Zoom as a Born Global Firm: A Case Study of Digital Internationalization

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Publication Date: 2026/09/08

Abstract: This paper examines Zoom Video Communications as a case study of a born global firm, highlighting how digital technology enables rapid internationalization. Born global firms are characterized by early entry into foreign markets and a significant share of international revenue, challenging traditional internationalization models such as the Uppsala model. Zoom, founded in 2011, leveraged its cloud-based video communication platform and subscription-based Software-as-aService (SaaS) model to reach users across multiple regions without relying on physical offices. Its global reach was supported by digital scalability, low operational costs, and strong network effects, allowing the firm to quickly capture users in education, business, and social sectors. The study also explores how Zoom maintained service reliability and security while rapidly expanding internationally. The study explores Zoom's early internationalization, digital entry strategies, scalability, and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on its rapid global adoption for business, education, and social communication. Key challenges, including data privacy, regulatory compliance, and competitive pressures, are analyzed. The findings illustrate how digital platforms, innovation, and flexibility enable born global firms to achieve fast international growth and provide valuable lessons for multinational enterprises seeking to operate in the digital era.

Keywords: *Born Global Firms; Digital Internationalization; Zoom Video Communications; Digital Platforms; Global Expansion; COVID-19 Impact; Saas Model; International Business; Network Effects; Digital Transformation.*

How to Cite: Riya Sarkar (2026) Zoom as a Born Global Firm: A Case Study of Digital Internationalization. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology*, 11(8), 3061-3070. https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26aug1150

I. INTRODUCTION

Globalization and rapid advances in digital technology have transformed how firms expand beyond national borders. Unlike the traditional gradual internationalization process, many companies today can operate internationally from an early stage, even when they are small and relatively unknown in their home markets.[1] Digitalization, supported by the internet, cloud computing, and digital platforms, has reduced barriers to global expansion by eliminating the need for large physical investments or overseas subsidiaries. In this context, born global firms have gained increasing attention in international business research. Born global firms internationalize soon after founding, generate a significant share of revenue from foreign markets, and adopt a global mindset from the outset, relying on innovation, digital technology, and networks to achieve rapid international growth. [2]

This paper focuses on Zoom Video Communications as a case study of a born global firm. Founded in 2011, Zoom is a cloudbased video communication platform that provides services such as online meetings, webinars, virtual classrooms, and business communication tools. Its digital platform enables real-time interaction among users across different countries, making it an essential tool in the global digital economy. [3]

Zoom is a suitable case for examining the born global concept because it expanded internationally at an early stage and reached global users without relying on traditional physical expansion. This paper examines how Zoom demonstrates the key characteristics of a born global firm and analyzes the factors behind its rapid international growth, with particular attention to the role of digital technology and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. [4]

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Digital communication technologies play an important role in international business by enabling firms to operate across borders more easily. Research on born global firms shows that digitalization reduces geographical and operational barriers, allowing companies to internationalize rapidly. Cloud-based platforms and scalable digital systems support global reach without the need for physical presence, which is relevant to understanding Zoom's international growth. [5]

The second study analyzes user reviews of the Zoom application using machine learning models such as RNN and GRU. The findings show that most users express positive sentiment toward Zoom, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic when online communication became essential. The

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26aug1150

study highlights Zoom's ease of use and reliability as key factors behind its widespread adoption, while also identifying areas for improvement. This supports the idea that user experience is a critical factor in the global success of digital platforms. [6]

The third study examines privacy and security concerns related to Zoom's third-party applications. It identifies issues such as data collection practices, transparency, and regulatory compliance, which may affect user trust. The findings suggest that although Zoom enables global communication, it also faces challenges in managing data protection across different regions. This highlights the importance of governance and security in maintaining long-term international growth. [7]

Overall, these studies indicate that Zoom's global success is driven by technological efficiency, positive user experience, and scalable digital infrastructure, while also facing challenges related to privacy and regulation. However, existing research mainly focuses on technical or user-based perspectives and pays limited attention to Zoom as a born global firm. This study addresses that gap by examining Zoom's international expansion through the lens of international business and born global theory.

III. RESEARCH METHODS

➢ *Research Approach and Case Selection*

This study uses a qualitative case study approach, suitable for examining in-depth organizational processes and strategies. Case studies are ideal for born global research because they allow detailed exploration of early internationalization and digital expansion. Zoom was selected for its rapid international growth, digital business model, and large global user base, making it a clear example of a born global firm. This approach allows the study to capture real-world practices and challenges faced by born global firms. The selection of Zoom also aligns with the course requirement to conduct a case study.

➢ *Data Sources and Analysis Method*

Multiple data sources were used, including Zoom annual reports, academic journals, industry reports, and public statistics on digital communication. Analysis combines descriptive summaries of Zoom's growth and services with theory-driven interpretation, applying born global concepts to understand its rapid internationalization and digital strategies. This method ensures both empirical accuracy and strong theoretical grounding, allowing a clear understanding of Zoom's international expansion patterns.

IV. COMPANY BACKGROUND: ZOOM VIDEO COMMUNICATIONS

➢ *Founding and Early Development*

Zoom Video Communications was founded in 2011 by Eric Yuan in the United States. Prior to founding Zoom, Yuan worked at Webex as Vice President of Engineering, where he gained significant experience in video conferencing technology. Through this experience, he identified common problems in existing platforms, such as poor reliability, complex interfaces, and unsatisfactory user experience. [8]

Zoom was founded with the vision of providing a simple and reliable video communication platform for global users. From the start, the company emphasized a cloud-based system with good performance and an easy-to-use interface, all of which helped it distinguish itself from competitors. Zoom faced issues such as small resources, unknown brand with strong competition in its infancy. Creating a reliable, scalable digital backbone was also challenging. Despite the headwinds, Zoom continued to attract users by refining its technology and emphasizing user experience. Zoom first leveraged businesses to build its reputation and support early global expansion when it started.[9]

➢ *Business Model and Core Services*

Zoom is a cloud-based video communication platform that allows users to connect through video, audio, and messaging in real time over the internet. With the same cloud benefits, Zoom can offer its international services to the world without having physical offices, which allows it to expand in foreign markets quickly. The company operates a freemium subscription model with Software-as-a-Service (SaaS), and basic services are free, while more demanding ones such as longer meetings, higher number of participants or special security features require the purchase of additional features. The strategy helps Zoom draw a large global user base and earn consistent revenue. Zoom's flagship services include video meetings, webinars, online education experiences, and system communications It is also a leading platform for webinars. Its features range from collaborate online to hosting events. And these can definitely be hosted in the United States and are easy with Zoom.

To better illustrate how Zoom's services are used across different activities, Figure 1 presents the main uses of Zoom services by purpose.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26aug1150

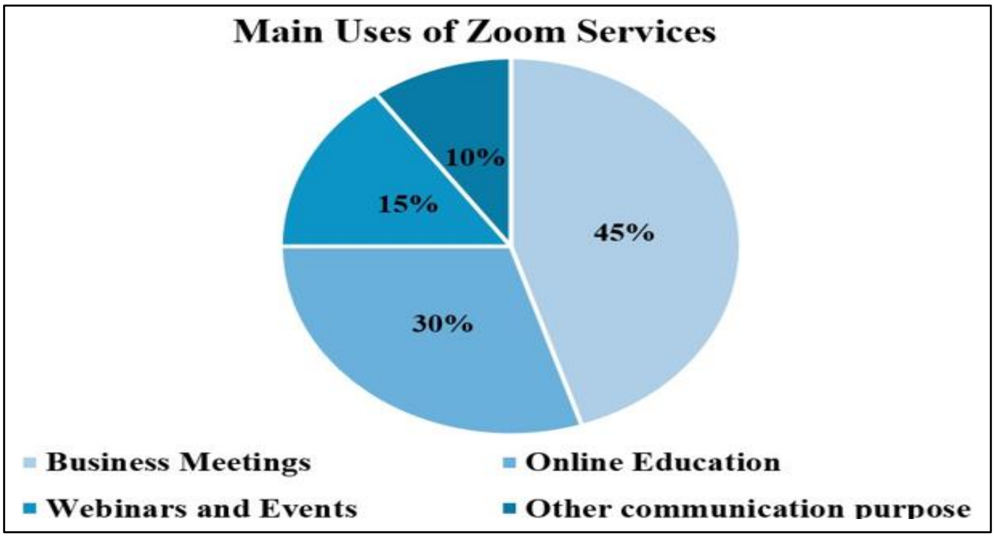

Fig 1 Business Meetings and Online Education Represent The Largest Areas of Zoom Usage. This Highlights The Platform's Strong Value Proposition for Professional and Educational Communication and Explains Why Zoom has Achieved Rapid Global Adoption as a Digital Service Provider.

- *Global Presence and User Base*

From its early years, Zoom experienced rapid international user adoption due to its digital platform and ease of access. And, because the service could be used anywhere with an internet connection, users from around the world were able to quickly adopt Zoom with almost no friction, helping it establish a global user base not long after entering each new international market. As the platform grew, Zoom attracted users all over such regions as North America, Europe and Asia-pacific. A large proportion of users were external to the home market, indicating demand from abroad and muscular network effects that raised the value of all users to the platform. [10]

Zoom's global presence developed through digital expansion rather than physical international investment. Figure 2 illustrates how global digital access enabled early international adoption, leading to rapid user growth across regions and the formation of a strong global presence. This process shows how Zoom scaled internationally in a short time and reflects its early global market orientation.

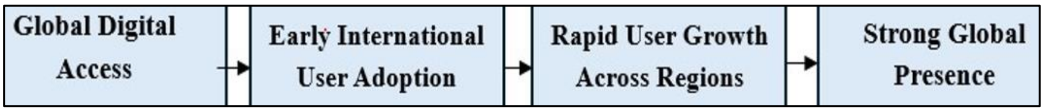

Fig 2 Zoom's Global User Expansion Flow

V. ZOOM AS A BORN GLOBAL FIRM

- *Early and Rapid Internationalization*

Early and rapid internationalization describes how a company enters foreign markets and gains international users soon after its founding, rather than expanding slowly over time. Born global firms operate in accordance with the same philosophy and serve as a core to this notion. In this regard, the case of Zoom will be utilized to describe early and fast internationalization as it has gained users from different countries in just a couple of years since its inception. With Zoom's digital platform, it was able to gain global traction and user numbers without the traditional requirement of physical expansion. This fast expansion of foreign users indicates Zoom's high level of internationalization and reinforces its categorization as a born global company. [11]

Table 1 Growth of Zoom's International User Share

Period	Key Development	International Users (%)
2011-2013	Early development and initial global adoption	10%
2014-2016	Steady international growth	25%
2017-2019	Rapid global expansion	40%
2020	Sharp increase in global demand	55%
2021-2024	Stable and mature global presence	60%

Table 1 Clearly Shows a Steady Increase in the Share of International Users at Zoom Over Time. The Rising Percentages Demonstrate how Zoom Expanded Globally within a Short Period After its Founding, Supporting its Classification as a born Global Firm.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26aug1150

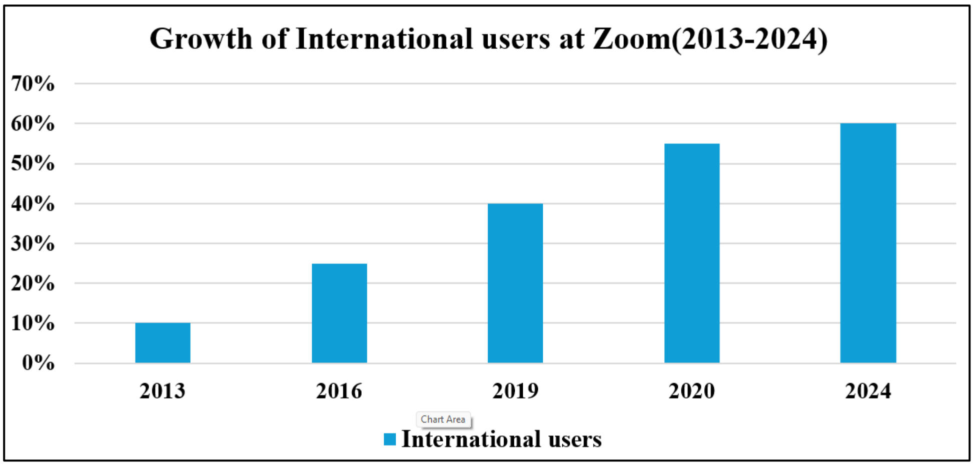

Fig 3 Zoom's International User Base Increased over Time. In 2016, International Users Accounted for About 25% of Total Users, Indicating Steady Growth Beyond the Home Market. By 2019, This Share had Risen to Around 40%, Reflecting Rapid Global Expansion. In 2020, International Users Increased Sharply to Approximately 55%, Showing Strong Global Adoption. By 2024, International Users Reached About 60% of The Total User Base, Demonstrating That Zoom Had Achieved A Stable and Strong Global Presence.

➢ *Digital Entry Mode and Scalability*

Zoom's international expansion is mainly driven by its digital entry mode, which allows the company to serve global markets through an online platform.

- By operating entirely online, Zoom can enter multiple foreign markets quickly without the high costs and risks associated with traditional international expansion. Users in different countries can access meetings simply by downloading the app or using a web browser.
- This digital approach removes the need for physical branches or local offices, allowing Zoom to scale globally from its early stages. The company can add international users with relatively low additional costs, as all users are supported by the same platform infrastructure.
- Zoom's cloud-based system ensures reliable performance and flexibility, even during periods of high global demand. This scalability enables rapid international growth and reflects a key characteristic of born global firms. [12]

➢ *International Orientation and Market Scope*

Zoom demonstrates a strong international orientation through its wide geographical reach and large share of users outside its home market. From an early stage, the platform attracted users across regions such as North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific, reflecting a global market focus rather than a domestic-first expansion. Zoom is a product that has been adopted globally across industries, ranging from business and education to healthcare and government agencies, evidencing the wide variety of markets it serves. Given that Zoom has capability to cater for different users groups across nations, this is a characteristic of being classified as born global firm. Zoom's digital platform also allows the enterprise to quickly accommodate international demand, which serves to further position the company as a global business. [13]

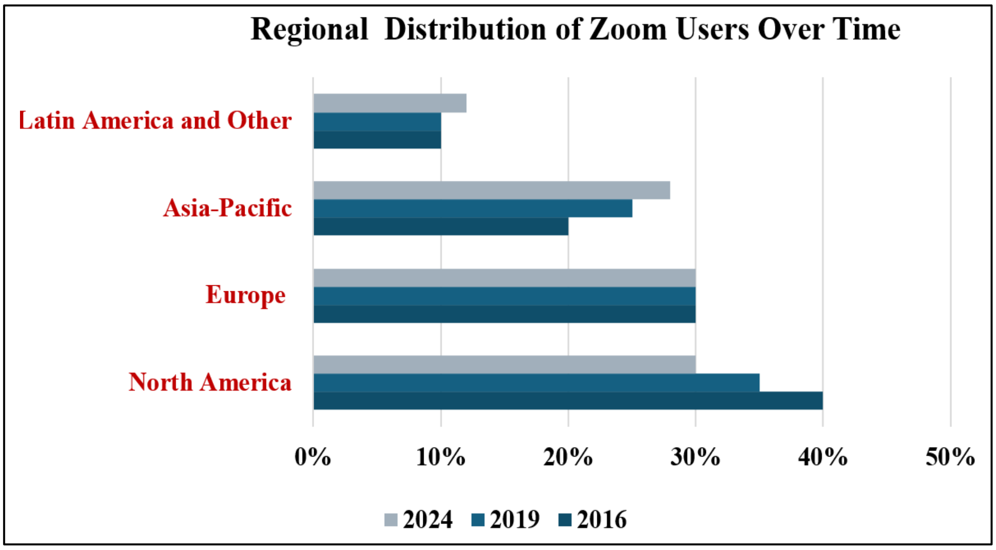

Fig 4 Presents the Estimated Regional Distribution of Zoom's Global Users Over Time, Illustrating the Company's Expanding International Market Scope.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26aug1150

The graph shows that Zoom's user base is spread across multiple regions, with consistent growth in Europe and Asia-Pacific over time. While North America remains an important market, the increasing share of users from other regions demonstrates Zoom's balanced global presence. This visual evidence supports the argument that Zoom functions as a born global firm with a strong international market focus.

VI. CRISIS-ACCELERATED GLOBAL EXPANSION DURING COVID-19

➢ *Communication Challenges During COVID-19*

The COVID-19 pandemic created unprecedented challenges for communication worldwide due to lockdowns and social distancing measures. Face-to-face communication was shorted or prevented, as in the case of ordinary interactions in university life and in activities where people frequently communicate for business purposes or personal daily contacts. Both organizations as well as institutions and individual actors just had to find other ways of remaining in contact and on-course beyond these moments. The digital communication technologies were no longer optional extras but essentials and work- as well as with-it people's ways of studying and communicating had to adapt. This has accelerated the world's reliance on online communication tools. [14]

Key communication challenges included:

- *Inability to Meet Face-to-Face:*

Lockdowns prevented physical meetings and gatherings, while zoom enabled real-time communication through video calls and virtual meetings.

- *Disruption of Business Activities:*

Offices were closed and in-person meetings were cancelled, but zoom allowed businesses to continue operations through online meetings, teamwork, and remote collaboration.

- *Disruption of Education Systems:*

Schools and universities were forced to suspend classroom teaching, and zoom supported learning continuity through virtual classes, lectures, and academic discussions.

- *Loss of Social and Professional Connectivity:*

Social distancing reduced personal interaction, but Zoom helped maintain social and professional relationships through group video calls and online events. [15]

➢ *Rapid Global Use of Zoom During COVID-19*

The COVID-19 pandemic created an urgent global need for digital communication as lockdowns and social distancing made face-to-face interaction impossible. In this situation, Zoom became a crucial platform for maintaining communication in education, business, and daily life. Its cloud-based design allowed the platform to scale rapidly and serve users worldwide during and after the crisis. The pandemic significantly accelerated Zoom's global visibility and adoption, strengthening its position as a key digital communication tool. [16]

- *Before COVID-19 (Up to 2019): Steady Professional Use*

Before the pandemic, Zoom was mainly used as a professional communication tool. Its user base grew steadily, driven largely by businesses and organizations, with limited use in education and social communication. Most users adopted Zoom for corporate meetings, remote teamwork, and international business coordination. Although international usage existed, overall demand remained moderate compared to later periods. [17]

Table 2 Zoom Usage before COVID-19 (2019)

User Category	Share of Total Usage (%)	Typical Use
Business & Corporate Meetings	60%	Team meetings, client calls, internal coordination
Education & Training	20%	Online training sessions, workshops
Conferences & Events	10%	Virtual business events, small conferences
Personal / Social Use	10%	Family calls, informal communication

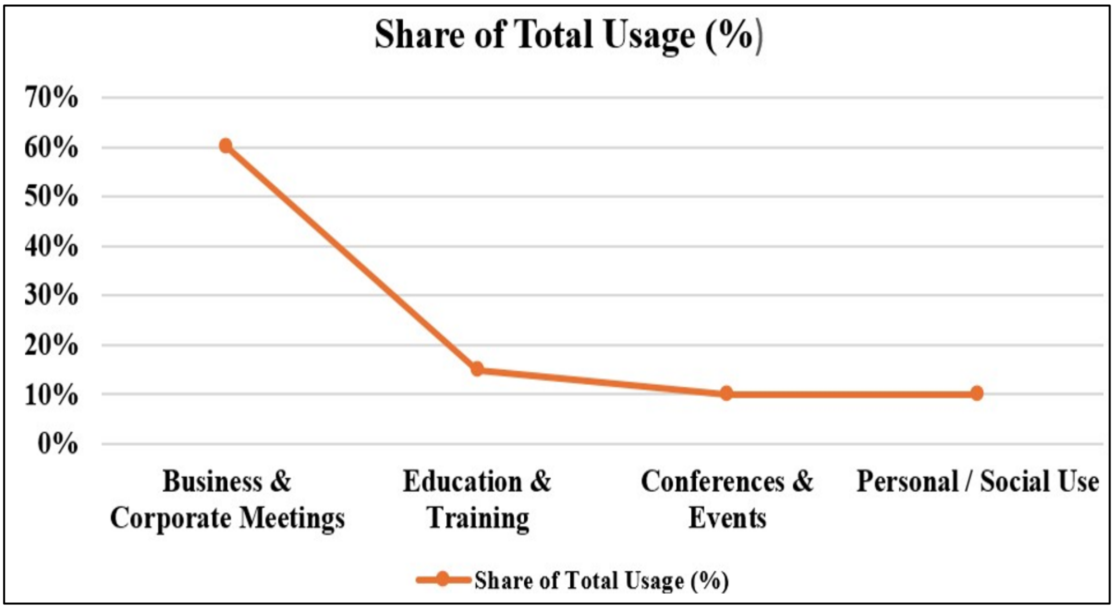

Fig 5 Visually Illustrates Zoom's Usage Distribution Before COVID-19, Highlighting The Dominance Of Business-Related Communication. The Graph Shows That Zoom Was Already Internationally Active But Primarily Positioned As A Professional Communication Tool Rather Than A Mass-Market Platform.

- *Growth of Zoom Use During the COVID-19 Pandemic*

During the COVID-19 pandemic, zoom use increased very quickly as people could no longer meet in person. Schools and universities used Zoom for online classes, while companies relied on it for meetings and remote work. Many people also used Zoom to stay in touch with family and friends. As a result, Zoom became one of the most important communication tools during the pandemic. [18]

Table 3 Zoom Usage During COVID-19 (2020)

User Category	Share of Total Usage (%)	Typical Use
Education (Online Classes)	40%	School classes, university lectures
Business & Remote Work	35%	Work-from-home meetings, team collaboration
Social Interaction & Events	15%	Virtual family gatherings, social events
Conferences & Webinars	10%	Online conferences, professional webinars

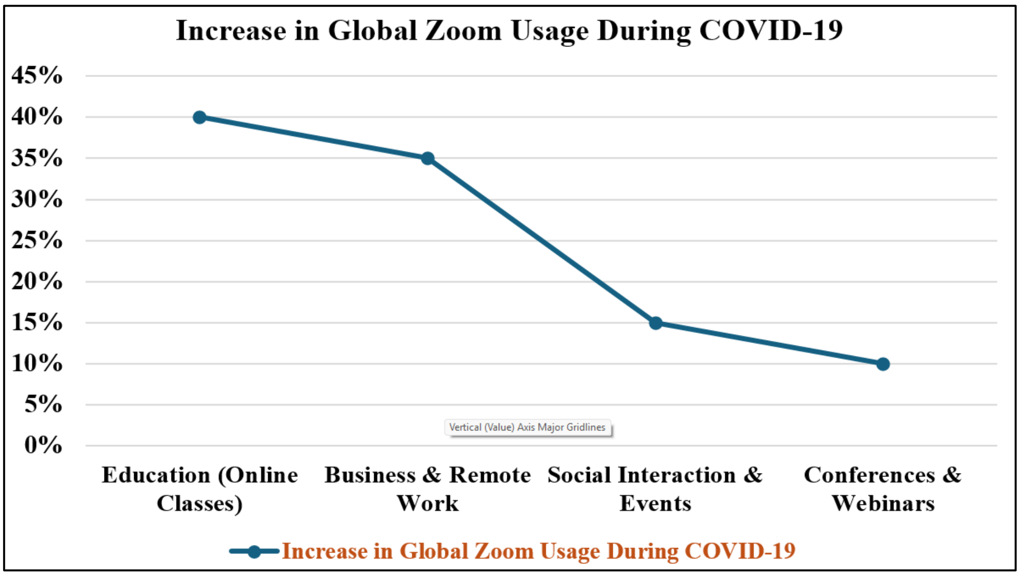

Fig 6 Illustrates The Sharp Rise in Zoom Usage During The COVID-19 Pandemic, Particularly for Education and Remote Work. When Face-To-Face Interaction was no Longer Possible, Zoom Became A Vital Tool for Maintaining Communication Across Schools, Businesses, And Organizations Worldwide. This Rapid Increase Highlights How The Pandemic Accelerated Zoom's Global Adoption and Strengthened Its Position As An Essential Digital Communication Platform.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26aug1150

- *Zoom Usage After the COVID-19 Pandemic*

After the COVID-19 pandemic, zoom usage became more stable but remained much higher than before the crisis. Many companies continued to use Zoom for hybrid work and international meetings, while educational institutions kept using it for online and blended learning. Zoom became a regular part of daily communication across different industries. This continued use shows that Zoom's global importance did not end with the pandemic but developed into long-term adoption. [19]

Table 4 Zoom Usage after COVID-19 (2024)

User Category	Share of Total Usage (%)	Typical Use
Hybrid Work & Business	45%	Hybrid meetings, international business calls
Education & Online Learning	25%	Online courses, blended learning
Conferences & Webinars	15%	Global virtual events
Social & Personal Use	15%	Personal communication, community events

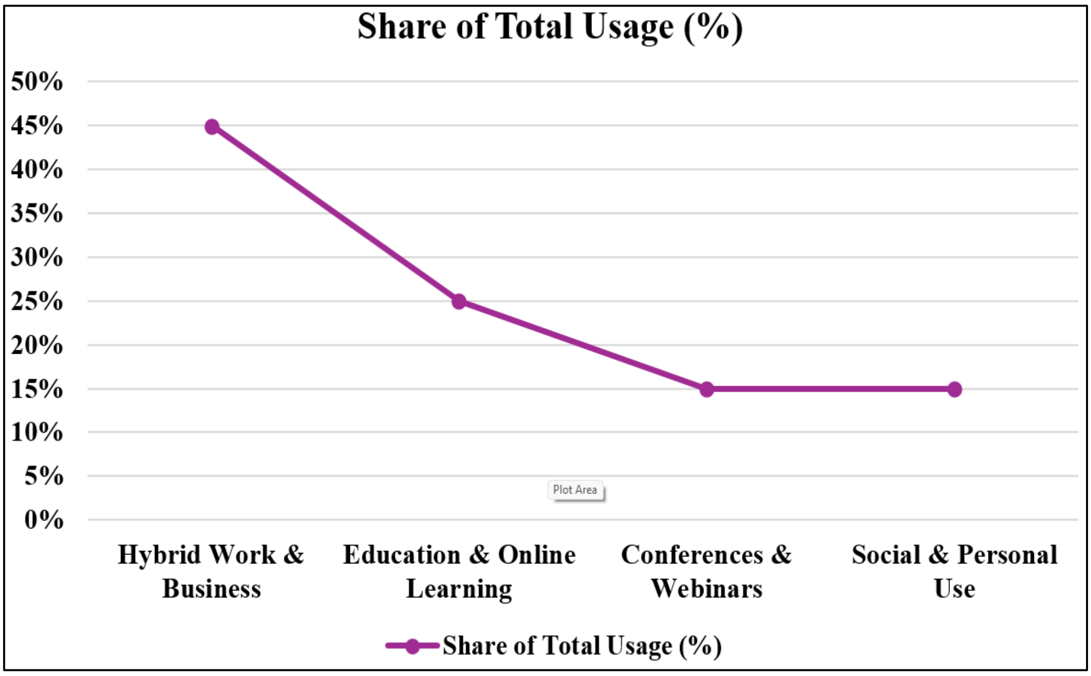

Fig 7 Illustrates Zoom's Stable and Diversified Usage Structure after COVID-19. The Graph Indicates That the Platform's Rapid Pandemic Growth Translated Into Lasting Global Adoption, Reinforcing Zoom's Position As A Born Global Firm with A Wide International Market Scope.

Before COVID-19, Zoom was mainly used by business professionals for meetings, conferences, and internal communication, with limited use in education and personal interaction. In the COVID-19 era, however, people are relying on Zoom more than ever as schools and universities move to online instruction and companies begin to operate remotely. Not only did the education and business sectors significantly depend on Zoom for teaching, meetings, and business as usual when it became impossible to see one another in person. After the pandemic passed, Zoom also remained in heavy use, largely by businesses that have adopted hybrid work and schools engaged in online or blended learning. Today, Zoom is still a crucial tool for online courses and virtual meetings as well as international collaboration in various niches.

- *Zoom's Role in Supporting Global Communication*

Zoom played a significant role in supporting global communication during the COVID-19 pandemic, when travel restrictions and lockdowns limited face-to-face interaction. The platform enabled people across different countries to stay connected through real-time video and audio communication, helping to reduce social and professional isolation. By enabling people to see and engage with one another, Zoom created a sense of presence that was especially valuable during times of physical distance. Zoom also provided stability to crucial fields like education and business. Universities and schools used Zoom to teach online classes, lectures or exams while businesses have been using it to run remote work, meetings and management over international groups. It was reliable and easy to use, so it could be used for formal and informal communication. All in all, Zoom came to play a critical role in preserving global outreach and co-operation, demonstrating its significance as a digital medium for facilitating international connection during crisis. [20]

VII. CHALLENGES AND RISKS FACED BY ZOOM

➢ *Data Privacy and Security Issues*

As Zoom experienced rapid global growth, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, data privacy and security became major concerns. The sudden rise in users increased risks such as unauthorized access, meeting disruptions, and data misuse. These issues raised concerns among businesses, educational institutions, and governments that depended on secure online communication.

To address these challenges, Zoom strengthened its security framework and introduced multiple protection measures. The platform improved encryption standards, added password-protected meetings, enabled waiting rooms, and enhanced host control features. Zoom also worked to comply with international data protection regulations such as GDPR, helping rebuild user trust and ensure safer communication. [21]

- *Security Workflow in Zoom:*

✓ Users create a Zoom account using an email ID and secure login credentials.
✓ A unique meeting ID and password are generated for each session.
✓ Participants join only with host approval through the waiting room feature.
✓ Data is protected using encryption and controlled access during meetings.

This structured security approach helped Zoom maintain trust and support safe global communication despite rapid expansion.

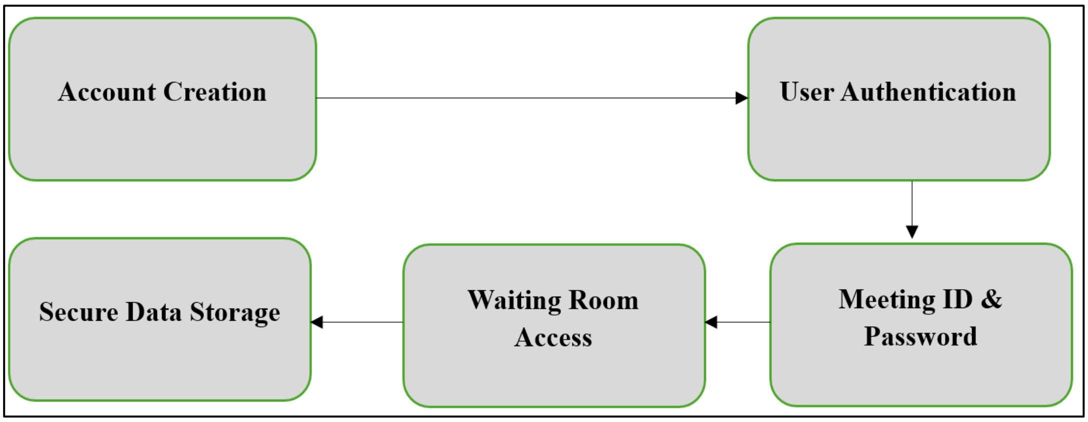

Fig 8 (Workflow of User Authentication and Data Security in Zoom)

The workflow of Zoom begins with user registration or login, where users create an account or sign in securely using authentication credentials. After logging in, users can schedule or join meetings using a unique meeting ID or secure link. Throughout this process, Zoom protects user data through encryption and access controls, ensuring safe and reliable communication.

- *Regulatory Challenges in Global Markets*

As a global digital platform, Zoom operates in many countries with different legal, regulatory, and institutional environments. This creates several challenges, as the company must continuously adjust its policies to comply with local laws while maintaining a consistent global service. Regulatory differences can affect data handling, privacy standards, and service availability, making compliance a complex and ongoing process. [22]

- *Major Regulatory Challenges Faced by Zoom*

✓ *Data Protection Laws*

Zoom must follow strict data protection regulations such as GDPR in Europe and similar privacy laws in other regions, which require careful handling of user data.

✓ *Data Localization Requirements*

Some countries require user data to be stored within national borders, creating technical and operational challenges for a global cloud-based platform.

✓ *Government Regulations and Censorship*

Different governments impose varying rules on online communication, content control, and encryption, which can limit platform functionality in certain regions.

✓ *Compliance and Legal Monitoring Costs*

Constantly updating policies, systems, and security measures to meet international regulations increases operational complexity and compliance costs. [23]

This section highlights how regulatory diversity remains a key challenge for Zoom's global operations. Different countries have varying data protection laws and digital policies, requiring Zoom to constantly adapt its systems and compliance strategies.

Managing these differences is essential to maintain trust and ensure smooth global service delivery.

ISSN No:-2456-2165 https://doi.org/10.38124/ijisrt/26aug1150

- *Competitive Pressure*

Zoom operates in a highly competitive digital environment where several global platforms offer similar communication services. As video conferencing has become essential for work, education, and social interaction, competition in this market has intensified. Major competitors include:

- Google Meet, which benefits from integration with Google Workspace and is widely used in education and small businesses.
- Cisco Webex, which is strong in enterprise and government sectors due to its focus on security and reliability.
- Microsoft Teams, which is deeply integrated with Microsoft Office tools and widely adopted by organizations.

This strong competition pushes Zoom to continuously improve its platform, enhance security, and introduce new features. To remain competitive, Zoom must adapt quickly to changing user needs and maintain a high-quality user experience in a saturated global market. [24]

VIII. DISCUSSION: IMPLICATIONS FOR MNE THEORY AND BUSINESS PRACTICE

The case of Zoom strongly supports the born global theory, which suggests that some firms expand internationally soon after their establishment rather than following a slow, traditional path. Zoom was able to access users around the world at early stage, instead of opening physical offices or entering the market in stages. This means it opposes models such as the Uppsala model and is an example how a digital firm operates globally from day one.

Zoom's rise also illustrates the evolving nature of the modern multinational corporation. By leveraging cloud technology and online platforms, Zoom achieved cheap and rapid global expansion. The Digital Economy, Social Innovation and Transformation This proves that digital ability, innovation, flexibility are more important than presence for global competitive; these lessons be useful to firms who seek grow in the state-of-the-art economy. [25]

Table 5 Implications of Zoom's Growth for MNE Theory and Business Practice

Aspect	**Traditional MNE Model**	**Zoom's Born Global Model**
Speed of internationalization	Gradual and step-by-step	Rapid and early-stage expansion
Market entry method	Physical subsidiaries and offices	Digital platform and cloud-based access
Cost structure	High investment and operational costs	Low marginal cost and high
Key success factor	Physical presence and	Technology, innovation, and user experience
Global strategy	Sequential market entry	Simultaneous global reach

Overall, Zoom demonstrates how digital platforms enable firms to internationalize rapidly and operate globally from an early stage. Its success highlights the growing importance of innovation, flexibility, and digital infrastructure in modern international business. This case shows how future firms can achieve global growth without traditional expansion models.

IX. CONCLUSION

This paper examined Zoom Video Communications as a case study of a born global firm, highlighting how digital technology enables rapid internationalization. Zoom expanded globally shortly after its founding, reaching users across multiple regions without relying on physical offices or traditional market-entry strategies. Its cloud-based platform, subscription-based model, and scalable services allowed it to serve diverse sectors such as business, education, and social communication efficiently. The study demonstrates that born global firms challenge traditional internationalization theories like the Uppsala model, emphasizing speed, innovation, and network effects over gradual expansion. Zoom's experience also highlights the importance of digital readiness, security, and continuous innovation for sustaining global growth.

Finally, the findings suggest practical lessons for multinational enterprises and policymakers. Firms can leverage digital platforms to achieve rapid global reach, while focusing on user trust, flexibility, and technological capability. Future research could explore other digital-born global firms to deepen understanding of how technology reshapes international business strategies.

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