

Online Marketing: A Burgeoning Covid Free Marketing Strategy and Some Reviving Post-Covid Marketing Measures

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Abstract- The year 2020 emerged as one of the drastic years in human history. The widespread outbreak of the pandemic covid-19 globally unleashed individuals' social aspects, economic status, and personal lives in an epic proportion. The nation has undergone a severe crisis because the government imposed a lockdown to prevent the spread of this contagion. The closure of the several months has completely disrupted the economic functioning and led to a breakdown in the economy. In such harsh circumstances, the businesses also find it extremely difficult to market their products through brick-and-mortar stores and interact personally with their customers. Though this pandemic put the survival companies in limbo but simultaneously, it also invokes immense opportunities for the businesses to initiate or expand their online presence and emerge as the leader on the digital dashboard.

This critical situation thrives the way for online marketing, and it also pushes the business or the sellers to reframe their marketing strategies for coping and competing in the market. Online marketing is the practice of advertising, persuading, and selling goods and services through a digital medium or via an online platform. The outbreak of this deadly virus has wholly revolutionized the behavior of consumers towards online platforms. A remarkable surge has been witnessed in sales undertaken through online marketing, and it was expected that this positive change might stick even to the post-pandemic period as well. Due to the massive wave of digitalization, the online market is expected to grow at 20 percent, with a market size of 18,938 Cr by 2021. This paper aims to determine how covid impacted the market and how the marketers respond to it by changing their marketing strategies. It also tries to analyse the present scenario and significance

of online marketing and suggests some measures to make it a prodigious one.

Indexed Terms- Outbreak, Pandemic, Contagion, Online marketing, Lockdown, Brick and mortar stores, Unleashed, Digitalisation

I. INTRODUCTION

As the entire nation has been under the grip of pandemic covid -19, its devastating effect was not only witnessed on the lives of millions of people but also acted as the stumbling block in the functioning of the businesses. Consumers' priorities have changed during this crisis period, and their consumption pattern also demarcated a sharp transition. So there is a dire need that businesses should also make sufficient changes in their marketing strategies. Marketing strategies are the forward-looking approach that a business should adopt for competing and surviving in the market. Due to covid, most of the sellers switched from traditional selling to online marketing. Effective marketing practices predict the growth and success of the business. When it comes to marketing, it refers to creating, communicating, and delivering something that has value for the customers or the clients. There are two approaches to marketing; one is Traditional marketing where the seller and buyer directly or personally exchange the goods or the services, whereas the other is online marketing, where the transaction is executed through a digital platform.

Online marketing is referred to as a tool used for promoting goods and services via the internet. Internet is now emerging as the premium source for promoting any product or service because of its wide accessibility to reach millions of people at a time. It was first invented and used in 1990. In 1994 first e-commerce transaction was executed over the internet, and after

that, the most prominent online site Amazon was launched in the year 1995; initially, it was started as an online bookstore, but later it expanded its operation, and currently, it is the largest online selling website in the world. Some of the other e-commerce websites are Flipkart, ShopClues, Snapdeal, which add more and more goods to their existing basket, whereas others like Ola, Uber, Lenskart, Pepperfry target a niche market for offering unique proportional services.

The year 1998 is also observed as the revolutionary year in the online market as Google was launched in this year. It is the most widely used search engine that organizes a pool of information from various sources and makes it globally accessible. This helps the customers gather information regarding any product or service.

The upheaval of covid substantially changes the trend of our living, working, learning, and even shopping. It completely flips the life of every individual. For keeping us safe, we are bound to remain inside our home, properly use the mask and sanitizers and follow up the practice of social distancing. But when the shopping is done through the traditional method, the buyer needs to visit the shop, interact with the seller, bargain, and pay for items purchased. These all activities involve the direct contact of buyer and seller, which is basically not safe because this is a contagious disease. To prevent the spread of this havoc, the government ordered the lockdown. The shops remain closed, and only a few of them delivering the essential items remain open by complying with stringent guidelines proclaimed by the government. As a result of which the traditional way of marketing completely halted, it has literally fuelled the business of online marketing sites. Due to this massive wave of digitalization, a robust spike has been visible in the sales of e-commerce sites because consumers resorted more toward online buying to prevent themselves from getting infected.

Online marketing is a strategic way to use the digital medium for promoting your business. It encompasses a wide variety of methods for marketing like social media, emails, websites, blogs, etc. there are various categories of online marketing; some of them are given below -

- a) Social Media Marketing – It is the practice of marketing the product or services through social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter, or Instagram. As the present society is the era of the internet, people spend most of their leisure time on social media. So, to draw the attention of the mass population and the peoples of all the generations, such a way of marketing is quite helpful. It was found that Facebook has about 1.79 billion daily active users worldwide. Social media is the most effective way of getting more eyeballs. It is a way to redirect the traffic to your site, and it also helps in creating brand awareness.
- b) Affiliate Marketing - It is the marketing where either the individual or the company called as affiliates promotes any other person or companies' product, and for promoting this, the affiliate earns his share of the profit from the sale he undertakes. The benefit of this type of marketing is that even if you do not have sufficient money or time to create or produce something new, you still have a golden chance to earn some profit by working as an affiliate by recommending or promoting a product without creating it.
- c) Email Marketing – Email marketing is a way of promoting your business by sending promotional emails to a person or group. Such promotional emails are sent to both existing and potential customers. Email marketing aims to retain the existing customers by offering them the most lucrative offers and raving the potentials to convert them into loyal customers. A study also found that an average order value of an email is three times higher than that of social media.
- d) Pay-per-click advertising (PPC)- In such marketing for increasing the online presence and driving the customers to your product or the website, the seller generally advertises their products on any advertisement platform like Google Add, and an advertiser is liable to pay the host of that platform when their add get click by the customers. It is well-known that Google is a widely used search engine that redirects customers to a particular website according to the keywords or queries in the search area. Some other such advertisement platforms are -LinkedIn Ads, Bing Ads, and Quora Ads, etc.
- e) Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) –It is the practice of increasing the visibility of your website

in relevant search on various search engines. If your websites or brand information remain at the top, it will be quite easier to attract the customers' attention. It is the preliminary source to attract traffic. Every individual basically searches about the product or service before buying it to gather complete information about the product he would like to buy.

Online marketing emerges as the best substitute to traditional marketing; the positive growth has been depicted in sales done through the online medium. It not only provides the services rather it also saves the customers from the acute crises which we all may face if online marketing was not available. Because most of the shops remained closed during the lockdown and only a few remained open, and it was not possible for them to cater the need of such a huge mass of the population because, at that time of crisis, it was mainly observed that peoples did the panic buying, they not only buy the goods in bulk rather than they even purchase those good which they do not need even at that particular time.

The scope of online marketing escalates at a rapid pace because of the several advantages it has –

1. It provides the benefit of 24*7 buying facility, one can shop as per his own convenience. There is no issue of time constraints that traditional marketing basically has. If we want to buy from brick-and-mortar stores, we must reach the shop in its usual working hours. No such time barrier exists for buying through a digital platform.
2. It involves low operation cost, and hence it is cost-effective for both the sellers and the buyers. The seller need not spend heavily on setting up the premises and maintaining the infrastructure. Similarly, there are no more middlemen involved; as a result, the consumers also get the product at fair prices.
3. It facilitates global marketing. Earlier, the sellers were able to market their products only in limited areas, and consumers could do the shopping from the shops of their nearby locations. But the online marketing vanishes all the geographical barriers and makes the entire world a global village through which online sellers increase their target market, and buyers get the facility to shop from anywhere with one mouse click automation.

4. It provides the consumers with a wide variety of goods and services along with a specific description of the products. It also facilitates the consumers in making the rational purchase because while purchasing the online platform, customers get the chance to go through the customer's reviews regarding the product or the services.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Covid- 19, lockdown, and social distancing have significantly disrupted consumer behavior and their buying pattern. The boundaries of the working life have totally vanished as people now have to work, study, and rest at their home only. People are bound to house arrest, and they have the only choice to adopt modern technology, which facilitates buying and working conveniently. Covid-19 has increased the use of social media such as Facebook, Instagram, WhatsApp, Twitter, and Zoom. They are generating an enormous amount of data through word of mouth (Sheth, 2020). It has been observed that customers have changed their preference for Grocery items, FMCG products, and bakery items. Earlier, those who have preferred organized retailers now some customers have changed their preference and shifted towards unorganized & online retailers. Easy availability, wider variety, security, less rush, and following all rules are the primary reasons behind preferring a particular channel (Pandit Pathak & Warpade, 2020).

In the initial phase of the lockdown, consumers do not take the social distancing norms seriously. In such a havoc situation, social distancing will only help to break the chain of the spread of the diseases. But soon as the government imposed stringent restrictions, consumers started taking precautions in the market. 96.66 percent of respondents were admitted that their buying behavior was affected by lockdown. Peoples are more concerned about the essential items during the lockdown phase. Many consumers are unable to purchase from online sites due to the non-acceptance of orders by online companies. (Patil & Patil, 2020). Even in such an extreme condition, the internet successfully transformed the business and emerged as a savior for overcoming this challenging situation. Even some general and well-known businesses used all their means for helping the population. Direct

interaction of the customers and the firm provides a sufficient basis for a healthy relationship. Although the country's economy suffered a lot, the business sector also learns how it should reframe its marketing strategies to reap benefits in the long run. (Rezaeinejad, 2021)

- Present Status of Online Marketing in India

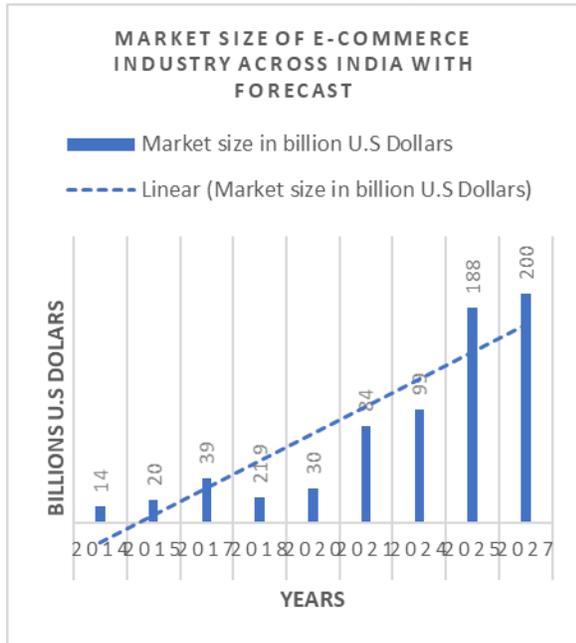


Figure-1

From above figure it can be seen that the market size of E-commerce industry in India is growing rapidly over the years, currently it stands at 24 Billion U.S Dollars which is projected to be grown upto 200 billion U.S dollars in year 2027.

The pandemic covid -19 ultimately sharpens the working system of the businesses and buying patterns of the consumers. During this upheaval, consumers resorted more toward online buying to prevent them from getting infected. At the same time, the business uses the online platform to carry out its activities smoothly and maintain communication with the customers even in this critical situation so that it can retain its existing customers.

It is also observed some sectors like airlines, tourism, automobiles, expensive electrical appliances, hotel industry faces a deficiency of demand while others like grocery items, general merchandise, household

items, pharmacy are overwhelmed with the orders. Online shopping has been rising at a tremendous rate. The global online shopping market will hit 4 trillion in the year 2020. This year can be marked as the year of transformation because of the gradual shift from virtual to digital.

Online marketing became the high avenue for shopping. These are some facts that highlight that despite having crises in the entire world, something progressive happened through the online platform in 2020.

A growth of 18 percent was witnessed in the online sale in 2020.

In March 2020, the volume of online transactions in the retail sector increased by 74 % compared to the rate in March 2019. The demand for grocery, alcohol, and home improvements accelerated by 12%, 16%, and 14%.

As per the report titled "Marketing in the era of mobile." India accounted for around 14 % of global app installations in 2020. The growth rate of app download in India is 28% which is more than the global average rate of 7%.

Online sales of the apparel increased by 34 percent, and the sale of electric gadgets also spiked as the culture of work from home is in the buzz the prices of PCs and laptops rise.

People during the lockdown spent most of their time on social media, the traffic over social media was 6 percent in 2019, and it increased to 8 percent in 2020. Even the spending on entertainment app also increases by 22 percent.

The shopping undertaken by the people from the bricks and mortar stores is reduced by 28.3 percent compared with the shopping before this outbreak, which paves the way for online marketing.

III. IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON ONLINE BUSINESS

• POSITIVE IMPACT

During the closure, everyone is bound to remain in their house. So, the people spend much of their leisure time while surfing on social media. Online marketing uses social media as one of the sources for promoting their business. Hence it can be said that this critical time encourages the use of social media and helps the company in building the brand awareness of the product through social media platforms.

Covid has hastened the online business more than ever expected, and digitalization became the compulsion to survive in this challenging time. Along with the company, the employees are also directed to work online from home, which provides an ample opportunity for them to become more experienced and technologically upgraded.

In this upheaval, online marketing has emerged as the perfect substitute for traditional marketing and proves extremely helpful for businesses in promoting their products and building a solid customer relationship and emerged as the ideal medium for catering to the customers' demands in this critical period.

Pandemic time has also accelerated the effective use of mobile phones; it became the place for clubbing different types of apps. The growth rate of app download is 28 percent, which was four times higher than the global average of 7 percent in 2020.

• NEGATIVE IMPACTS

For the production of the goods, effective supply chain management plays a crucial role. Producers need a steady supply of raw materials for the production of their merchandise. Due to the lockdown, the sellers are bound to face a shortage and delay in receiving the raw materials. Because of such disruptions in supply chain management, production got affected.

People are anxious and reluctant to spend on anything they don't need at that particular time. Because during this crisis period, all economic activities seem to be halted due to which income falls, and the expenses of the people get reduced. This will have a negative effect

on the profitability and growth of the concern and the economy as a whole.

In this adversity, businesses are forced to make some hard decisions. Due to a sudden breakdown in economical functioning, enterprises face the problem of the cash crisis and are unable to meet their expenses. To reduce this problem to some extent, many organizations terminated their workers or employees. Many people losing their jobs are bound to face severe crises. This becomes the cause of social unrest, emotional instability, and insecurity among the workforce. It also diminishes the social image of the organization because they didn't support their employees in this hardship.

Due to deadly pandemic covid-19, nonessential travel was totally restrained by the government for preventing the spread of this havoc. This imposes a vulnerable threat to travel, tourism, and hotel industry business and puts it into the dump. All those businesses that fall in that particular niche face huge losses and find it difficult to survive. It can be said that the service sector was hit worse by the pandemic.

Some Reviving Post –Covid Marketing Measures

Improvement in technology needs to be ensured because if it becomes more sophisticated and intuitive, it will definitely enrich the customers' experience on the digital platform by providing them better convenience, satisfactory and real-time services, and the customers will like to stay hooked up with it.

The business needs to reframe its marketing tactics and try to be empathetic while dealing with its customers. It also needs to restructure its way of promotion and strive to reduce its expenditures because this critical time calls for rationality while doing expenses and making some possible reduction in the cash budget.

Online shopping catches the massive attention of the customers, and they adopted it instantly during the critical time of the pandemic because today's customers are very much conscious about their health and safety, and they did not want to get infected by purchasing goods from the outside. So online businesses should try to ensure contactless delivery by eliminating the formality like signing after receiving

the goods. The processes need to be automated to ensure that their customer remains delighted with their safety measures.

Due to the closure of several months, the businesses' working was affected significantly. To reduce the impact of such interruption in the working, the concept of work from home evolves, but everything has its pros and cons. On one side, it proves highly beneficial as it enables businesses to perform their essential functions, but simultaneously, it also creates a problem for the employees who are not well versed with the technology. So, an utmost need was felt that business should make the proper arrangement for providing sufficient technical training to its employees so that the employees and the companies can easily overcome such problems in the present and future.

CONCLUSION

The pandemic has given a new orientation to marketing behavior and led to a digital transformation in the economy. The government had made strict provisions for discouraging the people from hanging out in public. As a result, the economic activities were halted, and even the giant economies were brought to a standstill. In such a dilemmatic situation when the virus thrown the entire world into the dump, the nation has observed the emergence of online marketing as saviour for undertaking the business and catering the wants of the consumers. Due to which a progressive trend has been witnessed in the sale undertaken through the online platform.

It is not possible to give an exact picture of the impact of a pandemic on the business's marketing strategies as the problem is still lingering around. However, the development of the vaccine is a ray of hope in the dark night. But after going through these entire phases of the pandemic, it is obvious that to persist in the market; it is pretty essential that a proper marketing strategy is needed to be reframed, and due attention should be given towards the development of the sound and sophisticated technology so that we can easily overcome any such situation in the future and can thrive exponentially after the post-crisis period.

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