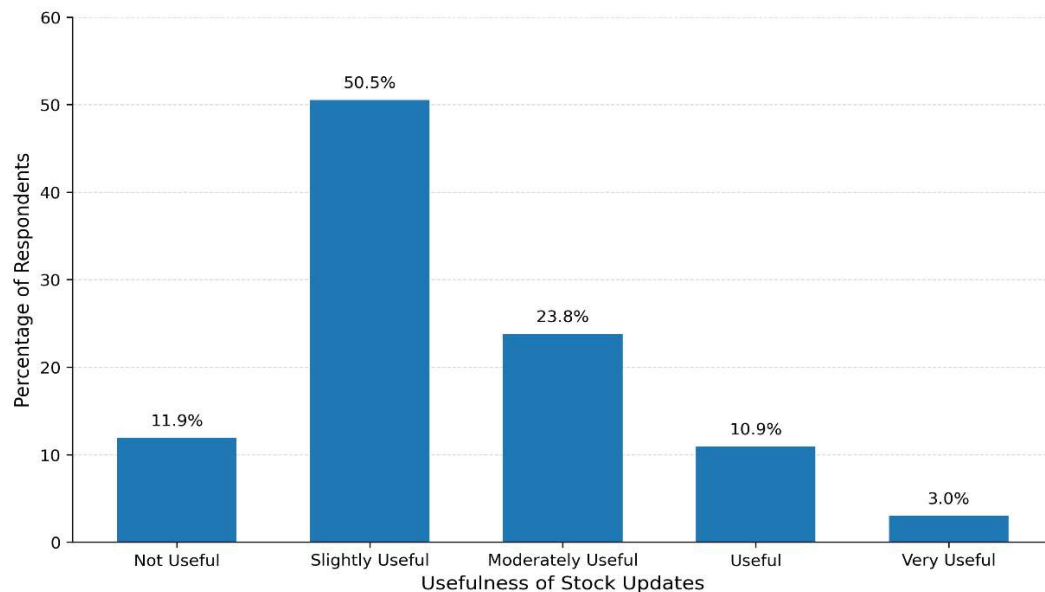
101 responses



The findings indicate that technology has had a positive impact on the ease and efficiency of the ordering process. 60.4% of respondents rated the impact at 4 stars, suggesting that most users consider technology to have made the ordering process considerably easier. 31.7% gave a 5-star rating, indicating a very high level of perceived convenience and efficiency. Meanwhile, 7.9% rated the impact at 3 stars, reflecting a moderate level of improvement. Notably, none of the respondents assigned ratings of 1 or 2 stars, indicating that no respondents perceived technology as making the ordering process difficult or negatively affecting their experience. Overall, the findings suggest that technology has significantly improved the convenience and efficiency of the ordering process among the respondents.

Usefulness in Inventory Management

Particulars	Respondents
Not Useful	12
Slightly Useful	51
Moderately Useful	24
Useful	11
Very Useful	3
Total	101

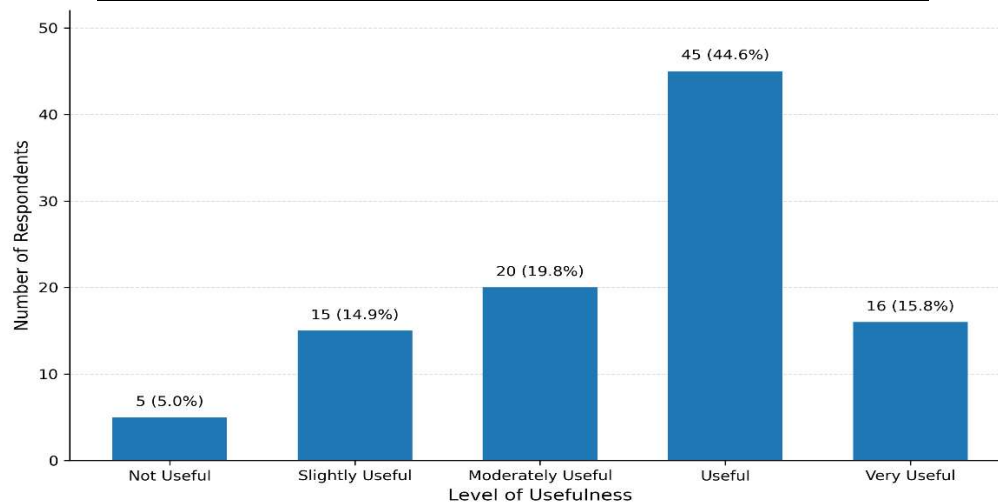


The findings indicate that stock updates provided through the digital platform offer some level of assistance to respondents in managing their inventory. 50.5% of respondents rated the stock updates as “Slightly Useful”, suggesting that while the information is helpful to some extent, its usefulness remains limited. 23.8% considered the updates “Moderately Useful”, indicating a reasonable level of benefit for inventory

management. Meanwhile, 10.9% rated the feature as “Useful”, while 3% considered it “Very Useful”, reflecting higher levels of satisfaction among a smaller proportion of respondents. In contrast, 11.9% of respondents found the stock updates “Not Useful”, indicating that a small group perceived little or no benefit from the feature. Overall, the findings suggest that stock updates have moderate utility, but there is scope for improving their effectiveness and relevance to users.

Prompt Updates on Promotional Schemes and Offers

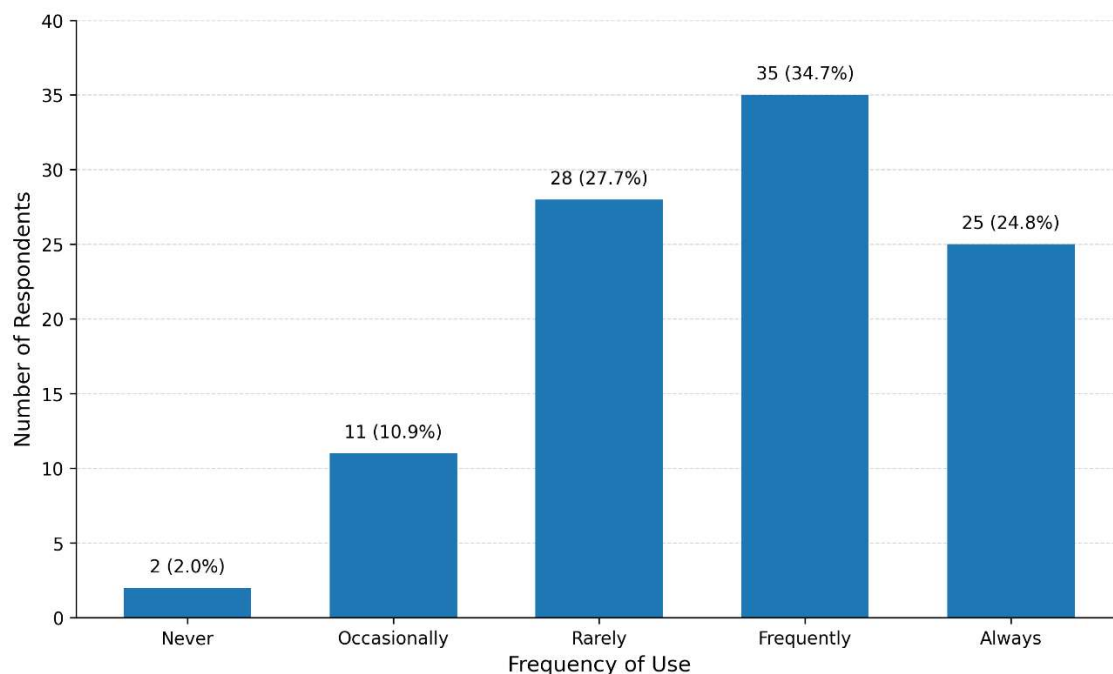
Particulars	Respondents
Not Useful	5
Slightly Useful	15
Moderately Useful	20
Useful	45
Very Useful	16
Total	101



The findings indicate that respondents generally perceive the feature as useful. 45 respondents (44.6%) rated it as “Useful,” representing the largest proportion of the sample. This is followed by 20 respondents (19.8%) who considered it “Moderately Useful,” while 16 respondents (15.8%) rated it as “Very Useful.” Furthermore, 15 respondents (14.9%) considered it “Slightly Useful,” whereas only 5 respondents (5.0%) found it “Not Useful.” Overall, 80.2% of respondents rated the feature as moderately useful or better, indicating a generally positive perception among users. The findings suggest that the digital feature provides meaningful support to respondents, although further improvements could enhance its usefulness and effectiveness.

Technical issues while using the Unnati app -

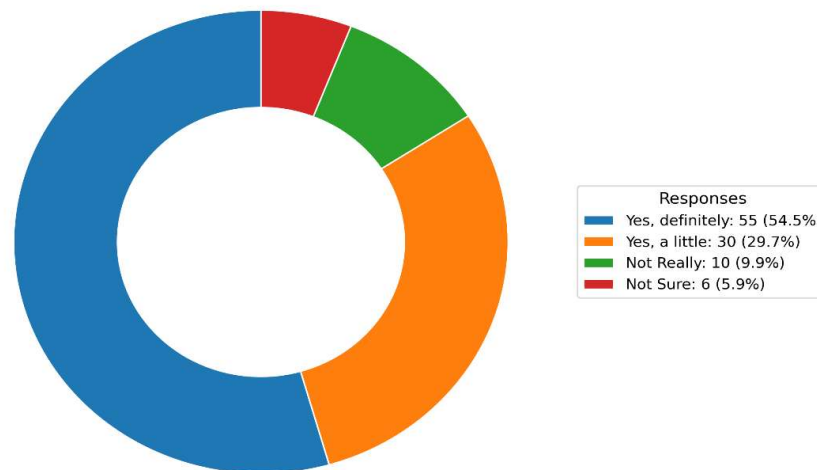
Particulars	Respondents
Frequently	35
Always	25
Rarely	28
Occasionally	11
Never	2
Total	101



The findings indicate that the digital platform is used with varying levels of frequency among the respondents. 35 respondents (34.7%) reported using it frequently, representing the largest proportion of users. This is followed by 28 respondents (27.7%) who use it rarely, while 25 respondents (24.8%) reported using it always, indicating a substantial group of highly regular users. 11 respondents (10.9%) use the platform occasionally, whereas only 2 respondents (2.0%) reported never using it. Overall, 59.5% of respondents use the platform frequently or always, suggesting a relatively high level of regular engagement. The very small proportion of non-users further indicates that the digital platform has achieved considerable acceptance among the surveyed respondents.

Improvement of services by adopting this technology

Particulars	Respondents
Yes, definitely	55
Yes, a little	30
Not Really	10
Not Sure	6
Total	101

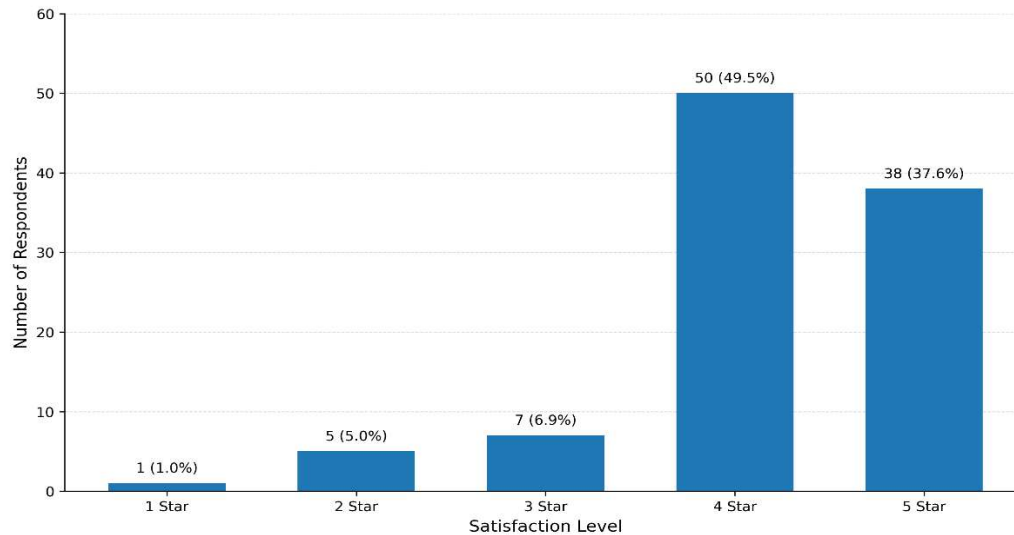


The findings reveal a strongly positive perception among respondents regarding the impact of digital technology. A majority of 55 respondents (54.5%) stated “Yes, definitely,” indicating that they clearly recognize the benefits or impact of digital technology. Another 30 respondents (29.7%) responded “Yes, a little,” suggesting that they perceive some positive impact, although to a lesser extent. In contrast, 10 respondents (9.9%) selected “Not Really,” while 6 respondents (5.9%) were “Not Sure.” Overall, 84.2% of respondents acknowledged at least some positive impact, demonstrating that digital technology is generally perceived favourably by the surveyed respondents. The findings suggest that ITC’s digital initiatives have been effective in creating awareness and delivering tangible benefits to its channel partners.

Overall Satisfaction Level

Particulars	Respondents
1 Star - Very Dissatisfied	1
2 Star - Dissatisfied	5

3 Star - Neutral	7
4 Star - Satisfied	50
5 Star - Very Satisfied	38
Total	101



The findings indicate a high level of satisfaction among the respondents with the digital platform/service. The largest proportion, 50 respondents (49.5%), rated their satisfaction at 4 stars (Satisfied), while 38 respondents (37.6%) gave a 5-star rating (Very Satisfied). Thus, a combined 87.1% of respondents expressed satisfaction or high satisfaction, indicating a strongly positive user experience. Meanwhile, 7 respondents (6.9%) provided a neutral rating of 3 stars. Only 5 respondents (5.0%) were dissatisfied and 1 respondent (1.0%) was very dissatisfied. Overall, the results demonstrate that the digital platform has been positively received by the majority of respondents, suggesting that it is effectively meeting users' expectations and contributing to a satisfactory digital experience.

Implications of the Study

The study has important implications for ITC Limited, particularly in strengthening its digital transformation and brand image. The findings indicate that digital platforms such as Unnati and Vajra have improved ordering convenience, communication, operational efficiency and user satisfaction among retailers and other channel partners. Effective use of these platforms can help ITC strengthen relationships with its trade partners and create a perception of being a modern, technology-driven, responsive and customer-oriented organisation. The study also highlights the need for continuous improvement in areas such as stock updates, promotional notifications, user support and regular platform engagement. For management, the findings can support better decisions regarding digital platform development, training,



communication and stakeholder engagement. The study further implies that successful digital transformation should extend beyond technology adoption and focus on creating meaningful value for users. Overall, effective digital integration can contribute to improved operational performance, stronger stakeholder relationships and a favourable ITC brand image in the competitive FMCG market.

Suggestions

Based on the findings of the study the following suggestions are proposed to further strengthen ITC's digital initiatives and improve the experience of its retailers, wholesalers and distributors:

- **Increase awareness of digital platforms:** ITC should conduct regular awareness and demonstration programmes to educate channel partners about the features and benefits of the Unnati and Vajra applications.
- **Improve frequency of app usage:** Since many respondents use the applications only occasionally, ITC should encourage regular usage by introducing useful features, reminders, personalized notifications and incentives for digital ordering.
- **Enhance stock information:** Stock updates should be made more accurate, timely and comprehensive so that retailers can make better purchasing and inventory-management decisions.
- **Provide timely promotional information:** Information regarding schemes, discounts, new products and promotional offers should be communicated through timely notifications within the digital platforms.
- **Improve user support:** ITC should establish responsive digital support mechanisms to address technical problems, order-related issues, payment concerns and other difficulties faced by users.
- **Simplify the applications:** The interfaces of Unnati and Vajra should remain simple, user-friendly and accessible to users with different levels of digital literacy.
- **Encourage wider adoption:** ITC should promote greater adoption of digital platforms among wholesalers and distributors, in addition to retailers, to ensure better integration throughout the distribution network.
- **Strengthen feedback mechanisms:** Regular feedback should be collected from users to identify difficulties and introduce improvements based on their practical needs.



- **Promote digital engagement:** ITC can use digital platforms to strengthen communication and relationships with channel partners, thereby improving trust, satisfaction and overall brand image.
- **Continuous technological improvement:** ITC should regularly upgrade its digital platforms with analytics, real-time tracking, personalized recommendations and other relevant features to maintain efficiency and competitiveness.

Conclusion

The study concludes that digital transformation plays a significant role in strengthening ITC Limited's brand image and improving its relationships with retailers, wholesalers and distributors. The adoption of digital platforms such as Unnati and Vajra has contributed to greater convenience, efficiency, transparency and improved communication within ITC's sales and distribution network. The findings indicate that a majority of respondents have a positive perception of digital technology and are satisfied with the digital services provided. The high level of satisfaction demonstrates that technology has helped simplify ordering processes and improve the overall user experience. However, the study also identifies areas requiring further improvement, particularly stock updates, frequency of application usage, promotional communication and user support. Overall, ITC's digital initiatives have contributed not only to operational improvement but also to creating a modern, responsive and technology-oriented brand image. Continued investment in user-friendly digital solutions and stakeholder engagement can further strengthen ITC's competitive position and brand reputation.

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