

Mumbai Dabbawala Case Study

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Student Undertaking

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“Management Learning’s from Dabbawala and Way Ahead”

A young dynamic boy born during the British era has a strong desire and potential to overcome challenges. Due to colonial rule and poverty, he was unable to continue his education and studied till Grade 2.

Once upon a time, he came across a Parasi Banker who asked him for help and said if he was willing to work for him he would pay in return. This idea brings revolution to his life. He thought of starting his journey as ‘Mumbai Dabbawala with his few fellow friends. They didn’t stop there but formed an organization named as ‘Mumbai Dabbawala’ in 1890’s. And that boy is none other than ‘Mahadeo Abaji Bache,’ the founder of ‘Mumbai Dabbawala Enterprise Pvt. Ltd.

They have best model for the contemporary era of that time to deliver the ‘Tiffin on time, every time.’ And because of their code of conduct, work ethos and strong dedication towards their work even the Prince Charles need to seek permission to meet them rather than asking them to come and meet.

They simply changed the dynamics of colonized India. Dark-skinned Indian people were looked down upon once upon a time but just because of their unconquerable quench to give the best quality and Six Sigma performance of the Dabbawala model they imprinted their brand value in the hearts and minds of Harvard Institute.

“If you salute your duty, you no need to salute anybody,

But

If you pollute your duty, you have to salute everybody.”

- A. P. J. Abdul Kalam

‘Mahadeo Abaji Bache’ is the perfect example of a leader who follows this rule.

He set an example to do the most challenging task. It’s not that easy to travel in Mumbai considering the traffic. But he was visionary in understanding the ‘Segmentation, Targeting and Positioning’ (i.e. STP) of marketing. This realization helped him positioned the dabbas and delivered on time with the life of Mumbai i.e. Local Trains.

Local trains had a solid network in Mumbai and they kept the city going. But the biggest issue occurred in 2005. The whole city was flooded with rainwater. 'Despite the odds, they delivered the tiffin like Gods.'

This ability to keep going on without worrying about the stumble blocks that might come in the way lets the Dabbawala stand out. And their error-free delivery is renowned worldwide. And there's no doubt why this is taught in the world's biggest management university.

This case study helps us to learn a great deal about time management, work-life-balance, work culture, code of conduct, ethics, employee engagement, customer relationship management, scheduling, work break down structure and the list is endless.

Managing the time sounds easy for most of us. But to understand what dabbawalas do and how they manage we all will find the task is very complicated.

They need to collect the tiffin from their client's home and then do the sorting of tiffin's at the nearby station just within 1-2 hours.

A little bit of delay might cause them to miss their train to the next station where they are supposed to deliver the tiffin.

This business demands a great deal of efficiency and effectiveness. Not only this but sharp business acumen and decision-making ability is must.

Everything is going great in life of this Mumbai Dabbawala. The model was so successful but suddenly the whole nation and world started struggling with the battle of COVID-19.

For Dabbawala's it's the worst ever time. Because the life-line of Mumbai which keeps on going for first time in history stopped. Everything turns upside down. People started working from the comfort of their houses. And the demand to provide and deliver home-cooked food suddenly drops.

The survival of Dabbawalla was challenged. But is there anything they didn't notice or simply didn't change which if they had changed they would have sustained?

Contrastingly if you remember most of the online services flourished during this time of COVID-19. Breaking the shackles of coronavirus they emerge and change the dynamics.

If Dabbawalla opts for digitization in their business it will become quite easy for them to track the deliveries. Not only this but demand and supply for their business can be gauged easily. Hence, data analytics will play a crucial role in understanding which locality or areas are in dire need of the services.

Accordingly, they can start their 'moving kitchen' or 'delivery van.'

Moving the kitchen will give them benefit of diversifying their business by starting their kitchen services. This can also generate more job opportunities for 'Mumbai Dabbawali.'

Not only this but the online delivery services along with moving kitchen will give them the edge over their existing model of just delivering.

Apart from that they can collaborate with restaurants or mess to provide cooked food. The motto is to provide home-cooked food that can be achieved by cooking the food in the kitchen run by Mumbai Dabbawala also.

As per the data analytics report and demand ratio, they can simply start their kitchen or mess services in the localities having more demand.

This is because many newly married couples are working professionals and they too, are in the search of mess also the students and bachelors living in PG and flat are fond of home-cooked food but, due to the workload and paucity of time unable to cook. So it's always a better option to opt for 'Moving Kitchen and delivery services.'

Apart from this they can adopt the delivery model of 'Borzo.' Your organization can have edge over Borzo is because Borzo charges lumpsum amount for deliveries. Whereas, Dabbawala's on the other hand side charges only 500 Rs to 700 Rs per Dabba.

Considering these parameters dabbawalla should broaden their perspective and start exploring delivering other goods also, along with tiffin boxes. But this delivery should not be free of cost. They should deliver the goods with feasible delivery charges to increase their target audience.

Right now, the problem is of target audience. Very less amount of people are relying on the dabbas, this is because most of the offices provide 'Canteen

vouchers' for their employees and as part of the perk some get canteen services for free also.

So, we need to consider this while analyzing what will be a better way to go ahead for dabbawalas.

Despite of vouchers and all many people still prefer to eat out of the office canteen and that is because of the taste, quality and price. Where dabbawalla are having flexible delivery prices but needs to start delivering the food along with tiffin to target the people who are eating out of the office canteens.

Additionally, you can expand your business gradually in nearby cities of Mumbai, such as Pune, Nashik etc. But before initiating this you need to train the dabbawalas in handling technology.

Having their 'App' for Mumbai Dabbawala will help to take the orders and deliver the food accordingly.

Also, App will give real-time data analytics of the business and as per the analytics, we can come up with a solid idea to bounce back again.

Now, the time has come for dabbawallas to bounce-back with full enthusiasm. Conducting anonymous surveys along with analytics will help us to understand what exactly customers want and then we can work on building the foundation.

Thus, it is advisable to embark on the new journey of becoming a 'Multinational Food Company' by starting Moving Kitchen and diversifying the existing business.

“Don't lose hopes O, Man
You're still in the game,