

YIN AND YANG – THE EQUAL AND OPPOSITE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

Winning the battle is an art, surprising but very true & worldwide accepted fact cited by Sun Tzu, the great Chinese Strategist. His book, 'The Art of War' explains Yin and Yang as the holistic principle of opposing forces used for winning battles. One must understand that Yin & Yang are not opposite to each other but are interdependent, interconnected & complementary opposite to each other's, which rise turn by turn. Today the philosophy of Yin & Yang can guide us for managing any business organization. It is need of an hour to understand Yin & Yang and its application in business world. Everything has both yin and yang aspects as light cannot exist without darkness and vice-versa. In every business one can find yin and yang. When we look at competitive situations, we tend to focus on one side of the coin only rather than the whole system. Our strategic challenge is seeing the balancing system instead of whichever of its components is drawing our attention at the moment. Concentrating too much on either side, in will result in imbalances and the disintegration of the organization. In this research paper, the researcher tried to understand the concept of Yin & Yang & how it can be connected with current business world.

Keywords: Yin yang, Strategy, Business Management

INTRODUCTION

What is Yin & Yang?

Yin and Yang has formed a cornerstone of Chinese philosophy for centuries and this principle of opposites was considered universal phenomena that apply to all things, may it be business, life or war as well. Yin describes the principles of femaleness, reflection, yielding and culture. These are the hidden and nurturing forces of growth. Yang describes the principles of maleness, action, control, and strategy. These are the evident and thrusting forces of growth.

It was believed that Yin & Yang worked together in a constant cycle that the seeds of one were contained in the other, and that one could only exert temporary dominance over the other thus, they considered a balanced and holistic approach was the natural requirement for healthy change.

Turning to corporate life, one can understand strategy as a Yang element, because of its driving and tangible nature to shape, focus and prioritize action required for organizational

sustainability. Culture is a Yin principle due to its subtle, intangible qualities that influence indirectly the behaviours and perceptions of people as they carry out their work.

Yin and yang are not opposing forces but complementary opposites that interact within a greater whole, as part of a dynamic system. Everything has both yin and yang aspects as light cannot exist without darkness and vice-versa, but either of these aspects may manifest more strongly in particular objects, and may flow over time. The concept of yin and yang is often symbolized by various forms of the Taijitu symbol, for which it is probably best known in western cultures. Sun Tzu references thirty-two different such pairs of opposing forces at work in competitive situations. Each provides a point of comparison among alternatives. He starts listing these pairs in the very beginning of his work: the army and the nation, creation and destruction, the ground and climate, the leader and method, and so on. Many of these pairs are connected in fundamental ways. For example, larger forces are always slower than smaller forces. Each complementary pair is a system in itself and all these pairs work together as part of the whole competitive picture.

The following image shows and explains various aspects which are covered by Yin and Yang as hot vs. cold, heaven vs. earth, summer vs. winter and so on. The image itself it is bounded all together and cannot exist without each other and as one part ends another follows which is a truly continuous process.



Figure 1. Yin Yang Circle

A poem below written by **Shis - tou** very precisely explains what is yin and yang

*Within light there is darkness,
but do not try to understand that darkness.
Within darkness there is light,
but do not look for that light.
Light and darkness are a pair,*

*like the foot before and the foot behind in walking.
Each thing has its own intrinsic value
and is related to everything else in function and position.
Ordinary life fits the absolute as a box and its lid.
The absolute works together with the relative,
like two arrows meeting in mid-air.*

The curves and circles of the Yin-Yang symbol imply a kaleidoscope-like movement. This implied movement represents the ways in which Yin and Yang are mutually-arising, interdependent, and continuously transforming, one into the other. One could not exist without the other, for each contains the essence of the other. Night becomes day, and day becomes night. Birth becomes death, and death becomes birth. In corporate world today's friend becomes tomorrow's enemy, and today's enemy becomes tomorrow's friends. Such is the nature of yin and yang where everything in the world is relative.

Heads & Tails - Another Way of Looking at the Yin-Yang Symbol

The black and white halves of the Yin-Yang symbol are similar to the two sides of a coin where they are different, and distinct, yet one could not exist without the other. The circle itself - which contains these two halves - is like the material of the coin which holds them together, it is what the two sides have in common - what makes them "the same."

When we flip a coin, we will - in terms of the imprints - always get either "heads" or "tails," one answer or the other. Yet in terms of the essence of the coin (the metal upon which the "heads" and "tails" symbols are imprinted) the answer will always be the same.

Interconnected still Independent Circles

What's great about the Yin-Yang symbol is that the smaller circles nested within each half of the symbol serve as a constant reminder of the independent nature of the black/white "opposites." While the creation of pairs of opposite would seem to be an aspect of our human software, one can easily maintain a relaxed attitude around this, knowing that each side always contains the other, as night contains day.

Philosophy of Yin & Yang

Winning the battle is an art, surprising but very true & worldwide accepted fact cited by Sun Tzu, the great Chinese Strategist. His book, 'The Art of War' explains Yin and Yang as the holistic principle of opposing forces used for winning battles. One must understand that Yin & Yang are not opposite to each other but interdependent, interconnected & complementary opposite to each other which rise turn by turn. Today the philosophy of Yin & Yang can guide us for managing any business organization. It is need of an hour to understand Yin & Yang and apply it in business.

In Chinese culture, Yin and Yang represent the two opposite principles in nature. Yin characterizes the feminine or negative nature of things and yang stands for the masculine or positive side. Yin and yang are in pairs, such as the moon and the sun, female and male, dark and bright, cold and hot, passive and active, etc. But yin and yang are not static or just two separated things. The nature of yin yang lies in interchange and interplay of the two components. The alternation of day and night is such an example.

The concept of yin and yang has a long history. There are many written records about yin and yang, which can be dated back to the Yin Dynasty (about 1400 - 1100 BC) and the Western Zhou Dynasty (1100 - 771 BC). Yin and yang are the basis of Zhouyi which means Book of Changes. Yin and yang became popular during the Spring and Autumn Period (770 - 476 BC) and the Warring States (475 - 221 BC).

The principles of yin yang are an important part of Huangdi Neijing (Yellow Emperor's Classic of Medicine), the earliest Chinese medical book, written about 2,000 years ago. They are still used for such purposes in the country.

Characteristics of Yin Yang

- Yin and yang are opposite in nature, but they are part of nature, they rely on each other, and they can't exist without each other.
- The balance of yin and yang is important. If yin is stronger, yang will be weaker, and vice versa.
- Yin and yang can interchange under certain conditions so they are usually not yin and yang alone. In other words, yin can contain certain part of yang and yang can have some component of yin.
- It is believed that yin yang exists in everything.
- Even if one part is in existence it doesn't mean that the other part is absent, it is very much present and only waiting for its time to come up.
- There is nothing good or bad about yin and yang

Principles of Yin Yang

1: Yin and Yang are equal and opposite at the same time

Everything in the world has its opposite (as claimed by science) - This is never absolute though, only comparative. No one thing is completely Yin (Evil, White) or completely Yang (Good, Black). Each contains the seed of its opposite and they can be transformed from one form to the other depending on many factors. For example, winter can turn into summer; or as simple as day turn to night and again night turn to day. There is not absolute bad or absolute good thing in the world.

2: Yin and Yang are interdependent

As mentioned, nothing is totally Good (Yang) or totally Bad (Yin). The Chinese philosopher says that: "*Yin creates Yang and Yang activates Yin*". One cannot exist without the other. For example, day cannot exist without night. Heat cannot exist without Cold. A woman cannot exist without a man and so other pairs are there.

3: Yin and Yang are further subdivided into another yin and yang

In anything and everything Yin or Yang aspect can be further subdivided into yin and yang. For example, the period of 24 hrs. can be subdivided into day and night. Day again can be subdivided into hot or cold or morning and evening.

4: Yin and yang consumes each other but they also support each other

The Yin and Yang philosophy is based on the principle of relativity as given by great scientist Albert Einstein. The levels of Yin Yang are relative and continuously changing. In order to have a harmonious change, balance must prevail for both Yin and Yang but this is merely the case. Most of the times Yin or Yang are out of balance and they affect each other, and too much of one can eventually weaken (consume) the other. For example too much aggressiveness in business may lead to some different outcome whereas too much lenient approach towards say employees will lead to no or very low productivity at all.

5: At times Yin can become Yang and Yang can become Yin

At a particular stage or time, Yin can be transformed into Yang and Yang can be transformed into Yin. For example, life changes to death. Hot changes to cold. Night changes to Day etc. One can change into the other, but not randomly. It is happening only when the time is right. For example: Spring only comes when winter is finished. The Day comes when the Sun rises etc.

6: The Yin is a part of Yang and vice versa.

As mentioned, there's not a single thing on our Universe that is total Yin or total Yang. There are always traces of one in the other. For example, there is always light within the dark (e.g., the stars at night or the lights in the streets).

By understanding the above mentioned principles one can have the understanding about the changes which are taking place in business and personal life and cope up with the same with ease.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The earliest Chinese characters for *yin* and *yang* are found in inscriptions made on “oracle bones” (skeletal remains of various animals used in ancient Chinese divination practices at least as early as the 14th century BCE). In these inscriptions, *yin* and *yang* simply are descriptions of natural phenomena such as weather conditions, especially the movement of the sun. There is sunlight during the day (*yang*) and a lack of sunlight at night (*yin*). According to the earliest comprehensive dictionary of Chinese characters (ca. 100 CE), Xu Shen's *Shuowen jiezi* (*Explaining Single-component Graphs and Analyzing Compound Characters*), *yin* refers to “a closed door, darkness and the south bank of a river and the north side of a mountain.” *Yang* refers to “open door, height, brightness and the south side of a mountain.” These meanings of *yin* and *yang* originated in the daily life experience of the early Chinese philosophy. Peasants depended on sunlight for lighting and their daily life routines. When the sun came out, they would go to the field to work; when the sun went down, they would return home to rest. This sun-based daily pattern evidently led to a conceptual claim: *yang* is movement (*dong*) and *yin* is rest (*jing*). In their earliest usages, *yin* and *yang* existed independently and were not connected. The first written record of using these two characters together appears in a verse from the *Shijing* (*Book of Songs*): “Viewing the scenery at a hill, looking for *yin yang*.” This indicates that *yang* is the sunny side and *yin* is the shady side of hill. This effect of the sun exists at the same time over the hill.

According to Sima Tan (SSU-MA TANca. 110 BCE), there existed a school of teaching during the “Spring and Autumn” (770-481 BCE) and “Warring States” (403-221 BCE) periods that bore the name of *yin yang*. He lists this *yin yang* school alongside five others (Confucian Mohist, Legalist, Fatalist, and Daoist) and defines its theory as “the investigation of the *shu* [art] of *yin* and *yang*.” According to him, this school focused on omens of luck and explored the patterns of the four seasons.

Yin Yang Approach to Current Business Management

In every business one can find yin and yang. The yin is water and earth which offers value whereas the yang is the fire and air, which shows how to bring that value to life or business. When any business is stuck and its growth have taken pause there is either yin or yang problem for sure. If your customers are happy about you and are spreading good about you in the market but still you are not getting any business growth then for sure you have yang imbalance. Then it is time for you to invest in the performance improving in your offering, changing approaches in your communication & convince your idea to others.

On the other hands if you are having pressure on your pricing and customers are viewing you as just another option, it’s time to increase your yin power & refocus your energy on the unity of your brand so as to get more value for your audience.

Many brands gets pushed or pulled by the rapidly changing demands and preferences of customers.

In today’s business where lot many forces are affecting its position in market and a question opens up about its sustainability in the market, it is very much required to check which aspect has become weaker and take corrective action accordingly. Many a times an understanding of such problem is not there due to which wrong solution is considered which unfortunately leads to deeper or heavier the problem itself. For example yang factor is weaken and as a solution by mistake if yin factor is give more weightage then it will only worsen the problem and the situation will become un controllable.

Table 1. Difference between Yin and Yang

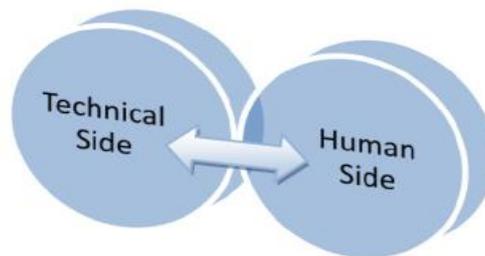
Yin and Yang: Properties and Associations	
Yin	Yang
Feminine	Masculine
Passive	Active
Receptive	Creative
Dark	Bright
Soft	Hard
Original Meaning of Yin and Yang	
Yin	Yang
North side of a hill (i.e. away from the sun)	South side of a hill (i.e. facing the sun)

Table 1. Difference between Yin and Yang (Contd....)

Some Symbols of Yin and Yang	
Yin	Yang
Moon	Sun
Night	Day
Water	Fire
Turtle	Dragon
Black color	Red color
North	South
Lead	Mercury
Even numbers	Odd numbers

Perception of Managers

When managers look at competitive situations, they tend to focus on one part of balancing pair rather than the whole system. Their strategic challenge is seeing the balancing system instead of whichever of its components is drawing our attention at the moment. As a matter of fact due to certain situation or due to human perception we tend to look at one side of anything whichever comes in our way. Which in turns gives not so accurate conclusion about the situation in our mind, and as some or other decisions are based on such information it is bound to happen that wrong decision will lead to wrong output which ultimately derived due to wrong perception generated by looking at one side only?



One way to illustrate this concept is using the coin shown above. When you look at this coin, it has a way of shifting perspective. One side seems to be the front, then another. Either the managers are busy looking at technical side and forget human side of business or vice versa. The concept of complementary opposites says that this is the shifting nature the deeper reality of many elements of competitive situations but people are uncomfortable with this duality so they settle on one way of seeing the complexities of a situation as "correct." This makes it difficult for them to correctly compare positions and situations correctly according to Sun Tzu. For example, some people look at situations and see problems. This perspective isn't wrong, but it obscures key aspects of any situation. We can also look at the same situation from a different perspective and see it as full of opportunities. Again, this view isn't wrong, but it also is incomplete. To make the label "problem" or "opportunity" work, we must filter out some elements of the situation. In our illustration, we block some of the lines

of the cube so it shows one face clearly as the front. In competitive comparisons, we ignore key elements of our position only at our own peril.

CONCLUSION

The beauty of the Yin and Yang approach lies in balancing act. Concentrating too much on either side, will result in imbalances and the disintegration of the organizational objective. Therefore continuous assessment of the state of the company and formulation of strategies to maintain the balance is the key to the achieve sustainability of any organization. All situations exist because many different opposing forces balance each other and the truly interesting part is that opposite forces are actually two necessary sides of the same system. The black and white symbol that depicts the idea of yin and yang is all about the interaction of two energies that causes things to happen. Two energies that cannot exist without each other. It is all right that there are differences and tensions that arise between businesses of different sizes – it's acceptable feature of competition and there's no point in assuming that it should not happen. But to be successful, all businesses need to generate wealth, and staying competitive is the way to achieve that.

The best way to manage the tensions that arise between various businesses is to understand that it is just one business community with many dimensions, instead of fighting against each other why not to understand yin yang aspects of the situation?

Sun Tzu's strategy makes situations easier to understand by creating simplified models of inherently complex situations. Dozens of different complementary opposites are used in the mental models of strategy. Good strategy is possible only by understanding the dynamics of complementary opposites. We cannot fight the forces of nature. We can only take advantage of the opportunities that the larger environment creates. Opportunity creation is only seen clearly through the perspective of the shift between complementary opposites. Over time, these shifts create trends and cycles that we can use to our advantage.

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