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Impact of COVID-19 on pharmaceuticals industry to adapt digital marketing

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Abstract

Title: Impact of COVID-19 on pharmaceuticals industry to adapt digital marketing

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This master thesis was prompted by the overall interest in Digital marketing that has been growing since last decade. During this pandemic time, we are interested to know about the impact of COVID-19 on pharmaceuticals industry. Most of the articles and the reports in the early stage were mainly about the concept of digital marketing, technology, implementation in day-to-day business. Lesser studies have been conducted keeping the pandemic in view. Covid-19 is the most influencing topic today around the world and because of this, digital marketing has become the important marketing strategy for every business to withstand in the market.

We have chosen to work with the pharmaceutical company in an emerging country India to study the impact of Covid-19 on pharmaceutical industry and how the industry is adapting digital marketing as their marketing strategy. The empirical study is designed as qualitative method. We had conducted the interview with the employees of marketing department, used digital marketing concepts from different literature and applied to our study. We have also explained about the selected methodology to answer our research questions.

Our findings from the research have shown that digital marketing is the most effective marketing strategies for almost all the businesses during this lockdown. The company we worked is believing that digital marketing has a long run result. We had discussed about the marketing challenges faced by the pharmaceutical companies during pandemic, challenges of adapting digital transformation, strategies followed by the company to sustain customer loyalty by following the aspects of relationship marketing. Our research also focused to know about the solutions to overcome the challenges faced by the pharmaceutical companies.

Keywords: Digital marketing, Pandemic, Pharma Industry, Challenges, and solutions.

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1. Introduction:

In this chapter we set up the basis for our research area, followed by problem discussion and the purpose of the thesis. The objective is to raise the interest in the subject of the thesis and what we try to achieve with this research.

1.2 Background

Coronavirus is a new disease that caused by COVID-19 which has huge impact in all joints of life throughout the world. The COVID-19 outbreak was characterized as a global pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO) and all walk of life got halted due to the instruction of social distancing. In the business sector, this novel coronavirus in terms of social distance condition influenced all companies to operate its business carefully and forces millions of the worker to work from home. There are many short-term problems facing by the retailers and brands such as, those related to health and security, the supply chain, the workforce, cash flow, customer demand, sales, and marketing (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020). It has been observed that travel industry has experienced declination of its regular business where the data showed that 90% of hotel rooms are empty (Asmelash & Cooper, 2020). In airlines sector, workforce cut down by 90% and tourism destination are likely to see no profits in 2020 (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020).

During the pandemic, people have modified their buying habits as everyone got stick to their houses. According to Kim (2020), a recent survey says that 46% of respondents plan to reduce their spending during the pandemic although demands increased for specific categories, including groceries or household supplies.

The nature of pandemic situation also has changed the business sector to transform its business strategy and business structure. Companies are shifting their business to e-commerce or online platforms and trying to adopt the digital transformation. Web traffics surged by 16% after the COVID 19 outbreak and sales in e-commerce have increased five times faster compared to in-store retail, approximately 90% of retail sales in 2019 happened in- store (Kim, 2020). Digital Ad Agencies realized that digital marketing is one of the best possible way for their clients to connect to its potential customers and 34% of digital agencies said that their customers increased their investments in digital marketing (Vapiwala, 2020).

To know about the background of pharmaceutical industry working online, a report published by Fortune Business Insights (Fig 1) Since 2015, there is a steady growth in the pharma market for its pharmaceutical products through online platform. The increasing penetration of eCommerce has influenced many online pharmacies also known as E-pharmacy, around the world, to offer doorstep deliveries as a standard offering.

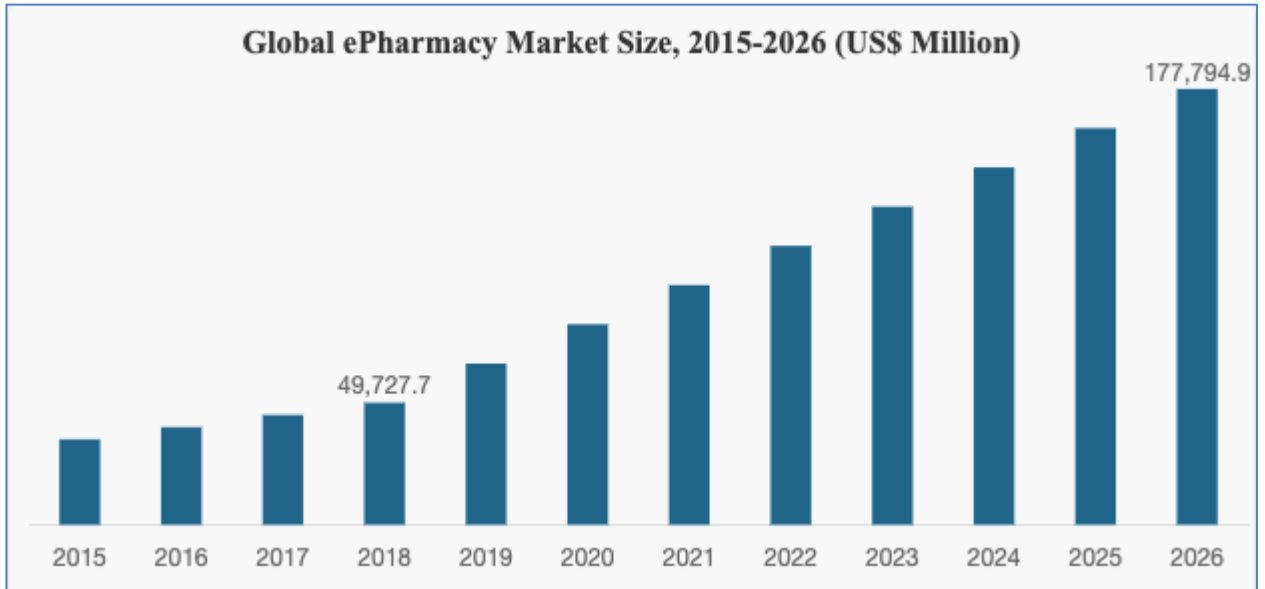


Fig-1: Source: www.fortunebusinessinsights.com

Already strengthened by the increasing reach of e-commerce and a growing population resorting to online purchases, the Coronavirus has further increased the demand for online pharma. According to a blog published by useinsider.com there is 200% increase in google search volumes for COVID-19 related health products. On the other hand, medical products like face masks, hand sanitizers and antibacterial have increased by 817% through online and purchases for cough, cold and common-flu tablets have increased by as much as 198% which was found by an eCommerce analysis (Giselle, 2020).

To achieve the business goal, considering this alarming situation and consumer behavioral changes, marketers and advertiser of the pharmaceutical companies are more focusing to adapt the digital transformation. This transformation become one of the most influential marketing strategy to boost up the sales and promoting the products (Dan, 2020). This pandemic situation insists companies to reconsider their current marketing effort and strategy since the pandemic has some impact on the culture, place, consumer behavior and which may also occur changing the structure of the market. Besides, pharmaceutical market also understands that after the pandemic, the pharmaceutical product sales game may be different and that may not be the same as before.

In this study we are focusing on an emerging market India. Because India has experienced longer lockdown compared to many countries, according to Deutsche Welle (www.dw.com). We had studied about how the pharmaceutical companies are operating in India and carrying out their marketing activities during this lockdown as this industry has been less affected compared to other industries. In India traditional marketing is more dominated medium and most of the companies allocate huge budget for traditional marketing for carrying out their marketing operations (Mohammed, 2015). As the aim of our study, we had explained how the pharmaceutical companies are carrying out their marketing activities replacing the traditional marketing with the digital marketing. We also studied about the impact of the pandemic on pharmaceutical industry. To understand the current situation, we have chosen to work with Med Manor Organics a pharmaceutical company from India.

- Impact of pandemic on pharmaceutical industry in India

India is the third largest drug producer in the world according to Business World India, and which contributes to the 60% vaccines globally and maintain high regulatory standards of market like US and European countries said according to Hannah Ellis, P. (2020). Corona virus has shown effect on Indian pharmaceutical market. Due to this, key representatives of pharma market, NITI Aayog an Indian government health policy are trying for the promotion and development of pharma hubs in India for the benefit of society. Indian government has taken initiative package of 13.6 billion Indian rupees for the domestic manufacturing of the drug materials and Intermediates to avoid the delay of raw materials from China during this pandemic period (Diksha, 2020).

The COVID 19 pandemic has affecting all sectors of the world including Indian Pharmaceutical Industry. The increase in the prices of vitamins and penicillin in India is in a fear that if the pandemic is going to be the same then the country might face the shortage of medicines (Arushi, 2020). Effects of pandemic on Indian Pharma sector may be as such deficiency of active pharmaceutical ingredients (API) and finished drug products, increasing price of essential drugs, inter-state transport challenge, increase in packing cost, labor supply and so on (Diksha, 2020).

1.3 Purpose and Aim

The aim of this research is to examine the adaptation of digital marketing by pharmaceutical industry due to pandemic. We try to examine the effects of this digital transformation, the management of this new change and the retention of this transformation for future growth.

The purpose of this study is to know about the marketing challenges faced by pharmaceutical company during the pandemic and to know how this company is dealing with the challenges by adapting digital transformation and about how the company is maintaining relationship with its customers with this transformation. We had used the following research questions to achieve our aim of the study.

RQ: 1. What are marketing challenges faced by pharma companies during pandemic in India.

This first question covers the point as though the pharmaceutical is one of the industries which has less affect during the Pandemic, but still they face few problems in running their business during the lockdown and this question is designed to understand the marketing challenges faced by the pharmaceutical company.

RQ: 2. How the pharma companies are dealing with these marketing challenges during pandemic.

Every business has their own strategies to deal with the challenging situations like Corona and this covers how the pharma industry are overcoming this challenges and what strategies they are adapting to deal with these challenges.

RQ: 3. How the pharmaceutical companies are maintaining relationships with its customers through the digitalization.

We have chosen RQ1 and RQ2 to talk about the challenges and solutions, the pharmaceutical companies have faced during the phase of digital transformation. This RQ3 describes how the companies are sustaining the business, customer loyalty through this transformation. We considered the sustainability and loyalty as two most important aspects of relationship marketing theory to carry out the study.

(Please explain more why you have chosen to look at relationship marketing/ customer loyalty?) There is no connection between this RQ and RQ1&2 as well as not mentioned in the intro about relationship marketing or customers loyalty. Also, relationship marketing is a big term, there is many things that goes under relationship marketing.

The research work is divided into following activities in orders to answer the research question:

1. Interview with the marketing head and other fulltime employees of Med Manor Organics, Pharmaceutical company.
2. Usage of statistics, different literatures, report, journals, blogs, company website to know how much this digital marketing is applicable as a business strategy.

The scope of research is divided into three areas:

1. Concept of Digital Marketing
2. Impact of pandemic on pharma industry
3. Pharmaceutical companies adapting digital marketing during COVID-19 to sustain their businesses.

1.4 Limitations of the study:

This thesis presents the study of impact of pandemic on digital marketing in pharma Industry and gives the reflection of how the companies are facing the pandemic and running their business using digital marketing. Due to the situation of pandemic, budget and time constrain this research was conducted only in one company named Med Manor Organics in Hyderabad in the south part of India.

1.5 Contribution

The contribution of our research is to give a clear picture about the pharmaceutical industry adapting the digital transformation as their marketing strategies to retain their business during pandemic situation. Today the situation of pandemic has slowed down the marketing implementations of all the businesses and forced the companies to adapt different approaches to run their day-to-day activities. Out of all other types of businesses, the industries that are doing well is the pharmaceutical industries. There is a need for the distributors of these companies to alter their marketing strategies to sell their existing stock and can also come up with new products which are useful during this pandemic period.

During this research we have read many articles, literatures on digital marketing, Covid-19 but here, the findings of this thesis will give an idea to the new or existing pharmaceutical companies about the digital transformation for the promotion and sales of its open to trade products which can be used without prescription and also helps to gain the knowledge from the experiences shared by the Med Manor Organics about this transformation and its maintenance. We had also discussed about the challenges faced by the pharma company during the pandemic for marketing and also about the solutions for the problems. Participants in this research will try to give a clear understanding about retaining customer loyalty using digital marketing. As a continuation to the previous research on digital marketing during pandemic, we would like to fill the research gap of existing research by using primary data through interviews to the marketing resources of Med Manor Organics.

1.6 Disposition of the study

This thesis consists of 6 chapters as follows.

- Chapter 1 discusses the background, introduction of the thesis, problem discussion and display the aim of the study and research questions.
- Chapter 2 covers the literature, theory and concepts of Digital Marketing and Impact of Pandemic on Pharmaceutical company in India.
- Chapter 3 covers research methodology and applied method for studying the research questions mentioned in Chapter 1 and about the characters of the research group that participated in the study.
- Chapter 4 covers the Empirical findings of the research.
- Chapter 5 presents Discussion and Analysis of our research linking to previous literature.
- Chapter 6 covers conclusions and recommendations of the research study.

2. Literature Review

This chapter covers some relevant literatures related to Covid-19 on digital marketing including an overview of marketing theories, potential outcomes of digital marketing in pandemic situation and learnings that reflects some positive and negative result/feedback after adapting digital marketing in pharmaceutical industry.

2.1 Digital Marketing

Digital marketing (also known as data-driven marketing) is an umbrella term for the marketing of products or services using digital technologies, mainly on the internet, but also including mobile phones, display advertising, and any other digital medium. (Pinaki, Nitin & Sheela, 2016).

Digital marketing is a form of direct marketing that connects consumers with sellers electronically using interactive technologies such as email, websites, online forums and newsgroups, interactive television, cellular communications and so on. (Kotler& Armstrong, 2009).

According to Piñeiro-Otero & Martínez-Rolán (2016), digital marketing is a projection of conventional marketing, tools and strategies, on the internet. The way of communication with the customer in digital marketing is same as traditional marketing but the only difference is usage of science and technology. The spectrum expanded in digital marketing to support the “servicing” and “engagement” of customer which covers customer acquisition and retention.

According to Busca & Bertrandias, (2020) and Piñeiro-Otero & Martínez-Rolán, (2016), suggests that digital marketing is referred to as achieving marketing objectives through digital technology which can help to attain marketing goals. It has an external and internal perspective that includes managing internal and external digital communications (Chaffey, 2014). According to Royle & Laing (2014), the aim of the digital marketing is to obtain and retain customers while building deeper relationships with customers through digital technology.

Above all definitions emphasize the importance of the strategic foundation of all marketing approaches that focuses on relationship and effective communication with the customer in promoting products or services. Hence while a company consider digital

marketing as their marketing strategy the firm needs to keep in the mind while designing their digital marketing program. According to Pinaki, Nitin & Sheela (2016), these are:

- Does your strategy match with the vision and mission of your firm?
- Does the strategy assemble platform match with the knowledge that is within your marketing team?
- Is that knowledge formally managed using any platform?

Digital Marketing and Traditional marketing

This section illustrates the pitfalls of the traditional marketing and at the same time highlights the benefits of digital marketing. Further the concept of traditional marketing has been the only marketing strategy used by many pharmaceutical companies in India particularly before the pandemic.

Traditional marketing encompasses the marketing methods which is used without the use of internet. Whereas digital marketing involves use of internet and technology. Digital marketing strategies are more important to the companies these days as usage of internet by the audience is being increased day by day. Also, due to the changing buyer and seller relations, companies need to adapt their marketing strategies according to the new digital age. Digital marketing can reach to large geographical area of the people when compared to the traditional marketing. Most of the distributors of pharma companies are also adopting the digital marketing strategies to update the doctors, customers to get the awareness of the newly manufactured products without the spread of COVID 19 infection (Usha, 2020). From the views of different researchers and authors the differentiation between digital marketing and the traditional marketing has been discussed as below (Ismat & Md. Murshedul, 2020):

Area	Traditional Marketing	Digital Marketing
Focus Audience	Simpler to an extent with local consumers.	Touch the aimed audience globally from all over the world.
Marketing Tactic	Having more a person-to-person connection to notify brand.	The physical attendance of the marketers is not at all mandatory.
Documentation	Delivering the hard copy of products, services description	Delivering the description in softcopy over the internet.
Consumer Interface	Very less interaction is involved	More interaction in digital marketing through a digital platform.
Marketing Budget	Involved printing, radio, TV ads which create more cost	Less costly because all is online.
Communication	Involving one-way communication	Involving two-way communication
Product and service price	Negotiated with each customer	Set by the seller for all customers

Pharma Digital Marketing:

“The use of online social medias like Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, online video platforms like YouTube etc. for marketing of pharmaceutical brand is known as pharma digital marketing” (Lakshmi & Swapnil, 2020, p21).

Pharma Digital marketing plays an important role to disseminate information to the doctor, patient regarding various medical products, disease, and medical services. In this era more pharmaceutical firms are using social media sites or e-commerce sites as a medium for digital marketing. During the pandemic, pharmaceutical companies are embracing digital marketing strategy to reach out the target group to aware of the Covid-19 as CSR activities, promoting different products or general medicine, health tips and trying to boost their sales thru e-commerce site. The usage of digital marketing now a potential part of the any pharmaceutical company. Renown pharmaceutical company Pfizer is highly active and responsive to their customers by using different digital media like YouTube, Facebook and Twitter and another multinational company Johnson and Johnson which produce medical devices, pharmaceutical, and consumer packaged goods are one of the first companies to launch a channel on YouTube to promote its product to its potential buyers. Quantum Pharmaceuticals and The Specials Lab are selling special medicines that shows that promotes e-commerce and digital marketing (Parekh, Kapupara & Shah, 2016).

2.2 Impact of COVID-19 on pharma industry

During the pandemic situation there is no other choice to move to digital marketing to sustain in the market. Those companies that had digital platforms already started with an incredible bit of leeway. Others have been compelled to change, to adjust to online consumption and their products to demand (Jyoti & Sawan, 2020). To adjust with the situation, companies are utilizing the different dimension of the digital marketing strategy. We have considered four aspects/situation as the impact of Covid-19 on pharmaceutical company.



- Shifting marketing strategy: (companies are shifting their traditional marketing strategy):

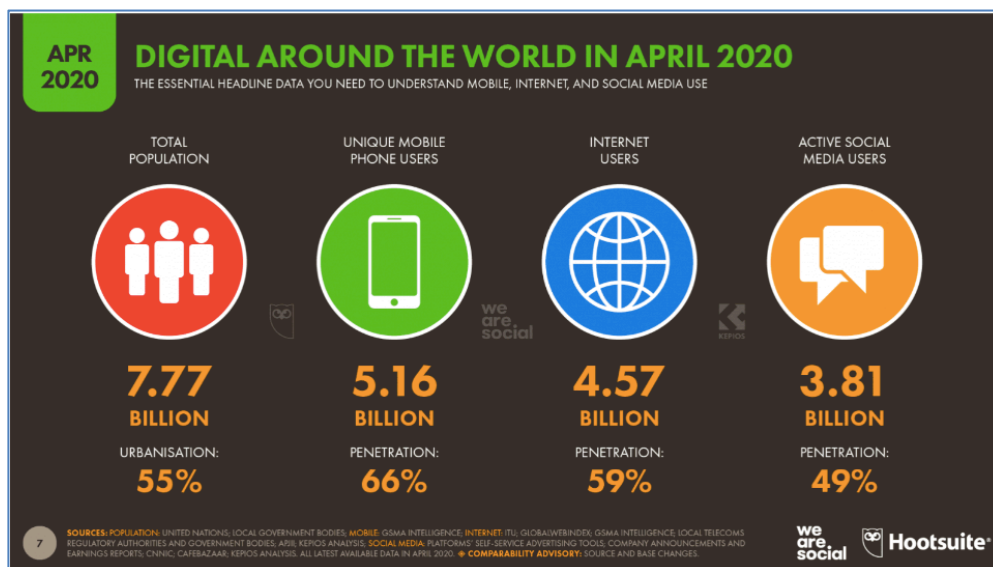
Corona virus has changed the lifestyles of the humans and this change is even going to stay beyond the pandemic period. The global retail industry is experiencing an unprecedented crisis in the wake of the COVID-19 lockdown and its economic recession. Many businesses are striving hard to run the organizations. To keep up the sales and to continue the marketing, the businesses started to move to digital platform to carry out their marketing activities and to maintain relationship with the customers following social distance.

- Advertising and new product launching (companies are launching/designing new products and services):

Due to COVID-19 the businesses are coming up with the new advertisement and product plans to attract the customers. Mainly the industries like pharma are coming up with the new products which attracts the customers to buy them during this pandemic period such as sanitizers, hand washes, face masks, face shields. The companies are making many efforts to reach its customer with the newly launched products and to keep up its sales during this period using digital marketing.

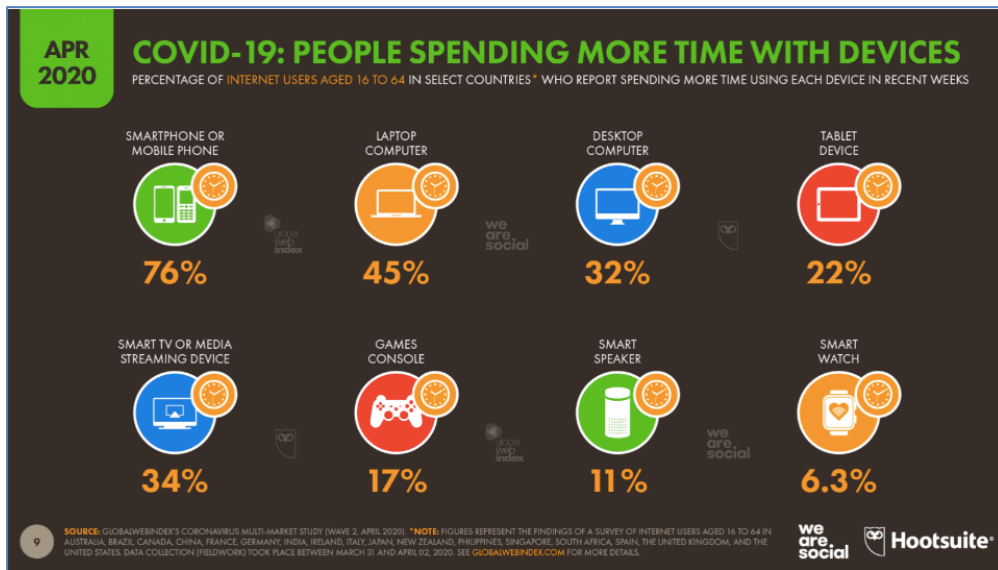
- Digital around the world (Usage of digital platform increased):

Analysis by DataReport shows that 4.57 billion people are now using the internet, an increase of more than 7 percent since last year. Users of social media are rising much faster, up by more than 8 percent to hit 3.81 billion today since April 2019.

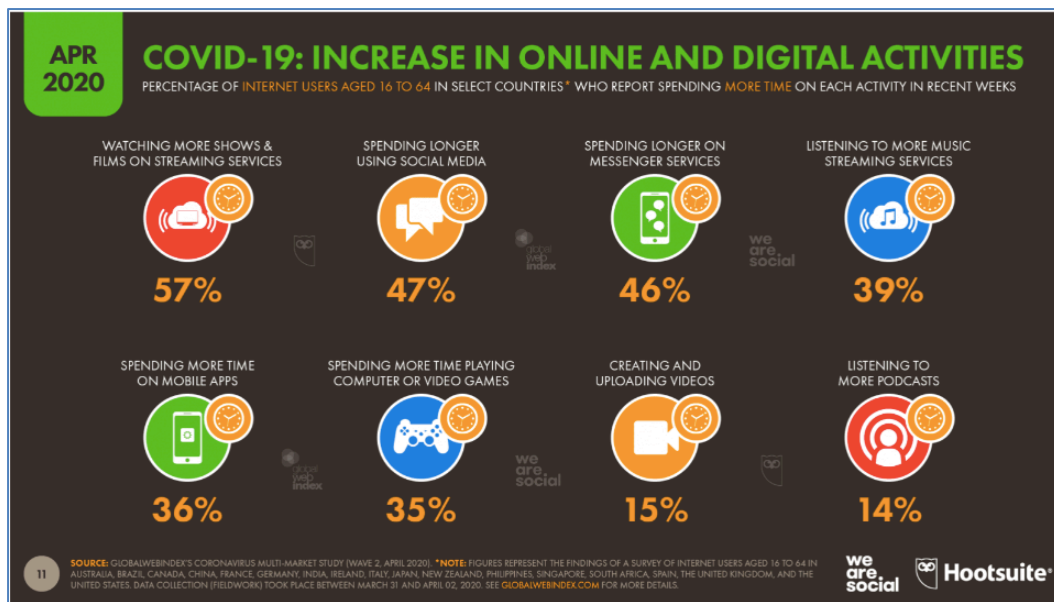


(Shahid, 2020).

Detailed analysis from GlobalWebIndex shows that as a result of coronavirus lockdowns, people around the world have spent substantially more time on their digital devices.



In addition to increases in device usage, GlobalWebIndex's data indicates that as a result of coronavirus-related lockdowns, the digital behaviour of people are also shifting drastically.



-Special issues (Maximum usage of ICT platform/tools/technic to reach customer):

The special issues include the maximum usage of ICT platform and to maintain the smooth functioning of this usage. The other issue includes the balancing of customer communication and relationship from distance as face-to-face communication is missing. Hence, the pharma industry needs to use digital marketing tools to reach its customer in a manner where its product values reach to its potential buyer uninterruptedly and sales

remain consistent. Moreover, through this marketing strategy company is focusing on sustainable sales even after post COVID-19 (Shahed, 2020).

2.3 Importance of digital marketing during pandemic

Every business needs to be prepared to stand as the test of time and sometimes during hardest phase like pandemic. Only a strong business plan will shield their business from major loss. The digital marketing strategy offers huge possibilities for all the organization which is hard to achieve in the traditional marketing. It also provides opportunities for the businesses to obtain financial value through building alliance with stakeholders, customers and employees (Purkayastha & Sharma, 2016). Having online presence is winning half the battle and the most important thing is integrating existing and potential customers to digital marketing plan. And this has raised two factors such as:

- Decline of offline channels
- More people online than ever

According a report by Total Audience Report by Nielsen's February 2020 published in eyesafe.com that screen time spikes to over 13 hours per day and during covid-19 situation and the agency projects a 14% increase in mobile and work-related devices. Digital marketing refers to the practices followed to keep your brand in your customer's eye. You can often segment your customer to make your campaigns more targeted. Importance of digital marketing during the pandemic also includes:

Creates brand recognition

Consumer wants to invest their money on the brands which they recognize. Social media creates plays a very important role for the attracting the audience for the brands. In a report (Sarah, 2020), a giant technology focused online news portal says, Facebook usage has increased by 37%, WhatsApp observed a 51% increase of usage in the later phase of pandemic. This social media helps to see new brands everyday which we never seen before and helping the customers to know about the new brands. (Sarah,2020)

Lead Generation

Collecting the data of the leads helps to improve the business. Few social media sites are designed with a facility to collect the customers interests with their frequent search. This helps to know the taste and preferences of the customers in products and services. This digital marketing is helping the companies to finds the leads especially during this period of pandemic.

Enhanced audience engagement

Digital marketing enables communication between the consumers and the company which was not possible with the traditional marketing. Companies are keeping their customers engagement in various means during the pandemic using social media.

Cost effective

Digital marketing is more affordable than the traditional marketing as it does the duty of many marketing agents for the company. With a cost efficiency the company can cover wide area of the audiences when compared to the normal traditional marketing which is restricted to the specific area (Jyoti & Sawan, 2020).

Scope of Digital marketing during COVID-19:

Increased screen time of customers

A lot of nations around the world are currently under the lockdown and quarantine has restricted the flow of goods, services and people. Many businesses have taken the decisions to move to online platform to perform their business and global revenue of offline business has decreased to 20% (Chaffey, 2011). Increased screen time of customers has become an advantage to the company to post its advertisements to reach to its customers.

Replaced traditional marketing with the digital marketing

Digital marketing is something which is in boom from couple of years and this has become something which we cannot ignore irrespective of size of the business and technological advancement. Humans are glued to the phones or laptops and trying to stay connected through social media and this is the best time to the companies to realign or to refocus on its marketing strategies to reach the promotion of their products to maximum audience through online through different modes of marketing which includes:

- SEO
- Content Marketing
- Search Engine Marketing
- Social Media Marketing
- Email Marketing



Maintaining brand Identity

Companies are using digital and alternative medium for promotion of their products such as smart technology, micro influencer marketing and video advertising and many other. Companies are uplifting their brands by using digital marketing moods includes SEO, Email marketing, Social media marketing, Search Engine marketing, Content marketing. There is emergence of new platforms on social media includes tiktok, Reel by Instagram, Edutok for small advertisements in India.

More career and job prospects in digital marketing

The advancement of technology has helped to move the humans closer to the technology through upgraded phones and laptops and also through usage of social media helps the individuals to learn and also to create more jobs in the digital marketing platform and SEO analyst and will increase more and more in coming future (Neha, 2020).

Pharmaceutical company like med manor was following traditional marketing strategy but they now shifted to digital marketing to sustain in the situation. The company is highly focused in positioning the product in right platform like social media (facebook, Instagram etc.) based on google analytics and other statistics, creating effective content considering the demography and utilizing local celebrity as their brand ambassador to influence the promotion and to attract the target audience. Also, the pharmaceutical company is working on new ideas and tools to retain their existing customer and attract new customer.

2.4 Theory Discussion:

As a part of research, we would like to focus on relationship marketing theory in the viewpoint of digital transformation. Due to the nature of pandemic we linked our work with the theory which describes the interactive technology by which customer exchange their personal information in return of customized products and services. Also, the business organization requires customer loyalty to gain its ROI, hence we consider the theory which focuses the frequent interaction between the customer and the business organization to exchange information about offers, service feedback, reminders of their transactions to keep the business in flow.

Relationship Marketing theory:

Berry (1983, p61) states that *“the relationship with marketing attracts, maintains, and strengthens customer relationships”*.

Berry and Parasuraman (2004, p157) propose that: *“relationship marketing concerns attracting, developing, and retaining customer relationships.”*

“Relationship marketing directed towards the consumer, business partners, society, and the environment, also called external marketing, is carried out for the purpose of building interconnections” (Yaneva 2018, p135).

A modern economy is defined by globalization, technological growth, and the role of the internet (Berisha & Berisha, (2015). The modern economy is turning into a culture of interrelationship and interconnectivity. The web enables companies to rapidly adapt to change. In the new economy, the difference between the customer and the manufacturer is disappearing. Producers are expected to produce specific products that meet the needs and preferences of the individual customer. Digital marketing communication strategies are becoming a fundamental strategic force in this economy for building relationships, in particular, between business actors and customers.

The below figure presents a model of the digital marketing strategies for the relationship of business entities with consumers and the tools for doing so (Yaneva, 2018). The basic technological tools like valuable web contents, electric commerce/a system for registration and ordering, web design/functionality, search engine optimization (SEO), direct marketing/personalization, email marketing, online advertising, social media profiles/pages, applications in social media, mobile applications (mobile site versions), and blogging are now the most visible in digital marketing that are using to build the relationship.

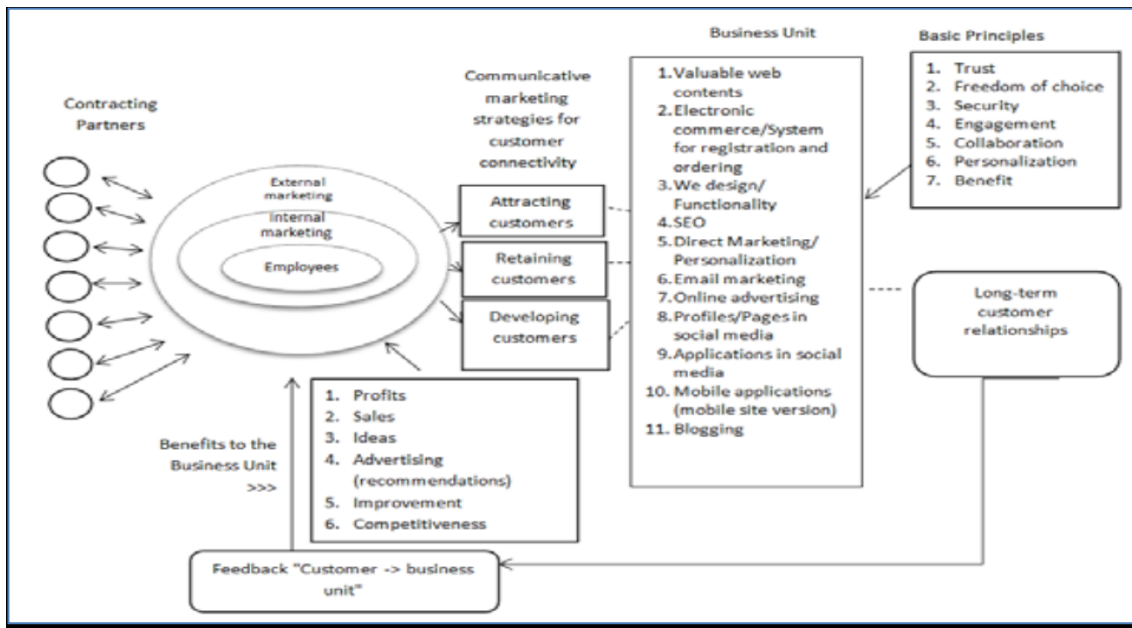


Figure 2: Model of digital marketing strategies for connectivity with clients

In the business relationship, customer loyalty is an important key factor that influences the sustainability of firms and organizations. Therefore, studies (Yaneva 2018) have shown that relationship marketing is building connection between the business and the customer and digital marketing is being used as modern strategy to serves the same purpose where both serves various methods to improve and enhance the customer loyalty in their businesses. In order to get a deeper understanding of their targeted clients, relationship marketing relies more on knowledge about the clients. In addition, firms and organizations build emotional bonds within the customers by having good relationships with them. Internet or digital marketing also emphasizes the importance of customer loyalty. Hence, the digital marketing is considered as new version of relationship marketing which creates the loyalty of the customer using digital tools and technics mentioned above.

Companies are emphasizing on utilizing the advanced technological tools to reach out the customer to build the relationship and when online customers are able to access those modern facilities, they tend to share their information or feedback that helps the producer to design and develop new products and services.

Now these days due, company uses different technological tools, technics, medium to connect the customer and derive information /feedback of the customer to design its product. As observed, relationship marketing and digital marketing works hard to increase the customer loyalty. However, what makes relationship marketing and digital

marketing different is communication. In relationship marketing, in order to increase loyalty to companies or organizations, it is necessary to develop and build relationships with customers. For example, salesmen will communicate with the customers to build close relationships, understand and derive the information of the customers and be aware of the expectations of the customers. This helps them to build rapport and able develop long-term relationship. During the process, it builds emotional bond in the customer. Consequently, when the customers' expectations and requirement are met, they feel satisfied and thus, increasing the customer loyalty (Shien & Yazdanifard, 2014).

Numerous studies have discussed the relevance of relationship marketing in the domain of digital marketing (Barreto, 2015). The public relations cover a wide range of actions intended to establish and maintain good relations with the target public, employees, media, and the society generally. In digital marketing, public relations campaigns are supported through the digital channels.

Hence, the digital marketing is considered as new version of relationship marketing which creates the loyalty of the customer using digital tools and technics mentioned above. This is the theory seeks to build customer loyalty. The characteristics like possibility of having regular and frequent communications, improve customer loyalty. Examples such as customized alerts for banking transactions, alters related to the customers depending on their needs and preferences such as discounts, offers, quality improvement feedback to gain the customer loyalty.

Aspects of Relationship marketing

The Pharma companies are considering the following aspects of relationship marketing in their day to day to business and the aspects include:

1. Customer loyalty
2. Sustainability
3. Digital marketing
4. Availbilty to the customers

Customer Loyalty

This includes how the companies are maintaining the customer loyalty from the distance. Med Manor or any Pharmaceutical companies did not shut their business during the pandemic and available to its customer for the medicines and worked as usually as before.

Sustainability

The Pharma companies to sustain their business during the COVID-19, they started to introduce the new products which are required by the customers to face the Corona virus. Pharma companies has launched many products such as Customed Mask, Sanitizers, Face shields.

Digital Marketing

Digital Marketing has become very important business marketing strategy to the companies during the pandemic to run their businesses. Creating unique digital ads, marketing their newly launched products, creating brand awareness from distance, promotions and many other benefits had achieved only using digital marketing.

Availability to the customers

To retain the customer loyalty the Pharma companies are available to the customer. Many companies had come up online sales and they are available to its customers to help them with the tracking, secured packing and delivery.

3. Methodology

This chapter presents the research methodology which is selected to clarify the solution to the research questions. It clarified our selection in research process and design, theories, along with the methodology.

- Awareness about the Company:

Med Manor Organics is a pharmaceutical company in southern part of India. Med Manor ranks top 84th among pharmaceutical companies in India and It has 22 years of experience since its inception in 1998. Med Manor Organics stands for 'High Quality health care' and 'Innovating for Excellence'. It is a PAN India company and Keto is shortlisted the brand of the year 2016 by the market research organization - Pharmacracy. It manufactures different products such as oils, capsules, cough syrups, antibiotics, Oral and nasal care, for diabetics, Sanitizers, and many others.

- Research Approach

This thesis begins with reviews of literature, which are used to compare the empirical findings. Qualitative data was collected during the interviews performed to group of people from pharmaceutical company. As qualitative research explores attitudes, behavior and experiences through such methods as interviews and questionnaires during work in process to understand an in-depth opinion from participants from the pharmaceutical company.

- Research participants

In this study the participants were full-time employees and key decision maker of marketing department of a pharmaceutical company in India. We have selected four employees (2 Senior Territory sales officer, 1 Head of Marketing, who is the key decision maker of Med Manor Organics India, 1 marketing executive) for an in-depth interview who have willingly participated in the study. They are in the field of marketing from many years.

S.no	Name	Designation	Sex	Age	Yrs of exp
1	Sumit Agarwal	Marketing manager	Male	56	20
2	J Arjun	Territory sales officer	Male	28	5
3	Radha Krishna	Territory sales officer	Male	30	6
4	Rajesh	Marketing executive	Male	33	8

- Participant Selection procedure

In this study, participants have been selected purposefully based on the following criteria:

- Employee who has practical experience in digital marketing, industry knowledge.
- Full-time employees who are responsible for ground level digital marketing activities like campaign, activation and response.
- Key decision maker who is controlling the digital marketing strategies.

- Research Site

The study is carried out in Hyderabad which is located in the southern part of India. The Interview with the marketing head has been conducted on phone and other employees are met personally and discussed about the marketing changes made in Med Manor Organics during the Lockdown and by keeping the pandemic in view.

- Data Collection tool

In this study, we have developed an IDI (In-Depth Interview) guideline to collect the information. In the guideline we have prepared open-ended questions to get more descriptive data. We had framed the interview questions keeping the marketing transformation in view from traditional marketing to digital marketing. We focused on what are the marketing challenges the company faced during the lockdown for its marketing and also about what are the solutions the Med Manor organics has implemented to overcome the challenges. Our questions talk about the marketing strategies they have come up with and also about the sustaining their business and profits by launching new products which are useful during the pandemic and the questions can be found in the end of the report in the Appendix section.

- Participants Selection technics

For this study, we have chosen Med Manor Organics a pharmaceutical company to meet the target participants from the marketing department who are responsible for all marketing activities of this company. We had chosen those employees who have more than 5 to 20 years of experience in marketing especially digital marketing and has experience in working in pharmaceutical company. Firstly, we had contacted the General Marketing Manager of Med Manor Organics who has 20 years of experience in the field of Marketing. He is the head of marketing department of this company for entire Telangana state, Where Hyderabad falls under this state. He is the person who takes the decision on finalizing the advertisements and all form of digital ads in this Telangana state for this company. He had referred us to territory sales officers to know the views of the employees on this transformation of their company from traditional marketing to digital marketing. We have also conducted an interview with the Marketing executives who goes on to the field work for marketing the Med Manor products. From the marketing executive we could come up to know about the marketing obstacles the company faced as the employees could not go out and market the new products launched during the pandemic (Sanitizers, Hair oil, Cough syrup, Customized masks, Face shields etc.).

- Data collection methods

In-Depth Interview (IDI) guideline has been developed according to the study purpose and the questions have been revied by the experts to check validity. In Hyderabad city, we have conducted the IDI. To do so, we had taken approval from the company by sending an official letter issued by the University authority. Four employees had participated in the interview where the researchers have conducted as per IDI guideline and recorded it with the permission of the participants as well. The IDI has taken 15-20 minutes to complete per participants. Social distancing and other health measure of Covid-19 has maintained during the data collection process. The investigator have gather the data by meeting in person. The researchers have clearly clarified the intention of the interview and study's intent. The researchers have expressed their gratitude for the time and information provided by the participants.

- **Data Management and Analysis**

Data will be managed and analyze from the starting of the data collection procedure. In this procedure all data will be collected through IDIs. There are different type of approaches for data analysis. Content analysis is one of the strategies for analyzing data. We have analyzed the data according to the content analysis approach as bellow:

- **Debriefing and transcription**

After data collection from the participants, we have started scrutinizing all data manually, checking data sheet and find out if there is any irrelevant and misleading information has recorded. So, ensure the data quality we recollected the data once we have found any information is missing. We discussed the information we collected with our supervisor to check if there is any discrepancies are there in the information. Then all data has transcribed with proper identification number.

- **Reading, monitoring, and describing**

In this step thematic framework has been identified by reading and monitoring. We have written memos in the form of short phases, ideas or concepts that helped to developed categorization.

- **Categorization**

We have examined all data several times and tried to find out the direct relationship between data and research questions. Then data has categorized according to the relation of research questions. After categorization of all data, we have kept the important categories of data that showed the situation and made the dataset in a manageable format.

- **Validity and Reliability of the research tool**

The data we had collected is reliable and valid as we had conducted interviews with the marketing head of Med Manor Organics to get the information. We had made this report considering the period of pandemic and its impact on pharmaceutical company in India.

- **Ethical issues**

It has been ensured that the information taken from the participants will not be revealed to the public and open to all interest. The responses of the respondents in this survey is

completely voluntary and only to helping us to continue the master's study. It was given an option to the participants to withdraw from the interview anytime they want.

- **Limitations**

The study has been conducted on a small scale for the partial fulfilment of the Master thesis and every steps have been conducted consciously. But it has certain limitations that are given bellow:

- The study's primary restrictions would be time constraints.
- Only one company has been chosen
- Country chosen from Emerging market, not the developed country
- Only limited no of people has participated in interview

4. Empirical Findings

We had conducted an interview with the employers of marketing department at Med Manor Organics Pvt ltd. We discovered the challenges faced by pharmaceutical company during the Pandemic. We also discovered about the positives outcomes of the pharma industries by adapting the digital platform in retaining its customer loyalty using Internet and technology.

We have arranged the results of the study according to the framed research questions linking to the answers given by the 2 territory sales officers, 1 Marketing Executives and 1 Head of Marketing Head in Med Manor company. This Company has transformed to digital marketing as the need of the consumer has changed and they are spending time on internet for online shopping, look for door to door deliveries to maintain social distancing. The first and the foremost thing which we found during our study is Pharmaceutical is the only industry which cannot use digital marketing for all of its products as the sales of the pharma products will depend upon the need of the patient and not on the digital advertisements. However, we found that the pharmaceutical industry can use digital marketing for its open to trade products such as sanitizers, face creams, hair oils, cough syrups, pain relief oils and so on.

RQ1: Challenges:

The challenges of the company during the pandemic have discussed as there is a lack experienced manpower for digital marketing. Since pharmaceutical products are not regular consumer products like food and beverage hence digital marketing is not practiced before the pandemic by this company. It is important to understand the technology, market trend, and skilled manpower to use the analytics which are the great challenges for the pharmaceutical company to adapt within a short span of time. The pharmaceutical company like Med Manor who were followed traditional marketing strategy has faced huge challenge in adapting digital marketing during pandemic. Also, due to policy and regulation by the government in pandemic to avoid contamination of COVID-19, supply chain network has faced huge challenges to balance the demand and supply of the market.

As the pharmaceutical products are not common to sell over the counter without prescription hence to overcome the business loss company has encounter the challenge to innovate new products such as sanitizers, masks, face shield, cough syrup, hair growth

oil, knee pain relief that can help company to minimize the loss and has a great need of digital marketing to reach their target customer. During this period of lockdown, there are no profits in the overall sales of the company and remained as neutral point with no profit or no loss as the traditional sales are decreased though the digital sales have increased.

It is discussed as the company has spent more money on advertisement than the sales expected. The expenses on digital marketing are a bit higher than the traditional marketing and spent a huge amount on marketing during the COVID-19. The company had a need to review its budget to retain its business and there is a need for the company to increase its budget. There is a drawback or a loss for the company that the money which they spent in few advertisements are already forgotten by the people and they always need to come up with the new ads to attract the customers and this is going to be a big ongoing expenditure for the company.

The company has decided to launch three open to use products without prescription and which are useful during the Pandemic. The company focused to work on online platform for maintaining the sales as almost all individuals started to depend on internet.

The company has come up with its own promotional banners or posters with Yoga poses and health tips which can be shared in what's app and trained all the employees to put forward the ads to all their contacts. Here, this repeated promotional advertisements by the company in what's app has sometimes made the friends and relatives of the employees to block the employees telephone numbers to avoid the repeated ads receiving from them. This might also restrict the company to lose its customers. Even the employees have not accepted this transformation and did not show the willingness to share the company ads as their personal WhatsApp status.

Med Manor has come up with online sales for the convenience of customers but, there is a lack of people for packing the products when orders are placed using Flipkart and Amazon. Though the orders are placed using E-commerce platform there were delays in the delivery by Amazon and Flipkart and could not deliver the products to remote areas as there was no transport facility during the lockdown. The company could come up with producing of only one new product which is sanitizer and in fact launching of many new products has delayed due to Pandemic. Because the changes in the consumer trends, the desire and the needs, the buying behaviour of the consumers Med Manor has a need to alter its new launches. The more publicity of the ads involves more expenditure on it. The

company says that traditional marketing management is more manageable as they can maintain the data.

RQ2: Dealing with the challenges:

The company has realised that digital marketing is the only strategy for their business during this Pandemic to run their business from distance and again as a part of digital marketing the Pharma company had designed their advertisements keeping the viewpoint of Immunity boosting because their products are very much important during COVID-19.

To overcome the challenge, the company has used all the types of Social media marketing channels to promote their ads and come up with the new Blogs where consumers can create a blog about the products and Fituber channel which helps to post the videos related to health and fitness which has more subscribers has helped for promotion. The company has come up with extra discounts if the order is placed using Med Manor official website and tried to divert the consumers from Amazon and Flipkart to avoid the delivery issues and also to avoid the sales commissions.

The company agrees that all the digital media channels has helped to promote and increase the sales. Whereas the company is getting more responses from YouTube videos through their tracking. The company has its own WhatsApp promotions to promote the products internally and the company has designed all the what's app ads with yoga poses on its own and did not buy it from advertisement agencies and forwarded it to 1000 people per day with a very strong disciple among the employees and forwarded these ads on what's app for almost 2 months from the day 1 of lockdown till the end of the lockdown without any break.

The company could maintain a neutral sales percentage without any increase or decrease through digital marketing when compared to traditional marketing. The company realises that all traditional sales are being covered up through digital platform. The company strongly says that their e-commerce sales has increased 10 times than earlier. In the place of 10 orders they are getting 1000 orders now due to the digital marketing through advertisements and promotions and believing that the digital marketing will be helpful to them further in their future activities of business.

Med Manor has focused on three important products which are useful during COVID-19. Such as cough syrup, pain relief oil and the hair oil to concentrate on hair for women during the lockdown and this hair oil has shown the best sales out of the new three launched products during the pandemic. The company did not have any campaign marketing before or after the pandemic But, they have TV advertisements before the COVID-19 in the devotional channels only for few products. Med Manor realised that it is easier to reach the large number of target customers through digital marketing when compared to traditional marketing.

Creating the awareness of new product was only done through digital marketing during the pandemic as there is no scope for traditional market due to lockdown and the same has shown great number of sales and also launched sanitizers depending up on the need of the market. The company realises that with the digital marketing they would able to know which part of the country has more demand to their product and then this helps them to plan for their future distributions geographically for traditional sales in those parts. The company has an opportunity to get the real time feedback from customer on the usage of the products which is not possible in traditional marketing.

RQ 3: Digital marketing in aspect of Relationship Marketing theory.

Med Manor Organics has maintained customer loyalty with the regular communication with the customers regarding the delay in their services or deliveries due to non-availability of transport or interrupted supply chain network during lockdown. Digital marketing has helped this company a lot to keep in touch with their customers in creating the awareness brand in their minds. The company employees are available to customers 24/7 and to avoid the delayed deliveries from the e-commerce websites the company has come up with the sales on its own websites with special discounts to sustain its business during the lockdown.

As we considered important aspects of Relationship marketing in our literature part such as Loyalty, Sustainability, Availability. Med Manor Organics has ensured to implement all these important aspects in reshaping their business during the lockdown. For the sustaining their business during this tough time they had adapted to digital platform for its marketing. The company has considered the need of its customers and launched the products which are useful during this pandemic. They were available to the customers on all platforms in social media through their Ads, videos, banners, blogs, online sales

through Flipkart, Amazon and looked for all the available means of platforms to communicate with the customers directly or indirectly. Med Manor Organics has taken all kinds of risks for its customers and tried to available to its customers at the right place and at the right time.

We have found many aspects during our research and can be known below:

Most Important strengths for the company:

1. The company has known its targeted consumers through advertisements and What's app ads and through many other platforms such as Facebook, Youtube, Instagram pages.
2. The company got the feedback for its products which they could not know through traditional marketing and the sales as has increased with positive feedback. This feedback has helped as the reviews to the products and encouraged the other individuals to buy the product.
3. Brand has reached many people then before using digital Marketing when compared to traditional marketing. The Ads in the television and the WhatsApp compatible videos, many digital ads in other applications like Facebook, YouTube have helped to spread the awareness to the larger part from the employees and customers.
4. The Med Manor companies realizes that Digital marketing is more affordable than the traditional marketing and can reach to more customers at reasonable cost and mentioned as even with Rs 1000 we can work on digital marketing in India and says that traditional marketing involves more budget though it has some extra benefit of direct interaction.

Most Important obstacles faced by the company are:

1. The company need to give lots of offers while the sales are through e-commerce portals and through this the company cannot enjoy more profits. Using the e-commerce portals, the companies must pay the commission to e-commerce sites. Med Manor has come up with online sales and extra discounts to the customers who placed the order through the company official website to avoid this commission paying to private sites.
2. Special manpower needs to be maintained to manage the advertisements and frequent investments need to be done on updating the ads and the ads need to be

unique and it is cost effective if the company wishes to go for more frequent ads on the television.

3. Should be available to the customer 24/7 for their queries and should be available even on holidays for packing, delivery. Online delivery tracking needs to be given to the customers and it was very tough for the company to deliver the products on time due to lockdown and non-availability of transport to specially to deliver it to the rural areas. The company has faced lot of delivery challenges and has overcome it with the regular communication with its customers about the delivery issues and dates and this is how the company sustained its customer loyalty.
4. Extra expenses for packing and delivery after moving to digital platform which is not necessary in traditional sales as it was through physical shops before the Pandemic. As the employees did not work during the Pandemic a new team or the available management team of Med Manor has worked to reach the distribution point and pack the products for the delivery as per the orders placed by the customers.

We also found that the digitals advertisements of Med Manor are unique from the other ads by following ways such as:

1. Using top celebrating for ads
2. Taking the Consumer influences into considerations.
3. Ads are designed with a small, interesting story to attract the customers.
4. Yoga Poses and Immunity building tips to attract the customers to save these ads

5. Discussion and Analysis

We analyzed the research result from our questionnaire, Interview, and details discussion with participated companies by comparing the findings to the available information, which are available from previous literature review.

Due to the Pandemic all the individuals are started to use Internet to spend their time during the lockdowns and this The Company has come up with the offers to its customers when the orders are placed using Official Website of med Manor. YouTube and Fitube has paid them more and through this we can analyze that the video advertisements reach more into the minds of people then the normal promotions banners.

According to Rajiv (2016), Modern marketing techniques provides cost effective marketing platform to reach millions of customers in short time. In line with our empirical study, we found that Med Manor organics has faced lots of challenges during the Pandemic to run their business and the business was shut almost for a month and they could not meet their customers through traditional way. After transforming their marketing activities to digital platforms, the company could reach their customers through Ads in television, WhatsApp banners, through YouTube videos and blogs and has reached to more customers globally when compared to traditional marketing.

According to Zhang (2013), Digital marketing has created an impact for increasing sales revenue, especially for the products where the customers can read reviews, write products about their personal experiences. In line with this literature, we found that Med Manor organics could be able to receive feedback on its products after moving to digital platform which they could not get it through traditional marketing. The customers started to comment below the YouTube video ads and also on the blog related to the products. This has helped Med Manor Organics not only to get feedback and to increase the sales, but also in knowing the needs, tastes and preferences of the customers which will be helpful for the company for customizing the future products.

According to Rohit (2020), During this pandemic people are more careful about their health and safety. In line with our research from our empirical findings we found that Med Manor Organics company has adapted digital marketing during the pandemic, and this is the only strategy to the business to retain its sales and its customers for maintaining the customer loyalty following social distancing. According to the above literature, this

company has started to manufacture the health and safety related products which are useful during this Pandemic period such as sanitizers, Face masks, Face shields, Hair care oil, Knee pains oils keeping in the view the health and safety of its customers and this has helped Med Manor organics to sustain their business during this tough times. The company believes that digital marketing is going to be a long run strategy for their business even after the pandemic.

According to Rajiv (2016), Digital marketing relies mainly on the high quality, relevant content, the requirement for which is underestimated by the huge number of small businesses. In line with our empirical findings, we found that Med Manor has made advantage of the changes in the habits of the people and started to think about the digital way of communicating to their customers through advertisements and the E commerce sales. The company has come up with its own ideas to create its ads with the unique styles with the Yoga poses, Immunity boosting tips which are useful to its customers during this pandemic time and this makes the customers to save these small ads as it contains Yoga Poses to follow them when the customers are affected with COVID-19.

According to Ishaq (2018), Digital marketing is the promotion of products and services through different forms of electronic medium. In our empirical findings we found that, Med Manor Organics has promoted its products in almost all the social media platforms such as on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, FitTube, What's app and also by the repeated ads on television to promote their newly launched products and to create brand awareness for this new products.

According to Sunil, Gowda & Shivakumar (2020), Pharmaceutical marketing is an essential activity that ensures the availability of medicines at right place and time. In line with our empirical studies, Med Manor Organics has launched the products which has huge demand during the pandemic. They could sustain in the market only by launching COVID-19 related products such as sanitizers, masks, face shield, cough syrup, pain relief oil for the elders to concentrate on their knee pains during this lockdown rest. Though the Med Manor could not be available to customers through physical stores but still they are available through all types of online medium and with the products that are essential during COVID-19. As per our analysis we also see that though there are online sales during the Lockdown the orders could not deliver to customers at right time due to non-availability of transport to remote areas. It means, the online sales also depend on many

factors and this did not benefit the company much, rather gave negative impression to its customers as the company failed to fulfil the orders.

During COVID-19 face to face pharmaceutical marketing has thrown out of the gear and digital marketing has gained increased adoption. (Sunil, Gowda & Shivakumar (2020). To agree with this literature, Med Manor Organics could not carry out its traditional pharma marketing operations through distributors and marketing employees due to the nature of Pandemic. We found that even the employees of Med Manor have affected with COVID-19 while carrying out their marketing duties. So, Med Manor organics has started to train the employees to carry out the marketing by digital form that is through WhatsApp status, forwarding ad videos to their friends and family. We also found that Med Manor has started to give offers if the customer purchases its products through company official website which shows the pharma marketing has thrown out of the gear and moved to digital transformation. We also learnt the company should manage to be available to the consumers 24/7 without taking the holidays to maintain customer Loyalty.

Nagasudha, Sruthi, Krithika (2020), Digital marketing achieves target of marketing a business through online modes and by using all digital channels. In line with our empirical studies, Med Manor Organics could be able to achieve its marketing goals through digital transformation. We found that this company could find its target customers and the brand has reached more globally when compared with traditional marketing. We also learnt that at one point of time, the company realized that advertisements of its products have forgotten by the customers and they need to reinvest for the same to be in the minds of consumers and the company should invest in packing and delivery which is an additional cost when compared to traditional marketing.

6. Conclusion

This chapter includes an evaluation of the study and recommendations.

Online penetration got boost during this pandemic. It was low penetration among mass people, and now they got forced to adopt online. They used to watch only TV, also kids are switching to online school and worker forced to work from home hence online penetration is higher due to Covid-19, digital marketing is on the peak.

The psychology of people using internet has changed. Earlier people were spending time in TV and other media but now stop watching news on TV due to depressing news, they switch to digital because they can customize the content to what they need. So impact of Covid-19 to digital marketing are: more reach due to higher penetration and more platform.

If we focus on the pharmaceutical industry and the impact of Covid-19, we found short term and long-term impact. Short-term impacts of Covid-19 pandemic includes demand changes, regulation revisions, research and development process changes and the shift towards digital marketing, tele-communication and tele-medicine. In addition, industry growth slow-down, approval delays, moving towards self-sufficiency in pharm-production supply chain and trend changes in consumption of health-market products along with ethical dilemma could be anticipated as long-term impacts of COVID-19 pandemic on pharmaceutical sector in both global and local levels (Ayati, Saiyarsarai & Nikfar, 2020).

To utilize that short term impact pharma industry has chosen to digital marketing to keep their sales up and maintain their brand image. Considering long term impact, pharma industry concentrating the trend of changes of health-market products.

- Suitability of the study

Based on the empirical findings, the pharmaceutical company that we have selected in our research can be considered as partly suitable, as they reflect digital marketing concept to a certain extent. This is despite of the difficulties to directly defining benefit of digital marketing to company's success and calculate the potential return in Covid-19 situation due to the lack of lots of other factors like in house business measures and historical records as related to their practice toward customers. Since the needs of the study objects

that are interesting and explorative, the fact that they are not fully implement digital marketing but partly is evaluated as minimum effect.

- **Further research**

Based on the different literature, research interviews, theoretical knowledge we have understood that have understood that those companies enjoy better relations with their customers that practice digital marketing in their business operations and possess potential long-term partnership as return. There are other many challenges facing the pharma business when it comes to marketing. Brand awareness, right platform to use for digital marketing, data policy, quality and informative content, regulatory and policy related issue, budget are the most important fact that need to be consider while going for digital transformation. Several companies are trying to understand digital's true value whilst maximum are incorporating the digital marketing into the wider marketing strategy. Hence its utmost important for the company to identify the value chain of the digital marketing.

In order to find out in depth if small, pharmaceutical companies in consumer goods sector would enjoy the real benefit of deploying digital marketing concept in the market since medical products is a vital product that needs irrespective of all ages and 365 days. Besides, it is important to the companies to consider any kind of situation like Covid-19 to tackle the business challenges.

- **Evaluation of the study**

The data collection regarding impact of Covid-19 in digital marketing focusing pharmaceutical industry proved to be more complicated than expected. Since the company that we have selected were practicing traditional marketing before Covid-19 pandemic and adapted the digital marketing newly and also in testing phase. Most of the data especially customer related information, sales volume, business growth have kept confidential. It is also proved to be hard to find literature that describes real impact of Covid-19 in digital marketing focusing pharmaceutical industry. Apart of these aspects, the data are collected via in-depth interview discussion which reflect some pictures of real impact of Covid-19 in digital marketing in the pharmaceutical industry.

The quality of the research would have been further improved if there are other pharmaceutical company could have participated to the interview and more individual

industry expert could join to provide the opinion who have implemented digital marketing strategy in the same industry and have experience to tackle emergency need. This means they would have more experience and be able to provide more accurate feedback. Also, we could have taken interview of general people who are using digital platform for their buying purpose during pandemic situation. However, some input from the employee of the Med Manor have enabled us to acquire some information to insight of digital marketing strategy and the impact of Covid-19 in the digital marketing in the pharmaceutical industry segment.

The interview found some interesting insight of pharmaceutical industry and the digital transformation of the business strategy due to pandemic which are:

- People are ignoring TV and other media to avoid depressing news and mostly engaging them to online platform since these platforms give them opportunity to customize the content.
- The pattern of advertisement content changes since people are giving more responses to those content which gives them positive tips to remain healthy.
- Sales are increasing even direct sales are not happening through store sales.
- Pharma company are designing different content for different geo-location
- It is important to have expertise in marketing team to implement digital advertisement since traditional marketer are not used to technical tool, analytics etc.
- It's important to the pharmaceutical company to bring the variety of the product category.

- **Recommendation**

We find that all pharmaceutical companies could benefit from applying digital marketing concepts, although some digital marketing technology, such as tools and platform, might be too complicated, expensive and unnecessary. There are new technology and tools are regularly developing in the market and the company who are traditional marketer can adopt those as pilot project for their marketing campaign. Also, considering the budget issues, companies can utilize those tools and techniques by a small group of people or hire consultant to help them to adapt the digital marketing. Most important thing is, companies need to understand the importance of digital marketing and be selective in marketing strategy.

A successful digital marketing strategy cannot be implemented successfully by just simply having ICT knowledge and the ROI will not happen overnight. Changes must occur at all levels, including policies and processes: digital marketing knowledge adaptation, ICT knowledge, market trend, concurrent situation, budget, and company's objective and goals. All aspects of the business must be become customer driven.

The importance and practice of digital marketing during pandemic in any business especially pharmaceutical company is a significant topic to discuss. Building trust beyond advertising, the pandemic has likely increased consumers' scrutiny of the direct communications they receive from brands. The pandemic has created a huge opportunity to the marketer to rethink about their marketing strategy. First of all the to create the "Trust" to the audience. Marketer should create the trustworthy content and ignore to spread the fake news about their products or disease. Also, digital marketing should be concern about using customer data since there are plenty of digital platforms serving advertisement which are violating the customer privacy. Hence marketers should consider the platform and tools to proper uses of the advertising budget.

In the case of the Med Manor of this thesis, which most likely to have one or maximum four persons running the company's marketing department and the company has no complex marketing strategy and also new in digital marketing due to Covid 19 where a full phased digital marketing can be applied faster. However, we recommend studying relationship marketing theory in order to fully understand how digital marketing can be great beneficial to the company to build the relationship with their target customer not only in pandemic situation but also for future and that are best fit for the company and its business model.

Implementing a digital marketing from the start may help the company. However, the company's staff does require sufficient training and proficiency to apply digital marketing in every situation.

- **Manage relationships with customers is a key**

The concept of digital marketing focuses on the customer as the main player; therefore small companies like Med Manor in pharmaceutical industry should look at their overall business portfolio and allocate resources accordingly to the defined work in process. It is

recommend to avoid unnecessary tools or processes and marketing campaign that create costs rather than making profit and to obtain regular feedback from customers to fulfill their future demands better and effectively.

The company's employees specially marketing team should be trained in their digital skills, especially people who interact with customers on a daily basis even though they are not actively working in sales function. Based on our study, it appears that most of employees in this small pharmaceutical company who practices traditional marketing strategy does not have digital marketing knowledge and concept of relationship marketing. A lack of digital marketing knowledge and concept of relationship marketing could lead to failure in the future, such as missing insight information prior to launch new medical products and services. It is also important that this digital marketing practice occurs in two-way communication between customers, the pharmaceutical company and suppliers. So, keep track of the business is important to face any challenges like Covid-19 pandemic to designing digital marketing campaign, budget in future.

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Appendix-1

-: Questionnaire: -

Q: What is the marketing strategy of your company to sale, promote your products during Covid 19?

Q: Does your company use any of or all of the following digital marketing channels; The Internet/Website, Social Media and Mobile Phones to engage with and onboard new customers, improve sales?

Q: Please mention the most effective digital channel used for obtaining new customer/improve sales by your company during last 8 months (March – November)?

Q: On average, how many new customers / sales (no of order) does your company acquire via digital marketing channels each month during Covid 19?

Q: What has been the success rate of the use of digital marketing channels for obtaining new customer/improve sales during last 8 months (March – November)?

Q: What audience age demography uses digital marketing channels the most to place order during Covid 19?

Q: What audience age demography uses non-digital marketing channels the most to place order during Covid 19?

Q: Which products has been sold most due to the digital marketing campaign during covid 19?

Q: Does your company conduct any awareness program /campaign before Covid 19?

Q: Do you think the awareness campaign has reached most to their target customer after going to digital transformation?

Q: Does the awareness program/campaign conducted by digital marketing improve the sales of the products?

Q: Is there any marketing budget difference before and after covid 19? What is the impact of changing the budget ?

Q: Do you think it is become more easier to reach most of the target customer by digital transformation and helped precise sales?

Q: On average, how many new customers / sales (no of order) did your bank acquire via non-digital channels in each month before Covid 19

Q: What factors do you think support the emergence of digital marketing channels as an effective way for your company to acquire new customers, improve sales and grow share of market during Covid 19?

Q: What factors do you think hinder the emergence of digital marketing channels as an effective way for your company to acquire new customers, improve sales and grow share of market?

Q: Do you believe that your company has the requisite capacity to continue adapting and improving in response to the evolving digital marketing technics/digital transformation?

Q: Do you agree with the statement that ‘increasing usage of digital marketing channels /digital transformation by your company has influenced offerings and marketing activities’?

Q: Do you agree with the statement that 'digital marketing channels are fast becoming a successful way for the pharmaceutical company to grow its customer base’?

Q: What digital platform you use most for the marketing?

Q: Did you come up with any new products keeping the Pandemic in mind and how did you promote them to the customers?

Q: How your ads are unique from others and how are you creating the awareness of brand in minds of customers?

Q: Which is more affordable to the company to the companies either the Traditional marketing or digital marketing what you suggest being as marketing head.

