



13

Virtual Teams: The New Work Norm for the Post Covid-19 Era

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13.1 Introduction

Marketing literature notes that digital evolution is massively shaping marketing dynamics and indeed defining the marketing norm (e.g., Opute, 2017). For a couple of decades now, we have entered the digital era, and digital mechanics such as Internet, Internet of things (IoT), social media, digital communication, and digitisation are constituent parts of daily life (e.g., Spencer & Sutton-Brady, 2020; Opute et al., 2020b). Within that marketing discourse, it has been emphasised that digital technologies form a significant tool that companies use to respond to consumers' stimuli (Opute et al., 2020a; Belk, 2013; Opute, 2017) and also for marketing strategy delivery and consumer behaviour tracking (Opute, 2020a; Enyinda et al., 2020; Ozuem et al., 2008).

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Furthermore, it has been noted that businesses are increasingly leveraging digital technologies for marketing implementation and in securing competitive advantage, both in local (e.g., Opute, 2020a) and also in global markets (e.g., Rachinger et al., 2019; Opute, 2020a).

Within that target of implementing marketing and securing competitive advantage, a typical operational strategy used in organisations relates to team working. Whilst team working as a useful tool towards achieving organisational deliverables is by no means a new trend (see Table 1), the trend of virtual team working has gained significant importance over the last two decades. In addition to the influence of technological evolution on virtual team working, another force driving virtual team working endorsement is growing globalisation of markets and increased organisational dispersion across geographical settings (e.g., Kimble, 2011; Schouten et al., 2016). Given the internationalisation of trade and increased networks amongst organisations, virtual team working has become a strategic operational tool. Consequently, there has been an increasing academic and management attention on improving the understanding of virtual team working (e.g., Schouten et al., 2016; Strohmeier, 2020; Kuusisto, 2017; Strohmeier, 2018).

The Covid-19 pandemic has exerted unprecedented global implications, compelling organisations to resort to virtual team working to curtail the economic damage. Given the severe implications of the Covid-19 pandemic on the global business community, leading to a huge economic downturn precipitated by the lockdown containment measure, virtual team working would not only become a more competitive strategy but also an operational norm. In the Special Issue Call for Papers of the *Journal of Business and Industrial Marketing* (2020)—“Interactions, Relationships and Networks in a digital era,” Guest Editors Spencer and Sutton-Brady comment thus: “recent events linked to Covid and associated phenomena such as social distancing have accentuated the digital effect” (p. 1). The various industrial sectors are all upgrading their practices to fit the new dispensation. As succinctly captured by Hacker et al. (2019) not only is the changing workplace increasing the utility of the virtual teams’ strategy in responding to the complex dynamics of contemporary organisational issues, but also the pertinence for addressing the

associated management challenges cannot be overlooked. This management challenge premise is a critical space for knowledge development (e.g., Hacker et al., 2019; Chatfield et al., 2014; Jimenez et al., 2017; Lukić & Vračar, 2018). Furthermore, literature underlines the need to incorporate information systems (e.g., Munkvold & Zigurs, 2007; Schouten et al., 2016), human resource management (e.g., Strohmeier, 2020; Kuusisto, 2017; Strohmeier, 2018), and psychology (e.g., Kimble et al., 2010; Hacker et al., 2019; Mocktinis et al., 2012; Gilson et al., 2014) viewpoints in the understanding of virtual teams.

Inspired by domain discourse, this chapter aims to contribute to filling a research gap in the area of virtual teams. To do that, this chapter draws its foundation from the management logic that a leadership fit is strategic to effectively steering team working towards optimising symbiotic interrelation and organisational performance (Opute, 2014). Founded in that thinking, this chapter forwards a conceptual perspective that is aimed at ensuring effective virtual team working, taking into consideration interdependence as a critical feature in team working, human resource management theory, psychological factors, and infrastructural features. The conceptual framing of this chapter is important because limited attention has been given to understanding how to optimise team collaboration and task performance in virtual team working (Schouten et al., 2016).

Next, digital technologies and team working is presented as a theme, explaining clearly team work, virtual team working, and how digital technologies are becoming a central part of modern society and team working. Following that, the benefits of virtual team working are explained. Thereafter, typical challenges that may impede the effectiveness of virtual teams are considered. In that regard, this chapter draws from the psychological foundation, HRM, and infrastructural theories to flag management initiatives that organisations can take towards ensuring effective interdependence and optimal alignment amongst virtual team members. In the concluding part of this chapter, recommendations for organisations in the African setting are offered, and the core conclusions underlined. Also, directions for future research are flagged.

13.2 Digital Technologies and Team Working

Daily life dynamics are becoming increasingly digital technologies enabled (Opute, 2017). By implication, therefore, life activities have become increasingly virtual based in contrast to the conventional trend of face-to-face interactions. Hence, marketing literature notes that there is a glaring paradigm shift in the way marketing is practised from the conventional practice to internet and digital technologies-based marketing (e.g., Opute, 2017). That marketing implication is further underlined by recent observation that the “place” marketing mix feature no longer being only physical, but also digital based (Opute et al., 2020b). In marketing literature, digitalised technologies-based marketing (also called e-commerce) has been defined as “the process of buying, selling, transferring, or exchanging products, services and/or information via computer networks, mostly internet and intranet” (Turban et al., 2010: 48). In other words, selling activity is no longer domain-specific but rather transpires through digital technologies.

From the point of team working, there is an increasing trend of digital technology-based working. Whilst team working has been an established organisational structure since the 1970s, modern team working has shifted significantly to the virtual form (Kimble, 2011). Three critical factors have facilitated the virtual team working significance:

1. Evolving digital technology,
2. Internationalisation of trade and global networks, and
3. Virtual team working as a response mechanism to the containment implications of Covid-19.

A team—a group of “*individuals interacting adaptively, interdependently, and dynamically towards a common and valued goal*” (Salas et al., 2000: 341), and may be of diverse dimensions (e.g., task interdependence, role structure, lifespan) (Wildman et al., 2012). Virtual team is a particular type of team and implies “*groups of geographically and/or organisationally dispersed co-workers that are assembled using a combination of telecommunications and information technologies to accomplish an organisational task*” (Townsend et al., 1998: 18). In a virtual team,

membership could take any of two forms (Kimble, 2011): (1) relatively stable (for example, an established sales team), or (2) change regularly (for example, project teams). Thus, virtual teams could be ad hoc or permanent. Membership of a virtual team could be composed of people from the same organisation or a number of different organisations. Also, team members may work within a not spatially significant space (for example, they could work in the same building) or could be significantly spatially distant (for example, work in different cities or countries). Finally, virtual team members may work at the same or at different times. The framing of virtual team working in this chapter relates to any form of virtual working where membership could be composed of people either from the same organisation, different organisations, or even of a global form (across countries).

13.3 Benefits of Virtual Team Working

Virtual team working is a strategic operational tool that organisations embrace to compete effectively in the marketplace. Within that goal of staying competitive, the central target is to leverage virtual team working to enable team members to work virtually to achieve organisational goal—offer deliverables to customers at a profit. One major benefit of virtual team working for organisations is that it offers flexibility, i.e., reducing relocation time and cost of agile virtual teams (Anderson et al., 2007). Beyond that, virtual team working can be utilised as a tool to enable innovative marketing strategy:

Enables Network and Cooperation: As a strategic operational tool, virtual teams enable organisations to leverage scarce resources across geographic and other boundaries (Munkvold & Zigurs, 2007: 287). As noted by Chatfield et al. (2014), organisations utilise virtual team working to capture diverse knowledge resources towards business value creation. Virtual team working allows organisations to strategically build networks and forge forces with competitors towards gaining entry to market segments that were prior to beyond their reach. Thus, virtual team working can be used as a tool towards enabling innovative marketing. Also, virtual team working can be leveraged to enable

competitors to cooperate with each other and their customers towards building a customer relationship management system for their mutual benefits (Kimble et al., 2010).

Enables Globalisation: Virtual team working is also a strategic tool for internationalisation of businesses. Businesses could leverage virtual team working to globalise business operations. For innovative organisations, virtual team is a highly useful option towards penetrating global markets (Chatfield et al., 2014). Furthermore, on the point of innovativeness and market penetration, it has been documented that technology-enabled virtual team working enables not only better team performance but also swift entry to markets (e.g., May & Carter, 2001).

Further details on the benefits of virtual team working are captured in Table 13.1.

Table 13.1 Level of Use of Virtual Working Teams in Organisations (including Estimates of Use)

Authors	Insights (including estimates)
Gartner (2003)	This study estimated that 60% of all major corporations used virtual teams (see Gibson & Gibbs, 2006; Martins et al., 2004)
Gartner (2012)	It was estimated that 80% of major corporations would be using virtual teams by 2016
Gartner (2016)	In a survey of virtual teams, it was found that 85% of respondents in corporations work on virtual teams
Hoch & Dulebohn, 2017	In a study involving 3000 managers from 100 countries, it was found that 40% of employees in their individual organisations spent at least half their work time on work involving virtual teams
RW3 Culture Wizard, 2016	This study notes that 48% of the virtual teams were global compared to 41% and 33% for 2014 and 2012, respectively

Source Author. Facts collated from Hacker et al., 2019

13.4 Managing Virtual Teams: Critical Factors

Workgroups form critical organisational trends in responding effectively to contemporary marketplace dispensation (e.g., Kimble, 2011; Opute, 2014). Teams are organisational units constituted by organisational personnel who pursue a common goal, and members have a mutual responsibility for the outcome of the team effort. Whilst teams and team working enable organisations to work flexibly and effectively towards achieving organisational targets—which could be tangible products or services or even sub-product or other organisation's value chain units (Kimble, 2011), the implementation strategy may vary from one organisation to another. The implementation diversity is not a core theme in this chapter, rather the premise in this chapter relates to virtual team working. Therefore, this section aims to highlight critical factors upon which the effectiveness of virtual teams hinge in organisations. As evidenced in Table 13.1, virtual teams have been used in organisation since about twenty years.

Team Management: The Role of Leadership—Achieving effective teams is a huge challenge (e.g., Opute, 2012, 2014) and even more for a virtual team (e.g., Hacker et al., 2019). Critical to ensuring harmonious team working is a fit leadership strategy that enables optimal symbiotic interrelation (Opute, 2014). In a recent publication that offered a retail marketing perspective for effectively absorbing the lockdown impact associated with crises situations such as Covid-19, Opute et al. (2020b) re-echo the leadership fit importance. Virtual team leadership literature sensitises two central themes (Gilson et al., 2014): leadership behaviours and leadership traits. The focus in this chapter is not to engage intensively with the behaviour and traits themes, but rather on the transformational leadership foundation, which, as documented in virtual team literature, is grounded on personality and communication factors (Balthazard et al., 2009) and can enable performance, satisfaction (Purvanova & Bono, 2009), and motivation (Andressen et al., 2012).

Leadership is important in virtual team functioning (Gilson et al., 2014): it influences how teams deal with obstacles, and how teams adapt in challenging situations. Underpinned by this leadership logic, the conceptualisation of this chapter aligns with the foundation that

ensuring a fit leadership strategy is primary to ensuring effective virtual teams. A fit and effective leadership would ensure that the infrastructural, human resource and development, and psychological components associated with virtual team working are adequately taken care of.

Psychological Factors—It is important to commence with this factor because interdependence is a critical feature in team working and the extent to which symbiotic interrelation is achieved hinges largely on the extent to which interdependence is optimised (e.g. Opute, 2014; Opute & Madichie, 2016). As stated earlier, the conceptual framing of virtual teams in this chapter reflects a membership from within one organisation, across several organisations, and across geographical and continental levels. Founded on the criticality of trust in the formation and sustenance of virtual teams (e.g., Hacker et al., 2019) and recognising that “trusting a stranger with whom there is no prior relationship or a physical encounter is risky” (Owonikoko, 2016: 26), the psychological framing in this chapter embodies cognition-based and affect-based trust theories of interpersonal relationships (McAllister, 1995). This theoretical framing is further rationalised on the logic that culture significantly conditions the mindset of individuals and thus lack of trust may be a rational response in relationships involving heterogeneous cultures (Opute et al., 2020c; Hagos et al., 2018), a cultural contention that resonates with German norm—*Vertrauen ist gut, Kontrolle ist besser*, which means who you do not know, do not trust.

Ensuring unity in thoughts and perceptions is critical towards ensuring essential cognition-based trust for effective working relationships (e.g., Opute, 2014; Opute & Madichie, 2016). High levels of cognitive trust enable a conducive team climate where members feel relaxed and freely share information and build interpersonal relationships (Owonikoko, 2016). From the point of task performance, when such level of cognitive trust obtains, team members leverage their thoughts and intuition to accept team members, as well as show faith in their effectively implementing their tasks (Kanawattanachai & Yoo, 2002).

Organisations would need to give due attention to *cultural* heterogeneity amongst virtual team members and take necessary steps to ensure that there is a harmonious climate that thrives on trust amongst

team members (e.g., Opute, 2012, 2014). Cultural diversity negatively affects relationship amongst personnel in intra-organisational (e.g., Opute, 2014; Opute & Madichie, 2016) and inter-organisational (e.g., Shao et al., 2020) settings. Further culture-based literature contends that in global virtual teams, collectivistic oriented members favour team processes than individualistic oriented members (Mockaitis et al., 2012). Literature also documents that whilst team members from certain countries (e.g., the United States) favour the inclusion of team members in discussions and decisions, members from other locations (e.g., Belgium, India, and The Netherlands) do not support such practice (Dekker et al., 2008). Failure to manage culture-based challenges in a virtual team working space would lead to frustration amongst team members and that would impair interdependence and alignment between team members. *Trust and Identity* are critical features for achieving effective virtual working (Hacker et al., 2019). Virtual team working is highly technology reliant, and a typical challenge of technology is its capacity to disrupt trust in virtual team working (Hacker et al., 2019). Securing trust amongst virtual team members is a critical step towards overcoming the diverse problems in virtual team working (Hacker et al., 2019).

Virtual team leaders must ensure mechanisms that build and maintain trust amongst virtual team members. In a digitally enhanced environment, trust amongst virtual team members is critical to achieving one identity behaviour in organisations, therefore organisations must ensure processes that facilitate and sustain trust amongst virtual team members. To share timely and accurate information, and work amicably and effectively and display transparent unified effort behaviour, a good measure of trust must exist amongst team members. To adequately ensure amicable work climate, the leadership must also ensure affect-based trust amongst virtual team members. Humans are a bundle of emotions, and the emotional frame of individuals may influence the level of trust they may have in other people, especially when the interaction between individuals is virtual based. According to Webber (2008), affect-based trust is borne out of emotions, care, concern, and empathy that team members display in implementing their individual tasks. When team members experience high affect-based trust, they would freely share task-related as well as personal information regardless of nationality, geographical

disparity, level or means of communication (Sarker et al., 2011). To steer virtual team working in the right direction, the leadership approach must incorporate mechanisms that give due attention to the aforementioned psychological features.

13.4.1 Human Resource and Development (Training)

Technology is a critical factor in virtual team working; consequently, adequate attention must be given to this factor to ensure optimal virtual team working (e.g., Hacker et al., 2019; Gilson et al., 2014). In doing that, it is very important that organisations bear in mind the challenges associated with technology-based team working, one of which is that team members may not be very familiar with the technological features of the new work norm (e.g., Opute et al., 2020b; Jarvenpaa & Leidner, 1999). The leadership must therefore ensure appropriate human resource management plan to enable effective virtual team working.

Within that point of human resource management, a critical point relates to the training of virtual team members to uplift their skills levels to enable them effectively work with technology-based processes. Team members need to understand how to navigate through the digitised work processes using the operational platforms, such as MS Teams, Zoom, etc. Familiarising themselves with these platforms could be very challenging for some team members, so the organisational leadership must invest in resources that would aid that transition process.

A core pre-requisite for effective team interdependence and decision-making performance is a shared understanding of performance (Schouten et al., 2016; Opute, 2008). Achieving shared understanding—a common understanding of a task as well as an understanding of each other's viewpoint (Weick, 1985), should be a core human resource management focus towards effective virtual team working. For example, for a decision task in a virtual team, team members would need to share their understanding of the decision process and decisions to be made, and a common understanding must be reached. Thus, social interactive skills would be required for optimal team interaction (Schouten et al., 2016), and for effective virtual team working, the human resource

management mechanisms must ensure that team members acquire relevant social interactive skills to ensure a common understanding.

A central target for organisations is to ensure effective virtual team working that would enable organisations to profitably satisfy customers. With regard to managing virtual team-related challenges, the leadership should also focus on HRM training that would enable team members engage effectively with customers. A virtually based operational process will bring obvious challenges for team members as well as customers who may not be familiar with technology-based retail as well as relationship processes of the firm. The leadership must ensure that the virtual team is not only adequately skilled to engage effectively with the technology-based platforms but also in achieving customer orientation. In the particular case of team members that have direct contact with customers, the leadership must ensure that these are well skilled in ensuring strategic engagement with customers and also helping customers to effectively navigate the associated technology-induced challenges of the new marketing norms.

13.4.2 Infrastructure

Digital technologies are critical for effective virtual team working (Chatfield et al., 2014). To achieve optimal symbiotic interrelation (effective information sharing, involvement and unified effort [e.g., Opute & Madichie, 2016; Opute et al., 2013]) for corporate success, the organisation must ensure appropriate digital infrastructure to aid virtual team working. The organisation must invest in technological devices and packages that aid virtual team working. Typical virtual team working platforms include Microsoft Teams, Zoom, Webex, Skype. Whilst these platforms enable virtual team working, they may differ in their designs and the extent of what is doable and how. Therefore, organisations must ensure a suitable option that enables virtual team members to effectively navigate through their work challenges.

Towards ensuring effectiveness in virtual team working, the leadership must also focus on managing team priorities, tracking progress levels, and managing failures in the operational dynamics in the team working

infrastructure. This will involve tactically organising the virtual working platform to ensure a clear definition and allocation of tasks. Equally, the platform must be structured not only to allow for easy and timely sharing of information but also cross alignment between the team members. The virtual team working platform should be structured to allow for effective chatting, and relevant documentation to be uploaded onto the platform for members to access and effectively carry out their tasks. Members should also be able to interact one on one amongst themselves and effectively interrelate symbiotically to achieve organisational objectives.

Towards achieving effective virtual team working and organisational targets, the virtual team working platform should also integrate software that enables video conferencing, archiving of such video conferences for future accessing by team members. Also, virtual whiteboard tools should be integrated to enable team members to brainstorm and pull ideas together and review their past processes. Integrating such tools would enable team members to effectively organise their thoughts as whiteboard tools contain collaborative features such as a comment section and cloud sharing (syncing). Effective communication and sharing of ideas are essential for effective virtual team working (Chatfield et al., 2014). To optimise team working, the virtual platforms should be structured to enable:

1. Screen sharing
2. Instant messaging
3. Note taking
4. Group chat
5. Team building activities
6. Reviews and check-ins

13.5 Recommendations for Organisations in the African Setting

Firstly, the conceptual framework forwarded in this chapter is summarised in Fig. 13.1. The conceptual framework suggests a leadership strategy viewpoint for ensuring optimal symbiotic interrelation in

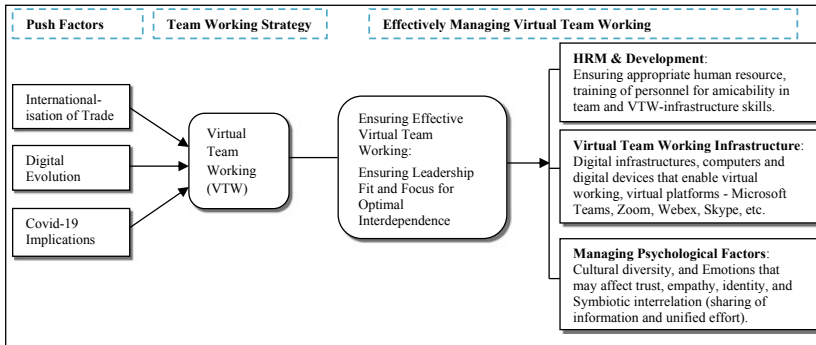


Fig. 13.1 Optimising Virtual Team Working: A Leadership Strategy underpinned on HRM, Infrastructural and Psychological Foundations (*Source* Author)

virtual-based team working towards corporate success. The framework underlines the pertinence for organisational leadership to ensure not only adequate infrastructural and human resource management and development, but also the criticality of giving due attention to the numerous psychological factors that may undermine the effectiveness of virtual team working.

The after-effects of the Covid-19 pandemic on organisations and consumers have awakened a focus for staying agile, thinking creatively, and responding pro-actively to change circumstances, as well as staying future focused. In responding to the Covid-19 pandemic, businesses have resorted to virtual team working as a rational strategy for overcoming the lockdown containment impact. Whilst virtual team working, in itself, is not a new operational tool, the aftermath of Covid-19 does underscore the pertinence for organisations to endorse that working strategy. In a not too distant future, virtual team working would be the established norm, and organisations that fail to embrace the new norm would perish. Two critical developments rationalise that conclusion. First, digital technologies have not only evolved significantly but have also become a core part of daily life, and as a matter of fact, human attitude has shifted significantly from conventional face-to-face interaction to virtual modes (e.g., Opute et al., 2020a, 2020b). Second, natural (including health) crises do occur, and the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the business operational

frailties of physical face-to-face interactions. In situations where movement restriction may be a containment strategy, virtual team working strategy would enable organisations to effectively navigate the operational challenges they face towards effectively ensuring deliverables to customers, and keeping the economy active.

The world in which we live is becoming increasingly dynamic, and only organisations that are armed with adequate operational strategy would survive in the constantly evolving marketplace. For organisations in the African setting, entrepreneurship activity has been documented to be relatively less productive (e.g., Opute, 2020a; Iwu & Opute, 2019), hence high levels of unemployment and poverty (e.g., Du Toit et al., 2018; Iwu et al., 2020), recognising that virtual team working would become the new operational norm in no distant future is critical.

No doubt, the virtual team working trend is one with dual implications for the African setting. First, endorsing the virtual team working strategy is unavoidable and would enable businesses in that setting to remain economically active. To attain the entrepreneurship capacity to be productive and enable economic growth, organisations in the African setting would need to embrace the emerging norm—virtual team working. Doing that would enable organisations in that setting to effectively explore innovative entrepreneurship marketing targets (see Opute, 2020a). Utilising virtual team working would facilitate an organisation's ability to leverage networking outlets and gain access to new markets, locally and internationally.

The second implication, however, is the associated challenge in how the new norm is endorsed. Here, African businesses would need to ensure leadership that is pro-active, committed, and armed with a clear strategy to effectively implement the transition. Organisations in this setting must ensure adequate investment in technological infrastructure, human resource management (including training and development), as well as ensuring that typical psychological factors that may impede effective symbiotic interrelation in the virtual team working space are eliminated. Thus, businesses must ensure that they acquire the service of a relevant virtual working platform that offers adequate features required for their team working. Also, members of the virtual team must be adequately trained to understand how to use the platform features to communicate

effectively and share relevant information for effective inter-dependence. This will also require skills for achieving shared understanding and social interactive behaviour. Finally, effectively implementing virtual team working requires the psychological factors (e.g., culture differences) that may undermine mutual understanding, harmony, trust, and identity, and extendedly symbiotic interrelation are effectively managed.

Organisations in the African setting should ensure appropriate operational mechanisms for monitoring, evaluating, and ensuring that necessary corrective measures are taken towards ensuring effective and goal congruity virtual team working. Equally important in that regard is that organisations in the African setting must keep an eye on emotions-related features (Opute, 2020b) that undermine virtual team working. Intensive emotion-based relationship conflict has been noted to be a common plague of virtual team working (e.g., Ayoko et al., 2012; Connelly & Turel, 2016). To maximise symbiotic interrelation in virtual team working and performance synergy, effective measures to address such conflict features must be ensured. Finally, organisations in the African setting must give due attention to the numerous stress-related features that team members may face due to working virtually, for example, coping with family-related stress factors whilst working virtually from home.

13.6 Conclusion and Future Research Directions

Daily life routine has become increasingly digital technology enabled, both for the individual as well as organisations. For marketers, a direct consequence is the marketing paradigm shift from the conventional physical-based place to virtual-based place marketing premise. Another consequence of the digital technology evolution is the team working enablement influence. Virtual team working is a further consequence of digital technology evolution. However, besides the technological inducement, virtual team working is gaining increasing endorsement due to its flexibility and market penetration (innovative and globalisation) benefits. As a consequence of the Covid-19 pandemic that paralysed the global

economy, virtual team working has not only gained further endorsement as a strategy for organisations to offer deliverables to customers but would, in the future, become the norm, as the global effort intensifies to avoid the global paralytic damage of the Covid-19 pandemic. As warned by Opute et al. (2020b: 84), “human nature has witnessed different forms of health crises, and to believe that Covid-19 may be the last of such health crises would be unimaginable.”

In the post COVID-19 economic landscape, businesses must find new ways of offering deliverables to customers. Businesses would need to start visualising and planning for the post COVID-19 era. Thriving in the post Covid-19 would require businesses that are not short-term “fire fighting” oriented but rather businesses that display sustainable long-term philosophy and offer business models that are robust and withstand shocks and uncertainties.

In their study that forwards innovative retail marketing response strategy for overcoming the unprecedented implications of Covid-19 pandemic, Opute et al. (2020b) noted that the Covid-19-induced challenges should be a wake-up call for businesses to endorse proactive, agile, and innovative strategies for effectively responding to natural disaster-related crises and challenges where restriction of movement may be enforced. Businesses are indeed responding effectively to the Covid-19-induced movement impairment challenge through virtual working strategy. Indeed, for numerous associated benefits, businesses may continue with the virtual strategy even post Covid-19. Virtual team working is the new norm for businesses to compete in the digital era. Whilst the endorsement of virtual team working is undoubtedly important, and indeed would become the norm post Covid-19, ensuring effective virtual team working is a huge challenge that requires a fit leadership strategy that is agile and contingency driven and gives due consideration to infrastructure, HRM, and interdependent and social interactive factors. Such a leadership focus is of critical importance towards achieving effective symbiotic interrelation in virtual team working.

Virtual team working would be a theoretical premise that would gain tremendous importance in the post Covid-19 era as the effort not only to absorb the pandemic-induced shocks but also to ensure future-oriented

practices for sustaining the operational flow of organisations even in times of lockdown would increase. It would be rational to expect a surge in knowledge development in this area in the near future. Future research should aim to shed light on how effective organisational initiatives have been in the use of virtual team working in responding to the Covid-19-induced mobility restriction challenges. Critical questions in this regard include (but are not limited to): what modus operandi are organisations prioritising and why? What are the core challenges that organisations are facing and how are they overcoming them? Finally, what future-oriented strategies are organisations focusing on towards mitigating mobility restriction challenges in the future?

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