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Thriving through a pandemic - A qualitative case study

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Since March 2020, the world has been combating a pandemic causing the world to shut down for a while. Due to the lockdown mandates issued in various countries, organizations have experienced diverse outcomes. While some organizations went out of business, laid-off employees, and struggled to generate revenue, others have experienced a boost in revenue and explored opportunities to pivot their business (Gkeredakis et al., 2021; Macmillan et al., 2020). For example, in 2020, while technology giants like Google, Microsoft, and Facebook generated revenues between 9% and 17% higher than their 2019 revenues, Netflix and NVIDIA recorded 25% and 45%, respectively, higher than their 2019 revenues (Macmillan et al., 2020). Conversely, this was not the case in the restaurant industry. While McDonald's struggled with revenue and took a 13% loss in 2020 compared to 2019, Chipotle had a 7.1% revenue boost over 2019, with digital sales growth to 174.1% (Chipotle Mexican Grill, 2021).

Digital technology plays a critical role in the sustenance of organizations through the pandemic; however, in-depth studies on how organizations apply these technologies, how business processes change, and the resulting outcomes are scarce. The above statistics show that organizations in different industries experience varied outcomes. Moreso, even organizations within the same industry, i.e., Chipotle and McDonald's, had different results. Why so? In response to Gkeredakis et al.'s (2021) call for studies investigating the use of digital technologies in times of crisis, I am conducting a qualitative study exploring how different organizations navigate the pandemic. Specifically, I am interested in studying organizations across diverse industries to understand how they apply digital technology and modify business processes to remain in business. Currently, I am collecting data, interviewing employees from different industry sectors such as oil and gas, renewable energy, telecommunications, health, education, financial and religious organizations. I will use NVivo12 for data analysis and hope to contribute to the crisis literature.

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