



POST COVID-19 MARKETING STRATEGIES

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Abstract

Consumers has always been the priority of marketing. So, an effective marketing strategy is the one which is developed keeping in mind the needs and aspirations of the customers. But as we all know future is uncertain. Time changes and so the customers' needs. Now a days, bringing innovation in your marketing strategy has become the need of the hour for every business in order to survive in the market even in the toughest times. Although we are shifting from crisis to recovery mode but covid-19 crisis has impacted consumers' mindsets in such a way that it will take a lot of time to switch their current mindsets and habits. New marketing strategies should be developed that are consistent with the current needs of the customers. Innovative marketing strategies are essential for the well-being of customers and for the companies as well. This is especially important during times like these – when unfortunate circumstances are changing our everyday lives. COVID-19 has affected most countries' economies, which prompted a lot of businesses to change or improve their marketing strategies. This research paper is an attempt to identify the new marketing strategies adopted by the companies in the post covid-19 and their success. We have discussed necessary improvements and modification in marketing strategies to satisfy customers' needs.

Keywords: *Marketing Strategies, Corona Virus, Post Covid-19 World, Marketing, Innovative Marketing Strategies, Covid-19 Marketing Strategies.*

Literature Review

Marketing Strategy

Marketing strategy may be defined as making a path that will provide your business a direction in prospecting, converting prospects into actual customers, fulfilling their needs, retaining the present customers and increasing the customer base. The ultimate goal of marketing strategy is customer satisfaction. Various marketing strategies have been adopted by companies to satisfy post Covid-19 needs of the customers. Not only for customer satisfaction but to gain a competitive edge over the competition in the post-COVID-19 era require fine-tuning current marketing strategies.

Marketing strategies adopted by the companies during Covid-19 pandemic are empathetic marketing, expanding product lines to meet the emerging needs of the customers, Digital migration, Introduction of new products, changes in concepts and operations of the business etc.

Objectives of the study

1. To explore the post Covid-19 marketing strategies adopted by the companies.
2. To analyze the importance of embracing new marketing strategies in post Covid-19 world.
3. To conduct decision matrix analysis to identify the best alternative for the companies' survival in pandemic with respect to marketing strategies.

Research Methodology

The study is descriptive and tries to identify the new strategies adopted by the companies in post covid-19 world. The decision matrix analysis was conducted to find out the best marketing strategy alternative companies can adopt during this critical situation and possible solutions were also identified based on



the previous studies. The research tool used for analyzing the data which amassed from different sources for this study is content analysis and the research method used is descriptive research. We have taken into consideration the qualitative aspect of the research study. This study is completely based on secondary data. A systematic review was done in detail for the collected literature.

Secondary sources of data used are i) Journals, ii) reports, iii) search engines, iv) company websites and scholarly articles, v) research papers, and other publications.

Importance of Marketing Strategy

- 1. Competitive Advantage:** Marketing strategies helps in gaining edge over the competitors. Sometimes it becomes important to develop situation-based marketing strategies. In covid-19, companies established pandemic specific policies and procedures. Many organizations focused on the safety and well-being of its customers. Companies invested in technology and infrastructure to support remote work and virtual collaborations and capabilities. These strategies attracted more customer base and resulted in gaining competitive advantage.
- 2. Brand Recognition:** Having a unique and powerful strategy helps the brand and overall company to obtain a reputed and remarkable position in the market. The main fundamental of marketing strategy is to highlight and promote the features, legacy and USP's of the band.
- 3. Persuade Customers:** While selecting the promotion tools and techniques, some factors that should be kept in mind are taste, lifestyle, income levels, and other parameters of the targeted customers that works as a pull factor for them. These strategies attract the new set of customers from the same operational market as well as from the untapped markets.
- 4. Planning of unique products and services:** Marketing strategy comprises of marketing research and study that helps the marketer to strategize effectively and plan development new and unique products that are consistent with current scenario. For example, veggie wash, mask one etc.
- 5. Planning of marketing budget:** Having an adequate and planned marketing strategy makes sure that there is an optimal use and allocation of marketing budgets on marketing tools and promotional activities that helps in achieving not only market goals but also overall goals of the business and its objectives as well.
- 6. Effective Distribution Plan:** With the changing time, there is continuous development in technology, tastes and preferences of the customers. In this digital world, younger generation prefer to buy products and services online either from the company directly or from its online promotional partners whereas middle age and old age group still believes in finalizing the purchase by physically visiting the store or outlet of the brand. The companies should strategize effective distribution plan and expand its network of distribution. The importance of effective distribution plan has increased especially in the time of covid-19 crisis.

Let us discuss the strategies adopted in post covid world

1. Empathetic Marketing

Empathetic marketing is that superpower which helps the marketers to understand its customers' feelings and experience and connect with them. Now a days people identify with empathy more than anything else.

Neuroscientist, Antonio Damasio discovered, "We are not thinking machines that feel, we are feeling machines that think." Damasio made this groundbreaking discovery: when emotions are impaired, so is decision-making.



Post covid-19 world has been so critical and sensitive and it might be possible that your customers might have lost someone or your customers might have gone through serious crisis. In these situations, it is the duty of marketer to act rationally and send more messages that identify with people's pain. It is essential to reach out a good percentage of your customers and identify their struggles and offering help wherever possible. Empathy might not be the standard mode of marketing of goods or services but it is the powerful tool of marketing.

Recent example of empathetic marketing is the mail sent by CEO of Swiggy to their customers concerned with their health and safety. The mail was as follows:

“Welcome back to Swiggy! It's been a while since we last saw you, and I hope these past few months have been safe for you and your family.

At the risk of sounding cliché, the times truly have been strange. But I've found that the little things like a Sunday biryani or pizza game nights (alas, played out on video call) can make things feel close to 'normal' again. I'm sure you feel the same way as well, and I would like to thank you for choosing us to bring back that feeling.

As you may already know, we've put several additional safety measures in place recently. My go-to option is our Best Safety Standards collection of restaurants - they go the extra mile with frequent sanitization, daily glove and mask changes, and everything in between to keep your order safe. We also frequently train our delivery partners in the best hygiene practices. Plus, their mask usage is monitored through our very own AI mask-selfie technology, which ensures they can't log in on the Swiggy app unless they're wearing a mask.

I hope in the time you've been away, we've only gotten better and that you were happy with your recent Swiggy experience. Thank you once again for choosing Swiggy and placing your trust in us.” This technique helps the marketer to step into the shoes of their target customers. Through this technique marketer can better understand and respond to their needs and wants, which will result in loyal customer base and greater business success.

Success

With Swiggy already operating at 85% to over 100% of pre-COVID levels, the company envisages growth potential for the next 3 to 5 years in the food delivery market. Trends of food orders changed post lockdown. Swiggy adapted scenario where no one ordered working breakfast in the office anymore and there were lesser single person orders as many people were still working from home. However, order sizes increased from 25% to 40% in value since more people were at home.

2. Expansion of Product Lines

When a company introduces a new product in the same product line of an existing brand, it is known as expansion of product lines. According to Global Data's Covid-19 Consumer tracker, 44% of Indian consumers bought fresh fruits and vegetables more than before in Week 9 (19 to 31 May 2020). Data also revealed that 48% of Indian consumers purchased household cleaning products, and 47% preferred buying personal care products more than ever before. Additionally, the percentage of consumers being influenced by health and wellbeing had increased from 73% during week 1 (25 to 30 March 2020) to 89% in week 9.



During corona pandemic, many companies expanded their product lines keeping in mind the health and hygiene related needs of the customers. As world faced an unprecedented crisis due to covid-19 and consumers needed strict hygienic lifestyle, companies made efforts to meet the growing demand for hygiene products.



For example, India-based fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG) giant ITC launched 100% natural NimWash Vegetable and Fruit wash with neem and citrus fruit extracts to strengthen its FMCG portfolio, says GlobalData. Along with ITC, other FMCG companies such as Dabur, Godrej Emami and Pantanjali also expanded their portfolio to include health and hygiene products. Most of these companies began with the launch of hand sanitizers, such as ITC Salvon's hand sanitizer and disinfectant, Dabur Sanitize and EmamiBoroPlus sanitizer. These companies now plan to expand their portfolio by exploring newer categories such as floor and surface cleaners, disinfectant sprays and immunity building products.

Success

Reckitt Benckiser's health and hygiene brands such as Dettol, Lysol, Harpic products have benefitted from a surge in covid cases worldwide that has essentially altered consumer behaviour and pushed more consumers in markets like India to adopt frequent cleaning practices. As a result, its brands have widened their reach and usage here.

Globally, the company reported a 13.3% jump in like-for-like sales (excluding foreign exchange fluctuations) led by greater demand in its home and personal cleaning products. In developing markets, third quarter revenue grew by 10.1% on a like-for-like basis as a result of strong Dettol and Lysol growth, offset in part by declines for Enfamil in Hong Kong, the company said in its earnings statement.

3. Digital Migration

With the lockdown and travel restrictions of the pandemic, everything shifted online. In covid-19 world, consumers started shopping online in greater number and frequency. The growth in e-commerce due to the pandemic has set a high bar for what's now considered baseline growth. According to the Q2 2020 report from the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. retail e-commerce reached \$211.5 billion, up 31.8% from the first quarter, and 44.5% year-over-year. E-commerce also accounted for 16.1% of total retail sales in Q2, up from 11.8% in the first quarter of 2020.



Indian small-scale businesses were forced by pandemic to embrace technology and move online. In response to the lockdown, restaurants closed dining areas and scraped by on pickup and delivery ordered via apps. Small shops that sell physical goods such as clothes and books figured out ways to list products online and, in some cases, created websites for the first time. Stores that still sell from physical locations are changing how they get paid — moving away from riskier cash and even physical credit card payment systems to prepaid invoices and contactless options. Technology adoptions that were expected to take years happened in weeks.

Success

Swiggy has identified street food and delivery of grocery as areas for growth in 2021. In an interview with ET Now's Nayantara Rai, Swiggy's Chief Operating Officer Vivek Sunder said that many restaurants have permanently moved to cloud kitchens as it was difficult to get the same number of orders which they used to get earlier. With over 5000 cloud-only kitchens entering the mix, consumers have a larger cuisine and brand diversity to choose from.

4. Introducing New Products

Most of the successful companies adopts the strategy of introducing new products. Due to the change in the needs and requirements of the customer in the pandemic, many companies introduced new products to meet the post covid needs of the customers. In today's highly competitive market, development of right product at right time and at right cost is the need of the hour. Introduction of new products that consumers want requires correct and thorough information, time and dedicated resources from the entire organization. The companies that are most successful at the development and launch of a new or revised product follow an organized and well-planned process. New Product Introduction (NPI) helps bring all the right resources together at the right time.

With the onset of COVID-19, it became imperative to realise the importance of health and wellness, alongside having a comprehensive health insurance policy. Keeping this in mind, Aditya Birla Health Insurance (ABHICL), the health insurance arm of Aditya Birla Capital Limited, introduced an array of services and product solutions that will enable customers to take care of their health in such difficult times.



ABHICL also launched 'Corona Kavach Policy'- an indemnity health insurance product covering COVID-19. Corona Kavach is a specific reactive care hospitalisation indemnity plan which covers hospitalisation expenses in case of inpatient admission due to COVID-19 infection and any other co-morbidity which a patient may have.

During the Covid times, Nestle innovated and launched products. Nestle introduced variety of maggi noodles in a limited platform and e-commerce platform and allowed the consumers to vote which of these flavours; tomato, Capsica and cheesy delight they want them to continue.

Success

According to a recent ET report, Nestle India, maker of brands like Kit Kat, Nescafé, Cerelac and A+ (milk and curds), emerged as the fastest growing in the FMCG space during the lockdown. The company posted a 10.7% year-on-year revenue growth in the March 2020 quarter, highest among peers, while the operating profit rose by 5.4%. During the lockdown, demand for Maggi surged by at least 20-25% over the average 'pre-Covid numbers'.

5. Changes in Concepts and Operations of Business

In response to the growth of business, development of business operations takes place, and the management plan to accommodate the changes to prevent errors and problems occurring in the system. Changes in operations can help the company find new systems that improve performance and cut costs, or that help the company stay compliant with new regulations. In the crisis period, many companies changed the operations of business not only due to the reasons of growth in business but also to meet the post Covid needs of customers.

In Covid pandemic, Nokia announced first phase of its new strategy, changes to operating model and Group Leadership Team. New company strategy had been shared in three phases, new operating model came into effect on January 1, 2021, designed to better position company for changing markets and align with customer needs.

- New model included four P&L-responsible business groups aligned with customer buying behaviour.
- New business groups were Mobile Networks, IP and Fixed Networks, Cloud and Network Services and Nokia Technologies.
- New Customer Experience organization to strengthen customer relationships across all businesses.
- Optimized model for better accountability and transparency, increased simplicity and improved cost-efficiency.



Success

In terms of smartphones, Nokia Mobile recorded shipment increase of 35% compared to Q3 2020, which means the Finns shipped 2.8 million Nokia smartphones in Q4 2020. That was enough for capturing 0.7% of the global smartphone market share in Q4, making Nokia the 15th biggest smartphone brand.

Decision Matrix Analysis

Possibility of Success in crisis				
Factors	New Marketing Strategies	Old Marketing Strategies	No Strategy	Score
Weights	5	3	1	
Company 1	1*5=5	1*3=3	5*1=5	13
Company 2	5*5=25	5*3=15	1*1=1	41
Company 3	2*5=10	5*3=15	1*1=1	26
Company 4	5*5=25	2*3=6	1*1=1	32

In this decision matrix, I have considered four companies. I have listed the factors that are relevant and assigned weights that reflects how important each set of criteria is during the crisis period for the success possibility of a company.

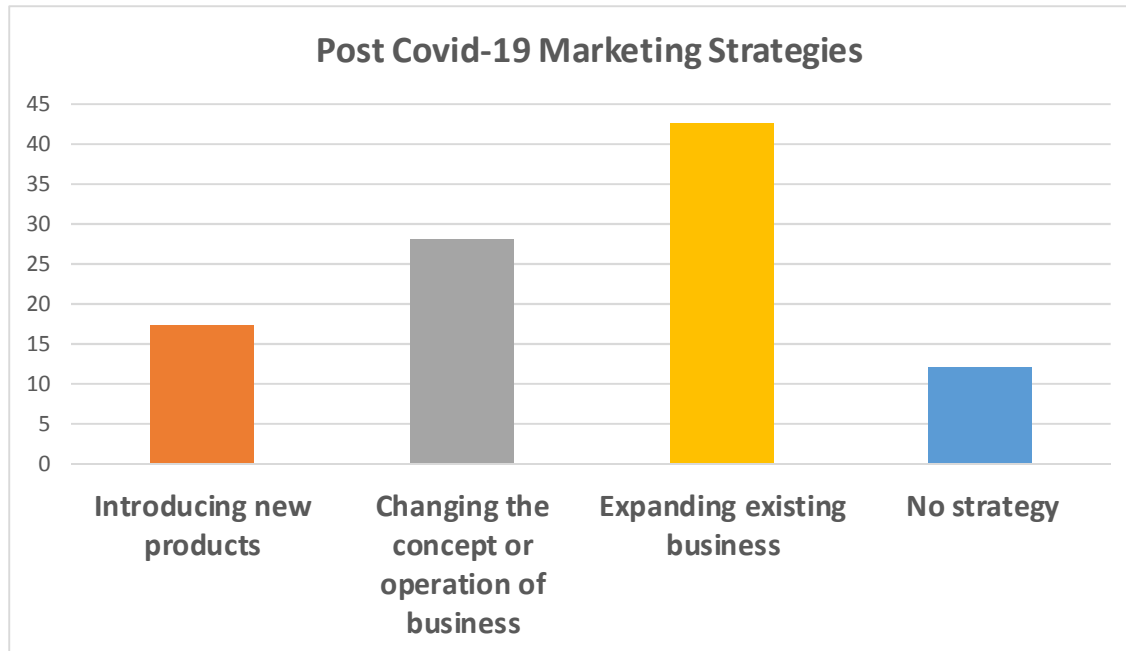
Old marketing strategy and no strategy both are factors but as per my reckoning New marketing strategy is the most important factor in especially in the period of corona pandemic as it will attract more customers and persuade them to buy product. That's why remaining factors have received lower weighted score.

As per the decision matrix, company 1 has the lowest score which means there is lowest possible chance of getting success or company may even fail if the company adopts no strategy.

Company 2 has the highest score which means there is highest possible chance of getting success. The company has adopted the combination of old and new marketing strategies which means that old and new marketing strategies both plays an important role in success of the company. So we can conclude that a company may move further with its old strategies but should embrace new strategies as well that are consistent with the current scenario.

Online Survey June 2020 on Post Covid Marketing Strategies in Malaysia

According to an online survey June 2020 conducted in Malaysia, among the main strategies preferred by respondents (32 respondents or 42.67 per cent) was to further expand their existing business. Besides, 21 respondents (28 per cent) planned to change their business concept or operations. Moreover, 13 respondents (17.33 per cent) chose to introduce new products, while the remaining nine respondents (12 per cent) did not have any business strategy for the future. Figure provided below represents the marketing strategies adopted during crisis period in Malaysia.



Conclusion and Suggestions

According to a survey conducted by CMO, most marketers agreed that the marketing strategies they have developed and used during the COVID-19 pandemic will be important opportunities for their companies over the long term (5.6 out of 7). Companies should focus on the current need of the customers in the crisis period instead of promoting their business. Companies can go back to their usual routine once the pandemic is over and economy is a lot more stable. Companies should make sure that their posts and ads show compassion and empathy towards the audience. Make your customers aware about how your products and services can help them during pandemic.

Businesses that don't implement digital and traditional marketing strategies risk becoming irrelevant, while those that choose to leverage this powerful tool will thrive. It's true that word-of-mouth is the most powerful marketing tool for building a healthy customer base, but without marketing, business owners will miss out on many sales opportunities.

Businesses who continue to ignore the latest marketing trends will be pushed out by competitors who embrace new marketing strategies.

Therefore, it is evident that in the post Covid world, there has been drastic change in the needs of the customers. So, it became essential for every company to evolve its marketing strategies. Empathy has been the best tool of marketing during Covid crisis. Marketers well performed their duties by putting an emotional touch in their messages and showing concern towards its customers. Digital migration has been the best decision ever taken by most of the companies as most of the consumers shifted to online shopping in the post covid world. Reliance only on digital platform was not sufficient. There were many issues which were yet to be looked upon such as health and hygiene related needs of the customers. Product lines has been expanded and new products were introduced to satisfy the health and hygiene related needs of the customers. There were also some companies which did not have any strategy and have been dissolved. Hence, we can conclude that to survive in any industry companies must evolve marketing strategies time to time.



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