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Editorial: Marketing after COVID-19: Crisis adaptation, innovation and sustainable technological advances

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Today's world has been tremendously changed by the COVID-19 pandemic. This crisis has, in turn, started or accelerated some of the globalisation processes that took root after the fall of the Berlin wall. Free movement of people and goods without borders restrictions has allowed free trade zones, foreign direct investments, and so forth. This continuous evolution was perceived to be unbounded. COVID 19 marked the beginning of a new era. The increased closure of countries, increased visibility of regional differences, and the return to the state as a player limiting and regulating the markets are now a reality. This was not anticipated before the COVID-19 global crisis. On the backdrop of this, technological advancements have facilitated the rise of new global powers. There seems to be an involution to the Cold War times with all its restrictions mechanisms. To complicate matters further, the use of medical discoveries such as COVID vaccination has been deployed in the battle for political and economic influence.

In these scenarios, marketing tools are undoubtedly evolving too. This evolution is rather catalysed by these challenging times. Marketing has traditionally been versed with the themes of competitiveness, problem-solving and providing and understanding the customer and their connected buyer and seller systems (Gamble *et al.*, 2011). In the 21st century, the theory of marketing has focused on the exchange of service, putting service as the fundamental basis of exchange (Vargo and Lusch, 2004). This has been termed as service dominant logic theory (SDL). This theory has been particularly appealing. However, it is not free of criticism because it seems to blindly advocate technological advancement at the expense of explanatory theory (O'Shaughnessy and O'Shaughnessy, 2009).

Consumers today should not be seen as passive objects to be targeted, segmented and researched. On the contrary, they can create experiences and value with their skills, imagination, and capacity for innovation. Consumers are not individuals, but they are more interconnected and part of networks (Baron *et al.*, 2010). Marketing must play a key role for innovativeness. Efrat *et al.* (2017) suggested that companies develop key marketing-related capabilities for innovation efforts and value creation. Amongst them, they included market intelligence, marketing adaptability, and task cohesion. They highlighted the vital importance of adaptability as a moderator for innovativeness.

On the other hand, the pandemic has highlighted the need for sustainability marketing. As posited by Font and McCabe (2017), sustainability marketing has the potential to employ tools and techniques of marketing for good purposes. For example, hedonistic and consumerist

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pursuits should not guide tourism marketing. On the contrary, marketing should help in designing more sustainable products and services. Marketing communication must be focused on communication with the aim to bring behavioural change.

In this special issue, ten articles are selected to highlight the post-Covid era trends in business and marketing. The first article by the editors titled “Branding Al Ain as tourist destination” discusses the importance of the destination identity gained through distinctive branding, the decision making behind the images, symbols, and colours of the brand. It also discusses whether the destination is promoted separately or within a broader national context. Whilst the study is not placed in the COVID-19 times, it looks at the potential future of tourism in the UAE and other countries, whereby developing local destinations and short-haul flights may be the trend in post-Covid tourism industry.

Radev and Yankova, in their paper, investigated revenue management during COVID-19 times and they termed it “COVIDisation of the economy”. They discussed the factors affecting companies and long and short term revenue management strategies. The authors proposed an interesting framework for effective revenue management using well-known models such as the Ansoff matrix.

Innovative developments such as Neom city in Saudi Arabia are synonyms of ingenuity in the post-COVID-19 era. Areej Algumzi looked into digital marketing practices in Saudi Arabia and their implications for a successful promotion of Neom city worldwide. The study also proposes important recommendations for Neom city marketers.

The marketing mix, particularly for services, has important considerations for people as a key aspect of the mix. This special issue includes an article about effective human resources practices after COVID-19. Pandya and Boukareva conducted a thorough literature review and recommended some actions that should be taken regarding the workforce and their management in these challenging times for businesses.

Amaliyah and Zakhra explored a very interesting topic, consumer behaviour during the Eid Al-Fitr celebrations during COVID-19. This explanatory study looked into the factors that affected the behaviour during these festivities and arrived at some interesting conclusions.

This special issue covers a number of countries. Focusing on Vietnam, Nguyen, Hoang and Nguyen examined the changing online buying behaviour of consumers during COVID-19 and proposed a useful analytical framework. The article has significant implications for marketing, and specifically about the role of trust in online shopping.

During COVID-19, higher education also faced sudden changes and shocks and many processes and approaches needed to adapt to the new situation. Shukla and Bhasin, using content analysis of social media, suggested a number of strategies for increasing engagement and reachability. Higher education institutions can use these recommendations and improve their communication strategies.

These times in which the environment took a respite have highlighted the value of sustainability. In this line of thought, Manalo and Riza investigated the problem of single use plastic in the Philippines in what they call “the sachet economy”. The researchers attempted to find explanations as to why the Philippines is so bound to using plastic. This exploratory study had a very rigorous qualitative approach to looking into possible solutions to this pressing issue. Treading on the same line of scholarship to an extent, Damodharan and Asraar



Ahmed offer an exploratory analysis of Quick Response (QR) code usage in India during the COVID-19. They identify the critical elements of behavioural intention towards QR code acceptance (BIQRA) among Indian smartphone users focusing on consumers in Bangalore city.

At the time of writing this editorial, the world is unfortunately living in a turbulent time, shaken by war, in a scenario of economic recovery marked by high inflation and shortages and with the ominous warnings on the unsustainable increase in global warming. These papers have addressed some of these issues, either directly or indirectly and attempted to provide a vision of what the future may entail.

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