

Innovative Healthcare Marketing Strategies during COVID-19

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Abstract

The COVID-19 Pandemic has resulted in many adversities. The disease has affected almost all known sectors, from the health to the business sector. One of the significant effects of the disease is that it has negatively influenced the healthcare market, creating the need to develop new and innovative marketing strategies. With the advancement of the disease, people have sought various preventive medical care and measures to protect themselves from the disease, which has led many of them to explore their medical, pharmaceutical, and healthcare options. For healthcare industries, this Pandemic has created the need to develop new and innovative marketing strategies to fulfill the unmet needs of the patients during this crazy time. These changes were mainly attributed to the lockdown initiated by the government, which has led to limited mobility of people to visit healthcare centers and businesses such as pharmacies. This paper will outline the innovative marketing approaches that have been taken by healthcare companies and measures that have been put in place to keep their businesses afloat while providing necessary medical, pharmaceutical, and healthcare supplies. Additionally, the study was prone to various limitations while researching and establishing the marketing innovations used by healthcare businesses. One of the significant limitations is that most marketing innovations discussed and data provided in this paper involved using the internet and social media platforms for marketing healthcare products.

Keywords: COVID-19, healthcare, marketing, innovation, influences, and strategies.

Introduction

The COVID-19 Pandemic has influenced many sectors around the world. The disease has led to multiple deaths across the globe, leading to the creation of preventive measures, which include the instilling of lockdown measures and mandatory curfews. Additionally, the disease has resulted in the closure of many businesses, which has consequently led to the collapse of economies around the world and the loss of jobs (Gandolf, 2020). Most organizations have developed innovative strategies amid pandemics to keep their businesses afloat (Sherman, 2019). For instance, almost all grocery and convenience stores started using online platforms heavily to promote their products and allow customers to order them at their convenience from home. The healthcare businesses also developed marketing strategies to ensure that customers and patients can access their much-needed services (Purcarea, 2019). Most healthcare businesses invested their time and money on plans that were more relevant during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Before describing the various healthcare marketing strategies, it is imperative to explain multiple technicalities of the aspect. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2011), healthcare marketing is a discipline in public healthcare that involves developing, educating, and conveying health news and practices using client-based and evidence-centered plans to protect and improve the well-being of various societies. Therefore, when we talk about healthcare or pharmaceutical marketing, it is mainly dedicated to educating and recommending effective products and interventions to customers using a scientific approach (Habes et al., 2020). After a firm understanding of healthcare marketing aspects, this paper outlines the various innovative strategies used by multiple healthcare businesses to support themselves during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The research involved a systematic research methodology. The primary research formula employed in this article is qualitative. This research formula involved the study of various strategic innovations used by healthcare businesses to support themselves.

The information regarding different innovative strategies was collected from multiple peer-reviewed scholarly sources. The primary databases used for searching the references included Google Scholar and JSTOR.

All resources used for the research were current, and the discussions were primarily based on the author's

observations & discussions. A specific set of keywords was used to find the most relevant sources for the research.

Impacts of COVID-19 on the Healthcare Market

COVID-19 Pandemic has, without a doubt, affected the healthcare market, which has been both direct and indirect. Before the declaration of various measures such as lockdowns and mandatory curfews, the healthcare sector saw an influx of customers who sought to buy products that could offer protection against the disease (McKinsey, 2020). These products included hand sanitizers, face masks, and surgical gloves. Most customers rushed to healthcare outlets to procure such products, which led to high demand for healthcare products. On the other hand, people avoided public areas and places with possibilities of overcrowding and infection (Shroeshe, 2021). As a consequence, the number of customers visiting healthcare businesses reduced significantly. Thus, the Pandemic resulted in a significant decline in customer numbers seeking medical products and services, which has created the need for healthcare businesses to develop innovative strategies to keep their businesses afloat.

The COVID-19 Pandemic has amounted to the development of several innovative strategies that were not thought of or proven to be successful enough. Although the Pandemic created so much chaos, it was an eye-opener for many businesses. It led to the design and development of several creative and promotional measures to keep the business sustainable (Market research future, 2020). One prime reason for this change was increased customer inclination towards getting their preferred products delivered to their homes. Hence, healthcare businesses also developed strategies along the same lines to keep up with the new trend. These new interventions could be long-term strategies, which means they may continue to be in use even after the Pandemic (Cuomo, 2020).

Innovative Healthcare Marketing Strategies

The COVID-19 Pandemic has influenced the development of innovative measures by healthcare businesses for their sustainability. One of the most significant measures used by the healthcare market is social media platforms (Macias, 2020). According to recent data, social media use has significantly increased during the COVID-19 as a result of people working from home and spending a considerable amount online & on social media (Dean, 2021). Therefore, healthcare businesses sought that as an option for marketing and created social media accounts making it easy for customers to reach the healthcare businesses and inquire about the products and services (Uppal and Anderson, 2020). Additionally, customers can order multiple goods and services and deliver them to their homes through social media platforms. This initiative was imperative, considering that people were encouraged to reduce unnecessary movement and physical interaction with other people, increasing their chances of getting infected by the virus (Iskowitz, 2020). Hence, through social media, healthcare businesses have created new marketing innovations.

Paid ads have proven to be effective marketing strategies during the COVID-19 Pandemic as well. Paid advertisements through popular sites reach a high number of consumers (The Economic Times, 2020). Popular sites such as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, and YouTube are used by millions of people around the globe (Ali and Anwar, 2021). Using these platforms to advertise various healthcare products, services, and information, effectively reaches a high number of people (World Health Organization, 2020). For instance, the World Health Organization (WHO) has been using these commonly visited sites to provide information regarding the preventive measures of COVID-19 and has recently used it to communicate to the public about the developed vaccine (Agarwal et al., 2021). Additionally, other businesses use these paid ads for advertising their products and have ended up attracting a vast multitude of customers (Talbot, 2020). Hence, paid ads have positively influenced healthcare businesses and consequently provided sustainability to the companies.

The development of responsive healthcare sites has been used very actively during the COVID-19 Pandemic to share information associated with the awareness of diseases and medications. Quick service delivery has also seen significant traction during the COVID-19 Pandemic as people were relying on most services to get delivered to their homes in the shortest time possible. These fast and responsive business modules have been able to reap significantly in the market. Most healthcare businesses went ahead and adapted this business module to keep up with this demand. They developed quick responsive sites to deliver medical services and products to their clients within a short time, building loyalty and dependability. They

wanted their customers to always look up to them to provide essential services. Hence, creating a quick responsive healthcare site has been a crucial innovation during COVID-19 to ensure a positive customer base.

Branding and advertising style have also changed during COVID-19 to ensure that customers are aware of the various services offered by healthcare businesses. Since most people were not moving out of their residences during the COVID-19 Pandemic, healthcare businesses have had to develop innovative strategies to promote their brands.

This change has created the need for partnerships between healthcare businesses and other companies. For instance, we saw a few healthcare businesses advertising themselves indirectly on products such as cereal boxes or milk cartons, which are commonly used in the average household and can reach a wide range of customers. Additionally, offering quality and exceptional healthcare services improves the business' brand. Hence, healthcare businesses have improved their service provisions to create a positive brand for themselves and improve their companies' perception (Lischer, 2021). Therefore, branding innovations have promoted healthcare businesses and kept them afloat during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Healthcare businesses have never been a big fan of promoting or discounting products. However, we saw that several healthcare businesses created promotions to attract more clients during the Pandemic. Product promotions and discounts have been considered one of the most valuable assets for a sustainable business. Most current and past customers often recommend a good healthcare product and service provider to other potential customers, hence a word-of-mouth promotion. By offering special offers or discounts on various services and products, healthcare businesses attract customers seeking their services (Knott, 2021).

Additionally, healthcare businesses have employed virtual physician liaisons to promote themselves. These physician liaisons act as representatives for doctors, hospitals, or medical practice via call or emails. Their duty as representatives is to refer doctors or any specialty physicians. These physician referrals are significant in growing the patient or customer base for many healthcare businesses. Many virtual physician liaisons have recently been employed to refer medical businesses to patients and potential customers to expand their businesses (Knott, 2021). By referring the patients to these healthcare facilities, these companies were able to cater to customers' needs, which in turn kept their businesses sustainable and growing. Therefore, employing physician liaisons or physician relations managers has helped many healthcare businesses remain relevant during the COVID-19 Pandemic.

The COVID-19 has forced businesses worldwide to pivot many of their marketing plans and tactics overnight, with tradeshows, conferences, and events canceled for almost everyone. Healthcare marketers were in a state of crisis, but webinars provided a fresh tactical opportunity. All you have to do now is act quickly and put your webinar plan in place to replace the money you were getting from sources that are no longer viable (Ismail et al., 2021).

All scientific medical activities have been transferred to an online format to continue ongoing medical education, in the form of webinars, after COVID-19 was declared a pandemic (CME). Most healthcare physicians' reactions across medical specialties to the rapid and unexpected change from traditional face-to-face meetings to webinars were incredible, as webinars provided an excellent alternative for discussions and recommendations for the future (Ismail et al., 2021).

Impact of New Innovative Marketing Strategies on the Healthcare systems

The new marketing strategies developed during the COVID-19 Pandemic have significantly influenced the healthcare systems. One of the most primary influences of the latest innovations is increased public involvement in various health aspects (Kooch, 2020). People can now search for information and post inquiries on social media platforms and various internet sites. All these online platforms and social media have significantly increased interaction between health systems and customers (Gandolf and Clifford, 2020). Additionally, through social media and website platforms, healthcare systems can inform the public regarding the different medical advancements made by the health systems (Anderson et al., 2020). As a result of these new marketing strategies, the general public has been successfully involved in many medical aspects, paving the way for people to discover new things about the healthcare sector.

Strategic marketing innovations have revolutionized how business is conducted (Dyra, 2020). The use of online markets has increased comparatively during the COVID-19 Pandemic as people order goods and services from various online platforms (Sing et al., 2020). This aspect has created significance for customers

and businesses as people no longer need to visit pharmacies and other healthcare businesses physically. Additionally, healthcare businesses run paid advertisements through websites and build their brands through social media platforms (Bejtkovsky, 2020). Hence, the online business market has considerably grown and revolutionized business conduct.

Furthermore, healthcare businesses have embraced digitizing their inventories and functions (Bejtkovsky and Copca, 2020). This factor has conveniently eased tracking and documenting information needed by the companies. People are now adapting to using websites to order products, services and communicate with medical practitioners (Berry, 2019).

The new marketing strategies have increased the customer base for local healthcare businesses. Popular websites are accessible from any point of the world, hence creating an effective advertisement platform (Grewal et al., 2020). Now, we are attracting customers from within the communities. These healthcare businesses also exposed themselves to the global market and have attracted customers from other countries via social media platforms and other websites (Baharun et al., 2019). Even local businesses have expanded to a global level. Additionally, these marketing strategies have provided an equal ground for competition for companies to promote their products.

Looking into these changes, we could say that these innovations have proved effective and could be implemented permanently in the near future (Durgadevi and Shree, 2020).

Limitations of the study

The study was prone to various limitations while trying to establish the multiple innovations used by healthcare businesses. One of the most significant limitations is that most of the marketing innovations covered in this paper revolve around social media platforms and other online platforms. Therefore, most of the facts provided in this study were based on the use of social media and various other online platforms. Additionally, the study offers findings solely on the healthcare businesses' marketing innovations. This factor is a limitation since the study did not explore how other companies developed innovations to conduct their businesses and sustain themselves. In order to understand the full scope of new marketing innovations, the research should focus on the entirety of all businesses as a whole. Thus, the factors outlined above have led to the limitation of the study.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 Pandemic has influenced almost all aspects globally. These unprecedented times have led to the adoption of new lifestyles as well as innovations in various fields. Several businesses have implemented new techniques and strategies to keep businesses afloat. The digital marketing strategy is widely adopted most imperatively since it reaches a broad customer base (Ben, 2017). Several companies partnered with multiple online channels and platforms to advertise their products and provide instant delivery services. The healthcare business also used this innovative aspect of marketing, i.e., using websites and social media platforms to promote their products. With these innovative strategies, healthcare businesses have been able to stay afloat and sustain themselves. Aside from the research on how healthcare businesses have developed strategies to support themselves, studies should be carried out to discover how other companies have sustained themselves during the COVID-19 Pandemic. These researches would further provide a broader scope of how various industries have been able to cope with the situation independently. Still, it is paramount to identify how the medical field has revolutionized its marketing during the Pandemic.

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