



# Marketing in Times of COVID-19

Getting the message out to potential clients has never been harder

**Viren Merchant**

## Introspection .... Yes & Not an Introduction!

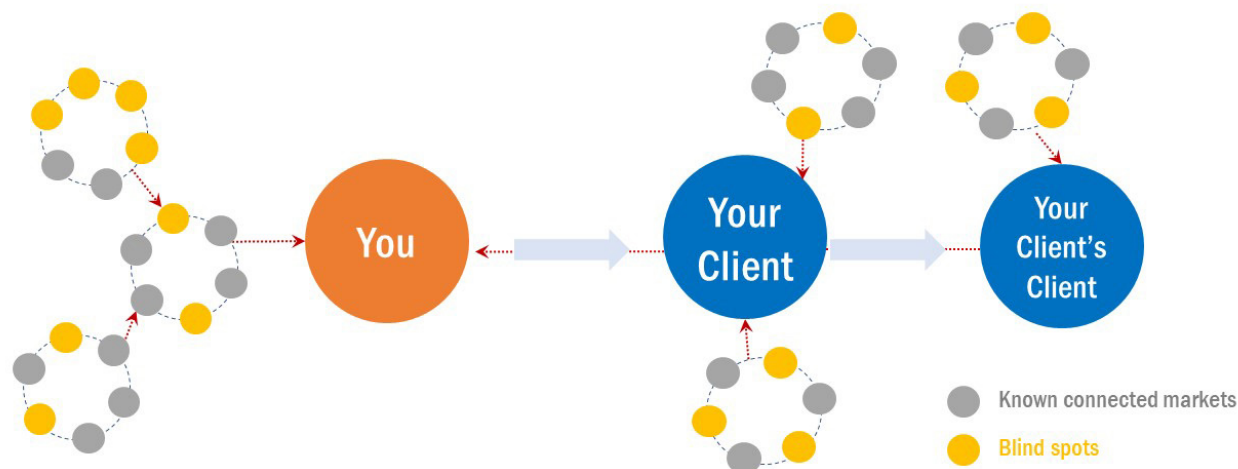
The COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis like we have never seen before and thus it is no surprise that it came with disruptions to business.

This pandemic has certainly had an impact on the way IPM business is conducted. This is new for everyone on the planet! Several businesses are

shutting up shops and economies have moved downward. Liquidity and cash flows have been restrained and growth plans have been derailed in the current times.

Therefore, it is important to *Stop, Relax, and Not Panic*, whilst preparing a marketing strategy to propel your organization forward! This is a time to gain perspective in order to strategize effectively.

## COVID-19 WILL IMPACT ...

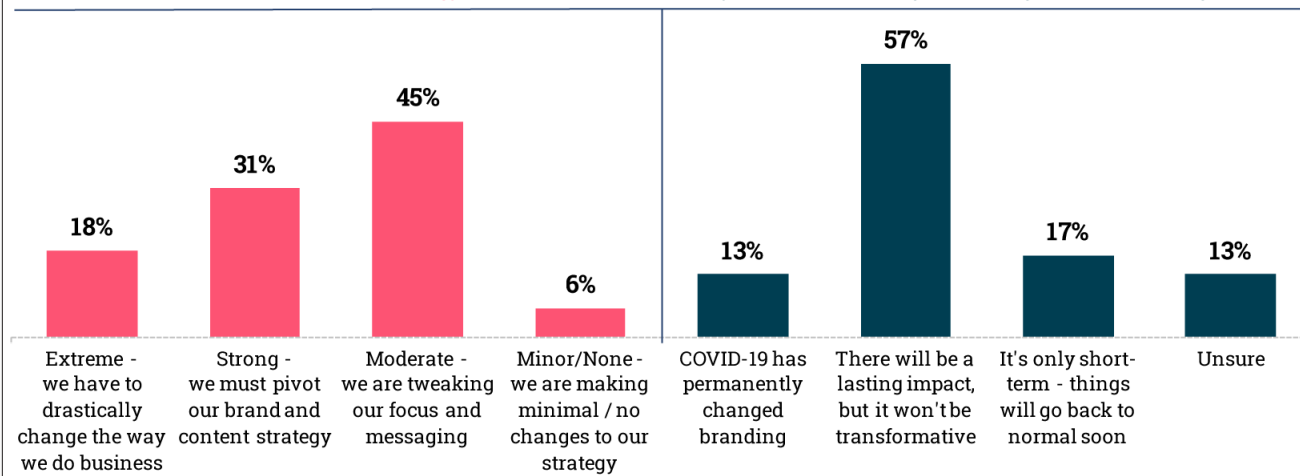


## COVID-19 Impact on Branding and Marketing Efforts



"How much impact is COVID-19 having on your brand and content strategy?"

"How significant do you think the COVID-19 disruption will be to your usual branding/marketing efforts in the long-term?"



Published on MarketingCharts.com in May 2020 | Data Source: Bynder

Based on an April 2020 survey of 301 marketing professionals across industries and company sizes

### Perspectives on the COVID19 Impact on Marketing

Several marketing surveys have pointed out a deep impact on marketing spends across industries along with changing consumer spending trends. It is important to monitor the prevailing market conditions. Check, for example, the graph above published by [www.MarketingCharts.com](http://www.MarketingCharts.com) in May 2020.

There are concerns with consumer discretionary sectors, i.e. non-essentials, where spending can be avoided by consumers. However, going forward there are positives expected with value based Content Marketing.

### Reanalyze Your Marketing Plan with COVID-19 in Mind

In times like these, one needs to respond to changes in real time. We are all learning and there is no silver bullet...yet!

Such times should trigger the leader to first step back, reevaluate one's plans, re-centre their thinking, and focus on what is next. Currently, keeping one's business in front of consumers could help with their perception of your brand, even if they are not buying it right now. Leading global economies including European and the

USA are predicted to take the next three years to recover from this crisis. Similar concerns hold for the Asia-Pacific economies as well.

Quote: "People do not buy goods and services. They buy Relations, Stories and Magic", by Seth Godin.

Have a strategy based on your spending capacity in the current times. It is imperative to keep a track of the revenue and assess all fixed and variable expenses whilst approaching marketing budgets.

Focus should be less on conversion rates for sales, and rather focusing on brand presence methods. There is a necessity for strategies to change with the times. It is time to shift with the trends and adapt to newer means of communication. Do not be keen to only sell, but rather, to listen and reciprocate with your audience. Good digital marketing strategy is cost-effective option, particularly in the current situation.

The global economy has turned into a digital marketplace. Take for example, India's Internet consumption, which rose by 13% during the lockdown. A similar effect has been observed in other countries. Going digital and marketing online is the way forward in these present times.

### Post COVID-19 Marketing Strategies

Good marketing, at its core, has to include a deep understanding of your target market, which includes knowing:

- their day-to-day lives,
- their challenges,
- their joys,
- their perspective on the world around them.

Once you understand that, and take into consideration the current circumstances, one can

figure out how one's brand fits into that story. Many of those things you knew about your target audience/clients, are different now. The other challenge is that there is no manual for this.

### Consumer Centric and Present Situation Sensitive Approach to Marketing

Listen to what consumers need or want! Maintaining a connection with your consumers will help build a trustworthy relationship that will be rewarding. Share content that is engaging and



Make the  
customer the  
hero of your  
story.

ANN HANDLEY

relatable in these times to sustain the connection. This will help gain share ability and also garner consumer interaction. Content marketing is all about answering your customers' questions.

Understand the consumers' pressure points, ask for genuine feedback on your service, and develop knowledge of what they are looking for when they turn to your brand. This will help consolidate your marketing strategy.

### Marketing Strategy and Tools

It is important to have clarity between Marketing Strategy and Tools, including knowing the difference between the two, and effectively integrating your strategy based on geographic situations (i.e. local factors).

Tools of marketing may be similar across geographies, but the Strategy has to be specific and customized based on local parameters.

Content Marketing is about investing more in educating and creating awareness amongst customers and the target audience. This helps to connect with customers and build healthy sustainable relations.

It is time to pivot! Craft a message that is sensitive to the current situation, takes into account your

customer new situations and concerns, and is honest, transparent, and human (i.e. not pushy).

Take for example this advertisement below by Nike. This Nike advertisement is truly a Gold Standard. It is human and inspiring. It aligns with the defining spirit or mood of the current times of the pandemic. The simple, black-and-white creative adds to the gravitas (with dignity and seriousness) of the message without having a negative undertone. Instead, it has an underlying tone of hope and optimism. Have a positive mindset, but do not be insensitive.

### Tools of Marketing to Consider

Consider developing a learning centre kind of digital platform, endowed with information, publications, webinars, and other information. Hold virtual events that focus on value based knowledge sharing with the target audience and clients, and ensure that there is a clear message for the attendee to takeaway. Use social media effectively, both the free and paid options, as they have good return on investments and at reasonable costs.

Effectively use SEO (search engine optimization), generate niche subject demand relevant to current times, for example, disinfection, public health, and IPM. There are sites and directories,

**IF YOU EVER DREAMED OF PLAYING  
FOR MILLIONS AROUND THE WORLD,  
NOW IS YOUR CHANCE.**

Play inside, play for the world.



where you can go and place links for free.

Social media is a wildcard on a good day, so tread carefully, but tread you must! Do you have an established presence on social channels? Then utilize it! Responsibly take advantage of all your organic opportunities.

Around 65% of small-to-mid-sized businesses (SMBs) invest in pay-per-click (PPC) advertisement. Google Ads is also a wonderful marketing tool (keywords) and offers an impressive return on investment.

Marketing on radio is a good option too. Worldwide radio advertising contribute to almost 10% of total marketing spend, as it is recognized for its reasonable cost, and very good audience reach and penetration.

It is no secret that quality customer communication is an essential step to retaining the customers. There is a fine art to this communication, and one of the definitive aspects is email marketing. It has been in use for a long time and has reaped rewards for companies that effectively use it as a marketing tool.

Facebook Ads is another tool to consider due to its vast network, incredible popularity, and flexible budgeting.

One can consider the range of online tools available globally and locally in their countries, and the strategies to integrate the use of these options.

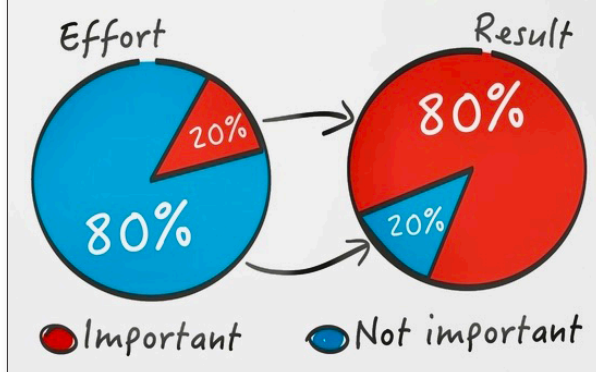
### Pareto's Principle

This principle can be an effective guideline to implement in one's marketing strategy for their organization. The Pareto Principle, named after esteemed economist Vilfredo Pareto, specifies that 80% of consequences come from 20% of the causes, asserting an unequal relationship between inputs and outputs. This principle serves as a general reminder that the relationship between inputs and outputs is not balanced.

Therefore, one can retain and grow one's loyal customer base during these pandemic times utilizing the Pareto's Principle as strategy. Analyze and focus on your core revenue generating clientele base, which may be a smaller portion of the total client pie. Leverage this data to maximize

## PARETO'S PRINCIPLE

Expand your business with the 80/20 rule



your specific customer engagements in these times through resource optimization and the right communication.

### Conclusion

Marketing in the conditions imposed on us by the coronavirus pandemic must lean on community, brand building, and relationships with existing customers.

If one can strike the right tone with their messaging, and that message resonates in the consciousness of the target audience, one's business will be in a good position to retain the market share or even gain as the economic activity normalizes and improves in the region.

To emerge winners in this crisis, one must combine resilience and agility in your strategy. You must determine where you should be strong and where to be flexible, keeping the target audience in your mind at all times. ■

*This article is a summary of Mr Viren Merchant's presentation given at the FAOPMA-Pest Summit 2020 Virtual Conference.*

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