

An analytical study of recent trends in consumer behavior in light of the development of digital marketing technologies and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting measures have contributed to changing people's consumption habits and the strong emergence of digital shopping and marketing. Accordingly, the study aimed to try to identify the most important changes occurring in consumer behavior and the resulting changes in marketing policies.

To achieve this, we relied on analyzing the total data related to these changes to answer the study's problem. The most important finding of the study is that the Covid-19 crisis led to a change in consumer behavior, as the level of mistrust in digital commerce decreased among some, and online purchases increased. Consumers are becoming more aware and have more choices, which poses new challenges for organizations. This requires the latter to realize the importance of understanding these behaviors and the necessity of using appropriate digital marketing techniques, exploiting opportunities, and avoiding threats.

Keywords: Electronic consumer behavior, E-commerce, e-marketing, online shopping, Covid-19 pandemic.

Introduction

The whole world changed when it entered the digital era, which made everyone must keep up with the ever-increasing rate of change. This impacted all industries, particularly retail, as well as consumer purchasing habits. The COVID-19 pandemic and the lockdown and home quarantine measures also contributed to changing individuals' consumption habits and their trend toward online shopping. Digital commerce has also witnessed a very great acceleration despite having been around for a long time, which requires a forced transformation in existing economic models.

The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled many conservative businesses to go online. Retailers are using Omni-channel to reach out to customers. Sellers with an Omni-channel distribution network adapted quickly to the shutdown situation, however, retailers with no or little presence in online channels took longer to establish or ramp it up (Pandey, 2021). This unprecedented situation has made all parties involved in retail trade realize that it is very necessary to be present on the Internet and able to compete as much as possible. It is necessary to understand the motives and obstacles behind this using digital marketing and its techniques so that appropriate solutions can be found and sound decisions can be made. The research paper aims to identify the extent of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on digital marketing. And learn about the changes occurring in consumer behavior globally due to this pandemic.

-The importance of the study:

Between the collapse of the stock markets and the difficult situation of companies, the spread of the new Coronavirus is leaving a very severe economic impact that may result in major transformations in the world, the largest beneficiaries of which will appear to be some companies in the technology and Internet sector. Therefore, this study derived its importance from trying to know the extent of the impact of the current conditions on consumer behavior and digital marketing and knowing the necessary measures and procedures.

-Objectives of the study:

This research seeks to achieve a number of objectives, including:

- Identify the extent of the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on retailers marketing
- Identify the changes in consumer behavior after the emergence of the new Coronavirus, Covid-19
- Coming up with results and recommendations that may contribute to finding solutions and marketing strategies that suit the current circumstances and trying to exploit opportunities and avoid threats.

Study hypotheses:

- 1- The Covid-19 pandemic has not changed consumer behavior towards digital shopping.
- 2- There is no need to develop digital marketing techniques in line with consumer behavior and the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

To cover the topic, the following topics will be addressed

- 1-: Basic concepts about marketing electronic and electronic consumer
- 2- The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on e-commerce
- 4- Consumer behavior has changed online after the Covid-19 pandemic
- 4- The sales channels most used by e-commerce companies after the Covid-19 pandemic
- 5- -Change in the types of products sold after the Covid-19 pandemic
- 6- The impact of Corona on consumer trends electronically
- 7- E-marketing strategies that you can focus on after the pandemic.

1. Basic concepts about electronic marketing and the electronic consumer

E-marketing is known as the use of the Internet and marketing tools to improve marketing processes and activities, identify customers, engage with them, and give value to them (Gilmore et al., 2007, p. 235).

1.1 E-marketing

E-marketing is the integration of digital media, data, and technology into marketing activities. Marketers use electronic media to promote products or services in the market to attract customers and allow them to interact with the brand. Among its most important techniques: are social media marketing, and online marketing, whether through websites, online advertisements, subscribeable emails, interactive kiosks, interactive television, or mobile phones (Vinh & Ly, 2021, p. 04).

Accordingly, electronic marketing is defined as the use of technology and the Internet to achieve the benefits that can be achieved to the consumer through learning about products through electronic means and the speed of arrival of products from anywhere in the world. It is one of the contemporary methods to attract consumers, interact with them, and provide Bridges of communication between seller and buyer to market goods and services via the Internet.

1.2 Online shopping

Online shopping is a type of commercial exchange that occurs between businesses and consumers via electronic methods(Perea Y Monsuwé et al., 2004). It is a set of efforts made by the buyer via the Internet to search for specific products and compare the products available for sale in electronic retailers. We point out that the consumer does not only use the Internet to purchase the product through it, but also uses it to examine the prices, product features, and after-sales amenities that he will obtain if he purchases the product from a specific store.(Parajuli et al., 2021,p 212)

Consumer behavior is known as the behaviors consumers take when purchasing, using, evaluating, searching for, and disposing of goods and services that they believe will meet their needs (Schiffman et al. 2010). Online shopping behavior refers to purchasing goods and services over the Internet. The process is carried out in five steps, similar to traditional shopping behavior (Li & Zhang, 2002). According to (Kumar & Sobha, 2016), These steps are: The consumer feels the need to buy and then begins searching for information and all the possibilities available on the Internet. Finally, the consumer buys things that meet his needs.

1.3 Advantages of online shopping

The most important advantages of online shopping can be summarized as follows(Roy & Goel, 2020):

- Online shopping allows you to purchase at any time, 7 days a week;
- Providing products at better prices because the sale is directly from the seller without the intervention of an intermediary;
- Quick access to products from anywhere in the world;
- Traditional shopping leads to the tendency to spend a lot in a planned manner, while there are fewer expenses in online shopping;
- Comparing and searching for products and their prices is much easier online;
- A way to reduce effort and time for the consumer.

2. The impact of the COVID-19 crisis on e-commerce

2.1 Impact of the COVID-19 crisis on monthly e-commerce sales

The following figure shows worldwide retail e-commerce sales from 2014 to 2021

Figure(1): Worldwide retail e-commerce sales from 2014 to 2021 (in trillions of US dollars)



Source: (Retail e-commerce sales worldwide from 2014 to 2021 (in billion U.S. dollars), site web: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/379046/worldwide-retail-e-commerce-sales/> (02/04/2019)

Figure(1) shows retail e-commerce sales worldwide from 2014 to 2021. In 2017, worldwide retail e-commerce sales amounted to 2.3 trillion US dollars, and the revenues of 3 online stores reached nearly 100 billion US dollars. In 2017. Online shopping is one of the most popular online activities worldwide but usage varies by region.(statista, 2021). In 2021, e-retail sales reached approximately US\$5.2 trillion worldwide. This number is expected to grow by 56 percent over the coming years, reaching about \$8.1 trillion by 2026 (Statista, 2023).

2.2 The positive impact of COVID-19 on e-commerce

The most important positive effects of Covid-19 on e-commerce can be summarized: (Kaur, 2022)

- Variety of products: The use of e-commerce is increasing in the global market with many options of brands and products to choose from. Consumers can now obtain a variety of products anywhere.
- Lower prices: One of the biggest advantages of e-commerce is lower prices. Online prices are usually lower than brick-and-mortar stores because fewer employees are needed to run an online store.

- Online shopping is convenient and safe: pandemic, people can shop more safely Online, without being cramped, and waiting in lines.
- Accessibility: Consumers can use e-commerce services at any time. They can place an order, or browse products, just at the touch of a button. Even people living in remote areas can easily shop from the comfort of their homes.
- Save time: 63% of consumers start their shopping journey online. Because it provides great time saving for consumers in this busy life. There is no need to shop in stores and wait in queues, as the range of products can be purchased at lower prices and in the comfort of home.
- Due to the epidemic, individuals were forced to rely on technology, and customers became increasingly reliant on the internet, incorporating it into their daily lives and continuing to buy because they had no other alternative (Bourriche & Wazani, 2022).

2.3 The negative impact of COVID-19 on e-commerce :

The most important negative effects of Covid-19 on e-commerce can be summarized: (Kaur, 2022)

- Although most e-commerce companies saw their online revenues rise during the global lockdown in the spring of 2020. During the COVID-19 crisis, 6% of e-commerce enterprises experienced a reduction in revenue;
- Increased Competition: As a result of COVID-19, the e-commerce platform has gotten increasingly competitive.
- Profiling fraudulent users: this also complicates the operation of online commerce, particularly in the context of the COVID-19 situation.
- delivery: E-commerce enterprises have encountered a variety of challenges, including extended delivery times, complete lockdowns, and shipping and supplies taking longer than expected (Bourriche & Wazani, 2022).

3. Consumer behavior has changed online after the Covid-19 pandemic

Although there were some consumers who preferred to shop in the market, they tended to choose online shopping with the presence of the COVID-19 virus. Which is easy and safe and does not require interaction with many people (Paningrum et al., 2023).

Due to the pandemic, people are increasingly turning to e-commerce platforms to order the products they need. Consumer behavior has also changed online, according to a study conducted by UNCTAD in nine developed countries and emerging economies (see figure) (UNCTAD, 2020b)

Figure(2): The impact of Covid-19 on individuals' tendency to increasingly use digital technology

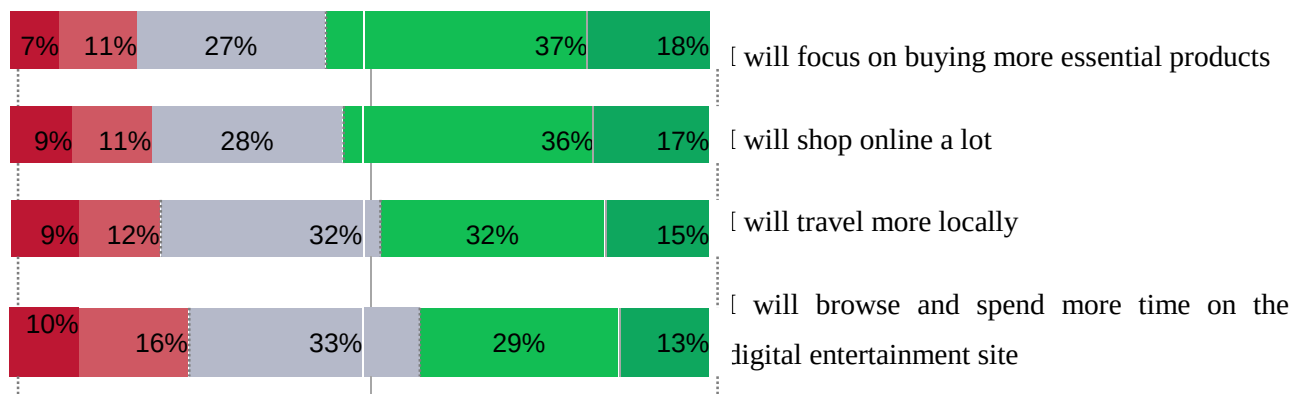


Source: UNCTAD (2020), Impact of the covid-19 pandemic on trade and development, Transitioning to a new normal, voir le site web: https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/osg2020d1_en.pdf

(15/02/2021)

One of the most important changes occurring in consumer behavior is their tendency, as a result of the pandemic, to spend more time on digital sites (entertainment, reading newspapers, etc.), and they are also shopping online more than before.

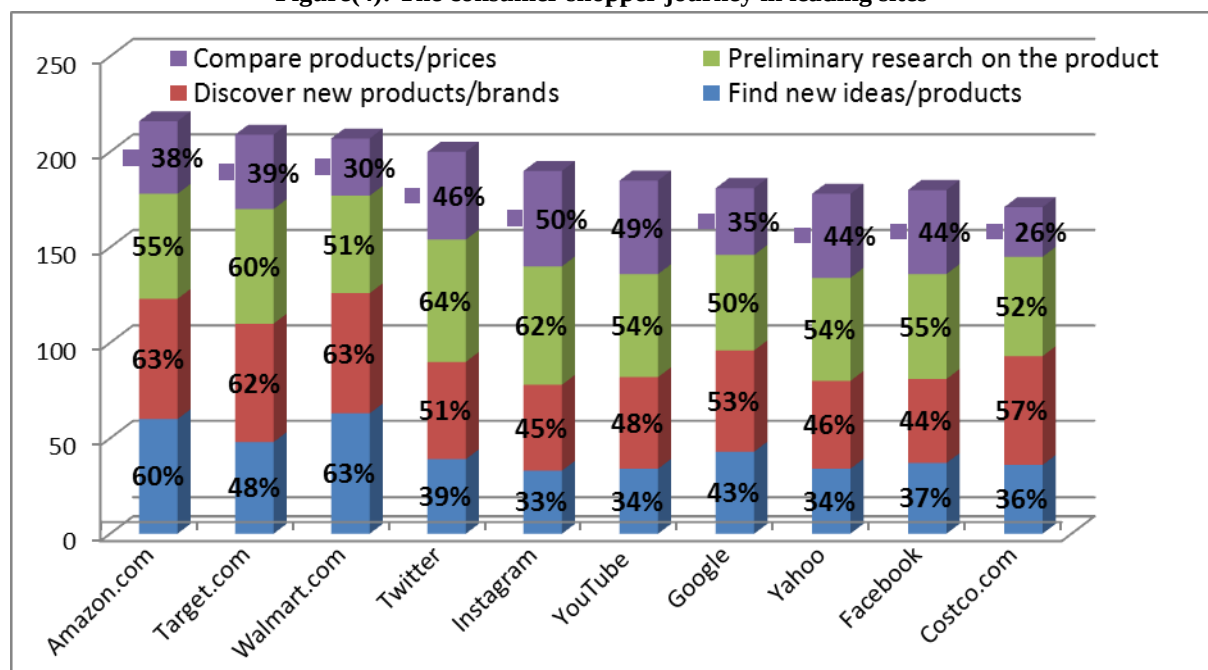
Figure(3): Many consumers expect the digital habits adopted during the coronavirus outbreak to continue



Source: Suisse NetComm, & Unctad. (2020). *COVID-19 and E-commerce: Findings from a survey of online consumers in 9 countries*. p33, https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstictinf2020d1_en.pdf

One of the most important changes occurring in consumer behavior is the tendency to purchase basic products instead of luxury products such as food and beverages, and to postpone major expenses during the crisis. The findings also indicate that increased interest in essential products is likely to persist after the pandemic has ended.

Figure(4): The consumer shopper journey in leading sites



Source: Kantar & Catalyst,(2020), *The State of Ecommerce 2021, Navigating the new world of omnichannel commerce and retail media*, <https://www.catalystdigital.com/wp-content/uploads/The-State-of-eCommerce-2021.pdf>

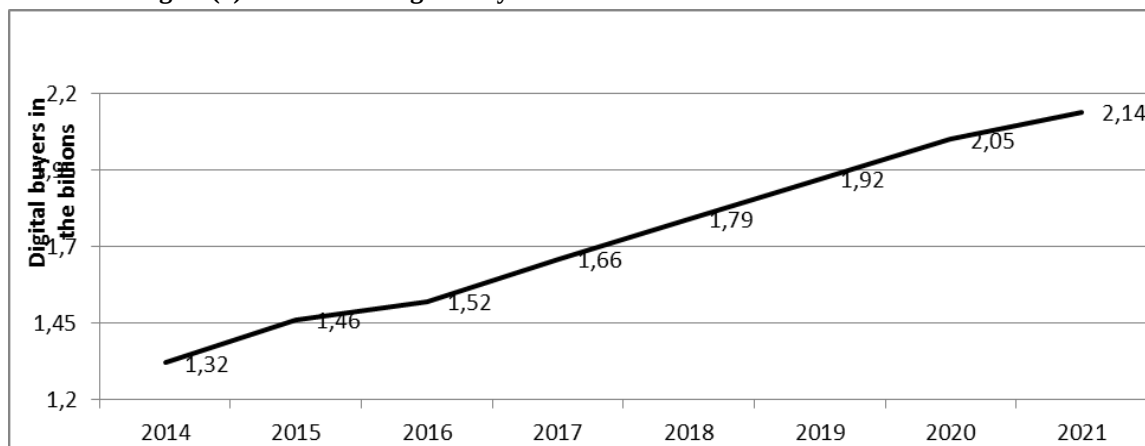
05/11/2022

While shoppers prefer to conduct research and compare products and prices on retailer websites, they also utilize search and social media platforms for the same purpose.(Kantar & Catalyst, 2020)

Number of digital buyers worldwide

People may now use the Internet more regularly and readily thanks to the ease of access to computers, the modernization of countries across the world through the Internet, and the growing popularity of smartphones. As of January 2022, there were approximately 1.02 billion Internet users in China and 307 million Internet users in the United States(Fokina, 2023). Purchasing goods and services online has become a common practice among many people around the world with the outbreak of the Covid-19 crisis, the number of digital buyers is increasing.

Figure(5): Number of digital buyers worldwide



Source: Bashir, R., Gaur, B., & Sharma, K. (2020). An analytical view of the moderating effect of gender on online purchase behavior. *International journal on Emerging Technologies*, 324.

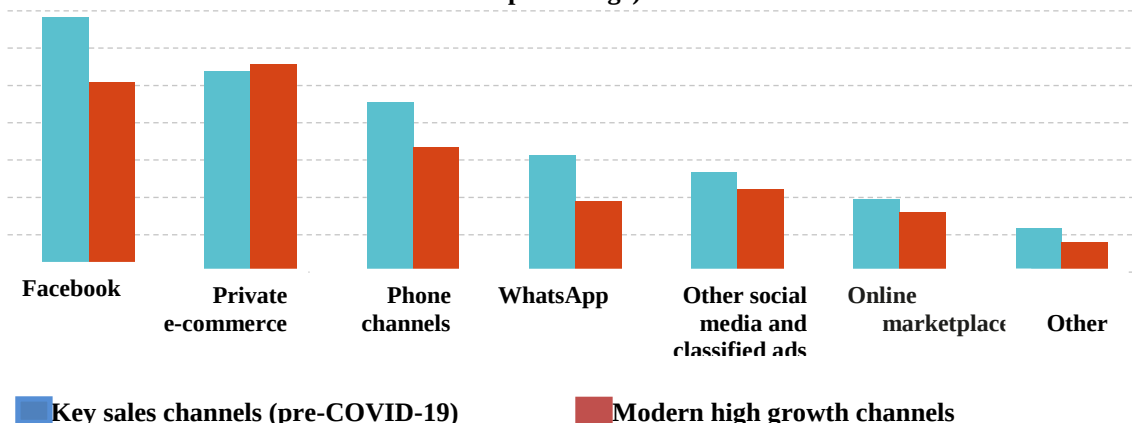
Global e-retail sales reached 5.8 trillion dollars in 2023 and are expected to grow to 8 trillion U.S. in 2027.(Statista, 2023)

4. The sales channels most used by e-commerce companies after the Covid-19 pandemic

Before addressing the sales channels most used by e-commerce companies after the Covid-19 pandemic, we point out that most brands use what is called **Omni-Channel Marketing** (Maddy, 2021) .This notion enables a multi-channel approach to selling, allowing clients to buy through any channel (sites; various e-commerce platforms, social networks, and physical stores).

Targeting multi-channel customers is especially important for organizations, as they spend three times as much as single-channel customers. Since the commencement of the COVID-19 crisis, E-commerce enterprises have sold their items through several channels (see figure).

Figure (6): The sales channels most used by e-commerce companies after the Covid-19 pandemic (in percentage)



Source: UNCTAD (2020a). *COVID-19 and e-commerce: Impact on businesses and policy responses*.
https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstict2020d12_en.pdf

According to a survey conducted by UNCTAD in June 2020 Since the start of the COVID-19 crisis, e-commerce enterprises have made extensive use of their websites and Facebook sales platforms. The latter is crucial because so many people use Facebook, WhatsApp, and other social media platforms. Telephone channels, such as text messages, USSD, and calls were also frequently used. (UNCTAD, 2020a)

Figure(7): Social media activities increasingly influencing ecommerce retail behavior



Source: Bashir, R., Gaur, B., & Sharma, K. (2020). An analytical view of the moderating effect of gender on online purchase behavior. *International journal on Emerging Technologies*, 325.

Retailers have developed mobile applications for easy access to social media and use them to influence individuals and advertise their products. One of the most important social media activities that influence consumer behavior is reading user comments and watching advertisements. The following figure shows the five best platforms for digital marketing activities:

Figure(8): The five best platforms for digital marketing activities

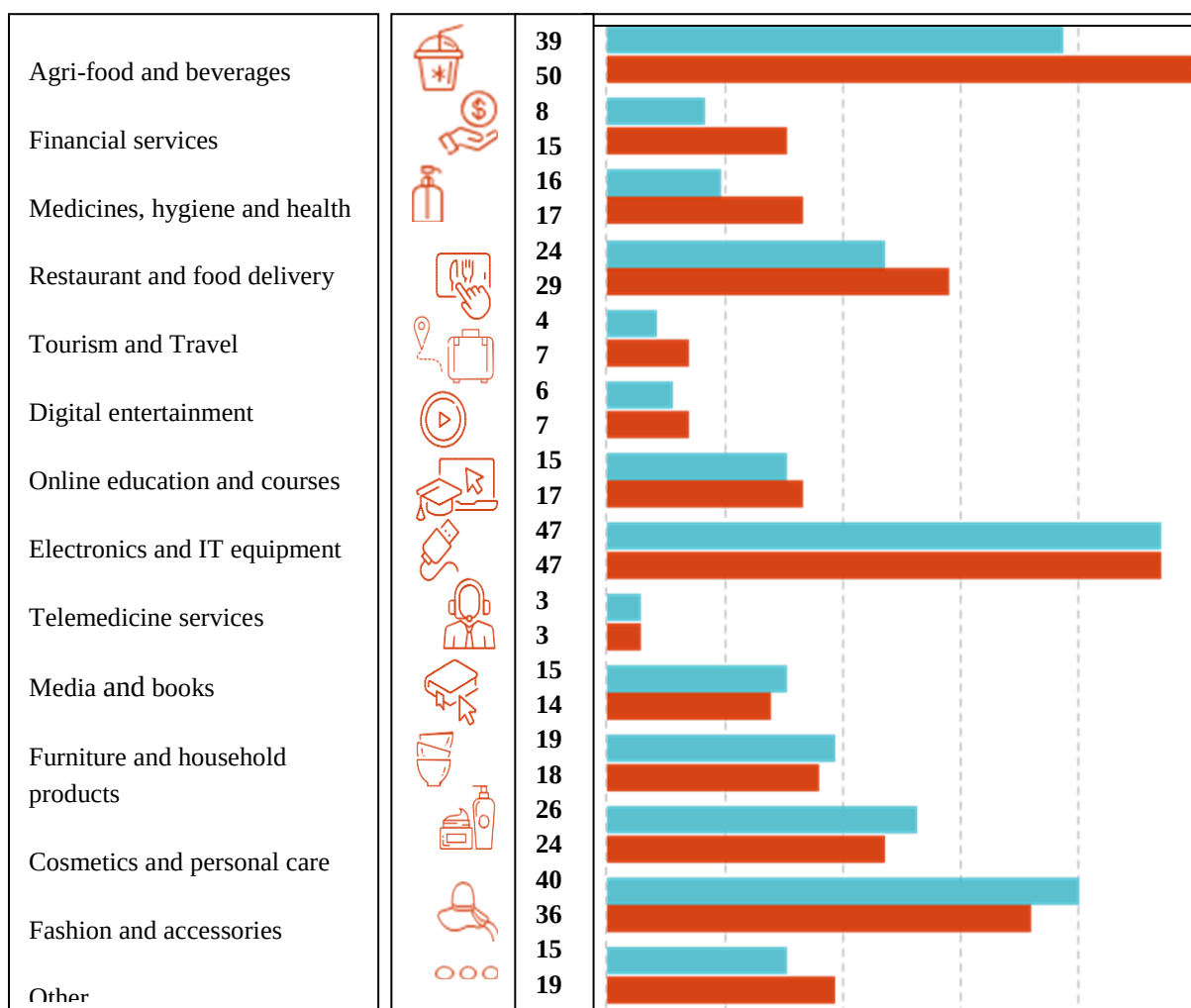
Digital marketing platform	Percentage
 Facebook	72%
 Google	67%
 Instagram	61%
 Twiter	50%
 Amazon	49%

Source: (Kantar & Catalyst, 2020), The State of Ecommerce 2021, Navigating the new world of omnichannel commerce and retail media, <https://www.catalystdigital.com/wp-content/uploads/The-State-of-eCommerce-2021.pdf> (05/11/2022)

5. Change in the types of products sold after the Covid-19 pandemic

The pandemic has caused a change in the products demanded by consumers, with most of them moving towards basic commodities.

Figure (9): Top 5 sales categories before and after the COVID-19 crisis (in percentage)



After the COVID-19 crisis

Before the COVID-19 crisis

Source: (UNCTAD, 2020a). *COVID-19 and e-commerce: Impact on businesses and policy responses*. https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstict2020d12_en.pdf

Before the COVID-19 issue, the leading industries for e-commerce enterprises were fashion, agriculture and beverages, electronics (including IT equipment), furniture and household items, and food delivery. (UNCTAD, 2020a)

Following the COVID-19 epidemic, companies reported an upsurge in sales of necessary commodities such as face masks and sanitizers, home office and education supplies, baking, comfortable apparel, and consumables (see figure). According to participants, everyday vital commodities such as agri-food and drinks, meal delivery, and pharmaceutical and hygiene product sales have surged the most since the COVID-19 pandemic.

Payment methods used by online shoppers

Buyers' preferred payment methods vary around the world. Overall, bank cards are the most popular mode of payment, accounting for 53% of transactions, followed by digital payment systems (43%), and debit cards (38%). However, digital payment methods are the favored option in China and Western Europe, but cash on delivery is preferred in Eastern Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. (Maddy, 2021)

Due to the increased demand for convenient and secure payment methods, e-wallets are very popular, and e-wallets accounted for 42% of global e-commerce transactions in 2019 (FedEx, 2021). PayPal, Apple Pay, the relaunched Google Pay, and mega applications such as WeChat Pay and Alipay all had tremendous growth globally. The combination of digitalization and social alienation caused by the COVID-19 pandemic has boosted consumer adoption of e-wallets for contactless payments. According to a conservative projection, the total number of e-wallet users worldwide will exceed 5.2 billion by 2026, up from 3.4 billion in 2022. (Bian et al., 2023)

6. The impact of Corona on consumer trends electronically:

We summarize the consumer's orientation towards the elements of the marketing mix in light of the Covid-19 pandemic: (Averroes, 2022)

6.1 Orientation towards the product

After the crisis subsides, Consumers will prioritize purchasing basic products above fancy goods. If it does not become a permanent habit, it will certainly persist for a long period. He also likes to buy in bulk and keep basic and nutritious food items. He will be more generous in spending on cleaning, sterilization, and personal care tools, as he will spend more than his usual budget on these products. On the other hand, governments will develop policies to promote the local product, instead of importing due to its difficulty and risk during the crisis. This may be reflected in his behavior even after the crisis subsides, as he becomes friends with local products that he is not accustomed to using.

The crisis has also made customers more cautious and vigilant; they will be more aware and wiser, resulting in a fall in demand for luxury items and an increased focus on basic and consumer goods.

6.2 Orientation towards price

Consumers prefer to achieve the highest level of satisfaction at the lowest possible price. However, despite the importance of price in driving demand and quantity necessary, its impact is limited. The rationale is that things that are of interest to the consumer will be willing to spend a higher price to receive them in the quality that makes him feel safe, just as it has also increased the association with the mind that more expensive goods are better, and therefore one will spend more to buy more quality basic needs.

6.3 Orientation towards promotion

Consumer purchasing behavior depends on necessary products, so he will think carefully when watching a commercial, and will be more objective and careful when responding. He will also be more informed about the products and their features and will be less attracted to promotional temptations such as free gifts.

6.4 Orientation towards the shopping place:

The Covid-19 crisis has created a consumer who is more aware, adventurous, and confident in making online purchases, so he will always look for new markets and products. Even after the crisis is over, online shopping will become more common, and groceries will lose their importance.

6.5 The main trends observed in the consumer market

Analysis of the development of online searches since the beginning of the crisis makes it possible to identify new trends among consumers. Consumers are turning more than ever to e-commerce. From computer accessories in Spain to food and health products in India, in Europe, internet users are particularly interested in technology, cars, DIY, etc. While the fitness, health, and interior renovation sectors are booming in other continents, here are some of the key trends observed in the consumer market: (FedEx, 2021)

- Spain - Increased searches for computer accessories
- United Kingdom - Increase in orders for home improvement products
- France/Italy – Growth in trade related to car dealer searches
- Brazil/China - Significant increase in inquiries related to the world of sports
- India - Above average search traffic for food and health products
- United States - Increased searches related to home improvement products

According to UNCTAD's B2C e-commerce index, Europe remained the region most willing to engage in and benefit from e-commerce in 2020, with Switzerland leading the way. Access to secure Internet servers, the dependability of postal services and infrastructure, and the proportion of people who use the Internet and have a bank account or a mobile money service provider are among the criteria used. The top ten developing economies were all in Asia, with Singapore and Hong Kong (China) obtaining the highest rankings and the least developed countries maintaining the majority of the lowest scores. In 2019, Latin America and the Caribbean accounted for 6% of global internet shoppers. However, the pandemic has increased online buying in the region. For example, during the epidemic in

Argentina, the number of first-time online consumers accounted for 30% of the online shopping base in 2019, while in Brazil, 7.3 million people purchased online for the first time. In Africa, less than one-third of the population utilizes the Internet, but in West Asia, three-quarters of the population does (UNCTAD, 2021).

7. E-marketing strategies that you can focus on after the pandemic.

According to Oliveira et al., (2021), the pandemic has caused structural changes in the way firms operate. The COVID-19 epidemic has enabled businesses to shift their marketing strategies to more genuine and honest marketing, capable of solving increasing environmental and social concerns around the world (Alshaketheep et al., 2020). In these difficult times when everything is unclear, staying proactive is the best solution for companies, in addition to using digital marketing tools and adapting and re-adjusting advertising methods (Abdul Lasi et al., 2021).

7.1 A better communication channels are crucial for organizations:

Businesses must be present in the digital space and communicate with concerned audiences. To stay connected to their target market, businesses and organizations must prioritize digital marketing operations such as paid advertisements, search engine optimization (SEO), social media, and email marketing. (Abdul Lasi et al., 2021)

7.2 Search Engine Optimization(SEO):

Due to increased competition in the online market, organizations must optimize search engines to gain a competitive advantage. SEO increases the visibility of a business website, resulting in more opportunities to convert prospects into consumers (Shukulli, 2022).

7.3 Online Advertising

As life returns to normal, businesses must retain the internet reputation they established during the pandemic. To keep current customers and attract new ones, businesses should focus on the most effective online advertising stories (Shukulli, 2022).

7.4 Social Content Creation

Media consumption has shifted as individuals spend more time online. Social media marketing improves the function of introducing new products to the market (Habib & Hamadneh, 2021). Social media promotes and makes available new business opportunities that focus on market-specific rendering and proposals (Suhail et al., 2022).

During the pandemic, businesses updated their aim to be more sociological in nature, distributing information that makes people feel good in order to keep customers engaged, rather than focusing purely on maximizing stakeholder profit (Shukulli, 2022). Furthermore, as cited by Santos et al.,(2022), social media is a smart tool to communicate with clients and find out what they want. Customers can use social media to demonstrate how much they enjoy a product or content by voting and commenting, and consumers can use it to gain attention and take social action.

7.5 Multichannel

The pandemic necessitated a shift to online activities, and enterprises with their own online channel had a competitive advantage over stores that operated offline. Applying a multichannel strategy that incorporates online and offline channels improves the share of the wallet (Shukulli, 2022).

7.6 Rethinking how to use the 7P's and 4p's :

Marketing practitioners must reconsider how to employ the 7P's and 4p's strategy to provide value for consumers in light of changing consumer tastes and trends. Firms, for example, are investing more in online platforms and other marketing channels (digital platforms such as YouTube and Instagram) in order to reach and engage customers more effectively with the brand (Nguyen et al., 2021).

7.7 Interacting with the customer and chatting:

Digital platforms now replace previously in-person or sales-driven activities, and delivery options for product reception and service installation have proliferated, as have touchless possibilities. Increased online instructional content and FAQs to aid engagement and information gathering from a distance. In addition to implementing chat in areas where it was previously unavailable, or expanding chat and phone support hours (Abdul Lasi et al., 2021).

7.8 The perceived safety provided confidence:

Customers felt more confident visiting the store and ordering things online because of the perceived safety. Keywords like safety, priority, protocols, stay at home, social distancing, and care. digital marketing communication to customers would help in retaining old customers and acquiring new customers (Pandey, 2021).

Conclusion:

Several lessons have been learned by the consumer in the Covid-19 pandemic crisis, which has affected his lifestyle and way of thinking. Some consumers have found themselves victims of deception by some companies, or they may have exaggerated in purchasing some products or were hasty in spending unnecessarily. Other consumers, on the other hand, were prudent and acted responsibly during the crisis. However, the most critical issue is that the Corona crisis has resulted in new consumers with different requirements and preferences.

These are the most important findings of the study:

-The increased use of online commerce due to COVID-19 has led to increased competition. For organizations to survive in the market in the long term, it is very important to conduct a comprehensive analysis of competitors to obtain a better understanding of the market reality.

-The COVID-19 crisis led to a change in consumer behavior, as the level of mistrust in digital commerce decreased among some, which resulted in an increase in online purchases.

-The techniques used in digital marketing have evolved, resulting in a diversity of alternatives to persuade the consumer. This requires institutions to be creative and innovative in marketing their products to win over consumers before they turn to competitors.

-It is necessary for institutions to use social media and interactive marketing to create a good image and gain customer satisfaction, as traditional methods are no longer useful.

- Consumers will be more aware and have more options, posing new challenges for companies, whether in terms of product specifications or presentation. As a result of this development, businesses must be better prepared to face new sorts of competition and problems.

We summarize below the most important suggestions presented:

- Organizations must take advantage of the opportunity to communicate with their audience personally and interact with them, as this leads to consumers' association with the brand and significantly improves its presence on the Internet;

-Now more than ever, organizations need to understand the importance of e-commerce, online marketing, social media marketing, and search campaigns;

Currently, interacting with consumers on social media is beneficial for businesses. They can achieve a lasting impact through an effective marketing campaign strategy and creative content, and this can lead to better sales when restrictions ease;

-It is also important for organizations to be socially responsible towards consumers during this crisis. Institutions can show empathy through social campaigns such as awareness of the necessity of social distancing, and their safety practices should be highlighted to gain consumers' trust.

- The importance of chat in answering inquiries and using video to increase the tangibility of goods and stimulate purchase.

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