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*A Sociological Analysis of the Impact of Digital Marketing on Consumer  
Culture\*In light of the COVID-19 pandemic\**

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**Abstract:**

In light of the global development taking place and causing changes in the economic field, various countries have switched to digital marketing in an effort to ensure the quality presentation of their products and services and pursue client satisfaction. Moreover, the consumer's demand for this type of virtual marketing increased in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, particularly after the urgent measures taken by some countries to prevent the epidemic's spread, such as quarantines and social confinement.

Based on the aforementioned, the present research paper aims to present a sociological analysis of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the socioeconomic and health dimensions of consumer culture given its relation to digital marketing.

**Keywords:***Digital Marketing, Consumer Culture, COVID-19 Pandemic*

## **I-Introduction:**

Our world is currently going through a significant technological revolution, which has altered many rules and regulations on many different levels and in many different fields. As a result, we are now living in a virtual ideological network where man has entered a new era in his social, political, and even economic interactions, especially in trade and marketing.

On the one hand, new and updated terms appeared, enabling many institutions and organizations to enter global markets and increase sales and profit opportunities. On the other hand, we try to influence consumer behavior and culture in modern competitive ways. On the other hand, we mention "*digital marketing*," which has become in recent years one of the most important marketing activities for institutions in light of an unstable environment, openness to markets due to the tremendous development of the media and the increase in individual awareness, any institution, whatever its nature, must strive to understand and meet the aspirations of its customers in order to attract and win them by attempting to create and change the individual's behavior and local consumer culture into a global culture that keeps pace with the evolution in the field of trade and marketing.

The COVID-19 pandemic, in which the majority of society members turned to online shopping on commercial websites and even social networking sites to request goods and services due to the quarantine period, is evidence that digital marketing has economic, commercial, as well as social dimensions. The desire of customers to buy in a secure setting away from crowds and direct individual transactions, which aid in the spread of the epidemic and raise the risk of local and global health conditions, grows while businesses and services are closed for an extended period of time.

In light of the foregoing, we will attempt to present a sociological analysis of the impact of digital marketing on consumer culture in this research study by responding to the following question:

What is the impact of digital marketing on consumer culture and behavior in light of the COVID-19 pandemic?

### **1. Introduction to digital marketing between reality and aspirations**

#### **1.1 Definition of Digital Marketing:**

The term "*marketing*" is both old and modern at the same time. It is a necessary component for the success of any commercial transaction, regardless of its size or field. For decades, marketing has been confined to magazines, newspapers, and television channels, and these were the most advanced and effective marketing channels, until the emergence of the Internet and technology. Everything changed, and a new era and a new concept of marketing began, called digital marketing, or as it is known, "*digital marketing*."

Modern electronic "*digital marketing*" has transformed many marketing concepts and the interaction between the institution and the end user. Through it, the target client can be addressed at the ideal time and location and even be presented with the strongest justification for making a purchase. He defined digital marketing as: "the application of general principles in the science of marketing through the use of modern technological tools, especially the Internet, and it is also the tactics and strategies that are used to transform the virtual digital market into a tangible market." (Taha, 2008, p. 31); It enables creative and cutting-edge methods of communication with the consumer, including e-mail, SMS text messages, mobile applications, instant messaging, electronic bulletin boards, social networking sites, search engines, etc.

It was also described as utilizing contemporary technology, such as the Internet and mobile phones; to accomplish marketing objectives (Janssens, 2007, p.16), while Cheffey believes that "digital marketing is to achieve marketing goals through the application of digital technologies" (Cheffey, 2006, p. 8)

According to the aforementioned, digital marketing is larger and more thorough than e-marketing since it encompasses everything that is connected to modern technology, going beyond the concept of marketing on the Internet. Digital marketing includes strategies like SMS text message marketing, which may be used whether or not the phone is online.

Therefore, digital marketing refers to both contemporary communication technologies and the technological tools used (such as smart phones and TVs connected to the Internet), and

the digital platforms used (such as smart phone applications). It is also concerned with electronic customer relationship management, by studying the market, searching for new customers, serving existing and old customers, and giving customers the opportunity to contribute to the development of the products and services provided. (Taha, 2008, p. 34)

From this, we can deduce that modern digital technology is essential to the new marketing philosophy that digital marketing has adopted in order to meet customer wants, accomplish organizational goals, expand into existing markets and open up new ones, and ultimately enhance revenues significantly.

## **1-2. Characteristics and advantages of digital marketing:**

### ***\*Direct interaction with the client***

Customers can communicate their needs to organizations or businesses directly through digital marketing by responding to the marketing materials that the organization releases. For instance, a consumer can immediately voice his opinion about one of the company's products by leaving a comment on one of its social media pages. Of course, this offers the business a better understanding of its client's needs, wants, and issues, which in turn allows it to advance and expand.

### ***\*Good targeting ability***

Organizations may make precise targeting that enables them to reach potential customers who can generate good sales via them using the data and information that digital marketing delivers from reliable customer data.

Through digital marketing, you can target customers according to dozens of criteria, including

- Age
- gender (male/female)
- interests
- updated visits to websites.
- Researched words.
- Educational Qualifications.
- The geographical location in which the customer is located. (Matali, 2016, p. 17)

### ***\*Fair price and the ability to control the marketing budget more flexibly***

The reasonable price of digital marketing is a result of its exceptional effectiveness. The size of the gains or profits that can be realized through this expense is how the concept of cost is measured in this context. Instead of spending a ton on TV commercials that you can't control to show to each specific target consumer, you may pay for each target customer that watches a promotional video for your product in the world of digital marketing.

In addition to this, controlling the marketing budget is also a prominent feature in digital marketing. For example, a marketing campaign can be started on a social networking site with only \$100, and you can stop it at any time in an instant. (Al-Attar, 2003, p. 51)

### ***\*The ability to collect and reuse data***

Through the advanced technology provided by digital marketing, business owners can collect and retain customer data, and then reuse it again to provide distinctive marketing offers or achieve more sales to the same customers who bought before.

### ***\*The ability to accurately measure results and then make the required improvements***

One of the most important advantages of digital marketing is the ability to monitor, record, and analyze marketing results and then take appropriate decisions that help the business develop and improve. In digital marketing, everything is subject to analysis, from the level of interaction on social media to the percentage of opened marketing emails, watching marketing videos, and ending with achieving sales operations.

***\*Faster results compared to traditional marketing***

Results from digital marketing are frequently noticeable right away. On the one hand, you can precisely target your marketing, and on the other hand, you can measure everything and get an early look at the outcomes. For instance, if you are the owner of a product, you can start a marketing campaign, construct a social media page right away, and track how your target audience responds to it within an hour of its creation and approval. (Matali, 2016, p. 18)

**1.3. Digital Marketing's Social Dimension:**

According to the contemporary understanding of marketing, it is vital to create products that can be promoted; a "*social concept*" of marketing has emerged as a result of marketing professionals' growing interest in the social aspects of consumers. Furthermore, this concept calls for "the preparation of a marketing plan that considers the product, price, distribution, and promotion in order to satisfy the needs of the final consumer while paying close attention to the effects and consequences of that decision" (Al Bakri, 2006, p. 81)

In other words, if both the costs and social benefits of the program are among the most important criteria for judging its success in addition to the sales, costs, and profits resulting from it, then the marketing department-according to this concept-faces social problems. Moreover, it also has social responsibilities due to the impact of a large number of marketing decisions on the social environment of the project.

Hence, there is a social responsibility for the marketing activity, whose importance and objectives are due to the extent to which sociocultural standards are respected for the project's marketing process.

As social responsibility for marketing activities has grown in popularity and its impact on people's personal and societal relationships has grown, it emerged in the United States and Western European countries at the beginning of the sixties, what is known as consumer protection associations, which protect the interests of consumers and direct their behavior—based on correct information about goods and producers—in a rational way that guarantees the consumer gets the greatest satisfaction from getting the goods and services they want "this type of association is of particular interest to all countries around the world, particularly Arab countries" (Ramya, Mohamed, 2016, p. 80)

However, over time, it became apparent to everyone that the consumer's interests are indeed the focus of the marketing activity that achieves the interests of both the consumer and the marketing institution, even in the long term. Of course, in the beginning, there was a confrontation by the marketing men against the consumer protection associations because they perceived that they aimed to fight the interests of the As a result of everyone believing that the modern marketer has a social obligation, a close working relationship between consumer protection organizations in the nations where they were founded and marketing professionals interested in marketing activities evolved.

**2. The nature and dimensions of Consumer culture**

Because it plays a significant role in the advancement and development of civilizations, one of the crucial themes that have become a major title that attracts many researchers and media professionals is the culture of consumption which is positively reflected on his financial, social, and health circumstances

We will attempt to explain and explore the idea of this culture while making clear the variables determining its formation and how to quantify it. This is based on the significance of consumption as an economic, environmental, and social phenomenon.

**2.1. Definition of consumer culture:**

It is one of the main areas through which the elements of social change appear in daily life, and it is also one of the forms of material culture led by the market; this creates a relationship between the consumer and the things he consumes; and it is not just the consumption of commercial products; it enhances the individual's ability to express his identity. It reflects certain values and conditions and indicates the power of capitalism in reproducing the norms of a consumer society. (Fezerson, 2010, p. 05)

Consumer culture is also defined as

The consumer's familiarity with the available information about goods, services, and market conditions in general, with the aim of having a certain amount of knowledge represented in the methods of perceiving social reality with its various relationships, systems, and reactions, in order to achieve with them a certain consumer awareness as one of the pillars of consumer access to his rights and duties (Abdul Baqui, 2008, p. 46).

It is also known as: "Those cultural aspects accompanying the consumption process and represent the set of meanings and symbols that accompany the consumption process and that give this process its meaning and achieve its daily connotations" (Abdul Rahim, 2012, p. 185).

## **2.2. The Psychology of Consumption:**

The term "*culture of society*" refers to the system of behavior that predominates in it. This extends beyond just one field and encompasses ways of thinking and daily interactions with the vocabulary of life, where the consumption aspect takes up the majority of it. As a result, the culture of consumption holds a significant position within the general system of behavior that predominates in society. In contrast to other societies, educated societies consume differently, and the culture of the consumer varies depending on his level of cultural awareness and consumer behavior.

The desire to deviate and be alone in standing out from others, highlighting oneself, and attempting to give oneself some sort of social status are the primary drivers behind the sharp decline in consumption. Extravagance and rushing to the point of exaggeration in the consumption process are related to the level of culture and the prevalent ways and styles of thinking in society.

They consider that alcohol consumption can elevate one's social status when it is difficult to confront the high cost of living and the impossibility of coexisting with high prices due to the "low cultural level and consumer awareness of those who are worried about losing social status through the sharp tendency towards ostentatious consumption, consumer confusion has painful and adverse effects on various individuals and groups, which are easy to notice and feel" (Sivanesan, 2017, p. 15).

The media, in all of its forms, has a significant influence on public behavior, and while the extent of this influence varies depending on the culture and perception of the public, it is largely responsible for the spread of consumerism through advertisements, films, and programs that encourage excessive consumption habits. Hence the need of paying close attention to customer awareness and spreading knowledge on the path of consumption will result in positive effects on the individual and society, and this can only be achieved through the concerted efforts of the concerned community institutions and serious thinking about why some have started calling for the adoption of consumer education as a subject taught within the curriculum for school students.

## **3. Definition and implications of COVID-19**

### **3.1. Coronavirus**

According to many scientists, COVID-19 is a global pandemic that is currently ongoing and, according to many scientists, is caused by (Coronavirus 2) associated with the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS-Cove 2). The disease first broke out in the Chinese city of Wuhan in early December 2019. On January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization officially declared the outbreak of the virus a public health emergency of international concern. (WHO, 2020)

According to a recent report by the World Health Organization (2021), COVID-19 is a dangerous epidemic virus, the most common symptoms of which are:

- fever
- dry cough

- stress
- Other less common symptoms that may affect some patients include:
- loss of taste and smell,
- Nasal congestion,
- conjunctivitis (also known as red eyes),
- Sore throat,
- headache,
- muscle or joint pain,
- various rash patterns,
- nausea or vomiting,
- diarrhoea,
- tremors or dizziness;

Symptoms are usually mild, and some people become infected but have very mild or no symptoms.

Signs of severe COVID-19 disease include

- shortness of breath,
- lack of appetite,
- confusion or confusion,
- persistent pain or a feeling of pressure in the chest,
- High temperature (more than 38 ° C).

Other less common symptoms include

- irritability,
- confusion
- Decreased level of consciousness (sometimes associated with seizures),
- anxiety,
- Depression,
- Sleepdisorders,

In addition to severe and rare neurological complications such as strokes, encephalitis, delirium, and nerve damage, by the same token, people of all ages who have a fever and/or cough associated with difficulty breathing or shortness of breath, pain or pressure in the chest, or loss of speech or movement should seek immediate medical attention (WHO 2021). As for the treatment, the research is still ongoing, as not even an informant has come up with an invention or discovery of a vaccine to treat this virus, despite the emergence of many British, American, and Russian vaccines — but they are always in clinical trials.

### **3.1. Sociocultural repercussions of the COVID-19 pandemic**

The COVID-19 pandemic began in late 2019 and is still a significant problem on a global scale. The pandemic has spread to almost every country and has had a number of unfavorable repercussions on the economy, society, and politics, including the terrible economic crisis that the majority of countries are currently experiencing. Unfortunately, despite multiple attempts and efforts, many countries are still dubious of their efficacy.

The Covid-19 virus has both positive and negative effects, according to numerous scholarly investigations, including

#### ***\*Negativeeffects:***

- The greed of some traders and their exploitation of the crisis in an inhumane and unprofessional way.
- High prices of food products and sterilization materials and their scarcity.
- Global economic and commercial losses.
- The spread of unemployment, violence and crime.

#### ***\*Positive effects:***

- From the ecological aspect, it is noted that life is returning in many aquatic and forest environments
- Websites benefit from the presence of many customers.
- The recovery of digital marketing and e-commerce, especially during the quarantine period.

#### **4. A Sociological Reading of Digital Marketing and Consumer Culture in the Light of COVID-19**

Due to the social, economic, and health benefits of digital marketing and consumer culture, it is one of the crucial subjects that we must research and examine in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a sociological reading of some businesses, “although they are few,” about the reality of digital and electronic marketing in the time of the COVID-19 epidemic and its impact on consumer culture, we were able to deduce many points that showed the extent of the negative impact of this pandemic on the culture of the individual in general and consumer culture in particular, according to a study titled “The Impact of the COVID Pandemic on Internet Shopping and Consumer Behavior (2020).

The study demonstrated a noticeable shift toward digital marketing in consumer culture and behavior in response to the COVID-19 epidemic. This is in order to avoid the health risks resulting from the outbreak of the epidemic, as the percentage of women in online shopping exceeded the percentage of men, and the Algerian consumer developed a culture of delivery service for many goods and products at a pace ranging from two to three times a month. In the end, the study confirmed that the Algerian consumer perceives that digital marketing is not a completely safe process due to the manipulation of merchants and product owners as well as the lack of legal legislation that regulates it.

On the other hand, a comprehensive analysis of the COVID pandemic's most significant economic impacts in 2020 revealed that the pandemic was a humanitarian and health crisis that triggered a global economic downturn in which many nations turned to the digital economy, which in turn centered on digital electronic marketing and had an impact on consumer culture. And his behavior, as the majority of commercial transactions, have become digital and electronic, via the Internet, with a card It focuses on electronic digital marketing, which has affected consumer culture and behavior, as the majority of electronic digital business transactions are made via the Internet with an electronic card through which money is dispensed, but through the results, it was found that the Algerian consumer always prefers direct dealing in process of buying and selling, and this is for many The most important reason is the fear of digital marketing deception.

#### **II-Conclusion:**

Digital marketing has taken a quantum leap in light of the COVID-19 pandemic, so it is facing great challenges, the most important of which is changing the consumer culture to one that depends on and trusts digital shopping.

Institutions seek to study and understand the behavior and culture of the Algerian consumer and their trends, especially in light of the pandemic, by offering innovative ways. The digital world is attractive for advertising and promotion, the aim of which is to satisfy the consumer and try to gain his trust, on the one hand, and to help fight the outbreak of the epidemic by converting the consumer to the digital world and abandoning gathering and direct shopping, the latter of which becomes almost impossible and dangerous during the quarantine period that was adopted as a precautionary measure to prevent the spread of the pandemic.

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