Marketing strategies of MIPyMES in the Cd. Mexico and metropolitan area during and after the pandemic

Estrategias mercadológicas de las MIPyMES en la Cd. México y área metropolitana durante y después de la pandemia

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CONAHCYT classification:

Area: Social Sciences

Field: Administration and business Discipline: Business and accounting Subdiscipline: Marketing and publicity

doi https://doi.org/10.35429/EJROP.2024.10.18.4.10

Article History:

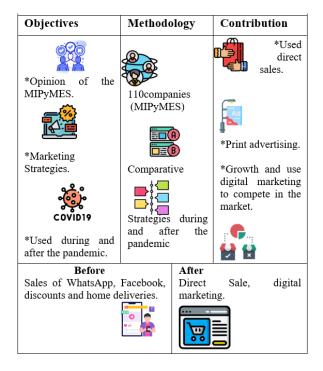
Received: January 31, 2024 Accepted: December 31, 2024





Abstract

In MIPyMES, it was a problem to withstand market irregularities and maintain themselves during the pandemic (SARCOV-2). Companies began using digital marketing to market, and after four years, they must carry out strategies for online and direct sales. This research aims to know the opinion of 110 companies that previously underwent a study on the marketing strategies used during the pandemic and then through a comparison. The research results show that during the pandemic, social networks were used for sales and promoted products with discounts and home deliveries, yet direct sales, deals, demonstrations, and printed advertising continued to be the most used and have greater results. Digital marketing has grown enormously, and MIPyMES must venture into it to continue competing in the market.



Resumen

En las MIPyMES fue un problema soportar las irregularidades del mercado y mantenerse durante la pandemia (SARCOV-2), las empresas emprendieron el uso del marketing digital para comercializar y después de 4 años deben realizar estrategias para las ventas en línea y directa. Esta investigación pretende conocer la opinión de 110 empresas a las que se las realizón estudio con anterioridad sobre las estrategias mercadológicas usadas durante la pandemia y después a través de un comparativo.Los resultados en la investigación muestran durante la pandemia se usaron las redes sociales para la venta y promocionaron los productos con descuentos y entregas a domicilio y sin embargo la venta directa, los descuentos, las demostraciones y la publicidad impresa siguen siendo las más utilizadas y de mayores resultados después de la pandemia, el marketing digital ha crecido enormemente y las MIPyMES deben de incursionar en él para seguir compitiendo en el mercado.



Marketing Strategies, MIPyMES, Pandemic

Estrategias Mercadológicas, MIPyMES, Pandemia

Citation: Álvarez-García, Mónica, Gutiérrez-Zepeda, Martha del Pilar, Guerrero-Ibarra, Carlos and Waldo Caamaño, José David. [2024]. Marketing strategies of MIPyMES in the Cd. Mexico and metropolitan area during and after the pandemic. ECORFAN Journal-Republic of Paraguay. 10[18]-1-10:e41018110.



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Introduction

For MSMEs as well as most companies it was a big challenge to withstand market irregularities and to stay in the market during the SARCOV-2 pandemic in the period 2020-2021, no doubt the consumer also had to change their buying and consumption habits. During this time companies undertook the use of digital marketing to market their products and services, the use of ICTs evolved to a great extent. And after 4 years of this period consumers have changed their buying habits, some of them still buy their products online, through applications or in physical shops, in this sense companies now have a dual role and make strategies for online and face-to-face sales. In this way, it is important to know what companies think about the marketing strategies they applied during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. Showing the perspectives of these periods is of utmost importance to get an idea of how marketing strategies have evolved in companies and what can give them greater results.

For this reason, the need arises to follow up on a previous study that evaluated the marketing strategies used by MSMEs during the pandemic, Quintero, M.L., et al., (2023). In that study the interviewees mentioned that the way to sell their products was through the shops and implemented the sale by whatsapp and facebook, the sales promotion strategies were discounts and home deliveries and in relation to advertising they used Facebook, on their website and at the point of sale and after having already spent several years it was necessary to know what strategies are applying the same companies to make a comparison of the strategies used during and after the pandemic, thus arising the following questioning:

What are the marketing strategies applied by MSMEs in Mexico City and the Metropolitan Area during and after the pandemic?

General objective

To find out the marketing strategies applied by MSMEs to reach consumers or users and manage to stay in the market in Mexico City and the Metropolitan Area during and after the pandemic.

Specific objectives

- To find out the sales methods used by MSMEs during and after the pandemic (face-to-face, digital or both) that have given them the best results.
- To identify the advertising strategies that were applied and have been most effective in MSMEs during and after the pandemic to inform their current customers about the products and services they offer and to reach new consumers or users.
- To find out which sales promotions they offered and were most effective with their customers and prospects during and after the pandemic in order to maintain or increase their sales.
- To find out whether companies have been able to adapt to changes in consumer buying habits after the pandemic ended and what other strategies they have used.

Methodology

The study universe for the research was the same 110 companies that had been the subject of a previous research study, Quintero, M.L., et al., (2023), in which the marketing strategies applied during the pandemic were found out. In this research, another questionnaire was applied to them to find out about the marketing strategies applied after the pandemic and to be able to make a comparison; fortunately, it was possible to count on the participation of all of them.

A quantitative, descriptive, non-experimental, but now longitudinal, research was also carried out with a quantitative approach. The results were analysed statistically through descriptive statistics and the absolute and relative frequencies were obtained for the analysis and interpretation of the information through comparative graphs of before and after that helped to show the results obtained through the description of the findings.

The information was obtained through the application of a collection instrument by means of Microsoft Teams FORMS.

The questionnaire was applied in one month, which allowed to know in a clear and precise way the current situation of the marketing strategies implemented by the MSMEs to adapt to the new behaviours and buying behaviour of the consumers.

The information obtained was processed in the EXCEL programme for subsequent analysis and graphical elaboration of the results.

Theoretical framework

This section includes different topics that help to understand how marketing strategies used by companies have evolved, especially the digital part that is here to stay.

Marketing strategies are considered by Arce L.G., (2010) as strategies related to the market and the company, which are carried out to achieve certain marketing objectives, and which present a certain degree of difficulty in their formulation and execution. Examples of marketing strategies could be developing new products, lowering prices, opening new sales outlets, etc.

Kotler and Amstrong refer to the four main steps in designing a customer-oriented marketing strategy. In the first two, the company selects the customers it will serve. Market segmentation involves dividing a market into smaller segments of buyers with different needs, characteristics or behaviours that may require differentiated marketing strategies or mixes. The company identifies the multiple ways of segmenting the market and develops profiles of the resulting market segments. Target market selection (or simply market coverage) involves assessing the attractiveness of each market segment and choosing one or more segments to enter.

In the last two steps, the company decides on a value proposition: how it will succeed in creating value for the target customers. Differentiation actually involves differentiating the company's market offering to create superior value for the customer. Positioning is about organising a market offering to occupy a clear, distinctive and desirable place relative to competing products in the minds of target consumers.

Kotler P., and Amstrong G., (2013) and to achieve this, differentiated sales, advertising, public relations and direct marketing strategies must be applied to reach the target market segment.

Kotler P., and Amstrong G., (2012) mention that sales strategies are carried out according to the market in order to market, sell, distribute and promote their products and services.

services, hence there are different selling methods such as face-to-face selling, online selling and mixed selling. According to these authors, face-to-face selling is that which takes place in the company's branch or establishment and where consumers come to purchase them.

The disadvantages of this sales method include the fact that delivery times are uncertain, the rate of customer complaints is higher and the number of returns is also higher; and mixed selling, which is made up of characteristics of the two previous methodologies, since the products are offered via the internet, but the delivery of the products is carried out at the company's premises.

In terms of advertising, these are activities that can also be developed directly in the establishment with printed media or online through digital strategies on social networks or the web through videos or flayers among other types of content and sales promotion with coupons, 2x1, discounts, digital demonstrations, or in person with free samples, demonstrations, tastings, discounts, fairs or exhibitions, etc.

It is important to mention that marketing has evolved considerably from 1.0 to 5.0 along with the marketing processes of products and services in the history and application of the strategies used by companies to achieve success in the market. Marketing 1.0 is characterised by product-focused company strategies, companies will invest solely in the product. One of the elements to highlight in this first phase is the unidirectional communication, where the client was not listened to and it was only the companies that provided information. It was disseminated through traditional media, such as television and radio.

With a more customer-focused approach, marketing 2.0 arises, which, unlike the first, focuses on getting to know the customer with the aim of satisfying needs and being able to retain them, that is, to build customer loyalty. It seeks to get closer to the customer on an emotional level in order to differentiate itself from the competition. One of the characteristics of marketing 2.0 is the use of new information technologies, which creates communication. Marketing 2.0 is closely linked to Big Data, and according to Kotler, Kartajaya Setianwan: Social media marketing (marketing 2.0) arises in today's information age, based on information technologies. The task of marketing is no longer so simple. Today's shoppers are well informed and can easily shop for a variety of similar product offerings. It is the consumer who defines the value of the product. Consumer preferences differ greatly from one consumer to another. The company must segment the market and develop a superior product for a specific target segment within the market. The golden rule of: the customer rules, works well for almost all companies. At the stage of marketing 3.0 it is related to care for the planet and society, i.e. social responsibility. Marketing 3.0 believes that consumers are integral human beings, and that all their needs and desires should always be met. Therefore, marketing 3.0 complements emotional marketing with a spiritual one. In marketing 3.0 companies differentiate themselves from each other by their values. Customers, apart from satisfying their needs, are looking for the satisfaction of their feelings and values. This leads companies to sell values associated with their brands seeking impact on their target audience according to Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., and Setiawan, I. (2013).

Marketing 4.0 where, according to Kotler, P., Kartajaya, H., and Setiawan, I. (2019), New technologies, social networks and digital marketing in general are revolutionising the way we reach customers. Today's customer has different habits than a few years ago: they are hyper-informed, hyper-connected, love honest and ethical companies, do not buy without comparison shopping, trust the experiences of other consumers and are unfaithful to brands.

This is why, now more than ever, it is necessary to reorient marketing practices to win the customer's support and trust. If we manage to exceed their expectations, not only will they buy from us, but they will also recommend us. To do this, we need to offer transparent and coherent experiences, and cover every aspect of the product that they demand: more human brands, greater commitment, better and personalised offers. It is marketing 4.0. To achieve engagement that customer recommendation.

The new generation of 5G technologies is here to stay. The pandemic we have experienced has accelerated the adoption of technology by customers, leaving the way open for the digitisation of their relationships with their brands. The era of Marketing 5.0 is beginning, whose author of the concept, Philip Kotler (Kotler, Kartajaya and Setiawan, 2021) defines it as the union of technology and humanity.

In relation to the strategies used by companies before and after the pandemic, several studies conducted by researchers were consulted.

According to the qualitative study carried out by Solis, F.T., (2021) (Estrategias de mercadotecnia en microempresas ante contingencia por COVID-19 en Ciudad Juárez), he concludes that the marketing strategies that micro-enterprises in Ciudad established before the COVID-19 confinement are: following the rules, regulations and prevention measures established by the Ministry of Public Health, and also using new media to advertise the business. Other strategies were the production of goods adapted to the current situation, distancing barriers, reduction of the capacity of people inside the establishments, work on demand or orders, continuous disinfection of work areas and customer service, as well as the purchase of technological devices that contribute to the performance of key activities in the buying and selling process.

Due to the pandemic, the purchase and sale of products and services worldwide took a 360° turn, and sadly many businesses were forced to close permanently. And those that were able to return had to adapt to a new normality that avoided common habits such as physical contact at all costs. Therefore, they had to create new sales strategies to reach the end customer, and the wave of digital marketing grew, which already existed, but now with greater seriousness and commitment to users. Cruz O. and Morales A.Y., (2021)

Marketing strategies as a consequence of technological changes, user needs and consumer behaviour, have left behind the obsolete ways of planning the marketing of products and services for new forms of marketing where the priority is not only to sell or buy products but a process where communication and interaction with the customer is established. In this sense, digital marketing and the different technological tools they use, identify more easily the needs of their customers with a much more complete vision, guaranteeing new, unique and personalised experiences. These new forms of digital marketing are designed to respond to the needs of consumers, which is why they are based on four aspects: content, context, community and connections. Content, which is precise and eyecatching of the product or service, with a message according to the context to which it is presented, with maximum research of the community to which it is offered and with full knowledge of the customer's connections, to be introduced in the networks in which they actively participate. Certainly, these digital marketing strategies, which in the present technological era and in the processes of globalisation in recent years began to gain strength, were the salvation for many SMEs in times of pandemic, especially in the first confinements. The companies that had already started to make inroads into the various digital platforms and social networks continued their processes, while the number of consumers through these media increased significantly. So now digital commerce is getting stronger, the companies that opted for these strategies are staying in the crisis period, some are starting up and others are reinventing themselves to reach their customers and attract new ones, and unfortunately others are disappearing.

Evidently, the period of pandemic gave opportunity to present and position themselves in the virtual world, some seeing it as a crisis and others as an opportunity, which definitely promoted the increase in the use of technologies in companies, marketing strategies that due to customer demand have been updated and improved in order to: positioning on the web, being one of the first in search engines; prioritising the personalisation of messages through different social networks of greater (WhatsApp, Facebook), in order to have more relationships lasting with customers: implementing the use of social networks with content that captures the attention of customers; creating intuitive websites with immediate responses; and increasing e-commerce, with more secure and reliable platforms.

These and other instruments identified and organised in digital marketing tools will allow companies to meet customer needs and boost sales, ensure their sustainability, stay ahead in physical and virtual spaces, and position themselves in the market.

These solutions created and adapted in times of pandemic need to be strengthened in order to transcend and be sustainable in the postpandemic period, so that these digital marketing strategies will eventually prove useful in periods of crisis. As positive aspects of the research, the novelty of the subject matter, the variety of information and the results of the different experiences, demands and transformations of the consumer are highlighted, which allow us to investigate the marketing strategies distinguished consumers. Actions that arose during the pandemic period, but which even in the post-pandemic period continue to manifest themselves, as they have transformed society.

Likewise, companies that opted for these strategies continue in the crisis period, some start up and others reinvent themselves to reach their customers and attract new ones, and unfortunately others disappear.

Evidently, the period of pandemic gave the opportunity to present and position themselves in the virtual world, some seeing it as a crisis and others as an opportunity, which definitely promoted the increase in the use of technologies in companies, marketing strategies that due to customer demand have been updated and improved in order to: positioning on the web, being one of the first in search engines; prioritising personalisation of messages through different social networks of greater (WhatsApp, Facebook), in order to have more relationships lasting with customers: implementing the use of social networks with content that captures the attention of customers; creating intuitive websites with immediate responses; and increasing e-commerce, with more secure and reliable platforms. These and other instruments identified and organised in digital marketing tools will allow companies to meet customer needs and boost sales, ensure their sustainability, stay ahead in physical and virtual spaces, and position themselves in the market. These solutions created and adapted in times of pandemic must be strengthened, so that they can transcend and be sustainable in the postpandemic period, so that these digital marketing strategies can finally prove useful in periods of crisis. Hernandez M. E., (2022)

One of the trends that they intended to implement in companies according to Beltrán M. (2019) was to note that digital companies were in their beginnings and that these applying the Buyer Person had a better impact within their beginnings in those types of businesses, instead in Mexican companies indicate us that there is no culture of applying strategies in small businesses, only some make a small discounts on some items but only spread it within the same local, hence the importance of informing them the importance of competitive advantages by implementing strategic strategies in each company as indicated by Alaña T, Crespo M & Gonzaga S. (2018). But nowadays according to Camacho L. (s/f) tells us that small companies enthusiastic about implementing strategies where they are looking especially that they do not invest a lot, but that gives them great opportunities, but about this in this document the real strategies that have worked for these companies are landed.

Results

Box 1

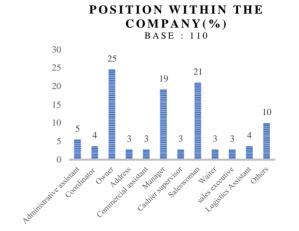


Figure 1

Source: Own elaboration

As can be seen in graphic 1, the majority of respondents in order of importance were Owners (25%), Salesperson 21% and Manager (19%), always trying to ensure that the survey was answered by decision-makers within the company or that they were interfering with the marketing strategies that are applied, the other positions are below 5%.

Box 2

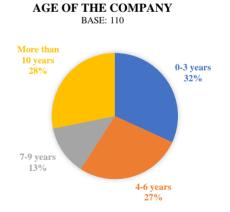


Figure 2

Source: Own elaboration



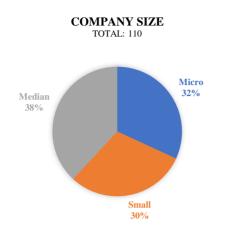


Figure 3

Source: Own elaboration

Regarding the profile of the MSMEs investigated (59%) are young companies, as they said they had been working for between 0 and 6 years and the remaining 7 years or more, and in relation to size, the percentage of participation was very even between micro, small and medium-sized companies (between 30% and 38% respectively).

Box 4

TYPES OF SALES USED (%)

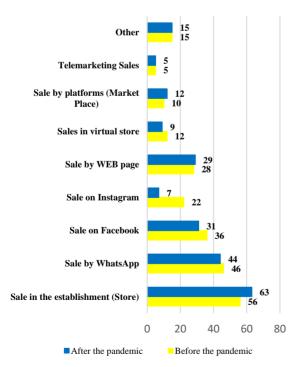


Figure 4

Source: Own elaboration

When interviewees were asked about the type of sales they used during the pandemic, Whats App and Facebook and WEB pages came out (46%, 36%, 28% respectively). Undoubtedly at that time companies were not prepared for online sales and had to improvise and start selling through social networks as the main medium because they did not use digital sales. And in the type of sales used after the pandemic, in first place is the shop (63%), once the shops are open many consumers prefer to see, try on and feel the products physically and it also allows them to make a more conscious selection. In second place, they answered that on the website (29%), and in third place virtual platforms (12%), companies continue to use this medium because some consumers want to save time and resort to the facilities of the payment method, they are also accustomed to digital shopping, where they can view the comments and recommendations of some buyers and can access many websites to make comparisons in quality and prices. It is worth mentioning that digital sales increased during the pandemic and are still increasing.

Box 5

WHAT TYPE OF SALE HAS CURRENTLY GIVEN YOU THE MOST RESULTS? TOTAL: 110

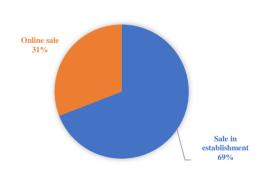


Figure 5

Source: Own elaboration

As can be seen in the graph, in-store sales are still the best performing (69%) because the buyer can have physical contact with the products or services to select them and we are still a country that continues to resist online shopping due to distrust or access to digital media to make the purchase.

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Box 6

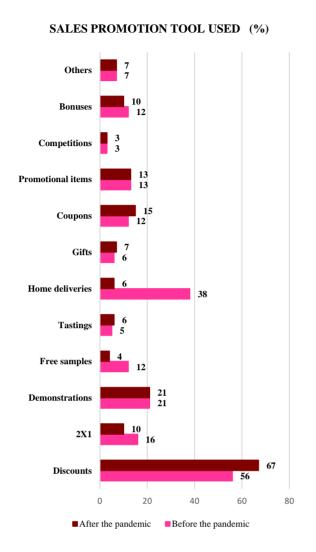


Figure 6

Source: Own elaboration

With regard to promotions, the results show that during the pandemic, the tools most used by MSMEs were home deliveries (38%), which were necessary to attract shoppers, which were useful at the time because of the fear of going out and catching COVID-19 and are still useful today. Another most commonly used tool is discounts (56%) used to attract consumers and retain sales in many businesses and companies. In terms of promotions, firstly discounts, which have the highest percentage (67%), are still a very common strategy for attracting buyers, followed by demonstrations (21%), which allow the consumer to touch, see and feel the products and select them in a more emotive way.

Box 7

ADVERTISING STRATEGIES USED (%)

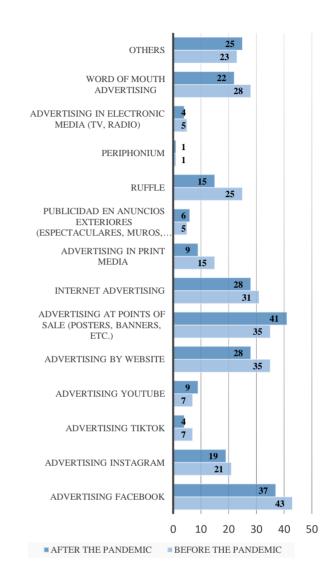


Figure 7

Source: Own elaboration

And on advertising strategies, during the pandemic as there was no personal contact and many businesses were closed or sales were limited, the most used advertising media were Facebook (43%), websites and posters (35%), internet advertising (31%) and leafleting (25%). While after the pandemic, point-of-sale advertising is still the most used (41%) and digital media are still being used, given that the increase in the use of social networks and online sales increased in large proportion, MSMEs continue to make advertising content for social networks such as Facebook (41%).

Box 8

WHAT TYPE OF SALE HAS CURRENTLY GIVEN YOU THE MOST RESULTS? TOTAL 110

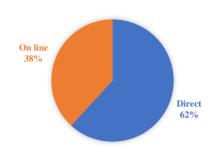


Figure 8

Source: Own elaboration

In the case of advertising that has given them greater results currently in MSMEs, it is still direct advertising (62%), this reason may be due to the fact that they have a more tangible visualisation and can achieve greater exposure in the media, as well as being able to play with images, colours and texts to attract consumers. While 38% mentioned that online advertising has given them better results, undoubtedly digital media are very useful and less expensive, however, the consumer is exposed to so much information and images that they lose attention and focus on the advertisements, so these companies consider that they have not given them the expected results.

Conclusions

It was a huge challenge for the whole society and especially for companies to understand how to cope with the situation that the global pandemic brought with it and that this was forcing them to take drastic actions, as well as to understand that the habits and consumption needs of the population were changing, at that time they were totally different, people had to adapt to this new stage and get used to the idea that the digital era was advancing abysmally.

It is important to mention this, as marketing has evolved considerably hand in hand with the marketing processes of products and services in history as well as the implementation of strategies used by companies after the pandemic, to achieve success in the market, therefore, had to create new sales strategies to reach the end customer, and that the global health situation was adapted to this new way of life, Also with the growth of the digital marketing wave, left behind the old ways of planning the marketing of their products and services has been confirmed that the marketing strategies that applied MSMEs in Mexico City and Metropolitan Area during and after the pandemic, are digital in nature as WhatsApp, Facebook and Instagram and then still follow the websites, virtual platforms and through Social Media, Big Data to Digital intelligence, But the most important thing is that the majority of sales that are still made is the sale in the establishment as the first place, also most of the companies adapted quickly to changes in buying habits of consumers with home deliveries, discounts, promotions and demonstrations at points of sale in order to detect the actions that were evolving and that so far have helped them to stay in the market and have a good market share in this. Without forgetting that the best publicity was word of mouth (infallible) by those closest to the consumers and by leafleting in different areas of the city.

A milestone that provides a lot of learning, considering that the marketing strategies applied in companies in conjunction with technology have advanced approximately 10 years, and are currently based on four aspects: content, context, community and connections, and 4 years after the whole world changed, companies and especially MSMEs are excited to apply these processes to their digital marketing.

Declarations

Conflict of interest

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest. They have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that might have appeared to influence the reported article.

Authors' Contribution

This research was carried out as a collaborative team, contributing their knowledge experience in accordance with the methodology employed, in order for the research to make a contribution to MSMEs.

Availability of data and materials

The data and tools used for this research are available in our Institution and the tables shown in this document can be editable for your consideration.

Funding

The researchers did not receive any funding.

Acknowledgements

We are grateful for the kindness of the companies that provided us with valuable information for this research.

Abbreviations

ANN Artificial Neural Network

MSMEs Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises

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