



## ***How is the transformation in analytics solution being perceived for the growth of retail?***

Making the right decisions at the right time with the right context is critical for growth. Hence analytics becomes a key propeller of the growth eco-system, more so in the Retail sector where customer connect forms the core of business. Analytics today has transformed from merely being a decision support system to a decision making system and is a must have weapon in today's competitive retail landscape.

Socially active, ultra-mobile and well-informed consumers today demand value driven engagements and personalized experiences. Analytics is at the core of this 1-1 personalization and can be used to drive high impact strategies for engagement, retention, cross-sell and up-sell, offer recommendations and personalized communication to drive higher loyalty. Analytical insights not only enable the customer marketing universe but steer all aspects of the retail business including merchandising, store planning, pricing, supplier management and product optimization.

In the Middle East, the speed to achieve analytics maturity and benefit, simply put, is the greatest advantage that a retailer can have to deal with the ever evolving, technologically advanced and hyper connected world and surge ahead towards sustained growth.

## ***Do you think innovation and growth go hand in hand?***

Innovation, both in the context of technology and business process, is the key to driving growth in today's digital era. In my view, innovation, as we know it, is born out of the surging desire for growth.

Retailers in the Middle East frequently compete to gain the attention of the same set of customers. Understanding and predicting customer behavior and preferences across channels and personalized experiences become paramount in the fight to sustain customer loyalty. The speed at which retailer decision makers receive accurate analytical insights affects the decisions they take and consequently their speed to profit.

The primary goal of innovation in analytics for Manthan has been to put decision makers, at the center of our design and engineering philosophy. We call it "Switch On" - analytics that is simple to

understand and easy to adopt yet encompasses within it complex algorithms of advanced descriptive, predictive and prescriptive analytics.

Switch On focuses on helping businesses enhance, simplify and speed up decision making with technological innovations. This includes role based business applications, comprehensive self-service capabilities, intuitive data visualizations, pre-built content, on-boarding wizards and rapid deployment options. The Switch On approach has not only added speed and accuracy to decision making but helped retailers boost sales and growth, to reap higher profits in the shortest possible time.

Our customers have been able to integrate analytics into their business processes and get their first actionable insights as quickly as within 5 days! In fact our innovative solutions helped one of the leading retailers here, in the Middle East, get a 15% revenue lift with better customer targeting and enhanced campaign accuracy.

## ***What are the innovations to watch out for in the cloud/SaaS and big data spectrum?***

These are exciting times with the cloud/SaaS horizon continually expanding.

Analytics is ideally suited for the cloud since analytics infrastructure is highly compute, processing, storage intensive and the inherent scale, elasticity and performance associated with the cloud is a perfect match. Also, today data sources for analytics have expanded beyond traditional source systems behind the corporate firewall such as ERP, CRM, POS systems to diverse external unstructured data sources including social, web/clickstream, IoT, etc. Hence it is easier to integrate all internal and external data sources from the cloud.

Big data analytics on the cloud, purpose-built for specific industries and verticals, packaged as SaaS applications is a mainstream trend across the globe. Given the high risk of failure that the traditional analytics projects carry in terms time taken to implementation, the trend is now more towards "buy versus build". This allows businesses to adopt fully packaged analytical applications on the cloud typically via a SaaS subscription model, which also brings down the capex requirement. Importantly, this also allows the retailer to focus on their



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business rather than managing complex IT infrastructure. These ready to be plugged in applications generally have pre-built descriptive, predictive and prescriptive analytics use cases and integrate easily with existing data sources. The rich and granular dashboards make them easy for direct usage by business users and thus offer faster ROI.

Another key technology trend with respect to analytics is the usage of big data infrastructure for running analytical workloads for management of large data sets, including the crunching and processing of structured and unstructured data, running machine learning algorithms at scale, as well as serving real-time analytics. Today Hadoop/Spark is at the core of providing low cost, high scale and high performance big data infrastructure.

In fact, at Manthan, we are leading with these trends and have built a comprehensive product portfolio for retail/merchandising analytics, customer analytics and supplier collaboration and analytics that uses the best of breed technology available today and is future proof.

### ***In a digital world, how important is the physical connection with the consumer?***

In modern retail, the two spheres of the physical and the digital worlds need to complement and enrich each other. The connected consumer looks forward to meaningful digital dialogue with various retail brands. However physical touch and feel experiences cannot yet be written off. They were, and will be a very important aspect of retail.

A spate of “experience stores” has been popping up as an able complement to the e-commerce businesses. Immersive, interactive technologies such as Virtual Reality have been making their presence felt in retail in-store environments. Creating a sensory illusion or bring make believe come alive was considered to be in the realms of science fiction. Not anymore. The lines between physical and digital worlds are blurring.

Advances in technology enable retailers to empower their store personnel to enhance the in-store experiences of customers. With mobile device aided customer service, a more personalized experience is delivered to the customer in-store using cross channel identifiers.

Highly engaging value driven personalized communications are also being communicated with the help of beacons.

Many of us have personally experienced the high impact Apple experience centres, though we may have picked up our iPhones online. What this explains is that, customer journeys are not linear any more. The omni-channel experience is reshaping the way retail businesses are conducted. A retailer’s ability to follow and impact customer decision journeys and be proactive in interpreting their desires and aspirations is the key.

Our focus at Manthan is to equip retailers, with the right analytics capability to not only understand the path to purchase of their customers and execute targeted campaigns, but also to manage their merchandising and supply chain processes as intelligently as possible, to build a bi-directional 1-1 personalized connect with consumers.

### ***What are your expectations from the event?***

We are looking forward to interactions with business and IT leaders as well as innovators in the region and expect to strengthen our understanding of both the analytics maturity and the requirement of the retailers here.

The analytics market in the Middle East is poised for significant growth. For example, Forrester has predicted 20% growth in cloud and BI applications consumption. Today Manthan’s solutions have been adopted by businesses worldwide, and our innovations have been consistently acknowledged by the analyst community including Gartner, Forrester and RIS News.

Over 200 retailers across 22 countries across fashion, grocery, mass merchandising and specialty are delighted with Manthan’s innovations. Retailers at the event should drop by to take the speed test and experience how quickly they can move from analytics adoption to ROI.

We look forward to bringing global best practices in retail analytics to our prospects and customers in the Middle East to enable them with the right analytics edge -- which is quick to adopt, future-proof, intuitive and provides the shortest path to profit.