Smart Business as an Approach for De-marketing During COVID 19 Pandemic: Insights from Health Sector

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Abstract

Current study aimed at examining the influence of smart business goals influence of de-marketing through COVID19 pandemic within Jordanian health sector. Quantitative approach was utilized depending on a questionnaire that was uploaded online and distributed on marketing and public relations managers in Jordan's (69) private hospitals. After application process, researchers were able to retrieve (53) questionnaires valid for statistical analysis. Using SPSS v. 23rd; study was able to realize the main hypothesis which indicated that smart business goals has the ability to influence de-marketing through COVID19 pandemic as an approach to detour individuals' interest towards certain items especially with the lockdown and quarantine which took place at the beginning of 2020. Study also found that selective de-marketing is the most influenced type of de-marketing by smart business goals which works on the bases of targeting specific segment of society to lower down the level of their demand on a certain product. The study recommends the need to pay attention to the risks of de-marketing, which is represented by the employees themselves, as it is possible for the organization to pursue de-marketing through itself without knowing it, and this is when the employees working in the organization have negative feelings against it as a result of the organization's lack of awareness of the importance of internal marketing, in this case the employees themselves are a major source of negative and opposite marketing.

Keywords: De-Marketing, Reverse Marketing, Ostensible De-Marketing, Selective Segment, Discontinue Production,Health Sector

Introduction

Marketing basically aims to impose a balance between demand and supply, in addition to increasing the acceptance of the service and the product and increasing its acceptance, spread and demand for consumption, but marketing in general does not take place in an unlimited manner because in the end all organizations are governed by production capacity, manufacturing accounts, processing or the time supposed to provide the service and ensuring its quality, and it is possible for the organization to fall into the trap of inability to reach the market requirements, and therefore the need for an alternative plan in order to avoid a major loss, the loss of customers or the difference in the mental image of the brand and become negative (Aboud and Ayyez, 2019). This alternative plan is called de- Marketing, which is based on (do and don't policy) for customers so that it is an alternative plan

in case the organization wants to control the demand for products or services or stop them completely (Sesale et al, 2017).

Problem Statement

According to Shi (2017), over the past decade, the world of marketing has undergone a host of changes, buying options are more complex and diverse than ever, and marketers have a lot of information at their fingertips.Baporikar and Fotolela (2017) argued that the world of marketing at the present time has developed significantly and remarkably, and the term 'smart marketing' has emerged, which relies on data from different sources, and uses modern technology to reach new customers and try to maintain existing customers. That is, it is possible to rely on this data to predict market trends, which helps in the planning process for future marketing campaigns (Hall and Wood, 2021).

Smart business goalsaren't only for marketing certain products and items, it can also be used in order to deviate individuals' purchase attention from consuming certain products that might be harm for them, may include health risks, or have been discontinued from manufacturing (Al-Shibly et al, 2019).

Based on the above argument, current study aimed at examining the role of smart marketing as an approach for de-marketing during the pandemic of COVID 19 within the health sector.

Reaching aim of current study was done through realizing the following set of objectives:

- Highlight de-marketing, its motives, role in the market and approaches
- Identify the basics of smart marketing
- Gather between smart marketing and de-marketing in terms of how smart marketing can be used within de-marketing

Model and Hypotheses

Researcher in this sense developed the following model in order to highlight the relationship between chosen variables:
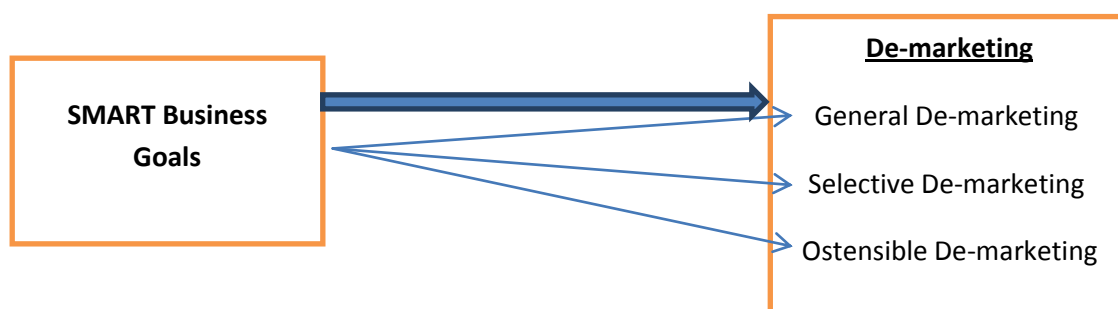

Figure 1. Study Model Azzam (2019) and Gupta & Prakash (2020)

Hypotheses Development

According to Al-Shibly et al (2019), smart business has been proven influential in many marketing fields and on multiple marketing levels. The idea of smart business is based on utilizing all smart

tools and device in order to do the job and realize the meant aim of the strategy and given the fact that de-marketing is a marketing strategy then it has the ability to be realized utilizing smart business approach.

Hall and Wood (2021) indicated that smart business entered many aspects of organizations' lives including finance through AIS, operations through smart supply chain management and marketing through depending on smart approaches to market and promote items and products.

Baporikar and Fotolela (2017) in their study on the use of de-marketing to change individuals' inclinations towards buying tobacco, the researchers indicated that now the use of smart methods such as spreading awareness messages and shocking images through social media has shown its effectiveness in prompting individuals to rethink smoking, as social media reaches to individuals in their homes and offices, even reaching individuals in their beds before sleeping in order to market a product or service or raise awareness of something. Through smart de-marketing based on smart electronic and technological strategies, de-marketing can hunt individuals not only in the markets, but also in shops and malls, even in their homes.

From another perspective, Shi (2017) indicated that the characteristics of smart business goals like time-bound, specific, measurable, achievable and relevant has facilitated the process of bettered-marketing, this appeared through depending on smart approaches when developing de-marketing strategies that aim to achieve lower demand and consumption on a certain product or service.

From above model and hypotheses testing; following set of hypotheses were extracted:

H: SMART Business Goals positively influence de-marketing approaches

H1: SMART Business Goals positively influence general de-marketing

H2: SMART Business Goals positively influence selective de-marketing

H3: SMART Business Goals positively influence ostensible de-marketing

Literature Review

The Notion of De-Marketing

De- marketing is basically one of the marketing policies that are used to control the behavior of the target segment or to legalize the way it deals with the product or service (Little et al, 2019). According to Hall and Wood (2021), De- marketing policy is established based on the same transactions as the usual marketing mix (price - promotion and advertising - places - product) "marketing mix"; but in a reverse way, such as raising the prices of liquor or stopping support, maintenance and spare parts for cars after a certain period of time from their issuance, or reducing promotion and advertising expenses, or withdrawing the product from the market.

According to Hashem (2011), de-marketing is defined as reverse marketing that includes product, price, location, and promotion policies, which can be used to reduce demand, Sekhon and Armstrong Soule (2020) defined it as all the policies and activities carried out by the organization to limit a certain behavior, and examples are many, including: raising tobacco prices, raising the prices of

tickets for concerts and celebrations if seats are limited, raising the percentage of university admissions and others. Veríssimo et al (2020) also defined the concept of de-marketing as an attempt to reduce the will of customers in general or a particular type of customer to consume a particular product temporarily or permanently.

The goal of using the de-marketing strategy is to create a state of balance between supply and demand, and this strategy can be activated on an entire market or on certain sectors of the market or certain segments of it in order to adjust supply and demand rates and ensure the continuation of the marketing process properly (Hashem, 2011).

To clarify the concept of de-marketing Hall and Wood (2021) indicates that when the ability of the organization to manufacture products is less than the demand for them, then it is useful to take counter marketing for some unavailable products with caution that this is done without harming the brand of those products; this is usually done by relying on logical reasons and justifications, providing alternatives and promoting the alternative as better and from the same manufacturer. Korstanje and George (2020) indicates that this plan is basically similar to what happens on a seasonal and annual basis in the fashion marketing process, which is called (fashion). This plan is considered one of the largest counter-marketing campaigns that live with it annually without the customer feeling it, and the matter is the same with new car models.

Applying De-Marketing As a Strategy

The implementation of de-marketing is done through continuous steps based on the implementation of marketing tactics, but with different goals. In this case, the goal is to reverse the usual state of marketing or the marketing process, and therefore the main objective is to reduce the demand for the product or service to safe rates without causing demand prevention completely abandoning the product or harming the entire marketing process, thus reaching the stage of destroying the brand's image and trust in it (Kim and Kim, 2019).

As for Hashem (2011) he pointed out that de-marketing is done by studying and exploiting the variables of the current marketing environment compared to the time when the product or service was presented for the first time, and trying not to conform to developments, with finding alternative solutions for users in other products or directing the target segment to paths different or request different services.

Types of De-Marketing

There are types of de-marketing notion which are used according to their needs, such types differ in the audience they target, goals to be achieved and end results to be read. Chaudhry et al (2019), Weiler et al (2019) and Ramirez et al (2017) indicated that the following are the most vivid types of de-marketing:

General De-Marketing

The organization may resort to this type of marketing when it plans to reduce the quantity of reverse demand, and it consists of three types which are temporary shortage, chronic additional fameand finishing the product.

Selective De-Marketing

The organization takes this step when it decides to limit the demand made by a certain group of customers.

Ostensible De-Marketing

It includes the feature of planning to reduce that demand which is a means in order to increase the condition.

Based on that, organization may decide to adopt de-marketing and start a campaign in order to reach its goal of decreasing demand on the items/service or get rid of a certain segment of clients (Rocha and Casotti, 2018). Such decision includes the following Magalhães et al (2017), Hesse and Rünz(2020) and Farquhar and Robson (2017):

1. Increasing or high prices.

2. An increased advertisement showing the risks of the product.

3. Reducing promotional expenses and reducing sales volume.

4. Effective reduction of sales representatives' time.

5. Reducing the discounts granted to agents and distributors.

6. Reducing product distribution outlets.

7. Increasing purchase expenses and time.

8. Reducing or withdrawing the quality of the product

9. Develop alternatives.

10. Putting annoying conditions in the purchase process.

Motivators for De-marketing

The reasons for using de-marketing strategies are very many, and it is assumed that each organization takes into account a specific policy of de-marketing from before the beginning of the marketing process and it is activated when needed, for example Hall and Wood (2021); Magalhães et al (2017) and Drugova et al (2020):

- The desire to get rid of a certain segment of customers that are characterized by high costs and low profits.
- Educating a certain segment of customers about the product and ensuring that they use the product properly.
- Issuing an update to the current product or adding new services to replace previous ones.
- Ensuring that the product or service does not reach customers outside the target segment, especially if the target segment is very dedicated and its number is less than the market segment that includes the entire segment.

- Avoid falling into the problem of raising the ceiling of customers' ambitions in a way that they cannot meet.
- Proactive action to avoid negative feedback from customers.

Smart Business as an Approach for De-Marketing during COVID 19

Smart business is a relatively new word in the world of business; it refers to providing practical procedures and appropriate communication tools to develop operations that use traditional operating methods (AL-Samydai et al, 2018). To do this, it is necessary to rely on transaction data, business processes and advanced technologies, and modern technological skills are essential to the process of structuring the vast amount of information (Kodaş and Kodaş, 2021).

During the Corona pandemic, smart de-marketing was highly relied upon, as it was pointed out the need to stop consuming many products in order to increase the ability of individuals to withstand the pandemic and confront it in a healthy way. On the health level, smart de-marketing has emerged for many products, including smoking, shisha, mixing and going to crowded places, and later with the adoption of vaccines, it was encouraged through de-marketing on the need to receive the vaccine in order to protect the individual and society (Quintero et al, 2021).

Methods and Methodology

Achieving aim and testing hypotheses of current study was done through collecting primary data quantitatively. For that sake, a questionnaire was utilized which consisted of two main sections, the first took into perspective demographics of study sample (gender, experience and qualification); while the other section consisted of statements related to study variables of de-marketing including (General De-marketing, Selective De-marketing and Ostensible De-marketing).

Population of study consisted of marketing and public relations managers in Jordan's 69 private hospitals as according to PHA (phajordan.org). After application process researchers were able to retrieve (53) properly filled questionnaires that was valid for statistical processing. SPSS V. 23rd was used in order to screen and analyze gathered primary data. In order to test the consistency of the scale, Cronbach alpha is used and alpha = 0.968 that means the questionnaire is reliable. Other statistical tests used included:

- Descriptive statistics (frequency and percentage)
- Descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation)
- Linear regression

Results and Discussion

Demographics

Demographics of study sample including (gender, educational level and experience) was calculated, as it appeared in table 1 below majority of sample was male forming as much as 94.3% of the sample, educational level of respondents was for the benefit of BA holders forming 49.1% of total sample who were with an experience of more than 10 years forming 47.2% of total sample.

Smart Business as an Approach for De-marketing During COVID 19 Pandemic: Insights from Health Sector

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics of Sample

Gender		
	f	%
Male	50	94.3
Female	3	5.7
Educational Level		
BA	26	49.1
MA	15	28.3
PhD	12	22.6
Experience		
2-5	16	30.2
6-9	12	22.6
+10	25	47.2
Total	53	100.0

Mean and Standard Deviation of Questionnaire

In order to thoroughly understands how the sample received questionnaire statements, descriptive statistics were presented in table 2 below which included mean and standard deviation; results indicated that all means of statements scored higher than mean of scale 3.00 which is statistically a positive indicator. The most positively answered statement appeared to be "Through smart business, the marketing message can be modified according to needs" scoring a mean of 3.43/5.00 and a std. deviation of .721. On the other hand, the least positively answered statement was "The timely-based characteristic of de-marketing can develop a temporary shortage in production" scoring a mean of 3.89/5.00 and a std. deviation of .780.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics of Questionnaire Statements

	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMART Business Goals		
Smart business goals are best for manipulating classic marketing strategies	4.13	.833
Smart business includes social media which is a main and direct approach to reach consumers	4.15	.841
De-marketing can take place smartly through smart business	4.11	.891
Through smart business, the marketing message can be modified according to needs	4.43	.721
Smart business can help in modifying promotion expenditures	4.13	.856

De-marketing
General De-marketing

Technology can help in controlling total demand	4.21	.769
Through smart strategies total demand can be restricted and shrunk	4.11	.870
Smartly, there is a way to manipulate prices to discourage consuming	4.17	.778
General scarcity can be developed in order to reduce demand	4.28	.907
The timely-based characteristic of de-marketing can develop a temporary shortage in production	3.89	.870

Selective De-Marketing

With smart strategies in marketing, there is a space to discourage purchases	4.38	.765
Smart business can focus on certain social classes to control its purchase from a certain item/product	4.25	.830
All social classes are attainable through smart business strategies in order to deviate demand	4.06	.718
Smart business can help targeting social classes for de-marketing	4.25	.918
Smart strategies can be selectively chosen and operated	4.02	1.009

Ostensible De-Marketing

If the main idea isn't de-marketing, through smart business there can be an outside de-marketing	4.36	.736
In a smart way, we can develop a shortage on the production	4.11	.954
Smart strategies can help in achieving the opposite effect of marketing strategies	3.96	1.073
Smart business strategies can create the appearance of not wanting more consumers	3.91	.658
Smartly, marketing can be played hard to get	4.23	.750
The idea of smart ostensible de-marketing revolves around being neglected by the seller	3.89	.870

The same process took place on study variables as it appeared in the following table 3, mean and std. deviation were calculated for variables of study in a more general approach. It appeared through results that smart business goals was the most positively answered variables as it scored the highest mean and std. deviation of 4.19/5.00 and .713 respectively.

Table 3. Descriptive Statistics of Variables

	Mean	Std. Deviation
SMART Business Goals	4.19	.713
De-marketing	4.12	.701
General	4.13	.730
Selective	4.18	.747
Ostensible	4.07	.722

Hypothesis testing:

H: SMART Business Goals positively influence de-marketing approaches

Table 4. Main Hypothesis Testing

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.662[a]	.438	.427	.53089

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	11.192	1	11.192	39.708	.000[b]
	Residual	14.374	51	.282		
	Total	25.566	52			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.403	.439		3.198	.002
	SMART_Business_Goals	.650	.103	.662	6.301	.000

Linear regression was used to test above hypothesis, it was found that t = 6.301 was significant since p-value was less than 0.05, that means we accepted that SMART Business Goals positively influence de-marketing approaches. Also r= 0.662 reflected **<u>high positive relationship</u>** as well as the independent variable explained **43.8%** of the variance in the dependent variable.

H1: SMART Business Goals positively influence general de-marketing

Table 5. 1st Hypothesis Testing

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.542[a]	.294	.280	.61996

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	8.153	1	8.153	21.213	.000[b]
	Residual	19.602	51	.384		
	Total	27.755	52			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.806	.512		3.525	.001
	SMART_Business_Goals	.555	.120	.542	4.606	.000

Linear regression was used to test above hypothesis, it was found that t = 4.606 was significant since p-value was less than 0.05, that means we accepted that SMART Business Goals positively influence general de-marketing. Also r= 0.542 reflected **medium positive relationship** as well as the independent variable explained **29.4%** of the variance in the dependent variable.

H2: SMART Business Goals positively influence selective de-marketing

Table 6. 2nd Hypothesis Testing

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.682[a]	.465	.454	.55235

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	13.513	1	13.513	44.293	.000[b]
	Residual	15.560	51	.305		
	Total	29.073	52			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.194	.456		2.615	.012
	SMART_Business_Goals	.714	.107	.682	6.655	.000

Linear regression was used to test above hypothesis, it was found that t = 6.655 was significant since p-value was less than 0.05, that means we accepted that SMART Business Goals positively influence selective de-marketing. Also r= 0.682 reflected**high positive relationship** as well as the independent variable explained**46.5%** of the variance in the dependent variable.

H3: SMART Business Goals positively influence ostensible de-marketing

Table 7. 3rd Hypothesis Testing

Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.668^a	.446	.435	.54315

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.097	1	12.097	41.007	.000^b
	Residual	15.045	51	.295		
	Total	27.143	52			

Coefficients

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.242	.449		2.767	.008
	SMART_Business_Goals	.676	.106	.668	6.404	.000

Linear regression was used to test above hypothesis, it was found that t = 6.404 was significant since p-value was less than 0.05, that means we accept that SMART Business Goals positively influence ostensible de-marketing. Also r= 0.668 reflected**high positive relationship** as well as the independent variable explained**44.6%** of the variance in the dependent variable.

Discussion

Current study aimed at examining the influence of smart business goals influence of de-marketing through COVID19 pandemic within Jordanian health sector. Quantitative approach was utilized depending on a questionnaire that was uploaded online and distributed on marketing and public relations managers in Jordan's 69 private hospitals. After application process, researchers were able to retrieve (53) questionnaires valid for statistical analysis. Using SPSS v. 23rd; study was able to reach following set of findings:

- The main aim of study was realized and it appeared that smart business goals positively influence de-marketing approaches with high positive relationship explained 43.8% of variance

- Smart business goals positively influence **general de-marketing** with a medium positive relationship explained **29.4%** of variance being the least variable influenced by smart business goals.
- Smart business goals positively influence **selective de-marketing** with high positive relationship explained **46.5%** of variance and appearing as the most influenced de-marketing type by smart business approaches.
- Smart business goals positively influence **ostensible de-marketing** with high positive relationship explained **44.6%**of variance

Study was able to prove that de-marketing is the adoption of a policy (do not do) with the aim of directing marketing in the opposite direction depending mainly on the marketing mix (product - price - promotion and advertising - places) to limit and control demand and balance it with supply or the ability to implement, and this aims to achieve marketing goals in general in the long run agreeing with Kodaş and Kodaş, 2021) and Baporikar and Fotolela (2017). Ensuring the preservation of the brand's position in the target market and maintaining the desired mental image of the target segment. This result matched what came along with Quintero et al (2021) and Al-Shibly et al (2019).

In addition, the study proved that selective de-marketing was most affected by smart business goals, through which the concerned organizations used de-marketing in order to legalize individuals' purchase of many harmful products such as tobacco and water pipe, as they reduce the immunity to resistance to the Corona virus. And it increases the chances of death, given that COVID 19 is one of the chest diseases, and smoking and water-pipe are among the most harmful practices to the lung as what came along with AL-Samydai et al (2018); Hall and Wood (2021) and Shi (2017)

Conclusion and Recommendations

The idea of de-marketing is not a permanent strategy followed in the organization, but it is one of the means that are followed in case of need. And in light of the Corona pandemic and the need to educate individuals about the importance of quitting smoking, continuous sterilization of surfaces, social distancing and maintaining a high level of social responsibility, de-marketing appeared as a marketing method to deter individuals from harming themselves, and this method was successful in terms of luxury The percentage of individuals' commitment to social distancing, sterilization, and hand washing, so that some of them quit smoking and avoid using water-pipes in all its forms in order to raise the level of society in the face of the pandemic and reduce the number of injured and deaths.

The study recommends the need to pay attention to the risks of de-marketing, which is represented by the employees themselves, as it is possible for the organization to pursue de-marketing through itself without knowing it, and this is when the employees working in the organization have negative feelings against it as a result of the organization's lack of awareness of the importance of internal marketing, in this case the employees themselvesare a major source of negative and opposite marketing. In addition to that, study recommends the need to be careful and take into account the methods of competitors and to ensure that the opposite marketing strategies are consistent along with the usual marketing policy (actually) to codify and control the demand for the product or service, or modify the behavior and direct the target segment in paths that serve the marketing objectives in the long term, as well as avoiding Short-term adverse reactions.

Smart Business as an Approach for De-marketing During COVID 19 Pandemic:
Insights from Health Sector

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