

MARKETING METAMORPHOSIS: TRANSITION FROM TRADITIONAL TO NOVEL METHODS IN INDIA'S PANDEMIC ERA

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Abstract:

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about unprecedented challenges for businesses worldwide, requiring a rapid transformation in the marketing strategies. In India, where traditional marketing methods have long prevailed, the transition to novel approaches has become even more critical during and post the pandemic. This research paper presents an engaging overview of the transition from traditional to novel marketing methods in India encompassing both the pandemic. And the post COVID era. Change paragraph

The paper delves into the challenges faced by businesses in India during the pandemic, including the closure of physical marketplaces and the need to adapt to changing consumer behavior. It explores the shift towards digital marketing as a primary channel for engaging customers and analyzes the various strategies implemented, such as social media marketing, influencer collaborations and online advertising. Additionally, the paper examines the utilization of technology driven methods, including contactless payment systems augmented reality experiences and personalized marketing campaigns.

Furthermore, the paper investigates the post pandemic marketing landscape in India, considering the lasting impact of the crisis and the evolving consumer expectations. It explores how businesses have reimagined their marketing strategies to align with the new normal, focusing on the integration of online and offline experiences, the rise of experiential marketing and the emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility. This paper contributes to the existing literature by offering a comprehensive overview of the marketing landscape during and post COVID, paving the way for more effective and adaptive marketing strategies in the future.

Keywords: Marketing transformation, Digital revolution, Contactless Commerce, Virtual Experiences, Digital Disruption, Consumer behaviour shift

Introduction:

The worldwide business landscape has shifted because of the Covid-19 epidemic. Traditional marketing strategies have become difficult, if not impossible, to perform due to enforcement of severe lockdowns and social distancing measures. The pandemic has caused significant hurdles

for companies in India, where a substantial percentage of the populace relies on physical marketplaces for their daily necessities. We intend to analyse the transformation from traditional to modern marketing tactics in India during the Covid-19 epidemic in this research paper.

Marketing has always been a key aspect of any business, and this pandemic has further emphasised the need to adapt to new marketing methods. With the closure of physical markets, which were the backbone of the Indian retail business, the necessity to change from conventional marketing strategies to newer ones has grown increasingly obvious. To survive in the market, it is necessary to develop and implement new marketing techniques.

In this study, we will examine the new marketing strategies used by Indian enterprises to keep afloat in these uncertain times. We will also look into the influence and efficacy of these new marketing tactics on customer behaviour.

The use of digital marketing has been one of the most major advances in marketing methods throughout the epidemic. People have increasingly turned to internet markets for their everyday requirements in the face of social alienation and lockdowns. As a result, the number of firms operating online has increased, and digital marketing has become a crucial instrument for them to reach out to their clients. We will investigate the various digital marketing tactics used by Indian firms and their impact on consumer behaviour.

Apart from digital marketing, we will investigate other unique marketing strategies used by Indian firms during the epidemic. Contactless deliveries, Quick commerce, and virtual events are examples of these. We will investigate how effective these approaches are in generating money and how they affect consumer loyalty.

Finally, we are going to investigate at the hurdles that Indian organizations have experienced as they transitioned from traditional to new marketing approaches. These difficulties include a lack of infrastructure, restricted access to technology, and substantial training. We will also go through the steps that firms may take to overcome these obstacles.

To put it simply, the Covid-19 pandemic has created unprecedented obstacles for Indian enterprises. It has, however, offered a chance for firms to develop and implement new marketing techniques. In this research, we want to present a summary of the movement from traditional to innovative marketing tactics in India throughout the pandemic. We believe that this paper will assist firms in India in making informed decisions and adapting to changing market conditions.

Literature Review:

The face of business has steadily altered throughout history for as long as it has been done. However, with the development of computer technology and the Internet in recent years, this transformation has occurred at a considerably faster rate. Electronic commerce (e-commerce) has established new channels for current firms as well as an atmosphere in which new enterprises

might emerge. To prosper, many businesses have had to adjust their marketing tactics to accept and capitalise on these developments.

The challenge for traditional brick-and-mortar businesses is to create a flawless link between the physically located shops and their online existence. It is essential that their products are comparable, so their online store serves as a replica of their online inventory. They have also make sure that their branding stays the same across all channels so that customers can easily know them no matter how they interact with the company. Because they lack the benefit of physical locations, exclusive to the internet products and services must discover novel ways to reach their target audience and differentiate themselves electronically. Online merchants, on the other hand, may target specific demographics and frequently have cheaper expense than conventional physical stores.

Contemporary dynamic marketing tactics highlight the significance of businesses connecting customers in order to improve sales. All types of online as well as wireless and and interactive media promotion, including posters, endorsements, electronic mail, search engine results, word-of-mouth, classified commercials and interactive television commercials, are considered interactive advertising (Tan, Kwek, & Li, 2013, p. 90). To create bonds with customers, companies use integrated marketing strategies via digital platforms, ensuring that all brand messages are uniform throughout conventional and novel marketing channels. This allows businesses to network with their customers on a more personal level (Peltier, Schibrowsky, & Schultz, 2003).

There are several channels for distribution to choose from. Conventional advertising is one-way, with no mechanism for client feedback. It includes media outlets such as billboards, magazines, newspapers, and television, and it is commonly used in tandem with online services due to its established track record of addressing the intended audience. These traditional methods may incorporate an electronic link, i.e., the usage of Quick Response Codes (QR codes). The camera on a smart phone or tablet examines an image in two dimensions to quickly display supplementary web content. One issue for marketers in the 21st century is deciding whether to promote advertising efforts through traditional media or the internet. The digital marketing (e-marketing) incorporates the concepts and practises used to influence consumer awareness, beliefs, and, ultimately, conduct, emphasising the consumer's responsibility in assessing the impact and effectiveness of advertisements (Pavlou & Stewart, 2000, p. 62).

With the increased use of cellphones and online apps, companies are experiencing novel forms of direct interaction, settlement, and targeted marketing, as well as emerging social networking elements that stimulate client communication with brands (Mosaic, n.d., p. 1). As a consequence, firms may increase the number of consumer downloads by optimising app placement. Because of social networking sites, the Internet, and technological advancements, millennials are becoming increasingly involved in product and brand marketing and development (Mangold & Smith, 2012,

p. 141). Their generation is adapting the way so the people perceive advertisements and is an important factor in the development of novel approaches to marketing.

Irrespective of the way the customer is involved, the purpose of developing a marketing strategy is to explain how a company will break into a market, engage prospective customers, and pique customer curiosity, which eventually interprets into sales (Laudon & Traver, 2015). The effectiveness or success of a marketing plan is thus measured by the extent to which it may impact a consumer's decision to purchase the goods or services offered by the business. Even the most innovative company concept or idea, according to Laudon and Traver (2015), can fail if it is not adequately advertised to prospective consumers.

Companies have been evolving their marketing strategies as per the needs and wants of the consumers. Prior to the Covid – 19 epidemics companies had the choice to decide which marketing strategies to choose from. But the pandemic pushed them on the verge of adopting swiftly to the changing consumer preference and behaviour. The following literature suggests the various behaviours consumers show to cope with vulnerabilities.

Sheth (2020) investigates the way the worldwide outbreak influenced consumers' lives and the way they managed to deal with and enhance new behaviour in social environments, office spaces, technological advances, and catastrophic events. While Kirk and Rifkin (2020) stated consumer behavioural trends across the three stages, coping, namely reacting, and long-term adapting to the epidemic outbreak, Zwanka and Buff (2021) investigated COVID-19 customers behavioural changes such as purchasing habits, international consumer traits, and psychographic information behaviour.

From crucial services like delivering meals (Mehroliya et al., 2021) to high-touch services like education and tourism (Hall et al., 2020), technological innovation has enhanced versatility in an extensive range of services. Spending is commonly utilised among customers as a coping mechanism to deal with the state of liability produced by uncertainty. Previous study has discovered an array of customer vulnerability coping strategies, such as either reactive or proactive approaches with either implicit or explicit articulation (Echeverri & Salomonson, 2019), impulsively and resilient consumption (Arnal Sarasa et al., 2020), and compulsive purchasing (Sneath et al., 2009). The Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) is very successful in tapping into customers' unspoken ideas and feelings below the conscious level (Zaltman & Coulter, 1995). ZMET uses a participant-led method to find out what people think about a product, service, and brand.

The literature suggest that consumers use various coping mechanisms to come out of vulnerable situations. One of the coping mechanisms is shopping or buying products. Covid - 19 pandemic was one of the most vulnerable situations in the recent times. Consumers were looking out for avenues to shop, and companies had to adapt to these dynamic demands. This research helps to

understand the coping strategies adapted by the companies to respond to the vulnerability of the consumers.

Research Methodology:

The research is exploratory in nature. The study is based on primary data. The data was collected from marketing professionals working in the domains of FMCG, FMCD, Sports and Fitness products and Apparels sector using Convenience Sampling techniques. Face to Face interviews with the company professionals working in either of the FMCG, FMCD, Sports and fitness products and Apparels industry were conducted with the help of an interview schedule which consisted of 12 open-ended questions. Total of 150 response was collected from the population. This data was then coded, cleaned and prepared for qualitative analysis. Content Analysis was then performed on the responses with the help of QDA Miner software.

Results and Analysis:

The following section will discuss the results of the content analysis performed on the responses received from the respondents.

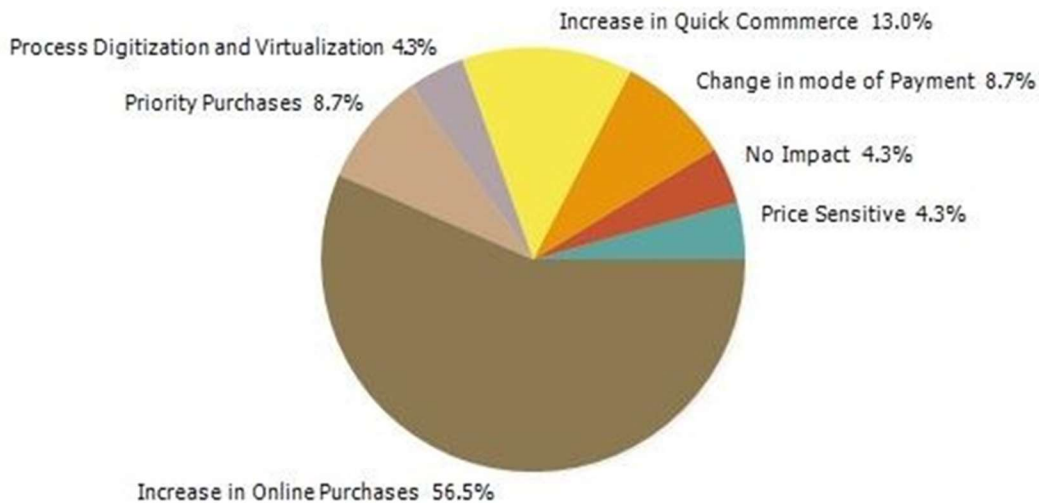


Fig. 1: Effect of Covid on Purchasing Pattern: Number of Cases

The COVID pandemic had a huge effect on the use of ecommerce platforms and the different paradigm shifts that happen in the consumer preferences. Figure 1 shows the number of cases which portrayed the how COVID influenced the purchasing pattern of the consumers. The content analysis shows that during the Covid -19 Quick Commerce has gained importance. The increase in quick commerce is evident as 13% respondents believed that quick commerce has had an impact on their lives. The companies such as Bigbasket, Blinkit, Zepto, Dunzo are examples of quick commerce these companies had seen a huge and a stupendous rise in their growth levels.

The data analysis also shows that 56.5% of the respondents felt that there was an increase in online purchases. The price sensitivity had also increased add 4.3% of the respondents responded favorably in this respect. 8.3% of the respondents said that there was a change in the mode of payment. However, 4.3% of the respondents said that there was no change or there was no impact of the covid over the paradigm shifts in the online purchase behavior of the consumers.

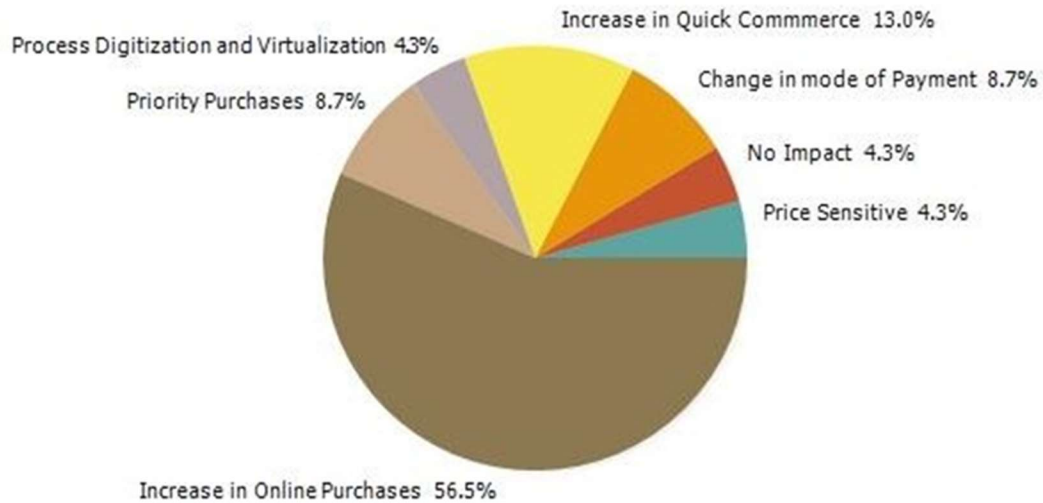


Fig 2.: Effect of Covid on Purchasing Pattern: Frequency

Fig 2: depicts the frequency at which the various changes in the online purchase pattern of consumers have been referred to in their responses. The data analysis shows that 12.5% of the respondents felt that there was an increase in quick commerce, whereas the change in mode of payment was 8.3%. Respondents also felt that the price sensitivity had affected to some extent though there was a marginal shift, and the percentage was only 4.2%. The major finding from the analysis was that the increase in online purchases was significantly higher than any other form of buying. Companies felt that consumers have bought goods and services online in huge numbers and this contributed to 58.3% of the respondents answering in favor of growth in online purchases. A small segment of 8.3% respondents felt that the buying pattern had changed, and priority purchases were only taking place. 4.2% of the respondents also felt that there was a huge amount of process digitization and virtualization.

Fig3: Steps to Adapt to Changes: Number of Words

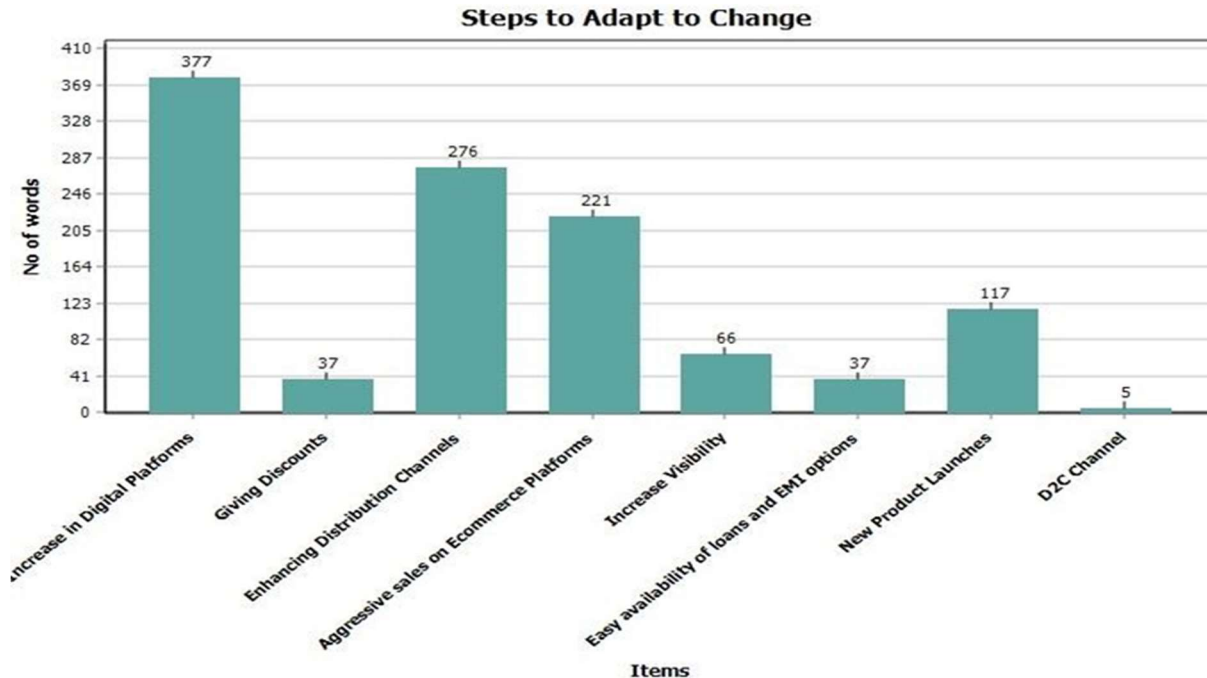


Figure 3 shows the various steps taken by companies to adapt to the changing paradigm shifts and to cope with the changing buying patterns of the consumers. The above figure specifically shows the number of words through which the respondents have hinted at the ways the companies have changed their strategies. In 377 cases there was evidence that there was an increase in buying through digital platforms. 276 words indicated that there was an enhancement in the distribution channels by various companies so that they could serve their consumers and reach out and grow more to retain and acquire new consumers. 221 cases suggested that there was an aggressive sale on the ecommerce platforms, and these helped the companies to engage more and in a better way with their consumers. 117 words depicted that companies had launched new products in order to engage with newer consumers as well as retain their old consumers.

Fig 4: Steps to Adapt to Changes: Number of Cases

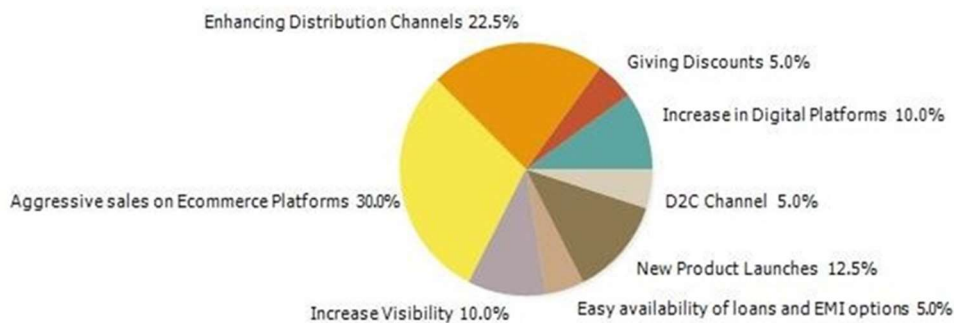


Figure 4 shows the frequencies at which various steps to adapt to the paradigm shift has been recorded as responses by the respondents. 30% of the respondents felt that because of the

aggressive sales on the ecommerce platforms there was increased online purchase. Enhancement in the distribution channel also contributed to 22.5% of the increased online purchases. The easy availability of loans and EMI options contributed to 5% of the total responses. Starting of new product lines or launches contributed to 12.5% and a whole new changing of distribution system and introducing a D2C channel contributed to 5% for the various mechanism companies adopted to adapt to the changing marketing landscape during the Covid – 19 pandemic.

Fig 5: Future of E commerce Segment: Number of Cases

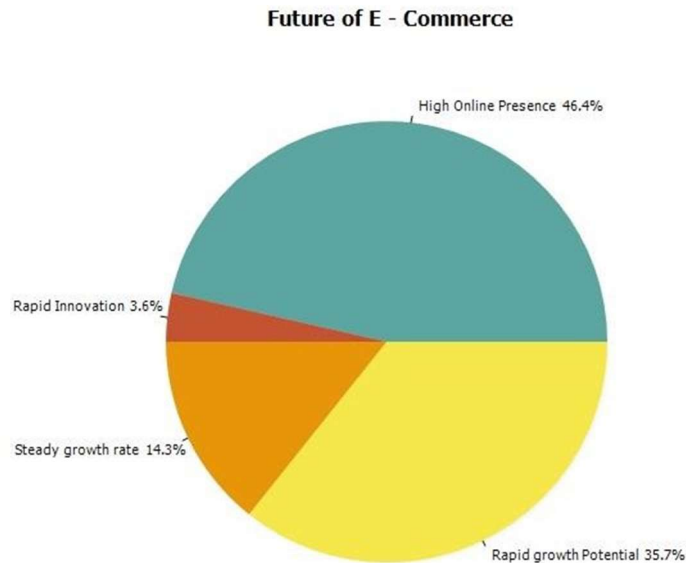


Figure 5 portrays the percentage of the number of cases respondents have indicated at the future of the E – commerce segment of the FMCG, FMCD, Apparels and Sports and Fitness Goods products. It is clear from the Figure 5 that 45.4% shows that High online presence by companies is the way forward. 35.7 % of the cases agreed that the future of E – commerce is very optimistic and there is rapid growth potential. 14.3 % cases felt that there would be a steady growth rate and the future of E – commerce will advance in a steady path. 3.6 % of the cases helped to show that rapid innovation is the way forward for the E – commerce segment.

Fig 6: Future of E commerce Segment: Number of Words

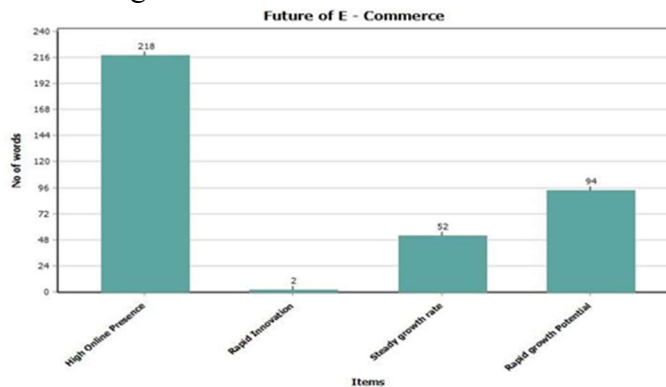


Figure 6 shows the number of words received as responses from the respondents which helps to understand about the future of the E – commerce segment for the FMCG, FMCD, Apparels and the Sports and Fitness Products. 218 words extracted from the response indicates that high online presence by companies will be the future of their E commerce segments. 52 words reflect that a steady growth rate is way the e- commerce industry will rise. 94 words extracted from the response help the companies to comprehend that the future of the E commerce segment has a rapid growth potential. However, only 2 words give an inclination towards rapid innovation as a factor for the future of the e commerce.

Fig 7: Growth Rate due to Paradigm Shift: Number of Words

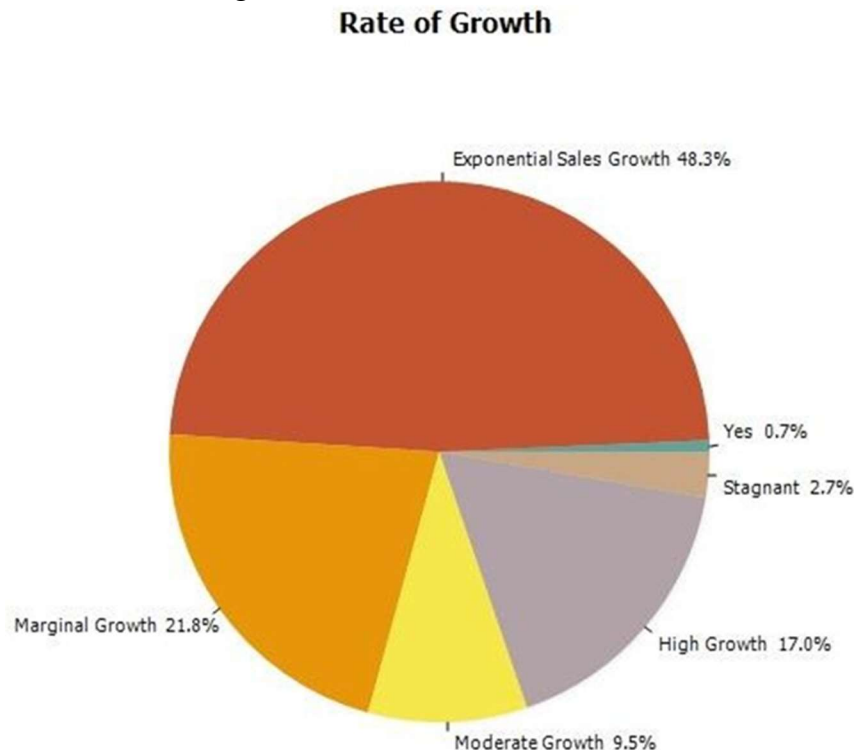


Figure 7 depicts the percentage of the words indicating the various growth rates at which the companies felt the E – commerce segment grew as a result of the paradigm shift due to the Covid–19 pandemic. 48.3% of the words portrayed that there was exponential growth in the company’s business turnover. 21.8 % words suggested that there was marginal growth, 17% words depicted high growth rates while 9.5 % words showed that companies were having moderate growth rate due to the E commerce segment. However, 2.7% of the words indicated that there was no change in growth rate or it was a stagnant growth rate.

Fig 8: Effect on Growth Rate of the company due to Paradigm Shift: Frequency

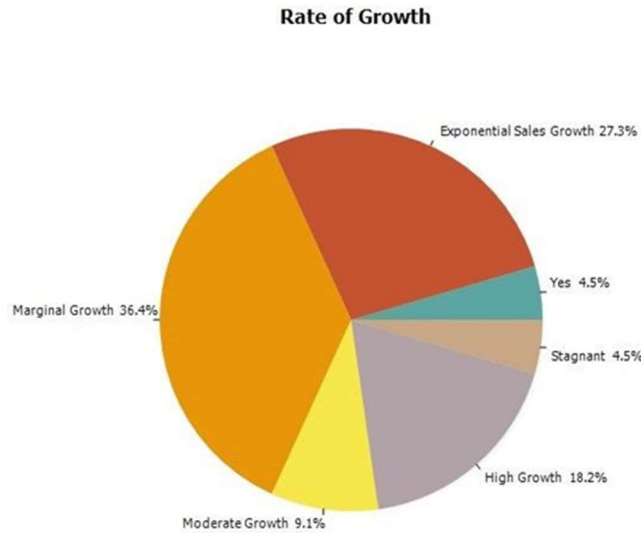


Figure 8 shows the frequency at which the respondents have indicated at the various rate of growth to predict the future of the e-commerce segment for FMCG, FMCD, apparels and sports and fitness goods. From the graph we derive that 36.4% of the respondents feel that there'll be marginal growth in the e-commerce industry of the companies in the coming future. The graph shows that 27.3% of the respondents feel that the future of the e-commerce industry will have an exponential sales growth. 18.2% of the respondents feel that they'll be high growth and 9.1% of the respondents feel that there will be moderate growth in the e-commerce segment of the companies. 4.5% of the respondents felt that there was a growth of the e-commerce sector and there will be a growth in future in the e-commerce sector, but the rate of growth was not very clear to them. However, 4.5% of the respondents also felt that there will be a stagnant growth in the e-commerce segment of the FMCG, FMCD, apparels and sports and fitness goods products.

Fig 9: Factors for Boosting E - Commerce: Number of Cases

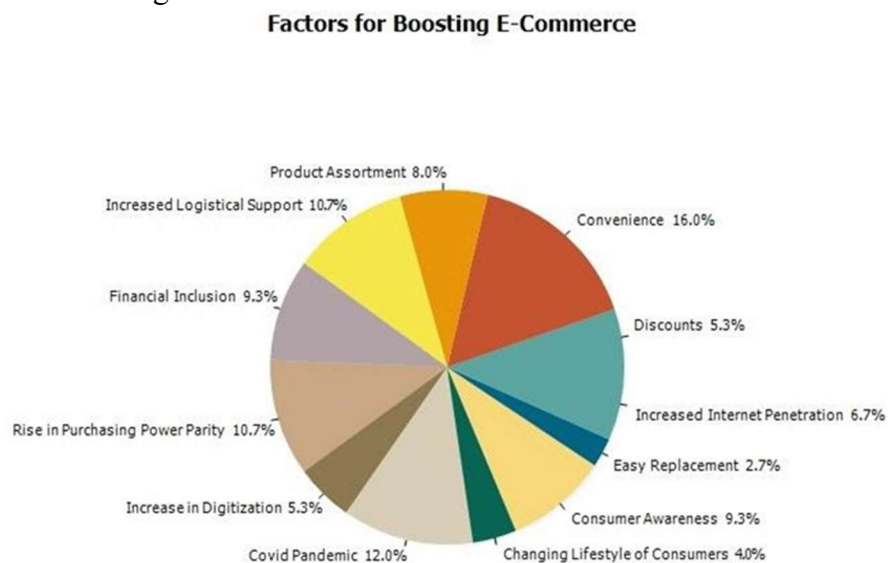


Fig 10: Factors for Boosting E - Commerce: Number of Words

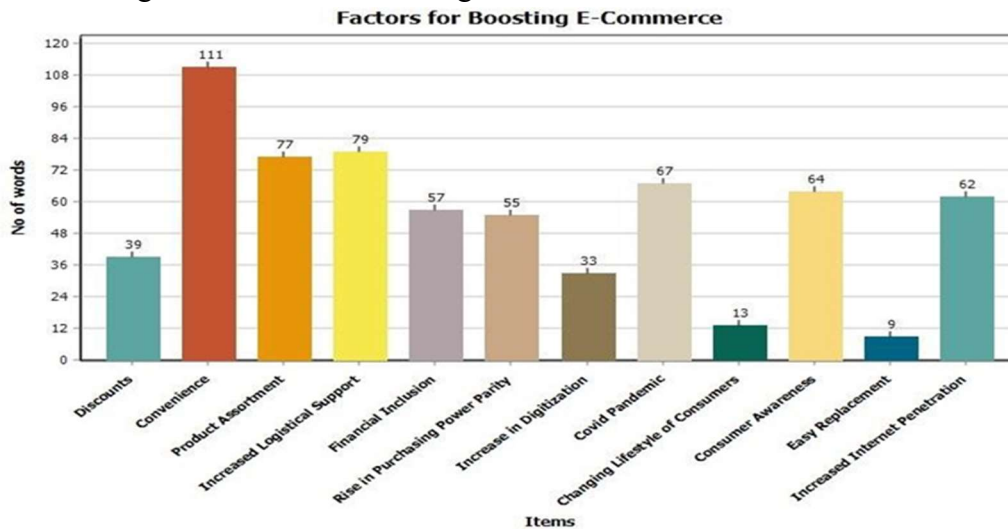


Figure 10 shows the factors which the industry experts felt helped in boosting the E commerce segment during the last 5 years. It is clear from the figure that Convenience is the major factor that has contributed to the growth of the E - commerce segment. The analysis shows that 111 words indicate that Convenience was the most prominent factor for the growth of the e commerce segment. 79 words indicated that the increased logistical support provided by the companies helped in increasing their digital presence. 77 words suggested that the product assortment provided by companies to its customers helped in the boosting of the E commerce segment. Covid Pandemic and Increased Internet Penetration were also among the top 3 reasons for the enhancement of the E commerce business for the companies. Customer Awareness, Financial Inclusion and rise I purchase power parity also contributed to the growth of the online purchases. Price discounts and digitization also helped to attract new customers and reach out to a wider customer base.

Fig 11 : Factors for Boosting E - Commerce: Frequency

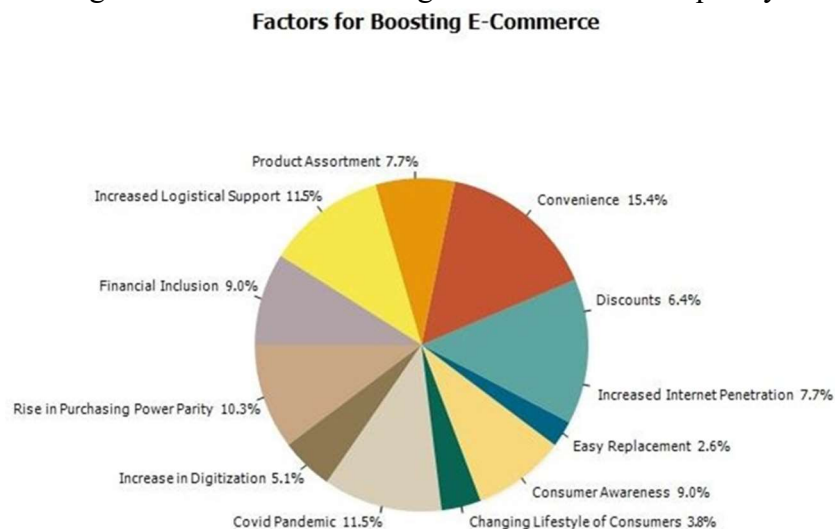


Figure 11 depicts the frequency in which the factors which help in boosting the E commerce business have been featuring in the answers received from the industry professionals. Convenience has the highest effect with 15.4% of the professionals suggesting it as the major factor for the E commerce business growth. 11.5% of the respondents felt that the Covid Pandemic helped the companies to give a boost to their E commerce business. The rise in purchasing power parity also helped the companies to enhance their online presence as the consumers have more purchasing power. Increased logistical support contributes to 11.5%, Consumer awareness and financial inclusion both had a 9% frequency.

Fig. 12: Changes in Methods of Advertising: Number of Cases
Changes in Methods of Advertising

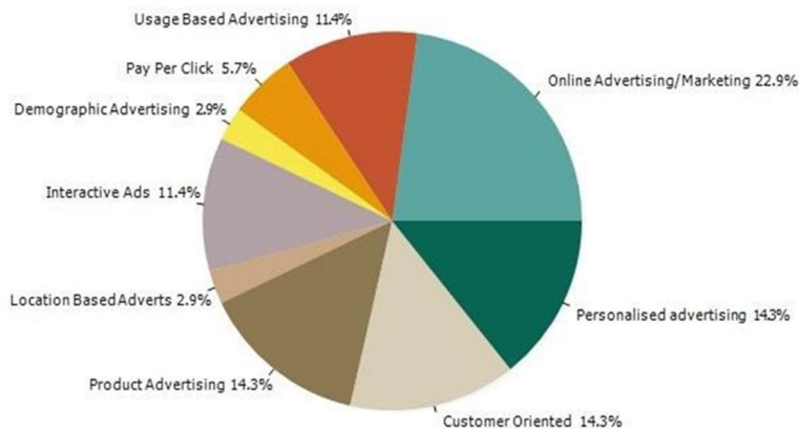


Figure 12 depicts the changes the companies have incorporated in their advertising strategies to overcome the paradigm shifts in the consumer's buying behavior. Online advertising or Online marketing has been the most significant change that companies have adopted. 22.9% of the respondents responded that Digital marketing is the way forward and to stay in the race this is the first and the foremost change that any company should adopt. The content analysis further suggested that Personalised advertising, Product advertising and Customer oriented advertising are the other strategies that companies have adopted to boost the E commerce business. Interactive Ads have helped the companies to access new target audience and retain their older clientele. Location based Adverts; Demographic advertising are the other forms of advertising that companies are now adopting to respond to the paradigm shift in a positive manner.

Fig. 13: Changes in Methods of Advertising: Number of Words

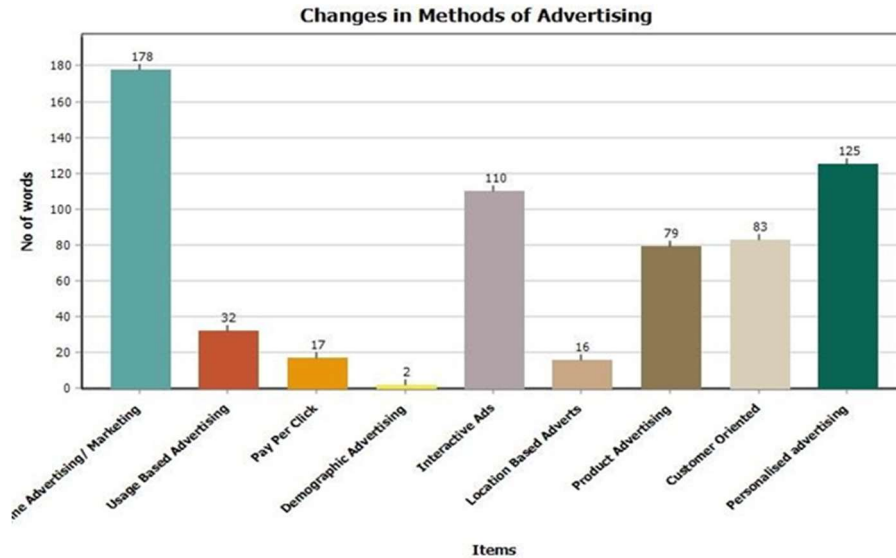


Figure 13 helps in understanding the number of words which indicate the various methods of advertising that companies are adopting to connect with their consumer base. 178 words from the responses received indicated that Online Advertising or Online marketing is the main change that has happened in the advertising landscape. The next big change that the advertising industry is witnessing is the introduction of Personalized Advertising. 110 words suggested that Interactive Ads are very helpful in generating interest in the consumers towards the products and helps in increasing consumer engagement.

Fig 14: Novel Communication Strategies: Number of Cases
Novel Communication Strategies

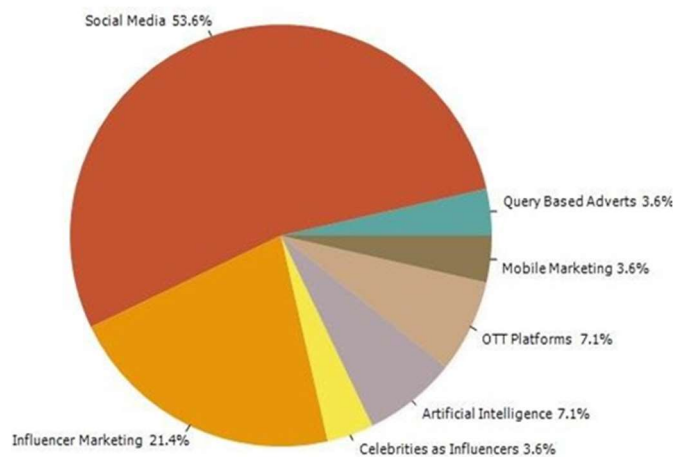


Figure 14 depicts the novel communication strategies adopted by companies to engage with their target audience and to cope with the paradigm shifts happening in the consumer buying behaviour. The data suggests that. Social Media marketing is the most preferred method of communicating

with the consumers. 53.6 % of the respondents said that they have moved their advertising to Facebook, YouTube, Instagram, and other social media platforms as the target audience is now hooked on to various social media platforms. 21.4 % of the respondents said that Influence marketing is the new trend. Companies are hiring influencers who are trending on Instagram, Facebook, Youtube, Pinterest and have huge followers to endorse their brands. Consumers easily connect with the influencers and when these influencers endorse the brands the visibility of the brands go up manifolds. Artificial Intelligence and OTT platforms are the other ways of communicating with the consumers. The introduction of chatbots have helped many companies to improve the customer experience. A happy customer helps to attract more prospective customers. OTT platforms are the new introduction in the lives of the common people. The COVID epidemic gave a boost to the OTT industry. Each OTT platform has various subscription plans. The newest of them is the plans introduced by NETFLIX which has lower rental and has advertisements running between the video. Celebrity influencer marketing, Query based Adverts and Mobile Marketing are the other methods that companies have adopted but none of these new methods.

Conclusions:

The study contributes to academic knowledge related to the coping up strategies, revival strategies of companies during the Covid – 19 epidemics. The study focuses on understanding the effect of the Covid – 19 pandemic on the usage of the E – commerce platforms, the steps taken by companies to adapt to the sudden change, how these changes will affect the future of the E – commerce industry. The study further analyzed the factors which helped in boosting the E - commerce industry, the changes companies have adopted in communicating with their consumers considering the shift in buying behaviour from offline to online mode and the novel techniques to counter and sustain themselves in the industry.

The study findings confirm that the Covid – 19 epidemic had an enormous effect on the purchasing patterns for FMCG, FMCD, Sports and fitness Products and Apparel products by the consumers. The online purchase for the product category of FMCG, FMCD, and apparels product categories have gone up manifolds. However for the sports and fitness good sthe consumers were forced to buy them online during the lockdown but after the opening up of the markets the online purchases have gone down. However consumers are now more inclined to buy fitness and helath products more in general. A significant increase in the quick commerce companies such as BigBasket Now, Zepto, Blinkit, Dunzo etc has been witnessed. The digitization and virtualization of various processes has also been undertaken.

The research further found that to adapt to the changing buying preferences of the consumers companies devised strategies and took various steps to adapt to the changes. The industry witnessed an increase in the number of online purchasing platforms as consumers are looking forward to buying products online. Companies have launched their own portals for digital purchase and have also collaborated with various E – commerce platforms to always make their products

available to the consumers. Companies have also enhanced their distribution channels so that the products can be easily made available, and the delivery time can be reduced. This has helped the companies to reach greater audiences and improve their visibility also. Aggressive sales

promotions are announced by companies of the E - commerce platforms which attracts the consumers and leads to a positive consumer disposition. Many companies have also launched new product lines, ventured into newer domains, provide easy loans and EMI options through these online portals leading to higher consumer engagement.

Analysis also shows that for companies to stay in the race and sustain themselves they must have high online presence. The E commerce segment has a rapid growth potential and only through online sales the companies can have a steady growth rate. Rapid innovation is also what consumers are expecting from the companies.

Another important finding from the research revealed that there were numerous factors which promoted the growth of the online shopping industry. Convenience provided to the consumers was the prime reason why online shopping has seen a stupendous increase. Consumers can buy products from anywhere, at any time and get them delivered to any place they want. Increased logistical support by the companies, increased product assortment of the online shopping platforms and the increased internet penetration has been other important factors for the growth of E - commerce. Covid pandemic gave a boost to the online shopping industry as consumers were forced to buy online. During this period consumers have now become less skeptical and more comfortable with online shopping.

The research states that companies have also made change to their communication strategies with their consumers. Companies have now shifted to online marketing or digital marketing to connect with their consumers as most of the consumers have a digital footprint. The companies are coming up with personalized advertisements with the help of machine learning, neural networks, and suggestive algorithms. Companies are also engaging with Artificial Intelligence to create interactive advertisements for enhancing the customer experience and customer engagement. Advertising has become more customer oriented and now the product is being advertised more as compared to the brand. Many companies have altered their advertisements based on the locations or geographical and ethnic diversity. For e.g. Tanishq advertises for its ornament in the local languages and dialects to connect with their audiences at the grass root level.

Finally, the research concludes that the companies are changing their strategies at the rapid pace and are adapting to the novel methods of marketing to keep up with the dynamism of the changing consumer buying behaviour. Novel marketing techniques such as Social Media Marketing, Influencer Marketing, Mobile Marketing, Query based Advert, marketing through OTT platforms are some of the strategies being adopted by companies.

Implications of the study to the Industry:

The findings of the study have several managerial implications. Companies can use the knowledge from the research to devise strategies to attract newer segment of consumers and retain the previous customer base.

Managers should consider that consumers are now looking forward to products and not the brands. The companies must understand the need of the consumers and come up with newer and innovative ways of interacting with them. The companies must cater and connect with every segment of the consumer base to sell their products.

Indian consumers are price sensitive consumers, they prefer good quality products at lower prices. The success of the online shopping websites has been huge as the companies can provide products at cheaper rates as there are no middlemen between the consumer and the company. Hence companies should increase more product assortment and provide consumers with more variety of products on the online portals.

Finally, the study suggests the companies should devise novel marketing communication strategies to connect to their customer base. Social media is a very powerful tool which helps in creating, connecting, and retaining customer base for the companies. Newer technologies such as Artificial Intelligence, 3D trials, Inclusion of Virtual Reality are the future of the online shopping industry and companies must implement them sooner or later.

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