

Impact of Covid-19 Pandemic on the Digital Marketing Strategies of Businesses in the United States: A Case of Selected Multinationals

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Abstract

The COVID 19 epidemic has had a significant economic impact on a number of countries, including the United States. As a result, the impact of the pandemic on organizations' digital marketing tactics in the United States was investigated in this study. The total number of 186 respondents who contributed data for the study was chosen using a convenient sampling approach. In order to analyze the data collected from respondents, the study used an ex-post facto research design and descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics revealed that most of the respondents are of the view that the pandemic have a very high impact on the digital marketing strategies of businesses in the United States. The study developed three hypotheses that were assessed at a 5% level of significance, and the results, based on the Levenes' and student t-tests, demonstrated that the pandemic had a statistically significant impact on businesses' digital marketing strategy in the United States. Based on the findings of the study, it is recommended that businesses in the United States maintain and develop the digital marketing tactics that were implemented during the COVID 19 pandemic for continued growth and success.

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Introduction

Various scholars have expressed worry over Covid-19's rising global influence (Bamidele-Sadiq et al., 2021; Cai & Luo, 2020), even as it affects enterprises all over the world, particularly multinational corporations in the United States of America. According to Cai and Luo (2020), the Covid-19 epidemic began in Wuhan, China, and has since spread throughout the world, and its impact on the world, particularly in the United States, has been growing, as businesses have been compelled to shut down operations as a result of the comprehensive lockdown, resulting in a decline in economic activity in the United States, as well as the rest of the world. Digital marketing strategies, as defined by Berman et al. (1999), are those strategies or plans that explain how a company wishes to achieve its marketing goals using online platforms such as social media, content marketing, and inbound marketing, among others. According to DeWitt et al. (2008), a company's digital marketing strategy is defined by the type of product they sell as well as their target audience. According to Armstrong et al. (2020), the Covid-19.

Customers' and businesses' daily lives have been drastically affected by the Covid-19 (Bamidele-Sadiq et al., 2021). Customers in the United States must become acclimated to using digital platforms for their transactions in order to prevent the virus from spreading further. According to researchers (Carmody et al., 2020; DiResta et al., 2020), over 70% of customers in the United States, as well as other countries, have resorted to using the Online platform for their purchase. As a result, multinational companies in the United States improved their marketing strategies by studying the consumption pattern of their consumers through digital means to effectively strategize their marketin. According to Donthu and Gustafsson (2020), the United States has one of the fastest growing e-commerce markets, which has been fueled by increased access to smart phones and technological knowledge, as well as a growing population, which is expected to reach 334,805,269 in 2022, up 0.57 percent from 2021.

The Covid-19 pandemic has warped the customer space in the United States, since clients of enterprises in the United States, among other countries, have progressed from the offline to the online shopping platform (Fernandes, 2020; Jiang et al., 2020 and Karmaker et al., 2021). The closure of physical businesses in the United States as a result of the Covid-19 lockdown resulted in strict operating standards, social distancing, and social distancing, resulting in an increase in online purchases of goods and services on the online platform, resulting in an improvement in the e-commerce markets in the United States. The e-commerce market in the United States was forecast to expand by 24.7 percent in 2020, according to Kwok et al., 2020. The market is estimated to develop at a compound yearly growth rate of 17.3 percent by 2024. (Ludvigsson, 2020 and Lin et al., 2020). Based on the foregoing, the purpose of this study is to investigate the likely influence of the covid-19 pandemic on digital marketing strategies of businesses in the United States, using the example of a few global corporations

(Coca-Cola, Philip Morris international and Amazon).

Aim of the study

The broad objective of this study was to examine the likely impact of covid-19 pandemic on the digital marketing strategies of businesses in the United States, using a case of selected multinationals, which was subdivided into various specific objectives.

Objectives of the study

- To investigate the impact of Covid-19 on the digital marketing strategy of Coca-Cola
- To examine the effect of Covid-19 on the digital marketing strategy of Philip Morris international and,
- To investigate the effect of Covid-19 on the digital marketing strategy of Amazon.

Research Hypothesis

H01: Covid-19 has no significant impact on the digital marketing strategy of Coca-Cola company.

H02: Covid-19 has no significant effect on the digital marketing strategy Philip Morris international

H03: Covid-19 has no significant effect on the digital marketing strategy of Amazon.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The impact of Covid-19 and digital marketing tactics has been conceived by several scholars (Bamidele-Sadiq et al., 2021; Karmaker et al., 2021; Ding and Li, 2021; Chereau and Meschi, 2019). According to Chaffey and Ellis-Chadwick (2019), a digital marketing strategy is a plan that assists a company in achieving specified goals and objectives via online platforms. In other words, digital marketing entails using a variety of online channels to achieve certain corporate objectives (Claver-Cortés et al., 2012). In an era when the majority of a company's clients conduct business on their mobile devices, a well-planned digital marketing strategy can be critical to achieving organizational advancement (Altay et al., 2021). In this regard, businesses develop well-rounded digital marketing strategies in order to pique the interest of a broad audience, which is critical to their success. During the Covid-19 pandemic, the world was in grave danger, as most businesses operating on offline platforms were forced to close their doors, leaving consumers with little or no choice but to rely on online platforms to make purchases and other transactions in order to mitigate the effects of the lockdown. Businesses, including those that were already using digital platforms, boosted their usage of online platforms in order to reach a larger audience, enhance sales revenue, profit, and hence organizational growth. The figure below further explains digital marketing strategies:



Figure 1: Successful digital marketing strategy

Source: Researcher's Computation

As shown in the diagram above, content marketing, search engine optimization (SEO), an engine website, email marketing, social media marketing, and pay-per-click (PPC) are among the digital marketing tactics used by many firms throughout the world (Banker et al., 2014). According to Iglesias et al. (2020), in 2020, 2021,

and 2022, the utilization of these digital marketing methods climbed to roughly 73 percent, 82 percent, and 94 percent, respectively. The increasing adoption of digital platforms by various multinational companies aided these companies in better understanding their audiences' consumption patterns and determining which digital marketing strategy to employ, resulting in increased sales revenue and profit for the company, as well as customer satisfaction.

Given that the Covid-19 pandemic aided businesses in improving their digital marketing strategies to meet their aims and objectives, Amhag et al. (2019) highlighted that the virus's propagation has allowed firms to cut their marketing budgets in half. This is evident in a study conducted in the United States by Cabrera et al., 2019; Prem et al., 2020; and Sanz et al., 2020) on the impact of Covid-19 on corporate marketing budgets. Their research was based on data collected from a primary source. They used Chi-square as a data analysis tool. Their findings are depicted in the diagram below:

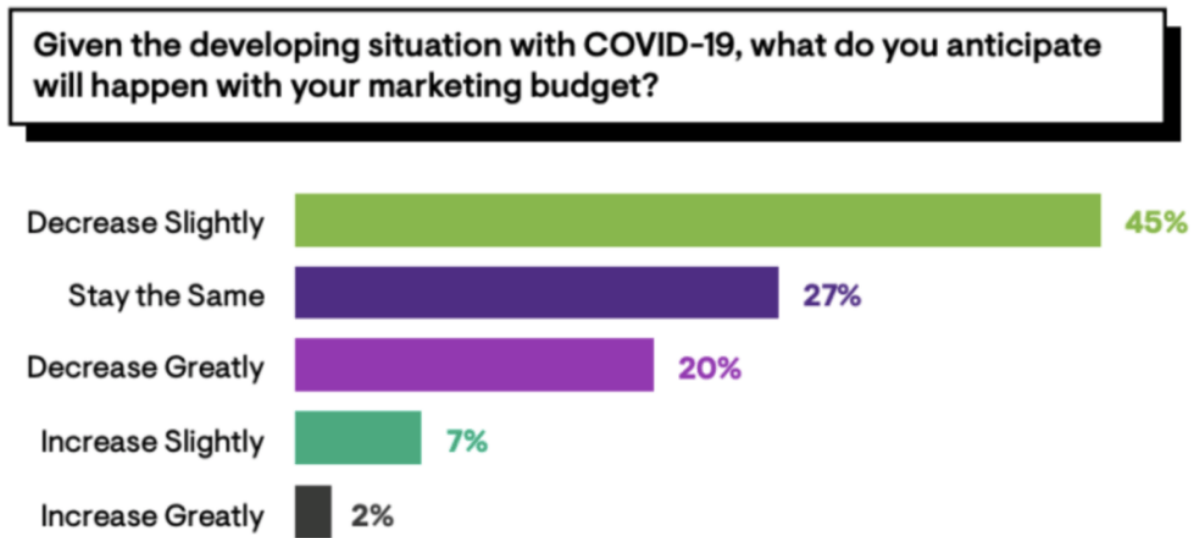


Figure 2: Marketing budget of selected United States multinational companies
 Source: Ben (2020)

The marketing budgets of a few international firms in the United States are shown in the graph below. According to the findings of the researchers, 45 percent of respondents believe that Covid-19 will cause selected global firms in the United States of America to reduce their marketing budgets marginally. This, they explained, is due to the fact that a substantial portion of the people will use their phones and other forms of information during the Covid-19, such as television and radio. Because customers can readily be reached through digital channels, this will lower the stress and overall expense of the marketing process.

An empirical analysis of the anticipated influence of Covid-19 on the digital strategy of selected enterprises in the UK was conducted by Zubillaga and Cortazar (2020), Jaume and Willén (2019), and Muoz-Pérez and Cubo-Delgado (2019). The research was based on data from a primary source. During their investigation, these researchers looked at 15 articles. They chose the study organizations using a case study research design. The Levene's and student's t-tests were used to analyze the data. According to the findings of the study, the Covid-19 epidemic has had a significant impact on the digital strategy of these selected UK enterprises. This is an addendum to Hodges et al(2020) .'s findings, which said that the progress of many companies around the world today is due to their increased usage of digital platforms.

Another study (Hodges et al., 2020 and Cabrera et al., 2019) looked at the impact of Covid-19 on digital marketing in India using the Binary logit and Probit models. The study relied on the Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) for data analysis and used the major source of data gathering. According to the findings, Covid-19 has had a substantial impact on the digital marketing strategies of the organizations studied in India. This result was reached based on the fact that Covid-19 provides a marketing channel (Online) that is immune to the effects of social distancing that occurred during the pandemic and post-pandemic period. This is consistent with the findings of Altay et al. (2021) and Armstrong et al. (2020).

Methodology

Research Design

Apuke (2017) defined research design as the many strategies that a researcher can employ to structure a study in a logical fashion with the sole purpose of addressing the research problem while fulfilling the study's goal(s) and objective(s). The study used the ex-post facto research strategy, which has been argued by scholars (Armat et al.,

2018) to be the ideal research design for evaluating the association between variables with illustrations.

Research Approach

In order to determine the influence of COVID 19 on digital marketing tactics in the United States, both qualitative and quantitative analyses were used. Graphic drawings were employed to aid the qualitative approach, while the Logit and Probit models were used to aid the quantitative approach.

Target Population

A researcher's target population is the group of persons on whom he or she wishes to conduct research and develop conclusions (Azungah, 2018). Workers and employers of international corporations in the United States, including as Coca-Cola, Philips Morris International, and Amazon, are included in the study's target group. This is done to provide an unbiased sample and to assess the influence of the pandemic on digital marketing tactics in the United States.

Sampling Technique

A total of 186 samples were collected using the handy sampling technique, with 62 samples each from Coca-Cola, Philips Morris, and Amazon in the United States. This was made feasible by a well-structured and well-developed questionnaire titled "A questionnaire on the influence of the COVID 19 pandemic on digital marketing tactics in the United States." Coca-Cola completed and returned the 62 questionnaires they were given. Only 59 of the 62 questionnaires sent to the Philips Morris firm were completed and returned. This indicates a 95% return rate, whereas Amazon filled and returned 55 of the 62 that were given to them, suggesting an 89 percent return rate. Overall, 176 of the 186 questionnaires were filled out correctly and returned, representing a return rate of almost 95 percent. The table below illustrates this:

Table 1: Analysis on Questionnaire Recovery for Coca cola

Particulars	Frequency	Percent (%)
Returned	62	100%
Not returned	0	0%
Total	62	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 2: Analysis on Questionnaire Recovery for Philips Morris

Particulars	Frequency	Percent (%)
Returned	59	95%
Not returned	3	5%
Total	62	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 3: Analysis on Questionnaire Recovery for Amazon

Particulars	Frequency	Percent (%)
Returned	55	89%
Not returned	7	11%
Total	62	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Table 4: Analysis on Questionnaire Recovery Overall

Particulars	Frequency	Percent (%)
Returned	176	95%
Not returned	10	5%
Total	186	100

Source: Field Survey, 2022

Method of Data Analysis

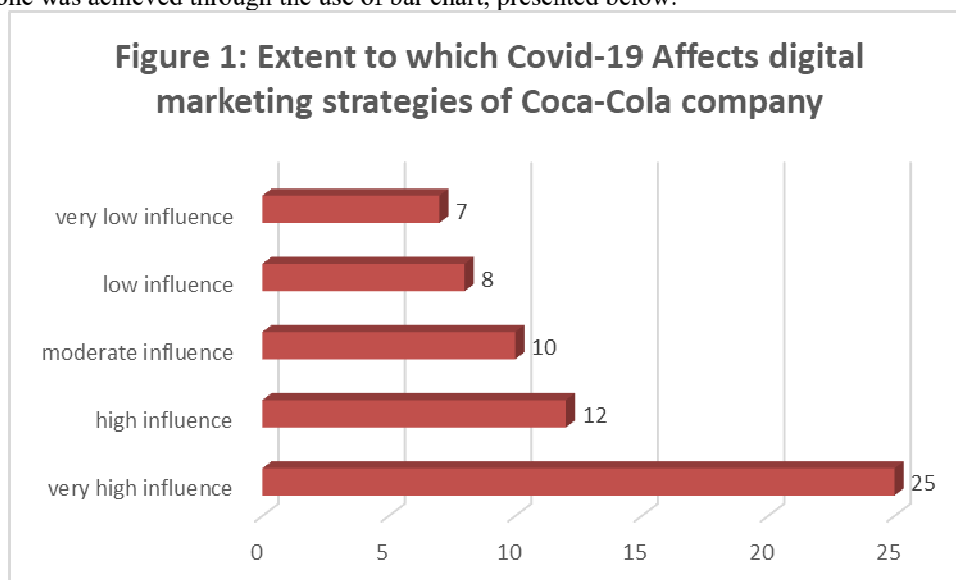
The information gathered from the respondents was examined using information found in the literature. Due to its usefulness in estimating models with discrete data, the study used descriptive statistics via the use of graphs and inferential statistics through the use of Levenes test and Students t-test.

Descriptive Analysis of the Impact of COVID 19 on the Digital Marketing Strategies in the Multinational Companies in the United States.

The respondents were asked to indicate the extent to which they support the idea that the COVID 19 pandemic has an impact on digital marketing strategies in the United States. The study used the Likert scale statistical technique to tackle the main objective of this study, which is to examine the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic in the United States. The scale was designed so that respondents could choose from one to five alternatives, including very high influence (VHI) = 5, high influence (HI) = 4, moderate influence (MI) = 3, low influence (LI) = 2, and very low influence (VLI) = 1. According to this structure, respondents who believe the pandemic has a very high impact on digital marketing strategies in the United States chose the highest option (5), while respondents who believe the pandemic has a very low impact on digital marketing strategies in the United States chose the lowest option (1). Respondents who believe the epidemic has a significant impact on firms' digital marketing efforts in the United States, on the other hand, chose the second choice (4). Similarly, a responder who believes that the COVID 19 pandemic has a moderate impact on business digital marketing tactics in the United States chose the third choice (3). Finally, those who believe the COVID 19 has little impact on organizations' digital marketing tactics in the United States chose the fourth choice (2).

Objective One: To investigate the impact of Covid-19 on the digital marketing strategies of Coca-Cola company.

Objective one was achieved through the use of bar chart, presented below:



From the figure one above, it is evident that a total of 62 respondents in Coca-Cola company adequately filled and returned the questionnaire. From the 62 respondents, 7 persons, which makes up approximately 11 percent of the total respondent in Coca-Cola chose the very low influence option. Also, 8 persons or approximately 13 percent of the total population chose the low influence. This means that a total of 15 persons or approximately 24 persons are of the view that Covid-19 does not have a significant impact on the digital marketing strategy of Coca-Cola company. On the converse, 10 persons, or about 16 percent of the total respondent in Coca-Cola company chose the moderate influence option. This implies that 16 percent of the respondents are of the opinion that Covid-19 has not have a high or low influence on the digital marketing strategies of Coca-Cola, but rather, a moderate influence. Similarly, 12 persons or approximately 19 percent of the total population chose the high influence option. Lastly, 25 persons, which makes up to 40 percent of the total respondents in Coca-Cola chose the very high influence option. This implies that 37 persons or about 60 percent of the total population are of the opinion that Covid-19 has had a high and significant influence of the marketing strategies of Coca-Cola. Overall, given the fact that a larger percent of the respondent chose the very high option, our conclusion is on this basis.

Objective two: To investigate the impact of Covid-19 on the digital marketing strategies of Philip Morris internationals.

To address the second objective of the study, we present questionnaires were distributed to the employers and employees of Philip Morris. Responses that were gotten were analyzed in the figure below.

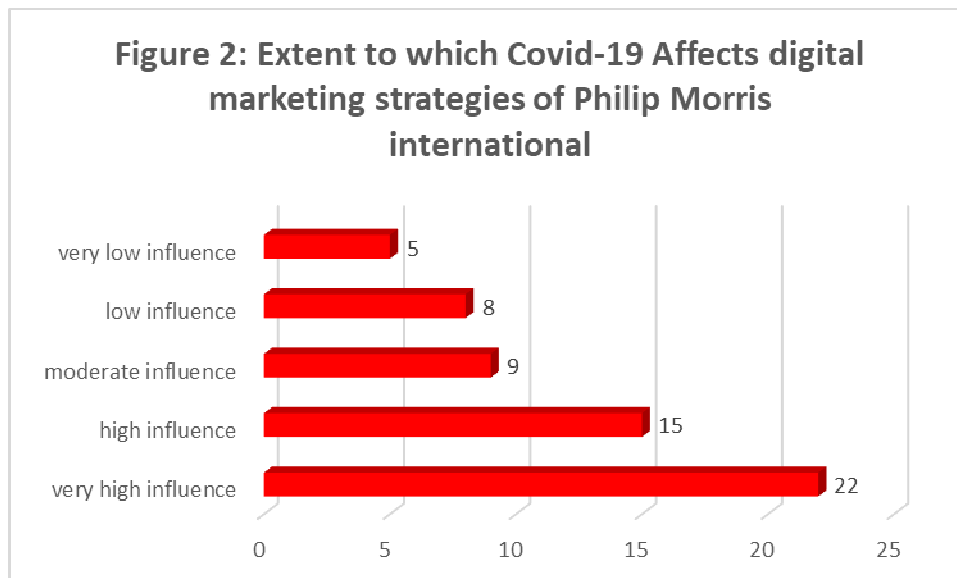
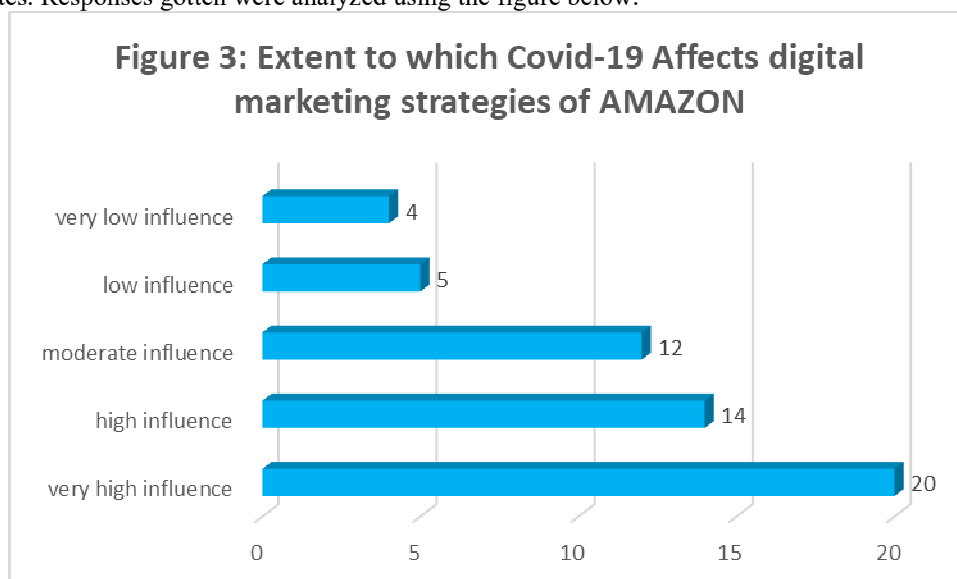


Figure 2 shows that a total of 59 respondents from Philip Morris Internationals completed and submitted the questionnaire in a timely manner. Five people, or around 8% of the total respondent in Philip Morris internationals, chose the very low influence choice out of 59 total respondents. In addition, 8 people, or about 14% of the entire population, chose the low influence option. This means that a total of 13 people, or around 22 people, believe that Covid-19 has no substantial impact on Philip Morris International's digital marketing approach. In Philip Morris Internationals, however, 9 people, or around 15% of the total response, chose the moderate influence option. This means that 15% of respondents believe Covid-19 has had a moderate impact on Philip Morris internationals' digital marketing strategy, rather than a high or low impact. Similarly, 15 persons or approximately 25 percent of the total population chose the high influence option. Lastly, 22 persons, which makes up to 37 percent of the total respondents in Philip Morris internationals chose the very high influence option. This means that 37 people, or around 63 percent of the overall population, believe Covid-19 has had a large and major impact on Philip Morris International's marketing activities. Overall, we came to this conclusion because a higher percentage of respondents chose the extremely high choice.

Objective Three: To investigate the impact of Covid-19 on the digital marketing strategies of AMAZON.

In a bit to achieve the third objective, questionnaires were dispersed to respondents in AMAZON company in the United States. Responses gotten were analyzed using the figure below:

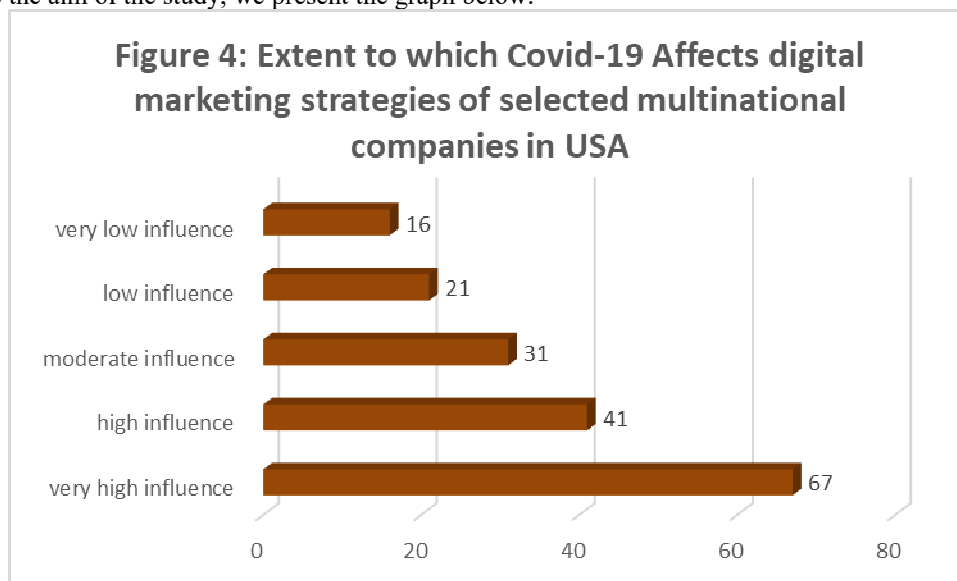


From the figure 3 above, it is evident that a total of 55 respondents in AMAZON adequately filled and returned the questionnaire. From the 55 respondents, 4 persons, which makes up approximately 7 percent of the total respondent in AMAZON chose the very low influence option. Also, 5 persons or approximately 9 percent of the total population chose the low influence. This means that a total of 9 people, or around 16 people, believe

that Covid-19 has no substantial impact on AMAZON's digital marketing strategy. On the other hand, 12 people, or roughly 22% of the total AMAZON respondents, chose the moderate influence option. This means that 22% of respondents believe Covid-19 has had a moderate impact on AMAZON's digital marketing strategies, rather than a high or low impact. In a similar vein, 14 people, or around 25% of the overall population, chose the high influence option. Finally, 20 people, or 36 percent of the total AMAZON responders, chose the very strong influence choice. This implies that 34 persons or about 62 percent of the total population are of the opinion that Covid-19 has had a high and significant influence of the marketing strategies of AMAZON. Overall, given the fact that a larger percent of the respondent chose the very high option, our conclusion is on this basis.

Aim of the study: To examine the likely impact of covid-19 pandemic on the digital marketing strategies of businesses in the United States, using a case of selected multinationals (Coca-Cola, Philip Morris internationals and AMAZON).

To achieve the aim of the study, we present the graph below:



Out of a total of 186 questionnaires, only 176 were correctly filled and returned. From the figure 4 above, 16 persons or 9 percent of the total respondents chose the very low influence. Also, 21 persons or 12 percent of the total population chose the low influence option. Similarly, 31 persons or 18 percent of the total population chose the moderate influence option. On the converse, 41 persons or 23 percent of the total population chose the high influence option. Lastly, 67 persons or 38 percent of the total respondent chose the very high influence option. Overall, given that a bulk of the population chose the very high influence option, we conclude that Covid-19 has had a very high influence on the digital marketing strategies of the selected multinational companies in the United States. This conclusion is in alignment with the findings of Hodges et al. (2020) and Sanz et al. (2020) on their study on the impact of Covid-19 on the digital marketing strategies of businesses in Canada.

Test of Hypothesis

Recall:

H01: Covid-19 has no significant impact on the digital marketing strategy of Coca-Cola company.

H02: Covid-19 has no significant effect on the digital marketing strategy Philip Morris international

H03: Covid-19 has no significant effect on the digital marketing strategy of Amazon.

The following hypothesis above will be tested using the Leven's test and the student t-test.

Table 5: Test of hypothesis one, two and three.

Digital marketing Strategies	Multinational Companies		Statistics	Levene's test		Students t-test			Decision
				F	Sig value	t	gl	Sig value	
Email Marketing	Coca-Cola	N	62	0.518	0.314	1.219	176	0.015	Reject
		Mean	1.87						
	Philip Morris international	N	59						
		Mean	2.13						
	AMAZON	N	55						
		Mean	2.90						
Social media Marketing	Coca-Cola	N	62	2.241	0.215	0.144	176	0.031	Reject
		Mean	1.96						
	Philip Morris international	N	59						
		Mean	3.52						
	AMAZON	N	55						
		Mean	2.04						
Pay-per-click	Coca-Cola	N	62	0.98	0.442	1.982	176	0.001	Reject
		Mean	3.55						
	Philip Morris international	N	59						
		Mean	2.09						
	AMAZON	N	55						
		Mean	2.91						

Source: Researcher's computation

Based on the results from the Levene's test, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that Covid-19 has had a significant impact on the digital marketing strategies of businesses in the United States. This is judged from the probability values which is less than the conventional 5 percent level of significance. Also, the result shows the absence of homogeneous behavior among the respondents in the selected multinational companies in the United States. This is shown in the inconsistent mean values above.

Discussion of Findings

The Levene's test and the student's t-test were used to arrive at the study's conclusions. E-mail marketing, social media marketing, and Pay-Per-Click were among the marketing tactics used by these international corporations. Based on the results of the Levene's test, it was determined that the respondents' responses on the influence of Covid-19 on e-mail marketing, social media marketing, and pay-per-click were not uniform. This is owing to the fact that digital platforms are used differently in these selected multinational corporations in the United States. As a result, the Covid-19 epidemic has a significant impact on the digital techniques they use.

The marketing methods indicated above in the course of our investigation were considerably influenced by the Covid-19 pandemic in the United States, according to the findings above. This is illustrated in table 5, which demonstrates that the probability values were smaller than the traditional 5% criterion of significance. This can also be seen in the student's t-test results. The results revealed that all of the student's t-tests were less than the standard criterion of significance of 5%. This results in congruence with the findings of Zubillaga and Cortazar (2020) whose conclusions based on his findings were that over the years, Covid-19 has had a significant influence on the digital marketing strategies of businesses around the world.

Similarly, when we examined the descriptive statistics, we found that most of the respondents chose the high influence option. Out of a total of 176 questionnaires that were properly filled and returned, 62 persons in the Coca-Cola multinational company were a part of this. In this regard, only 7 persons, or 11 percent of the total population chose the very low influence option while 25 persons or 40 percent of the respondents chose the very high influence option. Also, out of 59 questionnaires that were properly filled and returned by the respondents from Philip Morris international, 25 persons or approximately 40 percent of the respondents chose the very high influence option. Similarly, out of the 176 questionnaires that were adequately filled and returned, 55 were respondents from Amazon. Among the 55 respondents, 20 persons or 36 percent of the respondents chose the very high influence option. The descriptive analysis showed that a majority of the respondents chose the very high influence option. This implies that Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on the digital marketing strategies of businesses in the United States. This is in addendum to the findings of Hodges et al. (2020) and Sanz et al. (2020)

Overall, the result of the descriptive analysis showed that an aggregate of 67 persons is approximately 38 percent of the total responses chose the very high influence option, this is in alignment with the previous findings that Covid-19 has a very high and significant influence on digital marketing strategies of multinational

companies in the United States.

Conclusion

Using international corporations such as Coca-Cola, Philips Morris, and Amazon as case studies, this study has appropriately investigated the impact of the COVID 19 pandemic on digital marketing strategies of businesses in the United States. The pandemic has been identified as a significant element influencing organizations' digital marketing tactics. The study used an ex-post facto research design that included qualitative and quantitative data. The study used a suitable sampling procedure to choose a total sample size of 186 people, of whom 176 people answered to and returned the questionnaires satisfactorily. In order to meet the paper's aims, the Levenes test and the student t test, as well as graphs, were used. According to the descriptive statistics, the majority of respondents agreed that the pandemic had had a significant impact on firms' digital marketing efforts in the United States. In a similar line, the Levenes test demonstrated that there is no uniformity of conduct among multinational corporations in the United States (Coca-Cola, Philips Morris, and Amazon). The internet marketing methods were also significant, according to the student t-test. This is because the student t-test results were less than 0.05. The p-values were similarly less than 0.05, indicating that the pandemic had a significant impact on digital marketing strategies in the United States. Overall, the study discovered that the COVID 19 pandemic had a significant impact on organizations' digital marketing strategy in the United States. Bamidele-Sadiq et al. (2021), recommended pragmatic and effective approaches in response to the Covid-19 virus. On this basis, it is believed that the digital marketing methods that were implemented during the epidemic should be kept and even improved upon, since they have been shown to have a significant influence on businesses in the United States. As a future direction, researchers can investigate how multinationals can prepare to navigate and survive future unprecedented pandemics since research has shown that unforeseen and unplanned events are part of everyday living that can affect business operations.

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