



Impact of COVID-19 on the Marketing Strategies of Companies in India

Rajat Umery

Department of Management, LNCT University, Bhopal (M.P.), INDIA

Abstract

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The COVID-19 pandemic significantly changed the marketing environment in India by influencing consumer behaviour, purchasing patterns, communication practices, and the way organizations interacted with their customers. Restrictions on physical movement, social distancing, business disruptions, and the growing use of digital technologies encouraged companies to reconsider traditional marketing approaches and increase their reliance on digital platforms. The present study examines the changes in consumer preferences for different ordering channels and highlights the implications of these changes for marketing strategies. A descriptive research design was adopted, and primary data were considered from 250 respondents aged between 18 and 50 years. The respondents were categorized into four age groups: 18–25, 26–30, 31–40, and 41–50 years. Data were analysed using frequency and percentage techniques. The results indicate that Online Platforms and physical Stores were the most preferred individual ordering channels, each accounting for 26% of respondents. Facebook Accounts were preferred by 20%, Phone by 18%, and Email by 10%. When Online Platform, Facebook Account, and Email were collectively considered as digital channels, 56% of respondents preferred digital ordering methods, compared with 44% who preferred phone or store-based channels. The findings indicate that digital marketing and online purchasing have become important components of consumer engagement, while traditional channels continue to retain considerable relevance. The study concludes that COVID-19 accelerated the digital transformation of

marketing in India. Companies should therefore adopt an integrated or omnichannel marketing approach that combines digital platforms, social media, e-commerce, telephone communication, and physical stores to meet diverse consumer needs.

Keywords: COVID-19, Digital Marketing, Marketing Strategy, Consumer Behaviour, E Commerce, Social Media Marketing, Online Purchasing, Marketing Channels

1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic was one of the most significant disruptions experienced by businesses and consumers in recent times [1]. The spread of the virus, lockdowns, social-distancing requirements, restrictions on movement, and temporary closure of businesses created substantial challenges for organizations across different sectors. In addition to affecting production and supply chains, the pandemic changed the way companies communicated with customers and marketed their products and services [2,3].

Marketing practices that traditionally depended on physical interaction, customer visits, exhibitions, trade fairs, conferences, and face-to-face communication were significantly affected. Companies were therefore required to find alternative ways of reaching their target customers. Digital technologies, social media, e-commerce platforms, websites, email communication, and online advertising became increasingly important for maintaining customer relationships and supporting business continuity [4,5]. The uploaded source similarly identifies the increased importance of digital marketing and changes in customer communication during COVID-19.



The pandemic also accelerated changes in consumer behaviour. With people spending more time at home and facing restrictions on movement, online shopping became an increasingly attractive option. Consumers began using digital platforms not only for purchasing products but also for searching for information, communicating with businesses, comparing alternatives, and engaging with brands [6].

Social media emerged as an important component of this transformation. Businesses increasingly used social networking platforms to communicate promotional messages, provide information, respond to customer concerns, and maintain brand visibility. The original study also highlights the increased use of social media and its influence on customer engagement during the pandemic [7].

COVID-19 also affected the traditional 4Ps of marketing Product, Price, Place, and Promotion. Businesses had to modify products and services according to changing customer requirements, reconsider prices in response to changing costs and purchasing power, develop online distribution channels, and shift promotional activities towards digital media. Online sales and digital service delivery became increasingly important as customers became more comfortable with remote purchasing and communication [8].

The transformation was particularly visible in the area of digital marketing. Traditional promotional activities became more difficult because physical events and direct interactions were restricted. As a result, companies increasingly relied on digital advertising, social media marketing, content marketing, and online customer engagement. The pandemic demonstrated that digital marketing was not merely an additional promotional option but, for many organizations, an important component of business continuity [9,10].

Consumer preferences also became more diverse. Although digital channels gained importance, traditional channels did not disappear completely. Some consumers continued to prefer physical stores and telephone communication because of familiarity, trust, product-related requirements, or personal preference. This suggests that companies need to provide customers with multiple purchasing and communication options rather than relying exclusively on one channel.

The present study therefore focuses on consumer preferences for different ordering channels among respondents aged 18–50 years. A sample of 250 respondents was considered for the analysis. The study examines preferences for Online Platforms, Phone, Email, Facebook Accounts, and Stores to understand the relative importance of digital and traditional channels.

The analysis shows that Online Platforms and Stores were each preferred by 26% of respondents, while Facebook Accounts were preferred by 20%, Phone by 18%, and Email by 10%. When the three digital channels Online Platform, Facebook Account, and Email are combined, they account for 56% of the respondents. This indicates that digital channels have a substantial role in contemporary purchasing behaviour, although traditional channels remain important.

The findings have important implications for companies operating in the post-COVID business environment. Organizations need to understand changing customer expectations and develop marketing strategies that combine technology with customer-oriented communication. Rather than completely replacing traditional marketing methods, digital tools can be integrated with existing channels to create a more convenient and flexible customer experience.

Thus, the COVID-19 pandemic can be viewed not only as a crisis that disrupted existing marketing practices but also as a catalyst that accelerated the transition towards digital, customer-centric, and integrated marketing strategies [11].



2. Review of Literature

Dekimpe and Deleersnyder (2018) examined marketing initiatives during periods of economic decline and recovery. Their work provides a useful foundation for understanding how marketing strategies respond to changes in economic conditions.

Hamilton (2020) highlighted the growing importance of digital marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic. The cancellation of physical events such as exhibitions, conferences, trade fairs, and promotional activities encouraged companies to reconsider the allocation of their marketing budgets and increase their use of digital platforms. The pandemic also resulted in a decline in marketing expenditure in several markets. Organizations became more cautious about spending and focused on marketing activities that could provide measurable customer engagement and business value.

Siggelkow and Terwiesch (2019) emphasized the importance of connected strategies and continuous relationships with customers. The pandemic reinforced this idea because businesses needed to maintain customer relationships even when direct physical interaction was not possible.

Bettiol et al. (2021), in their study of Italian SMEs, found that digital technologies helped businesses reconnect with customers during the pandemic. The use of web-based technologies and digital content improved both the frequency and quality of customer interactions. Customer relationship management systems and online shopping facilities also helped SMEs remain competitive.

These findings suggest that web-based technologies should not be viewed simply as supporting tools. They can form an important part of an organization's overall marketing strategy.

Research by Cinelli et al. (2020) examined the role of social media during the COVID-19 crisis. Social networking platforms became major sources of information during the pandemic, although they also contributed to the rapid spread of inaccurate information.

Laato et al. (2020) highlighted the importance of studying consumer behavior during the pandemic. The unusual circumstances created by COVID-19 provided an opportunity to understand how consumers make purchasing decisions during periods of uncertainty.

Thus, the literature indicates that COVID-19 accelerated digital transformation, changed consumer behaviour, increased the importance of social media, and encouraged organizations to redesign their marketing strategies.

- **Objectives of the Study**

The COVID-19 pandemic created significant challenges for businesses across different sectors. It affected economic activity; consumer behavior, business operations, and marketing practices. To examine how companies can adapt their marketing policies and strategies in response to the challenges created by the COVID-19 pandemic. The study also seeks to understand the changing role of digital marketing, consumer behavior, promotional activities, and marketing strategies during the pandemic.

3. Research Methodology

The present study adopts a descriptive research design to examine changes in consumer purchasing preferences and the use of different ordering channels during the COVID-19 pandemic. The study focuses particularly on the shift towards digital and online channels such as online platforms, phone-based ordering, email, and social media, while also considering traditional store-based purchasing.

The research is designed to provide a systematic understanding of consumer preferences and the changing role of digital channels in marketing and purchasing behavior [12].



- **Population of the Study**

The target population consists of consumers between 18 and 50 years of age who purchase products or services through one or more ordering channels. The inclusion of respondents from different age groups helps in understanding differences in purchasing preferences across the adult population.

- **Sample Size and Sampling**

A total sample of 250 respondents was considered for the study. Respondents were selected from the 18–50 age group. For analysis, the respondents were classified into four age categories: 18–25 years, 26–30 years, 31–40 years, and 41–50 years.

A convenient sampling approach may be used for collecting responses from respondents who were accessible and willing to participate in the study.

- **Data Collection**

The study is based primarily on **primary** data collected from respondents through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed to obtain information regarding respondents' demographic characteristics and their preferred channels for placing orders.

The major ordering channels considered in the study were:

- Online platforms
- Phone
- Email
- Facebook accounts
- Physical stores

The questionnaire may be administered through both online and offline modes to obtain responses from consumers belonging to different age groups.

- **Variables Considered in the Study**

The major variables considered in the analysis are **age group** and **preferred ordering channel**.

Table 3.1: Age variable is divided into categories

Age Group	Frequency	Percentage
18–25 Years	65	26.00%
26–30 Years	55	22.00%
31–40 Years	75	30.00%
41–50 Years	55	22.00%
Total	250	100.00%



Table 3.2: Preferred ordering channels are distributed

Preferred Ordering Channel	Frequency	Percentage
Online Platform	65	26.00%
Phone	45	18.00%
Email	25	10.00%
Facebook Account	50	20.00%
Store	65	26.00%
Total	250	100.00%

4. Data Analysis and Results

The data collected from 250 respondents were analysed using descriptive statistical techniques. The analysis focused on respondents' age distribution and their preferred channels for placing orders. Frequency and percentage analysis were used to understand consumer preferences and the growing importance of digital channels during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

- **Age-wise Distribution of Respondents**

The respondents were divided into four age groups: 18–25 years, 26–30 years, 31–40 years, and 41–50 years.

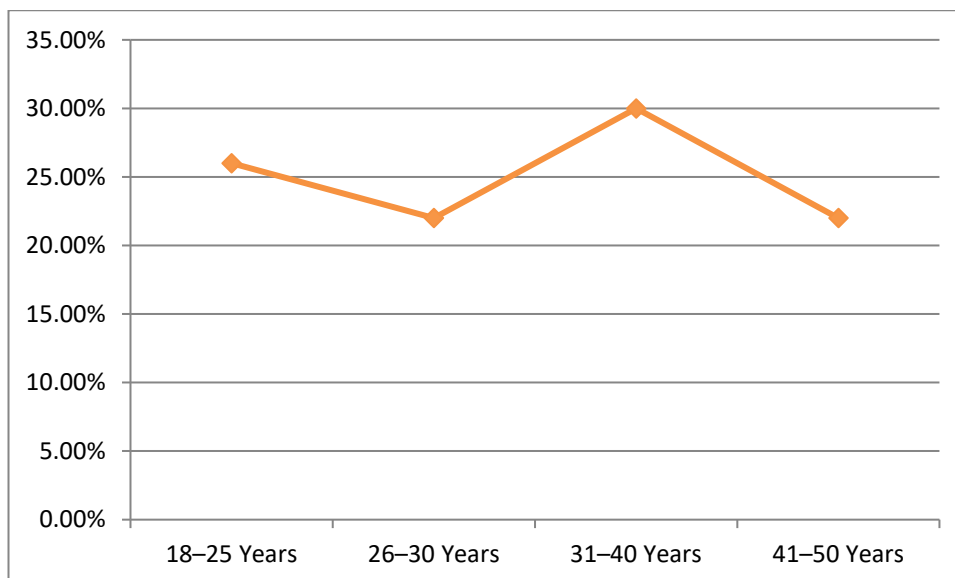


Figure 4.1: Age-wise Distribution of Respondents

Interpretation

The results indicate that the largest proportion of respondents belongs to the 31–40 years age group, accounting for 30% of the total sample. Respondents aged 18–25 years represent 26%, while both the 26–30 years and 41–50 years groups account for 22% each. The distribution indicates that the study includes respondents from different stages of adulthood rather than being concentrated in a single age category. This provides a broader basis for examining changes in consumer purchasing behavior and preferences for different ordering channels.



- **Preferred Channels for Placing Orders**

Respondents were also asked about their preferred channels for placing orders. Five major channels were considered: online platforms, phone, email, Facebook accounts, and physical stores.

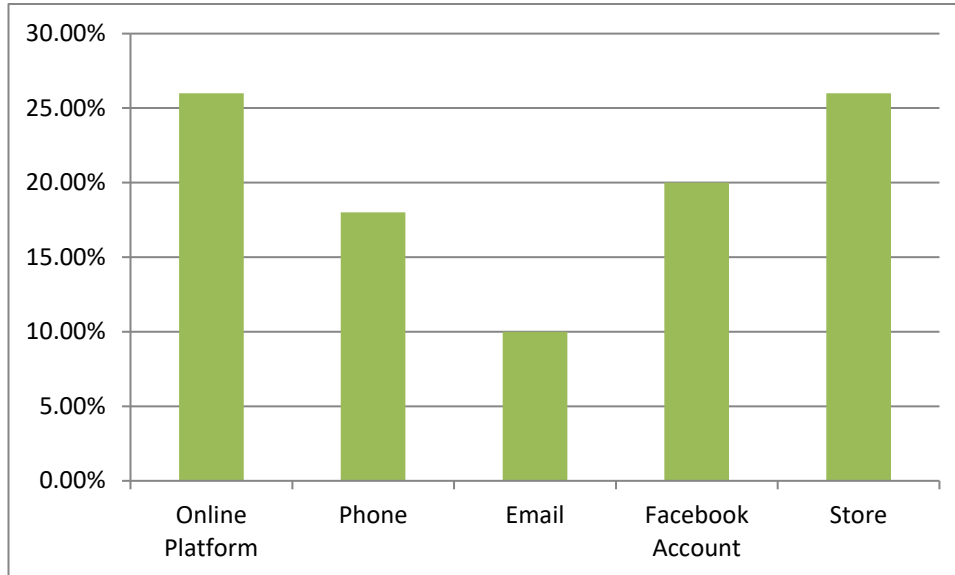


Figure 4.2: Preferred Channels for Placing Orders

Interpretation

The findings show that Online Platforms and Stores are the most preferred channels, with each being selected by 65 respondents (26%). This indicates that consumers continue to use both digital and traditional purchasing channels. Facebook Accounts are preferred by 50 respondents (20%), demonstrating the growing role of social media as a channel for customer interaction and product ordering. Phone-based ordering is preferred by 45 respondents (18%), while Email is the least preferred channel, with 25 respondents (10%).

Thus, 64% of respondents prefer digital or technology-mediated channels when Online Platforms, Facebook Accounts, and Email are considered together. This demonstrates the considerable role played by digital technologies in contemporary consumer purchasing behaviour.

- **Analysis of Digital versus Traditional Ordering**

For further interpretation, the ordering channels can be broadly classified into **digital channels** and **traditional/direct channels**.

Table 3.3: Digital and Traditional Ordering Preferences

Category	Channels Included	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Digital Channels	Online Platform, Email, Facebook Account	140	56



Direct/Traditional Channels	Phone, Store	110	44
Total	—	250	100

Interpretation

The analysis shows that 56% of respondents prefer digital ordering channels, compared with 44% who prefer phone or store-based ordering. The finding indicates that digital platforms have become an important component of consumer purchasing behaviour.

The relatively high preference for online platforms and social media suggests that businesses need to maintain a strong digital presence. Websites, e-commerce platforms, social media accounts, and other online communication channels can help organizations reach customers more effectively.

At the same time, the 44% preference for traditional/direct channels demonstrates that physical stores and telephone communication remain relevant. Therefore, businesses should not completely replace traditional channels with digital platforms. Instead, an integrated or omnichannel marketing approach may be more effective.

The descriptive analysis produces several important findings:

1. The study included 250 respondents from the age group of 18–50 years.
2. The largest age category was 31–40 years, representing 30% of the respondents.
3. Online Platforms were preferred by 26% of respondents, indicating the importance of digital ordering.
4. Stores also accounted for 26%, showing that traditional purchasing channels continue to remain important.
5. Facebook Accounts were preferred by 20% of respondents, highlighting the growing importance of social media in marketing and customer engagement.
6. Phone-based ordering was preferred by 18% of respondents.
7. Email was the least preferred ordering channel, accounting for 10% of respondents.
8. When Online Platform, Email, and Facebook are combined, 56% of respondents prefer digital ordering channels.
9. The results suggest that COVID-19 accelerated the importance of digital communication and online purchasing, while traditional channels continued to retain a substantial customer base.

5. Findings and Recommendations

The findings are consistent with the broader changes in consumer behaviour observed during the COVID-19 period. Restrictions on physical movement and concerns about health and safety encouraged consumers to explore online purchasing and digital communication. The preference for online platforms demonstrates the increasing importance of e-commerce in the customer journey. Social media also emerged as an important marketing channel, as demonstrated by the 20% preference for Facebook Accounts. However, the results also indicate that digital transformation does not necessarily mean the complete disappearance of traditional channels. The equal preference for online platforms and physical stores suggests that consumers may use different channels according to their convenience, product category, trust, and purchasing requirements.

Therefore, companies should adopt a balanced marketing strategy that integrates digital marketing, social media, e-commerce, telephone communication, and physical retail channels. Such an approach can enable businesses to serve



customers with different preferences while improving customer convenience and engagement. Thus, the results demonstrate that the COVID-19 pandemic contributed to a significant shift towards digital consumer engagement, but traditional purchasing methods continue to play an important role. The future marketing strategy of companies should therefore focus on providing customers with multiple, convenient, and interconnected channels for communication and purchasing.

6. Conclusion

The COVID-19 pandemic brought significant changes to the marketing strategies and consumer behaviour of companies in India. Restrictions on movement, social distancing, business disruptions, and changing customer expectations encouraged organizations to reconsider their traditional marketing practices and adopt more flexible and technology-driven approaches.

The findings of the study, based on 250 respondents between 18 and 50 years of age, indicate that digital channels have become an important part of the purchasing process. Online platforms were preferred by 26% of respondents, while Facebook-based ordering accounted for 20% and email for 10%. When these digital channels are considered together, 56% of respondents preferred digital methods for placing orders. At the same time, 44% continued to prefer phone or physical-store channels, demonstrating that traditional methods remain relevant.

The results suggest that the pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital marketing, e-commerce, social media, online communication, and content marketing. Businesses increasingly recognized that maintaining an online presence was essential for reaching customers and continuing operations during periods of uncertainty. However, the findings also show that digital transformation should not be viewed as a complete replacement for traditional marketing. Consumers continue to value physical stores and direct communication. Therefore, companies should develop an integrated or omnichannel marketing strategy that combines digital platforms with traditional channels according to customer requirements.

In the post-COVID business environment, successful companies are likely to be those that can respond quickly to changing consumer preferences, use technology effectively, and maintain meaningful relationships with customers. Marketing strategies should therefore focus not only on selling products but also on providing convenience, building trust, delivering relevant information, and creating long-term customer value.

Thus, COVID-19 acted as an important catalyst for the transformation of marketing practices in India. The pandemic accelerated a shift towards digital and customer-centric marketing, while also demonstrating the continuing importance of traditional channels. A balanced combination of digital innovation, customer engagement, and traditional marketing practices can help Indian companies remain competitive and resilient in the changing business environment.

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