

ADAPTING THE MARKETING MIX: ANALYSIS OF INDIAN COMPANIES IN RESPONSE TO COVID-19 FOR CUSTOMER RETENTION***MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION*****UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF****YASSER AHMAD KHAN****Assistant Professor****Submitted By****SHIVANI GUPTA****22042010981****SCHOOL OF BUSINESS****GALGOTIAS UNIVERSITY****1. INTRODUCTION****1.1 Background information on the research**

The worldwide coronavirus pandemic has touched the lives of countless individuals. As of September 2020, the World Health Organization (2020a) reported about 29 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, with over 900,000 fatalities. Quickly spreading from its January origin in China, the virus reached neighbouring nations. The United States has more than 6 million infected people, making it the country with the highest number of confirmed cases. Because the virus can spread so quickly from person to person, several countries have put travel bans, non-essential company halts, and stay-at-home orders into effect. The epidemic's detrimental impact on the economy is unrelated to people's health. According to Cantore, Hartwich, Lavopa, Haverkamp, Laplane, and Rodousakis (2020), a lot of countries are experiencing a recession irrespective of how much of an impact COVID-19 had on their income.

Many people have made rapid lifestyle changes in response to this health crisis. Supply chain management, resource allocation, and marketing are just a few areas where many businesses struggle when attempting to alter their standard operating procedures. A company's marketing strategy needs to be flexible enough to adapt to the changing needs of its target market if it wants to minimize losses and maximize gains. Studying the effects of a pandemic on the economy and the ways in which marketing tactics have evolved is essential.

1.2 The study's objective

The primary objective of this research is to determine whether and how marketing strategies change prior to, during, and after a pandemic. The thesis primarily focuses on the consequences of the shift to online commerce and digital marketing. Primarily, the research aims to answer questions like "How does the pandemic impact on customer

behaviour?" and "How do marketers adapt their marketing strategy in current situation?" and "What is the future for marketing plans post-pandemic?" the most.

1.3 A thesis's framework

Following the introduction chapter is a summary of the present COVID-19 pandemic situation. The thesis delves deeply into the topic of the economic effects of the epidemic because that is its primary focus. We will discuss the ways in which the pandemic significantly changed purchasing patterns in chapter three. We define marketing strategy and compare digital marketing to more conventional approaches in Chapter 4, which delves into the theoretical underpinnings. This chapter also lays out the marketing strategy mix (4Ps), which will help marketers come up with fresh adaptations as the pandemic progresses. In the empirical study, the findings from the qualitative investigation will be explained and examined. The interviews are conducted with marketing experts who can provide insight into the thesis topic. A concise review of the research, recommendations for further study, and an examination of the limitations are all part of the final chapter of the thesis.

2. THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC SITUATION

2.1 Important historical information

Coronavirus disease, also known as COVID-19, is "an infectious disease caused by the newly discovered coronavirus," as stated by the World Health Organization (2020b). The International Agency for Research on Cancer has given the new virus the name SARS-CoV-2. The first viral detection in December 2019 occurred in Wuhan, China. Research conducted by Sun, He, Wang, Lai, Ji, Zhai, Li, Suchard, Tian, Zhou, Veit & Su (2020) suggests that bats may have been the first vector for the disease, as a limited number of early cases were reported to have visited the Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market. Viruses usually take 2–14 days after exposure before symptoms appear. Infected people have reported a wide variety of symptoms, from mild pain to potentially fatal illness. Most people who have this condition will experience fever, dry cough, weakness, headache, nausea, vomiting, loss of smell or taste, etc. Insomnia, trouble breathing, persistent chest pain or pressure, bluish tint to the lips or face, or any combination of these should be taken seriously and treated as an emergency (CDC 2020a). After approximately 200,000 infections and over 4,000 deaths, the World Health Organization (2020c) declared COVID-19 a pandemic in March 2020. Though there are many ways the virus can spread, the most common is through close quarters between sick people. Coronavirus can be transmitted by the airborne droplets and saliva produced by an infected person's mouth whenever they talk, cough, sneeze, sing, or breathe. These illnesses tend to spread more easily in enclosed spaces with poor air circulation, such as funeral homes, restaurants, nightclubs, and public transit. The virus can also be found as heavier droplets that land on the ground or other surfaces. Although it is less common, the virus can also infect people whose hands come into contact with contaminated surfaces and then go into their eyes, nose, or mouth if they do not wash their hands thoroughly afterward. For as long as seven days, humans can transmit sickness. It is possible for asymptomatic patients to unknowingly transmit the virus (WHO 2020d). It is exceedingly difficult to accurately estimate the death rate caused by the new virus. While it seems to be more hazardous than the seasonal flu, its fatality rate is lower than that of the coronaviruses that caused SARS and MERS

(Sheikh & Rabin 2020). The majority of COVID-19 patients have made full recoveries, however as of September 17, 2020, the World Health

Organization has recorded around 937,000 fatalities (2020a). This figure is significantly higher than the original estimate of 2% by WHO; it amounts to a mortality rate of 3.1% (937,391 deaths to 29,737,453 cases). Nearly all COVID-19 fatalities (94%) had a pre-existing medical condition that worsened the severity of their symptoms (CDC 2020b).




Name	Cases - cumulative total	Cases - newly reported in last 24 hours	Deaths - cumulative total	Deaths - newly reported in last 24 hours	Transmission Classification
Global	29,737,453	292,307	937,391	6,057	
 United States...	6,530,324 	34,078	194,434	940	Community transmission
 India	5,118,253 	97,894	83,198	1,132	Clusters of cases
 Brazil	4,382,263 	36,653	133,119	1,113	Community transmission
 Russian Fede...	1,085,281 	5,762	19,061	144	Clusters of cases
 Peru	738,020 	4,160	30,927	115	Community transmission

Figure 1. Number of total cases, total deaths, new cases and deaths globally of selected 5 countries on 17 September 2020 (WHO 2020a).

Unfortunately, there is currently no way to prevent or cure this disease. When symptoms are minimal, it's best to stay hydrated or get some rest until the immune system recovers on its own. People take part in clinical trials so that researchers might find new drugs. Remdesivir, an antiviral medicine, has shown promise in animal studies and is one of these medications. As part of their treatment, patients typically just get the care they need, including reducing their fever or making sure they have enough oxygen. Research into new vaccines is an area of intense focus for scientists at the National Institutes of Health (NIH) and elsewhere (Sheikh et. al 2020).

The Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (2020c) list frequent handwashing, maintaining a minimum distance of 6 feet (2 meters) from sick people, using face masks, and sanitizing commonly touched areas as ways to avoid the spread of disease. Government actions have differed according on the specifics. Following the onset of the epidemic, Wuhan, the Chinese capital, was placed under lockdown. Cyranoski (2020) states that the city will be

sealed off until the crisis is handled. However, in an effort to achieve herd immunity, the prime minister of Britain implemented the contentious policy of allowing the virus to spread to its maximum potential. As a result of the catastrophic failure of this policy, however, a march lockdown order was issued. Hjelmgaard (2020) notes that several

other nations enacted strong quarantine policies, banned public gatherings, and limited border access in an effort to contain the pandemic.

2.2 Following the Pandemic: A "New Normal"

Researchers do not expect a vaccine against COVID-19 to be available before 2021, despite the fact that various treatments are now under investigation. Regardless of the warnings from health professionals, governments are financially compelled to open their economies. If a second wave of Coronavirus epidemics is plausible, people may need to make changes to their diet and way of life. As part of what is being referred to as "the new normal," numerous measures have been suggested by experts as necessary before the economy begins to gradually recover.

Financial effects

Both human health and the global economy have been profoundly affected by the COVID-19 epidemic. It is quite unlikely that the health effects of the pandemic will not cause an economic slump. According to UNIDO study, even nations that were not severely affected by COVID-19 are currently witnessing a decrease in their GDP (Cantore et. al. 2020). While some sectors have been hit worse than others by the COVID-19 recession, it is by no means the only problem.

In the first quarter of 2020, the OECD (2020a) recorded the G20 region's most severe decline in GDP, at 3.4%. With the time series starting in 1998, this GDP decline is the largest in absolute terms. The economic downturn of 2009 was mild, with an only 1.5% decline in GDP. This is another evidence of the devastating effect the COVID-19 pandemic has had on global economies. The GDP fell more precipitously in countries that had already implemented lockdown procedures. According to OECD 2020a, China's GDP declined 6.8% annually and 9.8% in the first quarter of 2020 when compared to the other G20 nations.

Every industry is feeling the pinch of the recession, but to varying degrees. Compared to the financial crisis of 2008, this quarter's stock market decline is unprecedented. In the next quarter, the FTSE will decline by 25% and the Dow Jones Industrial Average by 23%, according to Weiss's predictions. Over half of the textile and garment businesses surveyed by UNIDO foresee a precipitous decline in profitability. In addition, 29% of these companies were contemplating laying off 25% of their workforce or perhaps more. Industry leaders in the chemical and plastics sectors are crossing their fingers that the COVID-19 epidemic doesn't hit them too hard (UNIDO 2020a). Every sector is dealing with its unique set of challenges. Figure 6 shows that declining demand and employee salary

two of the most common major hurdles that many businesses face. Among the other things to worry about are logistics problems, financial difficulties, and interruptions to the value chain.

Figure 6. Top five concerns across industries in the pandemic (UNIDO elaboration 2020a).

Regardless, the COVID-19 pandemic has led to a rise in internet buying around the world. Government rules and the general public's fear of getting the virus have contributed to the meteoric rise in online purchasing. Adobe released a report that

	Problem faced (ordered by share of firms reporting it)				
	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Food processing</i>	Payment of wages (57%)	Fall in demand (54%)	Difficulty in financing (34%)	Value chain disruptions (29%)	Logistics problems (23%)
<i>Textiles and apparel</i>	Payment of wages (74%)	Fall in demand (71%)	Logistics problems (35%)	Difficulty in financing (34%)	Value chain disruptions (17%)
<i>Basic materials</i>	Fall in demand (73%)	Payment of wages (69%)	Difficulty in financing (36%)	Value chain disruptions (32%)	Logistics problems (18%)
<i>Chemicals, rubber and plastics (inc Petroleum)</i>	Fall in demand (69%)	Payment of wages (61%)	Value chain disruptions (35%)	Difficulty in financing (32%)	Logistics problems (22%)
<i>Machinery, electronics and transport equipment</i>	Fall in demand (69%)	Payment of wages (69%)	Difficulty in financing (30%)	Value chain disruptions (23%)	Logistics problems (22%)
<i>Other manufacturing</i>	Fall in demand (69%)	Payment of wages (66%)	Difficulty in financing (56%)	Value chain disruptions (18%)	Logistics problems (15%)
<i>Non-manufacturing</i>	Fall in demand (57%)	Payment of wages (44%)	Difficulty in financing (32%)	Logistics problems (19%)	Value chain disruptions (16%)

analysed the impact of the epidemic on internet purchasing. An increase of 77% year-over-year, internet spending reached \$82.5 billion in May 2020. It usually takes four to six years to achieve this level of growth, according to Vivek Pandya, Adobe's Digital Insight Manager (Koetsier 2020). Online marketplaces are quickly replacing traditional brick-and-mortar stores for consumers around the world. An incremental but discernible trend emerged, with the proportion of all US purchases made online increasing from 9.6% in Q1 2018 to 11.8 percent in Q1 2020. Regardless, it peaked in Q2 of 2020 at 16.1%. Similarly, in the United Kingdom, the share of retail sales made through online channels grew from 17.3% in the first quarter of 2018 to 20.3% in the first quarter of 2020. Third quarter of 2020 saw a skyrocket to 31.3% (OECD 2020b). This change will have both immediate and far-reaching consequences for online shopping. The OECD discovered that not all industries are benefiting from e-commerce, despite its rising popularity. Things pertaining to domestic pursuits, nutrition, and individual security were highly sought after in the United States, in

contrast to those pertaining to excursions, athletics, and dress code. Many other countries saw a spike in food service and online grocery shopping during the outbreak, including Germany, South Korea, and China. Other industries that people view as unnecessary are generally uninterested in. In South Korea, for example, there was a 67.8% decline in leisure and culture and a 51.6% decline in transportation and cultural services. Online clothing sales in China fell by 16% in 2019 following two years of steady growth of 23.7% (OECD 2020b). Both consumers and businesses have come to rely on internet buying more heavily since the spread of COVID-19. In order to comply with social distance requirements, many seniors already shop online and may continue to do so in the future. There was a 50% increase in first-time users of online grocery shopping in Brazil and South Africa, and a comparable increase in curb side pickup from restaurants and other businesses in the US and many European nations. A worldwide survey of consumers provided the data used in this analysis. Online shopping has become a vital alternative sales channel as a result of government rules that have closed many brick-and-mortar enterprises (OECD 2020b). Whole Foods Markets, an Amazon grocery shop, increased its online order capacity to 60% in April 2020 to meet customer demand. They also went from having 80 to 150 businesses that offered food pickup (Landry 2020).

3. THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND ITS IMPACT ON PATIENT ACTIVITY

A theoretical framework for the analysis of consumer actions Everything that goes into buying, testing, using, and finally getting rid of a product or service is called "consumer behaviour" (Khan 2006, 4). Rajeev Kumar goes into greater detail in his work and defines consumer behaviour as "the psychological processes that consumers go through in recognizing needs, finding ways to solve these needs, collecting and interpreting information, making plans and putting these plans into action (...), making purchase decisions and post purchase behaviour" (Kumar 2006, 2). Both definitions agreed that consumer behaviour included more than simply buying something. Influencing consumer behaviour starts well before the purchase and continues until the product is discarded. The end users are susceptible to the whims of many different actors in this process. There are two main types of effects on these factors: internal and external. Because they originate from inside, or "internal influences," customers are unique. All of these factors contribute to one's character, including one's way of life, values, motivation, affect, learning, and memory (Solomon 2018). Age, life stage, consumers' occupations, income levels, and self-presentation are all considered internal variables by Kumar. Conversely, what impacts consumers from the outside are known as external effects. They include things like family, socioeconomic status, reference groups, cultural norms, and the surrounding community (Kumar 2006, 13).

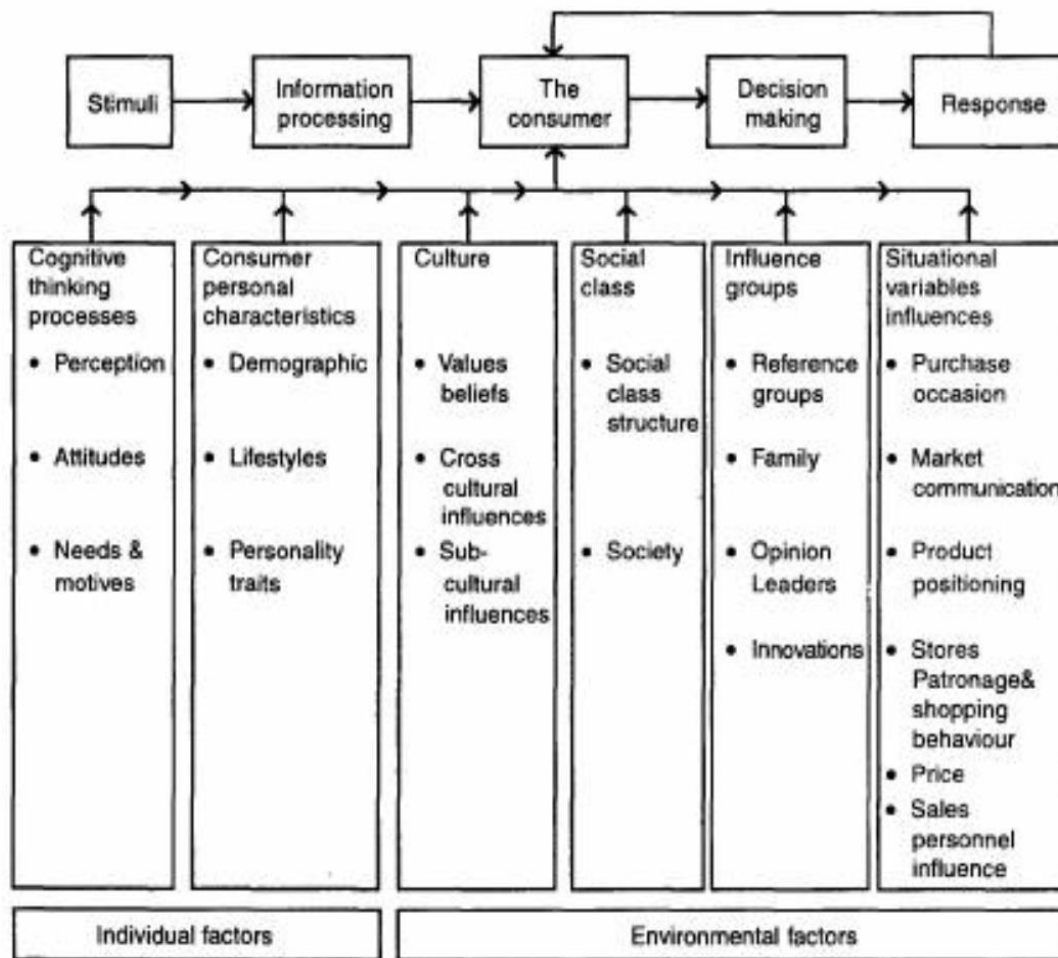


Figure 7. Individual and environmental factors affecting consumer behavior (Assaeli 1987).

Figure 7 specifies a vary of personal and environmental factors that impacting on consumer behavior. The decision-making process begins with the cognitive processes of consumers. Views, beliefs, needs, and objectives all play a role in shaping this way of thinking. Personal attributes, such as one's personality, lifestyle choices, and demography, can influence consumer behaviour from the inside out. Some examples of external influences include consumer value systems, cultural and subcultural influences, socioeconomic stratification, new developments, family dynamics, and influential people's opinions. The setting of a transaction is one of several variables that influence a customer's propensity to make a purchase (Nair 2008, 6). Examining the environmental variables that have emerged as a consequence of the COVID-19 epidemic, this study project seeks to analyse the impact on marketing strategy and customer behaviour. The following section of the thesis discusses the impact these concerns have had on consumer purchasing behaviour.

3.1 External factors impacting customer behaviour

External elements such as culture, socioeconomic status, and influence groups are investigated in this study. Although social variables do not have an immediate impact on consumer behaviour, they do influence customers' decisions over time (Khan 2006, 26). Each external influence and its effect on consumer behaviour are examined in greater detail in this part of the study.

People react unreasonably and panic when confronted with a terrible situation, as shown by historical examples of COVID-19 epidemics. Stockpiling and emergency shopping are part of this. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, there have been multiple reports of a worldwide emergency involving the purchase and storage of certain commodities. Whitten (2020) states that while the pandemic and stay-at-home orders were in effect, many purchased protective gear like as masks, gloves, and hand sanitizer. They also purchase items such as puzzles, board games, and video games to occupy their time. A fundamental need is to have relationships with other individuals. Along with water and canned goods, many people have opted to stock up on medical supplies like thermometers and cold medication. The behaviour of hoarding food is a fundamental reaction to danger, says consumer psychologist Kit Yarrow (Whitten 2020).

A number of countries have discovered that the rates of COVID-19 infection and recovery are quite unpredictable. Consumer demand differs among countries and categories based on these rates. According to Aull, Kuijpers, Sawaya, and Vallöf (2020), many people choose fruit over alcohol at first, but then they go back to snacks and beer when they realize they'll be home for a while. Another point they made was that demand had shifted dramatically in Italy before the government shut down. People are also gravitating toward foods with longer shelf lives, such as pasta, flour, rice, and frozen food, in addition to products for cleaning and safety, such sanitizing alcohol, tissues, etc. Aull et al. (2020) found that demand for discretionary products, including sugar, baking mix, cosmetics, and salty snacks, decreased significantly. Customers are more inclined to hoard inexpensive things if they are uncertain they will be able to obtain them later, if doing so would cause them little harm, or if the price is low (Anastasiadou, Chrissos Anestis, Karantza and Vlachakis, 2020). According to GAIN (2020), orange fruit is becoming more popular in Spain as people seek out other vitamin C and healthy food sources to fight the illness. Sales of consumer packaged goods (CPG) in the

United States surged. Somewhat unexpectedly, oat milk becomes an item that many buyers opt to hoard. There is a marked increase in health-related CPG as well. As an example, by the end of January 2020, medical mask sales in the US had surged by 78% (Kats 2020). Canned and dried milk sales in the UK surged by over 350% in the second week of March 2020, while canned and jarred fruit sales increased by another 297 percent (Criteo 2020).

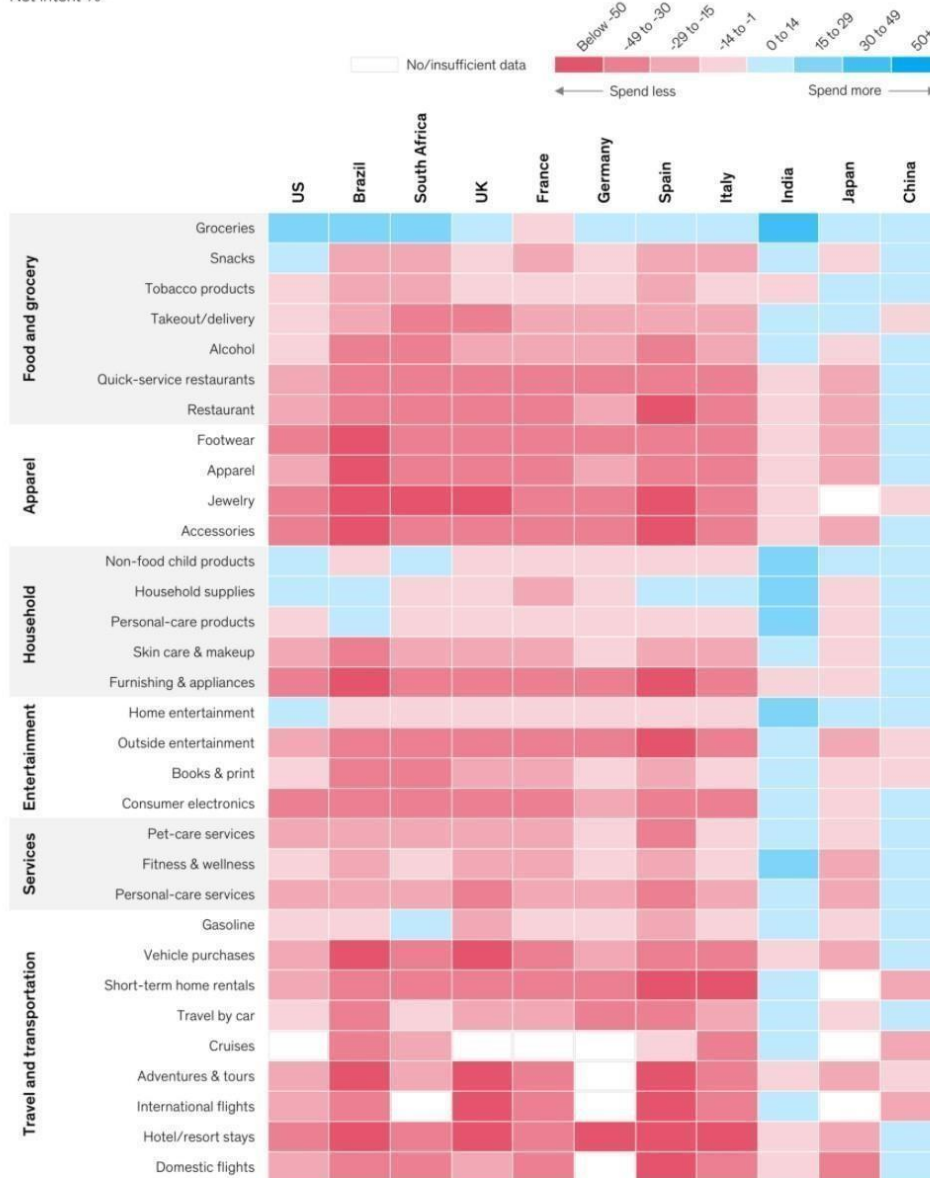
Customers' desire to hoard these products is reasonable. Foods in cans, dried pasta, rice, and flour are all adaptable and have a long shelf life. In times when going outdoors for food may be too dangerous, people can depend on them to keep them going for a long period. As long as the pandemic continues, health-related commodities like medical masks and hand sanitizers will be required.

3.2 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer habits

There have been worldwide shifts in consumer attitude and behaviour as a result of the health and economic crises. In order to gain a better understanding of these shifts, McKinsey & Company (2020) has been surveying 45 nations since mid-March. Aside from China and India, consumers in the studied nations intend to redirect their spending towards things that are considered necessities. Both nations intend to boost expenditure on non-essentials rather than food and drink. Consumers' anticipated expenditure over the next two weeks beginning 30 September 2020 compared to the previous year is shown in Figure 9.

Expected spending per category over the next two weeks compared to usual¹

Net intent %²



¹Q: "Over the next two weeks, do you expect that you will spend more, about the same, or less money on these categories than usual?"

²Net intent is calculated by subtracting the percent of respondents stating they expect to decrease spending from the percent of respondents stating they expect to increase spending.

Source: McKinsey & Company COVID-19 Consumer Pulse surveys, conducted globally September 18-30, 2020.

Figure 9. Expected spending per category in the next two weeks from 30 September 2020 (McKinsey & Company 2020).

China and India are getting ahead of the curve when it comes to economic recovery, thanks to consumers' plans to spend more across all sectors. Outside of food, most countries are reluctant to spend money on non-essentials like furnishings and entertainment, according to McKinsey & Company (2020). Figure 9 shows the fall in demand across several different businesses. There are no intentions to raise expenditure on apparel in ten out of the eleven nations depicted on the graph.

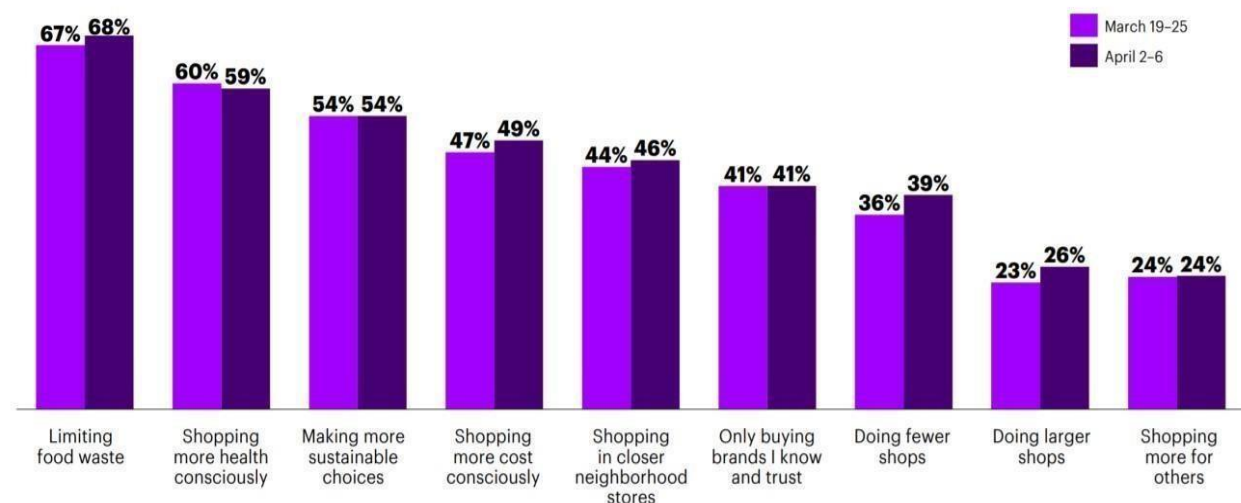
A number of nations have also decided not to invest in transportation or tourism because of the quarantine and border-closing order, which is still widely enforced. Consistent with this, Figure 6 details the primary concerns of several businesses. Restriction and anxiety surrounding COVID-19 have altered consumer behaviour, and this trend is expected to continue for a while. Accenture found that the virus has accelerated three distinct buying habits over the long term (2020). To start, self-care has surpassed all other priorities in people's lives. Also, they're trying to be more conscientious shoppers, which shows in their reduced food waste, more frugal spending, and preference for eco-friendly goods. Their commitment to supporting local businesses increased, whether it's through the products they buy, like vegetables grown in the area, or the way they shop overall. Figure 10 below shows the customers' expectations on changes in purchasing behaviour over the long run. The results of the two rounds of research—one from March 19–25 and another from April 2–6—show that their expectations gradually increased. Reducing food waste and improving health-conscious shopping are the two most significant goals, in keeping with the three tendencies highlighted by Accenture. Another trend that has been observed is that shoppers are choosing to spend less time outdoors and make greater purchases (Accenture 2020).

Figure 10 Consumers' expectations on permanently changed shopping habits (Accenture 2020).

Online shopping has quickly become the "new normal" as more and more people stay indoors. Online sales of food

Consumers expect their shopping habits to change permanently

Limiting food waste and shopping more health consciously are the top two priorities for consumers
Proportion that agree or significantly agree with statement and are likely to sustain this post-outbreak



Source: Accenture COVID-19 Consumer Research, conducted March 19-25 and April 2-6

increased by more than 30% on average across all countries surveyed (McKinsey & Company 2020). One of the biggest Chinese e-commerce platforms, Alibaba, had a 220% year-over-year surge in orders as the virus began to spread. The states with the highest number of reported cases of COVID-19 had ten to twenty times the usual subscriptions to cart, an American online delivery business. There has been an influx of both younger and older users, likely driven by the widespread fear of the virus and its potential harmful effects on those over the age of 50. In one set of consumers, one in five bought for groceries online for the first time, while in the other group, one in three consumers aged 56 and above did the same. Ocado, a UK online grocery store, said that nearly 800,000 consumers expressed interest in ordering weekly in March. Many customers anticipate a 32% to 37% increase in online shopping following the pandemic, suggesting that digital commerce will continue long after the dust settles (Accenture 2020).

4. PRINTING PLAN

The marketing process entails organizing, pricing, promoting, selling, and distributing ideas, commodities, or services in order to generate customer satisfaction through exchanges (Farese & Kimbrell 2006, 32). The end goal of all marketing efforts should be customer satisfaction and financial gain for the business. A marketing plan is necessary for any marketing activity if a corporation wants to succeed. According to Farese et al. (2006), a marketing strategy is a plan that companies and marketers follow to achieve their objectives. According to Philip Kotler and Kevin Keller (2012), a marketing strategy encompasses the following elements: the product or service's purpose, marketing, financial goals, potential needs it could meet, and competitive advantage. A marketing strategy should provide companies with a high-level overview of their market actions, according to Perreault Jr., Cannon, and McCarthy (2011). Establishing a target market and the marketing mix that pertains to it are the first steps in developing a marketing plan. Each of these components is essential for every marketing plan (Perreault Jr. et. al. 2011, 33).

4.1 Mission

An organization's mission statement is crucial. Mission statements are crucial, according to Kotler and Armstrong's (2017) "Principles of Marketing" book. There need to be no ambiguity about the reason for being of any organization. The first step for any organization can be to ask themselves, "What is our business?" Guess who the consumer is? Who are the buyers? We need to decide what we want to do a company with. Although these may appear to be straightforward questions, any company may find them challenging to answer. But this isn't an isolated incident, therefore the answer might shift. According to Kotler et al. (2017), businesses should consistently ask and thoughtfully respond to these inquiries. It is important for the company's overarching mission to be in sync with the specific goals of each business unit. Some examples of customer- and market-focused mission statements include "to become the choice for advanced and reliable lighting technologies" for a television studio lighting equipment company. Gaining contracts from smaller businesses or offering the most affordable prices are not mentioned. According to Kotler et al. (2012), 48, it is the duty of the relevant department to develop its own mission statement and accomplish the overarching goal of the company.

4.2 Examining the market using tools like SWOT and PEST

Marketers should undertake a market analysis to thoroughly grasp the possibilities and dangers of a market, since these factors are connected to the organization's strengths and shortcomings (NetMBA). Both internal and external factors can have an impact on a company, and two typical assessments for this purpose are SWOT and PEST. The four letters PEST stand for the four main sources of external influences on a change: politics, economics, society, and technology. If a business wants to know how changes in macro environmental factors are affecting its competitive position, PEST analysis is a great technique to use. Even while a company can't do much about these external issues, it nevertheless needs to analyse them so it can adapt its business plan accordingly. For a detailed explanation of PEST analysis, see the article by Sammut-Bonnici and Galea (2015a).

Political: When formulating a plan, a company must take into account trade, tax, labour, and environmental laws. Further factors that significantly affect a company's operations are commercial constraints and political stability. As an example, the Formula One industry was rocked when the European Union banned tobacco advertising. Censorship problems forced Google to suspend operations in China. Changes in fiscal policy or product licensing laws can also have an impact on businesses. Keeping tabs on the political climate in the regions where a company operates is essential in light of the aforementioned political considerations. For the most part, economic considerations determine whether or not a market is profitable and appealing. People often look to a country's GDP per capita as a measure of its economic success. Even while it's a helpful tool, it doesn't include everything that can affect a company's operations, including inflation or a high tax rate. Because economic factors have varying impacts on various sectors, it is critical for a company to comprehend how these elements relate to their particular industry. A downturn in the tourist industry, for instance, would have a significant impact on the entertainment industry because of the interdependencies between these two sectors. Interactions between the economic outcomes of various nations were also detected. Cyprus, Greece, Ireland, Portugal, and Spain were the primary targets of a contagious recession that swept across the European Union. Following the announcement that Cyprus had requested aid, the stock markets of other EU member states, including the UK's FTSE 100 index, France's CAC, and Germany's Dax, all fell sharply. Many economic variables may be difficult for businesses to track. It is possible for businesses to concentrate on monitoring important economic variables that affect their sector.

Social: The demand for particular products is influenced by societal trends since these trends dictate customer preferences and tastes. Workplace factors, such as work routine and attitude, are similarly impacted by these trends. Businesses can get an advantage in the market by keeping an eye on these societal trends and adjusting to meet customer requests. Banks, for instance, currently provide a dizzying array of services to everyone from students to employees to billionaires. The economics of a nation is also affected by its demographic makeup. Healthcare, medications, and recreational opportunities will be in high demand in countries with an ageing population. This differs, for example, from a nation with a young population, where education is highly valued. To better anticipate potential pressures that can affect the sector in the future, businesses should continuously analyse societal variables. Innovations in technology are happening at a dizzying rate, which is great news for certain sectors but disastrous for others. Online platforms were always reserved for corporations, but now individuals may use them to plan and book their own trips, thus becoming their own travel brokers. The proliferation of e-commerce and internet retailers has scared off brick-and-mortar stores. As a result of technological development, new intermediaries like Amazon and eBay have emerged. Anyone can post an honest review of a product or service, and other people will see it and take it into consideration when making a purchase. Advertisements on these sites can serve as a second sales channel for companies' wares. A competitive advantage can be gained by organizations through technological advancements, which can lead to cheaper production, greater product quality, and increased customer access. If they want to succeed,

businesses need to keep up with the newest digital trends and how they impact their industry. According to Sammut-Bonnici and Galea (2015a, 1-6). Weaknesses, Opportunities, Strengths, and Threats, or SWOT, is the acronym for this situation. All organizations can benefit from conducting a SWOT analysis, which is a method for analysing a company's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats (MindTools). Internal factors such as the company's resources, competencies, core competencies, and other competitive advantages are considered in a strengths and weaknesses study. Observational research into potential advantages and disadvantages of the market locates industry-specific and general contexts, as well as the resources used by competitors (Sammut-Bonnici & Galea 2015b, 1). The purpose of a SWOT analysis is to help a company make the most of its opportunities and strengths in the market while mitigating its weaknesses and risks (Kotler & Armstrong 2017, 80).

Positive aspects: When doing an internal study, it is important to look for signs that your company is more efficient and has a distinct advantage over its rivals. This will help you determine your organizational strength. Market situation, financial structure, product and technical capacity, potential for research and development, human capacity, and management effectiveness are the five factors that can be used to compare organizations and determine their strengths, weaknesses, or parity (Gürel 2017, 997). But for something to be considered a strength of the company, it must clearly benefit the business. To illustrate the point, consider MindTools: in an industry where every competitor has a top-notch production method, a company's strengths—high-quality products—become an absolute need. One definition of a company's weakness is any area in which it performs less efficiently and effectively than its rivals. An organization's performance and standing in the industry might be diminished by these shortcomings. Issues with infrastructure, funding, managerial skills, marketing approach, or public perception of the brand can all contribute to its vulnerability. Recognizing a company's shortcomings is just as important as knowing its strengths. After that, they will be able to resolve these issues that could lead to future difficulties (Gürel 2017, 997).

Opportunities: The opportunity for the business to accomplish its objectives can be described as "the convenient time or situation that the environment presents" (Gürel, 2017). These chances typically arise from outside sources and necessitate companies to remain vigilant. They could originate from advancements in the industry as a whole or from technological breakthroughs implemented by the company itself. A company's competitiveness and market positioning can be greatly affected by its ability to identify and capitalize on these opportunities (MindTools).

Potential Dangers: A threat is something that might make the organization's goal more difficult, if not impossible, to achieve. Threats to the company's survival or competitive advantage could arise from changes in the company's near or distant environment (Gürel 2017, 998). Businesses should be alert to these dangers and prepared to counter them before they strike. Any disruption in the supply chain, shifts in consumer demand, or bad debt can leave a company exposed to industry fluctuations. Before making any changes to the company's strategy in response to a specific threat, managers should look at what their rivals are doing and ask themselves if it would help their company stand out from the competition (MindTools).

Customer base

Businesses would do well to divide the general public into subsets of customers with similar wants and requirements. Afterwards, businesses should figure out which types of customers they can cater to best. When deciding on a target market, it helps to have a solid understanding of customer behaviour and to plan strategically. One of the keys to successful marketing is zeroing in on the correct target audience and catering to their needs (Kotler et. al. 2012, 213). Because every market's customers are unique in their needs, wants, finances, location, purchasing habits, and countless other ways, there is no one best way to segment a market. There are a number of ways to segment the consumer market, as shown in Figure 11 below. Geographic, Demographic, Psychographic, and Behavioural are the four main groups.

Segmentation Variable	Examples
Geographic	Nations, regions, states, counties, cities, neighborhoods, population density (urban, suburban, rural), climate
Demographic	Age, life-cycle stage, gender, income, occupation, education, religion, ethnicity, generation
Psychographic	Lifestyle, personality
Behavioral	Occasions, benefits, user status, usage rate, loyalty status

Figure 11. Example of segmentation variables for consumer markets (Kotler et. al. 2017, 213).

It is important that marketing managers are aware of the effectiveness of the segmentation. For example, consumers who buy table salt can be segmented into blonde and brunette, however, this factor does not affect the purchase of table salt at all. The requirements to have effective segmentation are measurable, accessible, substantial, differentiable and actionable (Kotler et. al. 2017, 221).

After segmenting the market, firms now have to evaluate and select one or many segments that they can serve best. There are three factors that firms can base on to evaluate, which are the size and growth of the segments, their structural attractiveness and company's objectives and resources. Firstly, firms must choose segment(s) that have the right size and growth for the company. Sometimes, the fastest growing and

largest segments are not always the right choice for some companies, especially smaller ones. It is more beneficial for them in the future to enter a segment with less competitors and less attractive. Secondly, structural factors of a segment also need to be examined by the firms. A segment with many large and aggressive competitors or the industry is welcoming to new entrants can determine if they are desirable or not. Other factors such as substitute products, powerful buyers or powerful suppliers can also affect the attractiveness of a segment. Finally, the company's objectives and resources are the final factor to decide if a market segment is the right choice. Even attractive segments can be disregarded if they are not aligning with the company's long-run objectives. It is advised that companies should only enter a segment if they can bring superior values to their customers and gain a competitive edge in the industry (Kotler et. al. 2017, 221-222).

5. Marketing mix

After selecting the suitable market segment(s), firms can customize marketing strategies to serve consumers effectively. This is when the marketing mix is introduced. According to Kotler and

Armstrong, the definition of marketing mix is "the set of tactical marketing tools – product, price, place, and promotion – that the firm blends to produce the response it wants in the target market". It is also known as the "four Ps", which stands for the four groups of variables (Kotler et. al. 2017, 77).

Figure 12 demonstrates the relationship between the target market and the marketing mix. The customer is not a part of the strategy, but rather the center of all marketing efforts (Perreault Jr. et. al. 2011, 36). This part discusses the four elements of the marketing mix.



Figure 12. The four Ps of the marketing mix (Perreault Jr. et. al. 2011, 36).

Kotler et al. (2017) states that "the sum total of a company's offerings to its end users" (77) constitutes a product. In terms of making the "right" product for the target market, this component can encompass tangible items, services, benefits, quality, packaging, branding, and so on (Perreault Jr. et. al. 2011, 36).

After a company has settled on the "right" product, the following stage is to coordinate its timely delivery to the right customers. A corporation can sell its products directly to consumers or use a distribution channel, which is basically a network of intermediaries, to get their products to consumers. Furthermore, this component could be affected by factors such as market exposure, difficulties in shipping, storage, and handling, and the administration of several channels (Perreault Jr. et. al. 2011, 36).

Advertising: Any and all efforts made to raise awareness of a product within a certain demographic or the broader public with the objective of generating sales. It is possible to direct promotional efforts towards both current and potential customers. Combining personal selling, mass selling, and sales promotions should be a part of a marketing manager's skill set (Perreault Jr. et. al. 2011, 37-38).

Price is the last component in the marketing mix. Advertising is pointless if consumers aren't going to purchase the advertised goods. When managers set prices, they should consider the marketing mix's cost as well as the intensity of competition in the desired market. Additionally, they need to be aware of what is considered standard in the market, which includes pricing methods that incorporate markdowns and markups (Perreault Jr. et. al. 2011, 38).

The marketing mix is an essential component of any successful marketing operation. It can only help the business achieve its goal by bringing in new customers and providing them with valuable services if it is completely integrated. The optimal positioning of a brand in the market depends on all four of the four Ps. There have been many marketing mixes, such as the four as or the new four Ps (Process, Platforms, People, and Performance), but the important thing

is to choose a framework that will help with the integrated marketing plan's development (Perrault Jr. et. al. 2011, 38; Kotler et. al. 2017, 78-79).

5.1 Different approaches to advertising across COVID-19

Marketing initiatives have undoubtedly been impacted by the pandemic in a variety of ways. Consumer behaviour changed drastically between the pre- and post-pandemic eras, necessitating adjustments to marketing strategy, the marketing environment, and basic marketing concepts (He & Harris 2020). This study examines the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on advertising strategies independently. The rapid spread of the coronavirus means that many businesses must be flexible in their approach to marketing. Companies' fortunes will rise or fall depending on how they handle the present crisis. The current art of marketing is all about changing and adapting to new places all the time. Pantano, Pizzi, Scarpi, and Dennis (2020) and Boudet, Gordon, Gregg, Perrey, and Robinson (2020) both point out that companies are facing pressure to comply with government rules and regulations while also satisfying the changing demands of their customers. To begin, with the massive shift from traditional stores to online marketplaces, marketers must rethink their marketing spending and approaches. Kathy Bachmann, GM of Analytic Partners Inc. in the Americas, claims that companies are refocusing their marketing budgets on short-term initiatives with the potential to increase online sales. Marketers must re-evaluate and make the most of their constrained budget in light of consumers' reduced spending. One approach would be to reallocate resources away from items that don't sell well and toward the one that matters most in this situation. The marketer must keep an eye on the results and quickly revise the budget if needed (Talbot 2020; Boudet et. al. 2020). Online gift card marketplace Raise (U.S.) successfully adopted this new marketing mind-set. The company has changed its focus from selling vacation gift cards to selling groceries, home office equipment, and other essentials. As client demand for housing rises and falls, Raise modifies their advertising strategy accordingly (Carr 2020).

Consumers have long been at the centre of marketing theory and practice. Marketers' primary objective has always been to learn what their customers desire and then meet that need as best they can (He et. al. 2020). Since the end of the pandemic is still uncertain, consumers are more naive and easily swayed than in the past. If companies try to profit off of this situation, they will fail miserably. At this moment, connecting with customers, demonstrating empathy, and remaining relevant are the keys to their heart. Ads for romantic vacations or those with too optimistic messaging may come seen as simplistic to consumers. Marketers in this situation would do well to find out which aspects of the brands are most appreciated by consumers. For instance, Lululemon, a sportswear business, made yoga DVDs with the slogan "The community carries on" so that viewers could do the poses in the comfort of their own homes. At the moment, a lot of folks are having trouble making ends meet. After realizing this, many banks decided to do away with overdraft fees altogether (Balis 2020; Boudet et. al. 2020) to better serve their clients.

Customers will remember how brands responded to the epidemic even after the disease has gone. As a result, consumers would think highly of a business that goes above and beyond by giving back to the communities where it operates. Doing something nice right now can help everyone feel better, boost morale, and enhance the company's image. Yet, consumers will recognize the sincerity of a company's marketing efforts when they employ such strategies. It is crucial that companies give back to the community because they care, not because they are trying to make a profit. Ekoï, a bicycle equipment manufacturer, gave back to their community by donating 5% of their profits to hospitals, as well as masks and glasses. Beyond that, Ekoï allowed clients to purchase as many as 10,000 masks online (Balis 2020; Carr 2020).

Even though businesses are being told to be adaptable right now, they still need a plan for when the pandemic ends. Companies will have to re-evaluate their original aims in light of the new market dynamics and the reality that many presumptions are irrelevant in the post-pandemic world. Numerous firms are expected to adopt a long-term survival

strategy, along with greater agility and considerable social responsibility, since many marketing models depend on historical data (Boudet et. al. 2020; He et. al. 2020). Another tactic for coping with the "next normal" is to make use of advanced analytics. Marketers can track consumer sentiment and spending patterns by playing with hypothetical scenarios and continuously watching customer activities. Businesses may address customers' demands and wants in the here and now as well as in the future with the use of advanced analytics (Talbot 2020; Balis 2020).

6. LITERATURE REVIEW

Brief overview of a literature review on adapting the marketing mix for customer retention during COVID-19 in Indian companies. Please note that this is a high-level summary, and you can dive deeper into each aspect for your master's thesis.

Product: Indian companies have adapted their product offerings during COVID-19 to meet changing customer needs. For example, restaurants introduced contactless delivery and takeaway options, and fashion retailers focused on loungewear and comfortable clothing.

Price: Many Indian companies adjusted their pricing strategies to remain competitive and attract customers during the pandemic. Some offered discounts, promotions, or bundled deals to encourage purchases and retain customers.

Place: With lockdowns and restrictions, companies had to rethink their distribution channels. E-commerce platforms became crucial for Indian businesses to reach customers. Companies also explored partnerships with local delivery services to ensure timely and safe delivery.

Promotion: Digital marketing and social media became essential tools for Indian companies to promote their products and services. They utilized various platforms to engage with customers, share updates, and create personalized experiences to strengthen customer relationships.

People: Indian companies focused on customer service and support during COVID-19. They trained their employees to handle customer inquiries, provide assistance, and ensure a positive customer experience, even in remote or virtual settings.

Process: Indian companies streamlined their processes to adapt to the new normal. They implemented contactless payments, enhanced online ordering processes, and optimized supply chains to ensure efficient operations and customer satisfaction.

Physical Evidence: While physical interactions were limited, Indian companies emphasized the importance of virtual experiences. They enhanced their websites, created engaging content, and utilized augmented reality or virtual reality to provide customers with a tangible experience.

7. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

7.1 Research approach

Quantitative and qualitative research methods are the two most common types of study. It is also possible to employ a blended method that combines the two approaches. What the researcher hopes to find out from their study dictates the

data collection method they choose. When there is a need for more exact numerical data in a field that has already been extensively investigated, quantitative research may be suggested. In addition, the accessibility, availability, and willingness of the sample to answer the author's questions play a role in determining the data collection strategy (Felix & Smith 2019, 93).

"Providing the answer to the research question through the recorded use of narratives, experiences, discourse, content analysis or the spoken word" is how qualitative research was characterized by Felix and Smith (2019). It is one of the primary research procedures, despite debates about the impartiality of this mode of data gathering. Interviews with individuals or small groups, as well as observations of a representative sample, can provide qualitative data for researchers. Once researchers approach data saturation, they stop collecting additional information from respondents (Felix et al. 2019, 94).

Quantitative research refers to studies that focus on measuring quantities or amounts. Subjects that can be quantified are the ones that benefit from this approach. Many academics favor quantitative research methods because they are perceived as being more objective. In this type of empirical investigation, however, the data quality is of the utmost importance. Findings will be useless for the study if the data isn't good quality. In most cases, researchers will use a structured questionnaire or some other method of systematic observation to collect quantitative data. A sufficient sample is necessary to draw accurate conclusions. Research in the social sciences sometimes involves hundreds, if not thousands, of participants (Felix et al. 2019: 95; Kothari 2004: 3).

In order to carry out the empirical investigation of this research, this paper opts to use qualitative approach. The author of this study had faith that the data required to answer the thesis questions could be obtained through the use of qualitative methods. This approach has the potential to go where other quantitative methods have failed by investigating the relationship between processes and outcomes. Since the implications of COVID-19 on marketing tactics and customer behaviour are central to the thesis topics, qualitative research will yield the most fruitful findings. Examining how marketing tactics have evolved in

response to the epidemic and the shifting relationship between businesses and their customers, the study questions do not presume any particular reality. The ability to determine the causes of changes is another strength of qualitative research. This strategy can help understand how people respond to a specific event by collecting their diverse explanations and experiences (Moriarty 2011, 3).

7.2 Methodology

To collect qualitative data, we personally interview the individuals and administer them a semi-structured questionnaire. The interviews were conducted online using Zoom, a video call tool, because to the COVID-19 issue and geographical distance. The survey asks people to reflect on and forecast how consumers and businesses would act before, during, and after a pandemic. Because the pandemic's impact on various markets is likely to be unique, it would be useful to conduct interviews with people from varied backgrounds so that the study may draw comparisons across the many industries represented.

In a semi-structured questionnaire, the researcher can get the basic data they need from participants by asking them a series of predetermined questions, but they can also go farther by offering open-ended inquiries (Adams 2015, 493). Respondents to interviews conducted over the phone may feel more at ease. In addition to the evident COVID-19 scenario, participants in telephone interviews have the freedom to select their own time and location while still being able to keep their distance from the interviewer. The interviewer also made a point of using affirmative responses like "mmm" or "yeah" to show the participants that they are being heard (Moriarty 2011, 9).

7.3 Collecting data

Since English is the primary language of this study, it was the first language in which the questionnaire was developed. Two participants, however, needed to be questioned in Vietnamese due to a linguistic barrier that arose during data collection. The author proceeded to translate the interview questionnaire into Vietnamese, taking care to retain all of the original context and content. Zoom was used to record the interviews, and if necessary, the author had them transcribed and translated. Data analysis for the thesis was subsequently carried out using the responses. The author was able to conduct fruitful interviews with four people from four distinct

industries, all of whom have marketing expertise. A minimum of five marketing professionals were to be interviewed as part of the initial implementation plan. Participants' worries regarding their privacy have been a stumbling block to the empirical investigation. The author contacted the participants by email, first sending a cover letter outlining the interview process and including the questionnaire to give them a sense of what to expect from the questions. The interviewer and interviewee schedule a mutually convenient time for the virtual interview once they have both agreed to

take part.

6.4.2 Making It Reliable and Valid
"The accuracy and truthfulness of scientific findings are concerned with validity in research" (Brink 1993). A research study is deemed valid when it provides unambiguous evidence of what exists and employs a valid methodology to support its intended measurements. The capacity of the author to accurately gather and record data, as well as the data's consistency, stability, and repetition, are aspects of reliability. Study validity is often assessed using four primary criteria: credibility, authenticity, criticality, and integrity. Alternatively, the credibility of the study is the foundation of qualitative research reliability. The purpose of reliability and validity assessments is to remove bias and guarantee that researchers are being genuine while studying social phenomena (Brink 1993; Golafshani 2003; University of Miami).

This thesis compiles a number of current theoretical discoveries from reputable academic sources. Despite some more recent exceptions, these beliefs remain vital and are commonly accepted by professionals in the field. As a result of these results, the likelihood of biased, one-theory research has diminished. Interviews with marketing industry professionals served as the major means of gathering data. Every one of the four interviewees followed the same protocol when providing their information. Nevertheless, the data quality was affected by external factors. For instance, answers were missing due to Internet connection disruptions, and participants were unable to recap their marketing strategies in detail due to confidentiality agreements between their companies. Nonetheless, the respondents' responses continued to be illuminating since they disclosed previously undisclosed trends and figures. This paper's validity and dependability were enhanced by the interviewees' backgrounds. Everyone who took the survey has extensive experience in the field and has worked with marketing tactics in the field for a long time. So, you can trust them to expertly supply data relevant to your thesis. On top of that, most of the people who took the survey had similar views. This means that comparable discussions in future research can yield the same results.

8. ANALYSING AND INTERPRETING DATA

The empirical inquiry was accompanied by four individuals who had marketing backgrounds. Four interviewees are introduced in the next paragraph, along with their job titles, industries, and localities. The interviewees' identities have been completely removed to ensure their privacy. The identity of the participants and their employers will be changed so that they appear as pseudonyms. The first person we speak with is Ms. A, who has extensive experience in the field of marketing. She is now in charge of the marketing for a customer loyalty program based in Europe. Thanks to her vast marketing experience, Ms. A was

able to provide insightful commentary on the state of marketing in the sector for the research. Ms. B., who is currently working as a digital marketing coordinator, is the second person to be interviewed. The company's digital marketing campaigns in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, are mainly her responsibility. Our third participant, Mr. C, works as a Business Development Trainee for a spiritual education program in Vietnam. Mr. C's classes are a great resource for individuals of all ages looking to develop their moral character, strengthen their interpersonal skills, and discover their life's true calling. Being one of the few successful Spiritual Education programs in Vietnam, his firm has been experiencing significant growth in popularity in recent years. Finally, there's Ms. D, who has a wealth of experience in marketing. While working as Campaign Leader for an in-house marketing agency in Ho Chi Minh City, she achieved remarkable success. Her clients, primarily in the automotive industry, had a breakthrough last year thanks to her team's innovative marketing strategies. She is the newest marketing professional to join a prestigious sports equipment company. Ms. D's experience in both agency and client roles greatly enhanced our comprehension of the Vietnamese marketing environment.

The data analysis is divided into three phases to address the three study topics. Each part starts with an appropriate research question, follows with a summary of the respondents' replies, and then finishes with an analysis.

Effects of COVID-19 on purchasing patterns

The first section of the investigation looks at how the COVID-19 pandemic has changed people's consumption patterns. Everyone in the study agreed that the significant increase in social media usage due to people staying indoors and not going out is one of the most obvious trends. Ms. B. recommended that her company immediately add additional online customer service chat boxes to their platform due to the rapidly growing amount of clients using this service. Their social media posts reached an even larger audience.

certain group of people. Consumers are increasingly sharing content online and providing frequent feedback on the services they have received, according to Ms. B., compared to the same time last year. Ms. B and Ms. D felt forced to reply to both good and negative consumer complaints as the usage of social media grew. Both their reaction and the rate at which they reply are being attentively monitored by the consumers. Because people spend so much time at home on social media, they have become more intelligent and perceptive. Therefore, consumers are able to discern which companies are being authentic. When they see a company that they feel isn't being honest, they don't hesitate to speak out.

The proliferation of social media has led to an uptick in online shopping. Many countries' regulations are making it hard for people to go shopping outside, so they're resorting to online stores instead. Customers' preferences and the things they buy are dynamic, says Ms. A. People bought things from her business that made them more comfortable at home. Her clientele transitioned from stylish clothing and accessories to pajamas and home goods. Online sales accounted for 40% of her company's revenue before the outbreak, but today they account for 80%.

Adapting marketing strategies to meet the needs of today '

Secondly, we will examine how the marketing strategies evolved in light of the pandemic. The empirical study kicks off this analysis by inquiring about respondents' pre-COVID-19 marketing methods. To answer this question, each

member has customized their marketing approach to fit their specific industry. Ms. A's main focus was data-driven marketing, which allowed her to provide her clients with personalized promotions. Ms. B's team was heavily into content and email marketing. Their first plan for 2020 was to boost awareness of the brand by enlisting the help of influential people and making promotional music videos and viral videos. Mr. C from the Spiritual Education program claims that word-of-mouth marketing, or the referral system, is the best way to bring in customers. The automotive business was quite traditional, and Ms. D was employed there. The majority of their product promotion efforts were around holding trade shows or investing in public relations campaigns. Everyone was rushing to make last-minute changes to their long-term plans as they responded to the unexpected coronavirus epidemic. According to Ms. A, B, and D, marketing tactics need to be flexible and responsive in order to keep up with the trends. In order to maintain a competitive edge, their team has learned the value of setting shorter-term objectives and making constant adjustments to their marketing strategies. Ms. A. stressed the importance of acting quickly, making quick judgments, and quickly promoting and implementing ideas. According to Ms. D, they are still using an agile approach, even though the pandemic has been going on for over a year. The reason behind this, she claims, is that the level of uncertainty remains constant across all industries. Because the pandemic has hit Vietnam almost every quarter, her team decided it would be wise to create short-term campaigns on a regular basis rather than commit to one poorly thought-out long-term strategy.

Most people who took the survey thought they had to shift their marketing priorities to better target the items and channels that would benefit from the explosive growth of online shopping and social media. To illustrate the point, Ms. A's group had to put their event and vacation partners on hold for a while before they could concentrate on advertising their online store partners. It seemed like a good idea to her to shift all the ads to internet retailers. Consumers are looking for products that make them feel at ease in their own homes, therefore her organization chose to push furniture stores and home apparel businesses. Other respondents stated that they mostly promote themselves online instead than in person. In order to stay in touch with their clientele, Ms. B's organization chose to develop digital engagement events like minigames. Ms. D's customer was an automobile company that had never done any kind of web branding before. They had already been convinced to move their marketing online by the time the coronavirus broke out by her team. They should enhance their social media strategy by enlisting influential people to video reviews of cars and then manipulate the online community's story through Facebook comments. Additionally, Ms. D brought attention to the fact that multiple FCMG companies "attacked" popular internet marketplaces. She claims that the current marketing trend is brands' attempts to leverage these platforms to boost sales in Vietnam.

Another prominent strategy used by the respondents' organizations is showing empathy and staying relevant to clients. In theory, this study's findings suggest that customers will remember businesses more strongly if they display compassion and empathy. "Stay at home. Stay healthy" was the slogan that Ms. A's company used for their advertisement. By releasing the relevant hashtags on social media, they encouraged their customers to follow government requirements. Ms. B's company, on the other hand, chose to emphasize their philanthropic endeavors. Their charitable mission includes giving back to the community by contributing a portion of every customer's order. Her company's marketing approach includes giving back to the community.

Only Mr. C. failed to come up with a new marketing strategy in light of the epidemic among all of the interviewees. The reason behind this, he explained further, was because his company's training program prioritized the mental and emotional well-being of its trainees. His CEO believes that if he provides genuine value to his customers, they will remember his program for what it is—not for the hollow advertising that falls flat. Mr. C argued that companies should not cater to social media trends but rather learn what their consumers value most and continue providing it to them, rather than launching digital campaigns that don't represent the company's principles.

To sum up, most of the participants have refined their strategies for internet marketing. Businesses took this move in response to consumers' altered purchasing patterns brought on by the pandemic. The survey's findings also provide credence to the theoretical case for prioritizing products that are more relevant to customers. All of the participants have shown a mind-set focused on quickness in their responses. Given the present state of affairs, most of them believe that flexibility is key when formulating strategies for marketing. Last but not least, the responses from these professionals illuminate the ways in which businesses sustain customer interest and loyalty. On their platforms, they must make a strong and compassionate statement. Customers have a more positive impression of the brand and are more likely to remain loyal when they feel their money is going toward meaningful projects. A participant's marketing strategy was at odds with the others, but other than that, most of the remarks were in agreement.

What are the next steps for marketing tactics following a pandemic? Vaccines against coronavirus are already on the market as of the publication of this study. Some countries have already started vaccinating their residents, but others just do not have the means to do it right now. A constant fear of the virus has prevented anyone from returning to pre-epidemic lifestyles (Skegg, Gluckman, Boulton, Hackmann, Karim, Piot & Woopen 2021).

The last study topic focuses on the marketing plan for after a pandemic. To get to the bottom of this, the empirical study polled participants on their marketing plans and trends they saw coming in 2019. Per the majority of responses, the epidemic is expected to continue until the end of the year. They remain optimistic, nevertheless, that new marketing fads will appear soon. First, health is receiving more attention from the general public. This claim was supported by the majority of interviewees. Because of the COVID-19 outbreak, consumers are more concerned about safety and sustainability. Ms. A and Ms. D both believe that marketers will soon find new opportunities to explore. Ms. D. offered additional background on this idea by stating that, after a year of focusing only on the epidemic, people's health, the environment, and recycling will be back in the spotlight in late 2021 or early 2022. In addition, there will be no slowdown in the meteoric rise of social media and online shopping. Many people want to continue using the Internet even when things return to normal since it has made them feel more at ease. Also, people who were born in the late 90s or early 2000s (Gen Z) are now seen as major influencers when it comes to setting trends on the internet. Companies, according to Ms. B and Ms. D, would modify their marketing strategies to appeal to the growing number of social media users. Key opinion leaders (KOLs) and celebrity endorsements will be the next big thing in marketing, say Ms. B and Ms. D. Because of the exponential growth of online media consumption, they both came to the same conclusion: this endorsement format will play a larger role in companies' marketing strategies going forward. To wrap off, Ms. D says that CSR projects are becoming more popular among businesses. Businesses may be trying to assuage their customers' expectations that they will continue their philanthropic efforts once the pandemic has ended.

9. CONCLUSION & RECOMMENDATION

Since this study aims to investigate the effects of the pandemic on advertising campaigns, this section synthesizes the key points by addressing the study's research questions.

8.1 In what ways is the epidemic influencing consumer habits? The COVID-19 epidemic has had a significant impact on everyone's daily lives. It has brought forth a new reality that customers must adjust to in order to stay afloat in this challenging period. Individuals have stayed home for long periods of time due to quarantine orders in several nations, which has led to businesses closing and individuals losing their employment. The buying behaviour of customers has been significantly impacted by this. Online shopping has replaced going out as their go-to method of spending less time outdoors. Online shopping has become the new norm for consumers, who now do it for both necessities and luxuries. There will likely be no let-up in this shift in consumer habits following the pandemic. While e-commerce and online buying are not new concepts in the digital realm, the ease of online shopping has now become even more embedded in customers' lives. The things that people buy online also change all the time. During the early stages of the epidemic, people stocked up on long-lasting essentials including dry ingredients, canned goods, and bottled water. On the other hand, when economies in these nations begin to recover, people are starting to spend more money on frivolous things like vacations and new clothes. On top of that, social media is becoming an integral part of most people's daily routines. Because they are unable to leave their homes, they rely on social media to keep in touch with loved ones and the outside world. The more time individuals spend on social media, the more they realize how powerful these platforms can be. They are using it to stay up-to-date on news, share content online, and express themselves. People are more aware of their personal and community health after a health catastrophe, like the novelty coronavirus outbreak. The long-term trend of health-related goods sales has been expedited. Their own life quality is being enhanced as a result of their actions. Among these, we can highlight the importance of reducing food waste and opting for more environmentally friendly items. Many people think this new buying pattern will remain forever. Because of COVID-19, people have changed the way they live their lives. Their social interactions, media use, and purchasing habits are just a few examples. The government's laws and worries about the virus's impact on public health prompted these measures. Customers were hoping these alterations would last for a longer period of time. After the pandemic ends, many people may still struggle to get back to their regular routines.

8.2 In light of the present climate, how might marketers modify their approach to advertising? This is a health emergency, and the global economy has felt the effects of the epidemic as well. It is believed that consumers' new purchasing habits will remain indefinitely. Because of this, businesses have had to rethink their advertising approaches and figure out how to keep their current clientele. To begin, with the massive transition from brick-and-mortar to online shopping, numerous firms launched e-commerce platforms and digital advertising initiatives. The significance of digital adaptation to meet the growing demands and wants of consumers has been emphasized by both theoretical and empirical study. Businesses should step up their game on digital platforms, making an effort to deliver the same or better value to consumers in a digital environment. Put simply, they need to offer the same services and products online as they did before the outbreak. Also, customers' habits are always evolving, so businesses need to be aware of that. Your prior assumptions about your customers behaviour could no longer hold water. As a result of the pandemic, shoppers have altered both their shopping habits and the products they purchase. Marketers need to pay attention to these shifts and adjust their strategies and tactics appropriately if they want to succeed in this era. It is believed that businesses can improve their customer acquisition and retention rates by shifting their marketing budgets to focus on more relevant items and channels. In order to make the most of the limited budget that enterprises currently have, they can minimize resources for products that aren't relevant, like luxury items or travel-related services. Customers care not just about the content but also about the velocity with which businesses alter their marketing approaches. Adapting to the ever-changing market has proven to be a successful use of the agile methodology. When developing a marketing strategy, businesses must take into account both customer needs and government requirements. Consequently, it appears that a long-term plan is less viable given the ongoing pandemic threat and the fact that market conditions might

alter dramatically in a single night. Among the most effective ways that industry insiders have dealt with this predicament is by adopting an agile mindset. Marketing currently requires a great deal of adaptability, since businesses must be prepared to change their tactics in response to emerging regulations and customer preferences. In order to implement timely adjustments, organizations must continuously assess the market. Finally, marketers' approach to developing marketing plans has undergone substantial changes as a result of the "new normal". The theoretical and empirical results both pointed to three key enhancements. These include being more adaptable in their work, showing customers empathy and kindness, and refocusing their marketing efforts on platforms and products that are more relevant to the present. Since consumers are now more nimble and easily influenced, businesses must keep a close eye on their performance and adapt as needed to remain competitive in the marketing industry.

8.3 In the aftermath of a pandemic, how will marketing strategies evolve? Experts are nonetheless worried about the pandemic's potential consequences, despite the fact that vaccinations against this virus have been developed. Mask use, hand sanitizer, and social isolation are all recommended ways to protect oneself from the virus until vaccines are widely available. Otherwise, a disastrous result would occur. Skegg et al. (2021) note that the future of the epidemic remains unclear. The current marketing landscape is expected to last till the end of the year, according to many marketing insiders. Marketers, they say, should keep an eye on emerging consumer trends including health-conscious consumption, sustainability, and life security. Marketers can use this as a jumping off point to investigate further and adjust their strategies appropriately. It is anticipated that the number of users of social media and online commerce will continue to rise. As a result, more and more people will begin to use these channels for interacting with one another and making purchases. As a result, businesses need to keep engaging with consumers online and improving their strategies to reach and satisfy them. Generation Z is slowly but surely becoming a sizable portion of the online population, and they have the power to shape consumer trends in the future. In order to stay relevant within this community, marketers need to create marketing efforts that centre around them. In addition, when media consumption peaks, companies can take advantage of KOLs or celebrity endorsement. Many brands will probably direct their marketing towards these types of endorsements in the future to reach their desired demographic. Last but not least, customers may hold brands to a high standard when it comes to their acts of kindness. Brands may work together more on CSR initiatives for their advertising campaigns as a result of this. In response to the last study question, marketing tactics will evolve over time. Products that improve people's and the planet's health might be a major focus for many companies in the years to come. Consumers are naturally seeking ways to improve the quality of life for themselves and others after more than a year of combating a deadly virus. Digital marketing expenses are going to increase and reach new heights to correlate the rising Internet usage of consumers. Spending on key opinion leaders (KOLs) and researching Gen Z are two other trends that industry insiders have noticed. Corporate Social Responsibility is also highly valued by consumers, leading it to be integrated in future marketing efforts.

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QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Introduction about yourself. (Name, current work position, experience in marketing field, etc.)
2. Before the COVID-19 pandemic started in 2020, what were the predicted marketing trends that you had known of?
3. What was the marketing strategy of your company for 2020 pre-pandemic? Did it follow any trends that you mentioned above?
4. After the pandemic started, how did your company's marketing strategy change? What was the most significant change in your opinion?
5. How did your customer's behavior change after the pandemic? What effects did it have on your marketing strategy?
6. In your opinion, did your organization's new marketing strategy succeed? If yes, what were the reasons? If not, how can it be improved?
7. What are some elements that you think are vital to marketing strategies during the pandemic? Are they any different prior to the pandemic?
8. The change in consumer behavior is predicted to have a permanent effect. How do you think it is going to impact your future marketing strategy?
9. What are your predictions for marketing trends in the upcoming year?