

# Promotional Marketing Campaigns in Pandemic Times

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## Abstract

**Research background:** CoVid19 was a shock for governments, organizations as well as people. At the beginning of the pandemic, everyone was stunned and companies tried to adapt to the “new reality”, as some sectors were forced either to diminish their offer due to the downfall of demand, or even to fully stop offering products or services as a result of the lockdown restrictions, as in the case of tourism and events sector. Imminent health, social and economic crises seemed inevitable, and with more destructive power than the 2008 economic crises.

**Purpose of the article:** Almost all organizations and companies were affected to a certain extent by this global crisis. On one hand, companies manufacturing medical products, drugs, devices, disinfectants, construction, digital industries, courier companies had an increase in the demand, while others like: automotive, aerospace, construction, hotels, spas, cultural and creative industries had a fall of demand due to the lockdown restrictions.

**Methods:** In order to discover the steps taken by organizations from different industries, we analyzed several promotional marketing campaigns and we deployed research among the potential customers in order to discover their opinion towards these kinds of strategies.

**Findings & Value added:** Organizations that encountered difficulties in the pandemic time appealed to promotional marketing campaigns bearing in mind several objectives, like: boosting sales, increase brand notoriety of the products or services offered and even gain more customers having a mixed expansion of the market, not only intensive or extensive growth.

**Keywords:** *promotional campaigns; raffles; prizes; strategies in pandemic times*

**JEL Classification:** *M3; M30; M39*

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## **1 Introduction**

Governments, companies, and individuals were all taken aback by CoVid19. Everyone was (Gerwe, 2021) startled at the beginning of the epidemic, and businesses struggled to adjust to the "new reality," as certain industries were forced to reduce (Gonzalez et al., 2021), their offerings owing to decreased (Galanakis, 2021) demand, or perhaps, stop supplying (Li, 2021) products or services entirely due to lockdown limitations. Impending health, social, and economic crises that appeared (Lu et al., 2021) to be unavoidable, and they appeared (Vo et al., 2021) to be more devastating than the 2008 economic crisis. In comparison with the 2008 economic crisis, we can state (Nicola, 2020) that the pandemic can be viewed like a war zone, where not (Roy et al., 2021) only businesses and different economic sectors were affected (Profiroiu et al., 2020), furthermore the loss of health (Radulescu et al., 2021) and even lives of those who were not strong enough to overpass the infectious caused by the virus (Balu et al., 2021). Almost all organizations and businesses were impacted in some way by the global crisis. Due (Kouvelis, 2021) to the lockdown limitations, demand for medical items, medications, devices, disinfectants, construction, digital industries, and courier businesses increased, but the demand for other industries such as automotive, aerospace, construction, hotels, spas, cultural and creative industries decreased (Sarbu et al., 2021). Organizations (Atkinson et al., 2021) that saw their profits decline had to resort (Sun et al., 2020) to a variety of marketing tactics to resurrect sales while also surviving the crisis, respecting or trying to respect the laws and restrictions imposed by governments due to the CoVid 19 pandemic (Burlacu et al., 2021). Companies tried (Zwerin et al., 2019) to increase the sales through various marketing strategies. One of the most applied (Soma et al., 2021) strategy by some companies was (Buzeta, 2020) the use of promotional Marketing Campaigns, either as contests or simple raffles (Orzan et al., 2020). In order to win the prize, the participants had to push (Chawla and Chodak, 2021) the "Like" button on different Social Media Platforms (Nosi et al., 2021) as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc., or purchase a product or service and register their receipt or invoice in order to have a chance to win the prize, and even to send (Pescher et al., 2014) a SMS. If some companies had as prizes their products or services, while others offered (Zhao & Renard, 2021) more consistent (Lucassen & Jansen, 2014) prizes as trips and even brand new cars. In terms of the quantity, scale, and range of promotional tactics employed (Peattie et al., 2010) by organizations in their integrated marketing communication efforts (Gupta & Gentry, 2019), sales promotion campaigns activity continues to rise and to evolve especially during these economic crises (Bodislav et al., 2020).

## **2 Methods**

We examined several promotional marketing campaigns and conducted research among potential consumers to learn about their reactions (Sohn & Kim, 2020) to these types of techniques in order to learn about the measures taken by businesses in various sectors (Bran et al., 2020).

In order to have a better understanding (Alshech & Sela, 2021) of what the main reasons are, why actual and potential customers take (Fu et al, 2021) part in these marketing promotional campaigns, we deployed a qualitative research among thirteen respondents. Due to nowadays restrictions of limiting the transmitting of the corona virus, we appealed to semi structured in depth interviews. The interview was organized in three modules. In the first module, we wanted to see the perception regarding advertising in pandemic times, and more precisely the manner, the message and communicational axes used by organizations, without limiting to only the companies that appeal to marketing promotion campaigns. Regarding the second module, the questions focused on what kind of contests

the audience liked to take part in. Either give away prizes, without having any kind of condition, like purchasing a product or a service, or be constraint of a purchase. While in the final module, we wanted to explore and identify what triggers the respondents to consider participating. To better understand the motives we wanted to discover what is more tempting for them, the value of the prizes, or the number of them. We addressed questions regarding the type of prizes.

### **3 Results and Discussion**

Organizations that faced difficulties during the pandemic turned to promotional marketing campaigns with several goals in mind, including increasing sales, increasing brand awareness of the products or services offered, and even gaining more customers through a mixed market expansion, rather than only intensive or extensive growth. Companies also believe that when the prizes given are related to the brands, they may produce content and buzz marketing, the user experience is better, and they can be utilized more frequently when releasing new goods in order to get people to buy and use them.

As mentioned earlier, the applied interview had been structured in three modules.

The first module, advertising in pandemic times. The respondents were asked either if organizations should have decreased, increased or even fully stop advertising during lockdown. Most of the respondents mentioned that they want the “business should be done as usual, and in the same manner, the advertising and promotion campaigns as well”. Only one respondent mentioned that he would appreciate less advertising and more information regarding the pandemic. Regarding the messages and communicational axes, respondents mentioned that they appreciate real life happenings, family reunions, parties with friends, trainings and team buildings done indoor or outdoor. While some of the respondents stated the actors who appeared in the ads should have respected the governments rules with a distance of 1.5 up to 2 meters, wearing masks and gloves, while others indicated that actions should have been as before the pandemic.

The second module is related to promotional campaigns that give customers the possibility of winning different prizes. What kind of contests? What is the best way to take part in these lotteries? Free participation, the only task to follow or to give likes, to post a comment to the page of the organization and to other affiliates persons or companies. To be restraint by the acquisition of an item or service and to register. The condition to take part in the contest by being constraint by uploading information of the participant, like first name, surname, phone number, email address, home address, the store from where the purchase was realized, even the type of the product. Some companies used simultaneously not only online platforms uploaded on the internet, but as well as SMS campaign, which sometimes are not free of charge, charging the participants.

The third module refers to the types of prizes and the value of them. Although we were in full pandemic restrictions, some organizations that deployed contests had as prizes even trips in other countries as a prize. Furthermore, during the restrictive lockdown, some contests had rules obliging the participants to go even further that they were allowed by the government in order to take part in the contest. Most of the respondents gave up participating in those contests as the fines were too high in comparison with the prizes, and they are not sure whether they are going to be the lucky winners. Almost all the respondents reckon that fewer but expensive prizes are more attractive and appealing towards their determination in order to take the action required by the organization in comparison with a large number of cheaper prizes but taken separately.

After conducting the research, we discovered that the audience was more open and interested in contests with more consistent prizes or contests where the participation is easier; the only requirement is to demonstrate the product purchase, specifically the product

purchases of greater value and quantity, by locating a special code to be inserted on a website platform.

The ability to buy online and be automatically entered into the contest looked more enticing and convenient for the participants to participate, according to the respondents.

In times of crisis, especially multinational companies are quite adaptable, and the brands studied were able to swiftly adapt their marketing to the CoVid-19 epidemic. Future studies are needed to see if these successful tactics can be sustained beyond the epidemic. We suggest that even quantitative research can be conducted in order to better understand the consumer (Wielen & Barrios, 2021) behavior.

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