

A study on paradigm shift towards digital marketing amid pre-post Covid-19 pandemic

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Abstract - The present paper attempts to study the consumer attitudes towards digital marketing. It aims to study the impact of COVID-19 on digital marketing. Further, it gives an insight into the factors affecting consumer behavior towards digital marketing. The research study was conducted during May 2021 Student's t distribution was used to study the difference in consumer behavior towards digital marketing during pre and post lockdown period. 3 and 5-point Likert scale was used to rate the responses of the respondents and to apply manipulation checks. Chi square test was performed to find association between gender of the consumers and their online buying behavior. Percentages were calculated to study the responses of respondents. The conclusions of this study give an insight into consumers' inclination towards digital marketing. Further, it explores consumer attitude towards online shopping. The findings of this paper are paramount to outline constructive strategies by marketers in the changing digital world.

Key words: Consumer Behavior, COVID 19, Digital Marketing, Factors affecting Digital Marketing.

I. INTRODUCTION

COVID-19 pandemic has affected the whole world and has led to a transition in the consumer behavior world over. It has affected the issues emerged in managing sales channels and interactions with customers. The pandemic altered shopping patterns in distinct ways. People who disliked online shopping or rarely used digital marketing alternatives started resorting to such practices and changed the way they shop. Marketers across the globe are anxious about changing consumer preferences regarding buying alternatives and are upgrading their websites and social media strategies to cater to the revolution in digital marketing. Observing a transition in consumer behavior towards online shopping the need was felt to study the impact of COVID-19 on digital marketing. Thus, this paper is an attempt to see the consumer attitudes towards online shopping during pre-post lockdown period. It aims to study the factors affecting consumer behavior towards digital marketing. Further, it tries to analyze the impact of COVID-19 on digital marketing. Digital marketing is the use of digital or social channels to promote a brand or reach consumers. This kind of marketing can be executed on the internet, social media, search engines, mobile devices and other channels. It requires new ways of marketing to

consumers and understanding the impact of their behavior [1].

Kumar (2020), studied that COVID-19 changed the priority of human beings in the whole world. The author conducted an exploratory research based on secondary data (McKinsey & Company). It was found that people were more careful with their health. This crisis changed the life socially and economically as people were living alone for following the social distancing. In this scenario digital marketing played an important role for the society. After Covid-19, people were more conscious with safety and trust. This paper focused on those factors, which played important role for the society and organization. In other words, scope of digital marketing will increase and organizations will also face some challenges. It was concluded that organizations should take care of the customers and try to support them with the help of innovative ideas and try to use digital platform for serving the customers for safety and maintaining the social distancing and also understand the behavior of the customer and try to satisfy the need accordingly and sustain in business world and use online deliveries with safety and maintain hygienic

[1] <https://www.ama.org/topics/digital-marketing/>

environment [2]. Ho, Hui, et.al (2020) stated that a boost to online sales post-COVID-19, but there are nuances across categories. Following significant momentum in e-commerce over recent years, Chinese consumers are likely to be even more amenable to online shopping after the outbreak, especially for categories with strong online track records, such as skincare, makeup, and personal care. Brands in these categories may see the coming period as an opportunity to build on initiatives they tried out in the early part of the year [3]. Ota, et.al (2020), Consumer Behavior towards online shopping in this pandemic period of COVID - 19 is changing rapidly. Almost every aspect of our lifestyle has been altered due to this pandemic. There are many factors popping up in these difficult times which are governing the buying decisions and preferences of the people. To meet these changing preferences and in order to help the consumers during this pandemic, E-commerce giant; Flipkart is working very hard. This research takes a descriptive approach towards obtaining its findings and results. The results of this report are supported by reliable secondary data and primary data as well. The results have highlighted the changing consumer mindsets during this pandemic which are mainly focusing on purchasing essentials and even giving priority to safety rather than discounts. The results of this study are restricted to political boundaries of India only. This research will help Flipkart and many other Ecommerce firms to understand the changing demands and behavior of its customers during this difficult time and give the best of services leading to customer delight[4]. A study conducted by Accenture reported new buying behaviors to outmaneuver uncertainty. It studied why, what and how consumers buy is changing due to the COVID-19 outbreak. Consumer priorities have become centered on the most basic needs, sending the demand for hygiene, cleaning and staples products soaring, while nonessential categories slump. The factors that influence brand decisions are also changing as a “buy local” trend accelerates. Digital commerce has also seen a boost as new consumers migrate online for grocery shopping—a rise that is likely to sustain post-outbreak [5]. Crosta, Ceccato, et.al (2021) conducted a nationwide survey in the Italian population to examine consumer behavior during the lockdown phase due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the COVID-19 emergency has emphasized the usefulness of essential goods (e.g. food, medications, etc.) compared to non-essential products (e.g. luxury items such as clothes and accessories), in the study, they categorized products in necessities and non-necessities. Furthermore,

changes in spending levels (necessities vs. non-necessities) were examined to confirm the effect that COVID-19 had on people's expenses. Moreover, they tried to clarify the relationship between changes in spending levels and changes in consumer behavior. Finally, they focused on the psychological factors underlying changes in consumer behavior toward the target products. They also explored potential underpinnings of consumer behavior by examining mood states and affective response to the emergency, perceived economic stability, self-justification for purchasing, and personality traits. Therefore, in this study, an integrative approach was adopted to study the contribution of different psychological factors by considering their mutual influence. Specifically, based on the empirical findings and theoretical accounts presented above, we hypothesized that during the COVID-19 pandemic [6]. Adewale and Popoola (2022) studied the impact of the pandemic on digital marketing tactics of organizations in the United States. They used convenience sampling technique for selecting a sample of 186 respondents. An ex-post facto research design and descriptive and inferential statistics were used to analyze the data. The descriptive statistics revealed that the pandemic had a very high impact on the digital marketing strategies of businesses in the United States. The study developed three hypotheses at a 5% level of significance. The results of the study were based on the Levenes' and student t-tests. It was found that the pandemic had a statistically significant impact on digital marketing in the United States. The study recommended that business organizations in the United States should maintain and develop the digital marketing tactics that were used during the pandemic for future growth [7]. Begum (2022) in her study, analyses and the impact of covid-19 on digital marketing and advertising as a whole. It was found that the global pandemic had a considerable impact at global, regional and local level on various sectors including Digital Marketing and Advertising. The author pointed out that it mostly had a positive impact on online shopping, as compared to various other fields such as economy, human resource, etc. Despite a lot of uncertainties among buyers and marketers regarding health, social life, economic stability, employment, etc., it led to behavioural shifts at both personal and organisational level such as work from home, staying indoors, online schooling, increased attention on health and hygiene, social distancing, increased social media usage, shift towards online content, etc. The new behavioral patterns had an immense impact on marketing and

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advertising efforts and this shift was mainly towards the digital world. The marketers and brands started connecting with the customers digitally more than ever before and the marketers gained a lot of opportunities to cash on. The study also revealed that the marketers have to focus on social responsibility and act mindfully while implementing the digital marketing strategies [8]. Alyahya (2021) in his paper made an attempt to analyze the impact of COVID-19 pandemic on digital marketing and advertising as a whole. It was found that many firms used digital marketing during the pandemic. Many firms opted for digital marketing as it required few people for marketing through the online portals and also to adhere to the government regulations to control spread of the pandemic. Many marketers laid off some of their employees to reduce the expenditure and to maintain social distancing [9]. Suhail et al analysed the financial performance of digital marketing after the Covid-19 crisis. They evaluated the development opportunities of e-commerce after the Covid-19 crisis and recommended the effective strategies to mitigate negative impact of Covid 19 on digital Marketing. They concluded that the study encountered their knowledge of the impact of Covid 19 in digital marketing. They described the facility of adjusting the market providing and digitalisation at the time of the pandemic. The function of digital marketing boosted up high culture of development in initiating new transformation of customers. The stable service and growth enhanced adequate knowledge and providing an image of branding and sustaining with the new action of visibility. New progress in digital marketing operates subsequent to customer needs and evident service security and management. The study managed to contrast the securing factors and authorised new progress benefits in procuring management equation successfully. The development of mobile marketing during sudden outbreak of pandemic Covid 19 witnessed a dramatic growth of homogeneous based marketing contents. This pandemic scenario primarily upended playbook of varied marketers that resulted in challenging existing rules about building customer's relationships and building of brands. It has been identified that some MSME were impacted through the digital marketing process after covid19 situation [10].

II. DATA AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. DATA

In the present paper, the research was conducted from May-June, 2021 and the data was collected from 15th May-25th May, 2021. Structured questionnaires consisting of open ended and closed ended questions including dichotomous and multiple choice questions were distributed to 30

respondents in Ludhiana, the Industrial hub of Punjab using multistage convenience sampling technique. Firstly, one of the major states in North India was selected followed by a major city in this state and finally a sample of 30 respondents were selected from this city. In order to check the appropriateness of the data collection instrument and a pilot test study was conducted on 5 respondents. The questionnaires were administered to 35 persons but only 30 complete questionnaires were returned back. Thus, the response rate was 85.7%.

III. METHODOLOGY

This study adopted the descriptive survey design. Mean, percentages, and were calculated to analyze the data. Chi square test at 5% level of significance was applied to test the significance of age and gender in digital marketing. Further, Student's t test was applied to study the difference between responses before and after lockdown. 3-point and 5-point Likert scale was used to study the level of agreement or disagreement on a symmetric agree-disagree scale for a series of factors.

H₁ : There is no significance difference between age of respondents and preference of online shopping.

H₂: There is no significance difference between gender of respondents and preference of online shopping.

H₃ There is no difference on frequency of online shopping before or after COVID-19.

IV. RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

A. Attitude of consumers during pre-post lockdown period.

In order to study the attitude of respondents towards digital marketing during pre-post pandemic period, they were asked to rank in order of importance the reasons for choosing online shopping, where 1 was assigned highest importance and 5 was assigned the lowest rank in terms of importance. The overall rank was calculated by assigning weights.

Table No. 1: Reasons for choosing Digital Marketing

REASONS	R 1	R 2	R 3	R 4	R 5	TOTAL	RANK	OVERALL RANK
Very convenient	12	9	4	4	1	117	3.9	1
Low price	12	7	6	3	2	114	3.8	2
Availability of 24*7	9	5	5	3	6	92	3.07	5

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Time saving	7	4	9	6	4	94	3.13	4
Variety of products	9	8	5	6	2	106	3.53	3

The analysis pointed out that the shoppers considered online shopping as convenient method of shopping and they thought that it offered low prices and wide variety of products. They did not have a favorable attitude towards time saving and 24*7 hour availability aspect with respect to digital marketing. Thus, the predisposition of the respondents with reference to online shopping was studied.

An attempt was made to find viewpoint of respondents of different age groups towards digital marketing. To analyze the results the respondents were divided into different age groups from 17 years to 47 years and above. Chi Square test at 5% level of significance was applied to study the association between age of respondents and digital marketing.

Table No.2: Chi square test to test association between age of respondents and digital marketing

(O)	(E)	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
14	22*17/30=12.47	1.534	2.353	0.188
2	5*17/30=2.83	-0.833	0.6938	0.244
1	3*17/30=1.7	-0.7	0.49	0.288
6	22*7/30=5.13	0.867	0.7516	0.146
0	5*7/30=1.17	-1.166	1.3595	1.166
1	3*7/30=0.7	0.3	0.09	0.129
2	22*6/30=4.4	-2.4	5.76	1.31
3	5*6/30=1	2	4	4
1	3*6/30=0.6	0.4	0.16	0.266

$$\chi^2 = \sum(O - E)^2/E = 7.7358, \chi^2_{(0.05)} = 12.592$$

Calculated value was less than table value. Thus, H₁ was accepted. It implies that there was no significance difference between age and impact of Covid-19 on Digital Marketing. Further, it could be inferred that people of all age groups had same attitude towards online shopping during pre-post lockdown period.

Further, attitude of respondents of different genders towards digital marketing was analyzed. The respondents were divided into males and females. The analysis was done by applying Chi Square test at 5% level of significance to study the association between gender of respondents and preference of online shopping.

Table No.3: Chi square test to test association between gender of respondents and digital marketing

(O)	(E)	O-E	(O-E) ²	(O-E) ² /E
13	50	37	1369	27.38
17	50	33	1089	21.78
			$\sum(O-E)^2/E = 49.16$	

$$\chi^2 = \sum(O - E)^2/E = 49.16, \chi^2_{(0.05)} = 3.841$$

H₂ was rejected which implies a significant difference between gender and preference of online shopping. It suggested that males and females had a different attitude towards digital marketing during the pandemic.

B. Factors affecting Digital Marketing

The respondents were asked questions related the factors they consider while doing online marketing. They were asked to give the extent to which they find speed of delivery as an important determinant in digital marketing. 3 points on the Likert scale were 'Always' (with highest value 1), 'Sometimes' with medium importance (and was assigned value 2), and the third point was 'Never' (with least value 3). Likert scale value of 1.333 (approx.) indicated that speed of delivery was an important determinant in digital marketing.

Table No.4 Importance of Speed of Delivery while choosing Online Shopping

SPEED OF DELIVERY	FREQUENCY	LIKERT SCALE	TOTAL SCALE
Never	-	3	-
Sometimes	10	2	20
Always	20	1	20
Total	30		40

To study the importance of shipping costs in digital marketing, the respondents were asked to rate the significance of shipping charges in online marketing. A 3-point Likert scale comprising of the options 'Yes' with the highest importance, 'May Be' with medium importance and 'Never' with the least importance was used. The analysis was done by calculating the overall rank. the Likert value (1.733 approx) revealed that respondents were not willing to pay shipping charges while shopping online.

Table No.5 Importance of Shipping Charges while choosing Online Shopping

SHIPPING CHARGES	FREQUENCY	LIKERT SCALE	TOTAL SCALE
Yes	4	3	12
No	14	2	28
May be	12	1	12
Total	30		52

Another factor affecting choice of digital marketing was the payment method preferred by the customers. The respondents were asked to rank different payment options available in digital marketing. The options were debit cards, credit cards, e wallets, cash on delivery, bank transfers and mobile payments. The respondents assigned ranks to different options from 1 to 6 where 1 was the highest rank and 6 was the lowest rank.

Table No. 6: Choice of Payment Method in Digital Marketing

	R 1	R 2	R 3	R 4	R 5	R 6	RANK	OVERALL RANK
Weights.	6 w ₁	5 w ₂	4 w ₃	3 w ₄	2 w ₅	1 w ₆	-	-
Debit cards (x ₁)	10	5	6	4	3	2	4.3	2
Credit cards (x ₂)	1	4	4	5	10	6	2.766	5
E-wallets (x ₃)	1	2	2	3	9	13	2.133	6
Cash on delivery (x ₄)	13	9	3	2	1	2	4.83	1
Bank transfers (x ₅)	2	7	5	7	5	4	3.4	4
Mobile payment (x ₆)	3	6	5	9	4	3	3.53	3

CALCULATION OF OVERALL RANK

$$= \frac{x^1w^1+x^2w^2+x^3w^3+x^4w^4+x^5w^5+x^6w^6}{\text{No.of responses}} = \frac{x^1w^1+x^2w^2+x^3w^3+x^4w^4+x^5w^5+x^6w^6}{\text{No.of responses}}$$

$$= \frac{10*6+5*5+6*4+4*3+3*2+2*1}{30} = \frac{129}{30} = 4.3$$

The overall rank was calculated which revealed that cash on delivery was the most preferred method of payment in online shopping followed by debit cards and mobile payments. It was found that only a few people preferred bank transfers. Credit cards were not much preferred for paying while shopping online, whereas the least popular payment method in digital marketing was e wallets.

Further, the respondents were asked the reasons which they consider were a hindrance in online shopping. This helped in identifying the challenges faced by digital marketers. Different reasons were listed and percentages were calculated. The main basis for hesitation towards online buying was the inability to touch the product and check the quality of the product followed by reliability and complex return process. On the other hand, missing social interactions, long delivery time and some other factors were not a major challenge facing the marketers.

Table No. 7 Reasons discouraging Online Shopping

REASONS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
I miss the social interactions	2	6.7%
Inability to touch and check the quality of the product	16	53.3%
Reliability	6	20%
Long delivery time	2	6.7%
Complex process to return	3	10%
Others	1	3.3%
Total	30	100%

C. Impact of COVID 19 on Digital marketing.

In order to examine the effect of the pandemic on online marketing, the respondents were questioned if there was any increase in their frequency of online marketing during the pandemic. They selected the most appropriate option from amongst the three options i.e. Yes, No or Maybe in reference to any hike in their online shopping behavior during Covid-19. It was found that 57% respondents had increased buying products online during this phase, whereas only 23% did not have any increase in their online shopping frequency. 20% respondents were not sure whether there had been any increase or not related to online purchases during that period.

Table No.8: Increase in Frequency of Online Shopping during COVID 19

RESPONSES	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Yes	17	57%
No	7	23%
May be	6	20%
Total	30	100

In order to compare whether there was any change in the online shopping behavior of the respondents during pre-post lockdown period, they were asked to mark the appropriate response with respect to this. Three options were given to them which included 'Nothing changed I was an online purchaser even before COVID-19', 'Yes, today I am more oriented with online buying' and 'No, I mainly purchase at physical store'. Percentages were calculated to examine their inclination towards digital marketing during this period. It was found that there was a difference between their preference towards online shopping before and after the pandemic. Majority of the respondents were became more inclined towards online marketing owing to COVID 19. Some of the respondents were online shoppers even before the pandemic and it did not affect their buying behavior towards digital marketing. There were a few respondents

who neither used digital marketing before lockdown nor afterwards. Overall, there was a surge in the online shoppers as a consequence of the pandemic.

Table No. 9: Orientation towards online buying during Covid-19

ORIENTATION TOWARDS ONLINE BUYING	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Nothing changed I was an online purchaser even before COVID-19	8	26.7%
Yes, today I am more oriented with online buying	17	57%
No, I mainly purchase at physical store	5	16.7%
Total	30	100%

Further, factors influencing consumers to buy online were examined. Percentages revealed that restrictions on social distancing imposed by the government during Covid-19 was found to be the major motive behind online shopping. Another factor that stimulated digital marketing was more time spent by consumers at home. Fear of coming in contact with risk group also an important consideration for choosing online marketing. Availability of products was also considered by some respondents, whereas, individual social responsibility and online campaigns did not have much impact to attract consumers towards online marketing

Table No.10: Factors Encouraging Online Shopping during Covid-19

FACTORS	FREQUENCY	PERCENTAGE
Restrictions on social distancing by government.	8	26.7%
Online campaigns	3	20%
Fear of coming in contact with risk group.	6	13%
Spending more time at home	7	23.3%
Individual social responsibility	3	10%
Availability of Products	5	16.7%
Total	30	100%

The study further tried to get an insight into the impact of Covid-19 on digital marketing by asking the respondents to regarding number of times they purchased products online before and after the pandemic in a month. Student's t test was applied to measure the difference in the frequency shopping online in a month.

Res pon den ts	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
D	1	-1	-1	8	0	8	0	5	1	4	-1	5	0	3	0

D ²	1	1	1	6	0	6	0	2	1	1	1	2	0	9	0	
Res pon den ts	1	1	1	1	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	2	3	T o t a l
D	6	7	8	9	0	1	1	0	6	2	0	-2	4	1	1	Σ D 5 2
D ²	4	1	1	0	4	1	1	0	3	4	0	4	1	1	1	Σ D ² 3 4 2

Applying t-test at 5% level of significance:

$$S = \sqrt{\frac{\sum d^2 - n(d)^2}{n-1}} = 2.9477 \quad t_{0.05} \frac{d\sqrt{n}}{s} = 3.220, \quad \text{Table value} \\ (t_{0.05}) = 2.045$$

The calculated value was greater than the table value, thus, H₃ was rejected which indicated a significant difference in frequency of online shopping before and after lock down. Thus, it pointed out that the pandemic had a significant impact on online marketing.

V. FINDINGS

The findings of the research paper are of paramount importance for the digital marketers. The study pointed out that the consumers consider online shopping to be convenient, offering products at low prices and has a wide variety of products. It was found that people of all age groups have same attitude towards online shopping during pre-post lockdown period. But, gender has a significant effect on buying behavior of consumers towards digital marketing. Thus, males and females have a different attitude towards online shopping. Regarding factors affecting digital marketing, it was found that Speed of delivery has a vital impact on online shopping. Consumers shun from paying shipping charges, thus, it could be inferred that charging shipping cost from consumers discouraged them from buying online. Another factor that affects online shopping is the payment method. No doubt, India is becoming digital India but still people prefer to pay through cash for online shopping even in today's era. Besides this, there are some crucial challenges facing digital marketers such as the inability of customers to touch the product and to check the quality of the products. Reliability is also a concern for digital marketers. The paper also attempted to study the impact of Covid-19 on digital marketing. It was found that the respondents were more inclined towards online buying as a consequence of COVID-19. While some of the respondents used online shopping during pre COVID 19 times but majority of them (57%) revealed they were more

inclined towards purchasing online post COVID 19 leading to a rise in online shoppers. The major ground for increase in digital marketing during the pandemic were restrictions imposed by government such as social distancing. In addition to this, most of the time spent by people in their homes due to lockdown was another factor leading to increased orientation towards digital marketing.

VI. CONCLUSION & SUGGESTIONS

The present research studied the attitude of consumers towards digital marketing. It focused on the factors affecting shopping behavior of consumers with respect to the changing trends in digital marketing during pre and post COVID19 period. Further, it examined the impact of the pandemic on digital marketing. The results provide some useful insights for strategists and scholars regarding crucial factors determining the transition towards online shopping. Digital marketing strategists should design their different programs or campaigns for male and female buyers as gender of consumers has a great impact on online buying pattern of consumers. On the contrary, people of all age groups prefer online marketing so standardized marketing programs could be designed for young as well as older digital shoppers. The online marketers should focus on convenience, low prices and variety of goods as these are important considerations for the online shoppers. Besides this, delivery strategies should be streamlined and the goods should be delivered to the online shoppers in minimum time as speed of delivery is one of the major determinants in online purchases. Further, shipping charges should be waived off as it is a major constraint facing digital marketers. People avoid buying products for which they have to pay the shipping cost. The major considerations for choosing online shopping during the pandemic were restrictions imposed by government on social distancing and most of the time spent by people in their homes due to lockdown. Further, digital marketing has seen a high growth potential post COVID 19.

VII. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

The research was based on primary data so the accuracy of responses could not be ascertained. This could further be affected as convenience sampling technique was used. Further, some of the responses were collected through internet which might have produced incorrect responses or some respondents might have given wrong responses intentionally. In addition to this the time available to conduct the research was limited restricting the sample size.

Improvements in the research could be made by using probability sampling techniques and by taking a larger sample size. Some issues such as research from marketer's perspective by selecting online sellers or businesses could also yield good and meaningful results. The research could also be undertaken to study digital marketing for different

product categories. Research should also not be restricted by time and monetary costs to yield better results.

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