***Marketing during Pandemic***

Humans are known to be a resilient race and when adversity strikes, they come up with some brilliant solutions for life to become easy to live with. Since the year 2020, the word “pandemic” has become a household one and the word “positive” has taken a different connotation altogether post wreck caused by the Covid 19 virus, globally. But the question arises have we, as humans, evolved? The answer is “Yes”, we have. Decades before, Edmund Jerome McCarthy, coined the 4Ps of marketing tools viz Product, Price, Promotion and Place, later propounded by Dr. Philip Kotler. Let’s take a look how the 4Ps have reacted to the pandemic and brought in a gradual change in our life. For discussion’s sake we will touch the Indian context mainly to evaluate such transformations.

**Product (and Services too!)**

Since the outbreak of the pandemic the entire population has been forced to stay at home to break the chain of infection. So, over a period of time marketeers has started infusing “healthy” aspects to their respective products- edible oils, biscuits, *atta* and packaged foods have been positioned more as “immunity boosters”, laminates and paints have been touted to have “viro-kill technology” and air conditioners, cars have been sold on the additional feature of having “*filters to stop the virus*!! The bio medicine (read *ayurvedic*) got a shot in the arm, as suave marketeers flooded the market with their products. A change for good indeed!

A big shift came as far as the ecommerce is concerned. Medicines, Food, Grocery, White goods, Home décor, Cars can now be booked online. The best part you get to sip your Red wine too at your home, courtesy e commerce!

Food delivery aggregators changed themselves into delivery aggregators, car care companies became House sanitizing units. Local *kirana* repair units became vegetable and fish vendors. In certain cities to meet the ambulance demand of the place taxi aggregators turned themselves as patient transporters. To cash in the public at home OTT content distributors like Netflix and Amazons had made their presence widely accepted through their web-series and contents.

**Price**

Indians are always known as one of the most price sensitive people in the world. So, at the advent of the pandemic marketeers were quite not sure how to price relevant or bundled products. Also, logistics had hampered due to restrictions at various state borders so ultimately consumers had to face shortage at times, giving rise to temporary panic. This was also observed in the US and UK supermarkets as well. The companies then started to price their products based the demand. People experienced sudden surge in price of staples as the basic needs boiled down to bare necessities as routes to luxury were duly closed!

Another approach followed by the Indian companies was market skimming! Companies harping on healthy product portfolios in order to make an impact on the consumers, were charging premium to make the first impression. Many service providers, restaurants were adding convenience fees as they were adhering to certain covid protocols which added to the overheads.

**Promotion**

This is the area where it had hit the market most. Due to lockdown the entire population went indoors and outdoors-media was left in lurch. Companies started moving away from big hoardings and banners and took refuge at the online platform. On the other hand, most of them experienced low demand hence a huge budgetary cut was there at the advertisement arena. Companies in the travel, tourism and luxury goods industry were left to themselves to defend.

Though prevalent, adverts started appearing more on the digital platform. India being blessed with a huge population owning smartphones, companies became more prominent in the social networking sites, YouTube and Instagrams of the world. This platform was cost effective too. Thus, a new era of digital marketing paved its way during the pandemic.

Another positive fall out of the pandemic is perhaps the gain in the radio listenership. Survey shows that during the corona lock down, time people spend listening to radio has increased by 23 per cent to 2.36 hours every day, second only to the television, Marketeers have been found to have shifted a good ad spend to this medium given its reach and acceptability all around.

 **Place**

Indians are traditional buyers. They believe a lot in touch and feel of the product, however the pandemic had recreated the market place a lot. The practice of visiting malls and bazzars were restricted. The shift in consumer behaviour impacted manufacturers too. The earlier practice of reaching out to consumers through intermediaries gave way to direct channel. B2B2C slowly became B2C or even D2C i.e., direct to consumer. The online market place facilitated such possibilities. This became a boon to the consumer as high street brands in absence of intermediaries lowered their prices and consumers were enjoying discounted priced in their go-for items. Growth of online transaction as reported by the RBI grew by almost 80% during the pandemic which itself is a testimony to such behavioural changes.

As Plato rightly spoke that “***necessity is the mother of all inventions”,*** we note the changes occurred during the pandemic as people had to resort to newer ways to live life. There was the demand side story and the supply side stories as well. There was a certain transformation of products and services as they were reinvented or had their lines extended to fit the requirement. At the end, we see a “New Normal” in place.

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