

Assessment of the rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing as a product of Covid-19

Author 1, Author 2, Author 3.

Abstract

Aims: The aim of the research was to examine the rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing due to covid 19.

Method/design: The study was conducted through primary quantitative research in which 200 professionals in marketing from the United Kingdom responded to the Likert scale-based questionnaire.

Findings: The research showed that marketing pressure to expand the customer base does not have a significant direct impact on unethical sympathy-based marketing. However, pressure to conceal and target vulnerable customers has a positive impact on the unethical practise of sympathy-based marketing. Meanwhile, the mediating effect of hyper consumerism was observed to be significant in the relationship between targeting vulnerable customers and unethical sympathy-based marketing in the COVID-19 pandemic. Hyper consumerism does not have a significant effect on marketing pressure to expand the consumer base and pressure to conceal the rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing during COVID 19.

Future implications: Future research could be done on other factors influencing unethical sympathy-based marketing and more detailed interviews can be conducted by the marketing professionals of other countries.

Keywords: *sympathy-based marketing, unethical, business, Covid-19, lockdown*

Introduction

In the past, it was the norm of companies doing unethical marketing by stating false facts and figures, exaggerating the qualities of their products and services, and claiming unverified facts like cigarette smoking gave an active lifestyle (Gupta and Srivastav, 2016). Brands change the facts and mislead their customers, which is an unethical practise that is being used to boost sales and revenue (Zarrad and Debabi, 2015). The reason the brands and companies are misleading their customers is that they know that it will be difficult to sell the products if the client knows everything about the product. According to David, Boniface, and Christian (2018), companies mask the dark sides of their products. However, showing too much of the good side through service and product is also bad.

In the crucial time of the COVID-19 pandemic, brands and companies used unethical sympathy-based marketing to increase their sales (Mehta, Saxena, and Purohit, 2020). COVID-19 has had a significant impact on the global economy, which previous viruses such as the Ebola virus could not (Ozili and Arun, 2020). Covid impacted the marketing strategies that are the corporate social responsibilities and philosophies of basic marketing and unethical sympathy-based marketing (García-Sánchez and García-Sánchez, 2020). As soon as COVID hit the whole world, governments started taking safety measures like lockdowns and strict social distancing. Covid 19 challenges companies and firms' corporate social responsibilities and unethical sympathy-based marketing. According to Kontoghiorghes (2021), retailers and companies tried to increase the profit margin during the COVID-19 crisis. Companies used COVID-19 as a tool for their profit by engaging in unethically sympathy-based marketing as people all around the world are afraid of the pandemic (Kontoghiorghes, 2021). These companies used people's emotions in their marketing and even the marketing was not ethical at all and boosted their profit and revenue. According to Butler (2020a) and Butler (2020b), the United Kingdom established a special task force to investigate companies that may be the source of an increase in unethical sympathy-based marketing during the pandemic,

misleading consumers about their products. The rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing challenges the company's commitment to the government of ethical business practises and corporate social responsibilities. Some researchers stated that due to the economic recession during COVID-19, companies used unethical practises to survive in the market for the long term while predicting the long-term consequences of COVID-19 and the lack of resources.

The research was conducted to identify the relationship between COVID-19 and the rise of unethical sympathy-based marketing. The impact of COVID-19 on the marketing factors and the hyper-consumerist behaviour triggered as the mediating factor on the rise of unethical sympathy-based marketing was also included in the research.

Following are the aims and objectives of the study:

- To determine the effect of unethical sympathy-based marketing due to covid 19.
- To identify the impact of marketing pressure, vulnerable customers on the unethical marketing.

Literature review

Due to marketing competition, Mathur (2019) argued about the rise of unethical sympathy-based marketing. The major motivation for organisations to take a step toward unethical marketing is the fact that they are lacking in market competition or generating less revenue (Bai and Chang, 2015). He and Harris (2020) stated that another possible reason is the future survival of the firms and corporate that became difficult during the COVID-19 pandemic and the organisations used unethical ways for marketing and to secure their future position. A study by He and Harris (2020) revealed that COVID-19 disrupts supply chain management, which potentially is the reason for organisations to lead them to unethical sympathy-based marketing. COVID-19 increased the pressure in the market, which was the result of the disruption of the supply chain, and ultimately

it impacted the marketing sectors, which motivated them to practise unethical marketing strategies to increase their customer base (He and Harris, 2020). Individual people are also affected by the pressure of the market in COVID 19. The individual person under pressure is mostly attracted by unethical marketing as compared to the situation when there is little or no pressure in the market. Ameer and Halinen (2019) discovered that business students are more likely to engage in unethical sympathy-based marketing when only revenue generation is considered. This leads to the hypothesis:

H1: Marketing pressure to expand customer base has a significant and positive impact on rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing

Concealing relevant information from the story or from any aspect of life is just as bad as lying. Every single business wants to show the positive side of their products and services and their hard work, but hiding information is not an ethical act (Abuznaid, 2012). For instance, if a food contains peanuts and the organisation mentions that the product has no peanuts in it and the customer is allergic to peanuts, there is a high chance that the customer will become ill (Shafiq et al., 2017). This concealing of information is not dangerous only in the food industry; it is also in every industry. In the business industry, it has become common to highlight only the positive side of the product while hiding the negative prospect of it (Heath and Chatzidakis, 2012). According to Boerman and Van Reijmersdal (2016), concealing information provides many benefits to the organisation in terms of profit, but this is increasing unethical sympathy-based marketing in society.

H2: Pressure to concealing important has a significant and positive impact on rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing

Jacobson (2019) defined vulnerable customers as those having little to no knowledge of the market and the workings of the market. Vulnerable customers have little information about financial products and the benefits and disadvantages of those products. They are less reactive to the policies

and insurance of firms. Companies and brands target these vulnerable customers to sell their products by using unethical sympathy-based marketing techniques (Choi, B. and La, S., 2013). These vulnerable customers are an easy target for the organisation whenever the market is unstable, like during the global economic recession and the coronavirus. Companies using ethical ways cannot motivate vulnerable customer as they have to show the negative and hidden side of the service and product as well (Palmer, D. and Hedberg, T., 2013). Therefore, they use unethical marketing, and their customers do not research before buying. In COVID-19, the vulnerable customers are targeted by ensuring the individual safety of not getting infected when using their product and playing with the emotions of customers that lead them to buy the products, which ultimately results in the rise of unethical sympathy-based marketing.

H3: Targeting the vulnerable customers has a significant and positive impact on rise in untheatrical sympathy-based marketing

In hyper-consumerism, there is a need for products that consumers are buying, making a shortfall in supply while demand is on peak. When individuals choose to consume a particular product, the whole global supply chain management gets affected and makes the changes to maintain the supply and demand to match the behaviour of consumers (Drumwright and Kamal, 2016). The consumer needs ethical products, so businesses tend to make ethical products, but to match the hyper-consumerism behaviour, businesses tend to be inclined towards unethical marketing. Due to hyper consumerism, individuals get trapped in unethical marketing and start buying the products, which leads to the rise of unethical sympathy-based marketing (Granot, Alejandro, and Russell, 2014). During COVID 19, the global economy was crashing and businesses were on the verge of closing down. Organisations started using unethical marketing in order to maintain the supply and demand that was due to hyper consumerism, which was caused by COVID-19 (Coffin and Egan–Wyer, 2022). According to Carrington and Neville (2015), hyper-consumerism behaviours play a key role in market pressure and the rise of unethical sympathy-based marketing.

H4: Hyper consumerism significantly mediates the relationship between marketing pressure to expand customer base and rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing during Covid-19

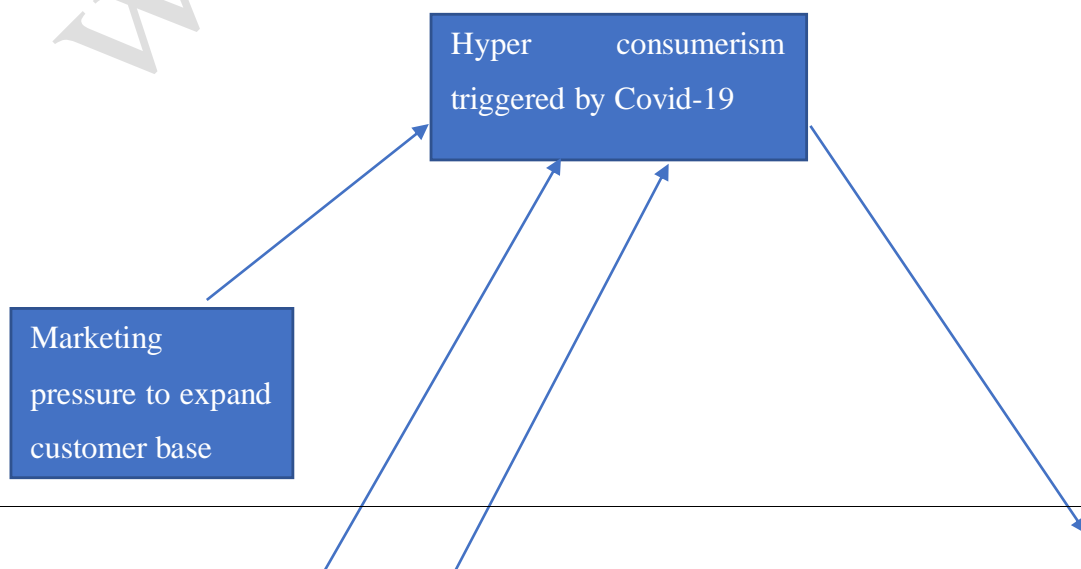
According to Flyverbom and Reinecke (2017), consumption is the belief that people in a given nation consume a consistent flow of products and services. Consumerism is an economic and sociological method of interpreting the economy. Hyper consumerism includes the positive main points, which are the increase in employment, wealth, and the economy, as well as improving competition in the market. Companies that lead the market start concealing important information about the product to increase their sales and profit generation (Jack, 2013). However, the act of concealing the information that a consumer must know is an unethical practise (Murdock, 2018). Hyper-consumerism behaviour plays an important role in the concealing of information. Hiding information has a direct impact on the unethical marketing of sympathy-based marketing. During COVID-19, hyper consumption increased, which impacted unethical sympathy-based marketing.

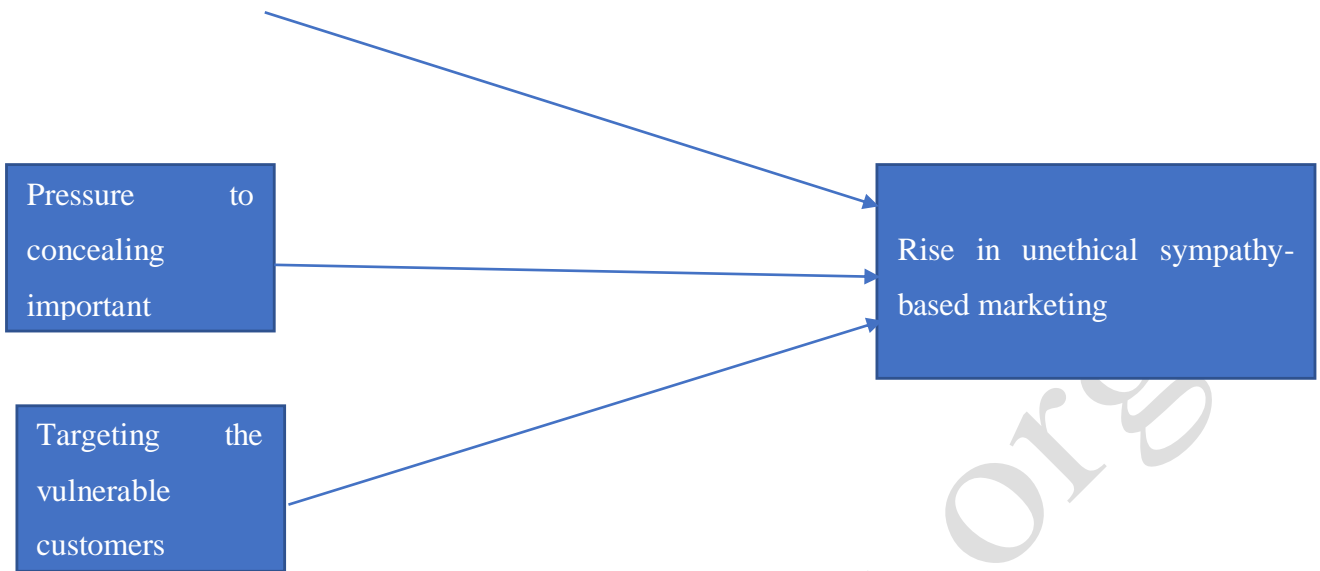
H5: Hyper consumerism significantly mediates the relationship between the pressure to concealing important and rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing during Covid-19

Hyper consumerism is time and location bound. According to Sheth (2020a), consumers develop the habit of consuming a particular product over time. Hyper consumerism as the mediating factor affects the vulnerable customers as they don't have enough knowledge, so by looking at the market and the product need, which is already short, they start buying. The companies practising unethical sympathy-based marketing make these customers their target, and other companies to compete in the market start doing it too, which results in the rise of unethical marketing. (Sheth and Kellstadt, 2021). Economies were collapsing and the demand for the product was increasing, which helped the organisation to start unethical marketing to meet the customers' needs. Hyper consumerism acts as the mediating factor in the relationship between vulnerable customers and unethical sympathy-based marketing (Ali, 2020; Eger et al., 2021).

H6: Hyper consumerism significantly mediates the relationship between Targeting the vulnerable customers and rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing during Covid-19.

Conceptual framework





Methodology

The current research was based on the philosophy of positivism. Positivism enabled the researcher to discern between objective and subjective information in the literature, and only those elements were used to construct the quantitatively verifiable literature analysis component. Despite the fact that numerous qualitative studies were included in the literature review, their goal was to establish the foundation for hypothesis development.

In this study, the researcher relied on quantitative data to identify the truth by using a quantitative research technique. In order to provide the foundation for the quantitative approach's surveys, a body of literature was first established. The quantitative methodology also permitted statistical and mathematical analysis, which was essential for guaranteeing excellent data quality and outcome validity. Along with this, the researcher employed an inductive approach, since the research was attempting to test hypothesis derived from observation and literature view. For the quantitative analysis, the researcher gathered responses from 200 professionals from the marketing industry in the United Kingdom through a 5-point Likert scale questionnaire. The purpose of opting the UK is because of its high consumer market and thriving marketing sector.

Results

Descriptive analysis

Descriptive analysis is conducted to examine the patterns in the dataset provided. In the following table, the mean statistics show that the values for all the variables are around the range

of 1.3 to 1.5, which corresponds to the ‘agree’ option on the questionnaire. Meanwhile, the standard deviation is also low which is indicative that the data does not have a significant variation from the normal distribution.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Std. Error	Kurtosis	Std. Error
Marketing pressure to expand customer base	200	0.33	3.67	1.36	0.5645	0.902	0.172	1.75	0.342
Pressure to concealing important	200	0	3.67	1.5833	0.79834	0.046	0.172	0.27	0.342
Targeting the vulnerable customers	200	0	4	1.5367	0.98893	0.446	0.172	0.66	0.342
Hyper consumerism triggered by Covid-19	200	0	3.67	1.31	0.99609	0.402	0.172	0.72	0.342
Rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing	200	0	4	1.37	1.01457	0.525	0.172	0.50	0.342
Valid N (listwise)	200								

Correlation analysis

Correlation analysis is indicative of the statistical association between the independent and dependent variables. In the following table, it can be observed that Marketing pressure to expand consumer base is only moderately correlated with Rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing with a coefficient of 0.488. Meanwhile, pressure to conceal information is also moderately correlated with the dependent variable with a coefficient of 0.692. On the other hand, Targeting vulnerable customers was strongly and positively correlated with Rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing with coefficient of 0.986. Similarly, the mediating variable was treated as another independent variable in this analysis, which was strongly correlated with a coefficient of 0.953.

Table 2. Correlations

		Marketing pressure to expand customer base	Pressure to concealing important	Targeting the vulnerable customers	Hyper consumerism triggered by Covid-19	Rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing
Marketing pressure to expand customer base	Pearson Correlation	1	.270**	.502**	.464**	.488**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0	0	0	0
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Pressure to concealing information	Pearson Correlation	.270**	1	.654**	.608**	.692**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0		0	0	0
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Targeting the vulnerable customers	Pearson Correlation	.502**	.654**	1	.957**	.986**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0		0	0
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Hyper consumerism triggered by Covid-19	Pearson Correlation	.464**	.608**	.957**	1	.953**
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0		0
	N	200	200	200	200	200
Rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing	Pearson Correlation	.488**	.692**	.986**	.953**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0	0	0	0	
	N	200	200	200	200	200

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Regression analysis

Regression analysis is conducted to examine the causal impact of the independent variables on the dependent variable. Since there are three independent variables in the current research, the first regression test was conducted by taking Market pressure to expand customer base as the sole independent variable. By analysing its relation with the mediating variable of hyper consumerism, following table shows that the model summary has a low R-square value, which is indicative of low predictive capability of the model formed between the two variables.

OUTCOME VARIABLE: HypCons

Table 3. Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.4638	0.2152	0.7827	54.2775	1.000	198.000	0.000

Table 4. Analysis of model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	0.1969	1635	1.2039	0.2301	-0.1256	0.5194
MarPress	0.8185	0.1111	7.3673	0.000	0.5994	1.0376

Meanwhile, with respect to the outcome variable of rise in sympathy-based marketing, the high R-square value of 0.9115 shows that the model significantly predicts the relationship.

OUTCOME VARIABLE: SymMar

Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.9547	0.9115	0.092	1014.406	2.000	197.000	0.000

In the model analysis below, the non- zero value between LLCI and ULCI shows that neither marketing pressure to expand customer base nor hyper consumerism are significantly explainer of rise in sympathy-based marketing.

Table 5. Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-0.0078	0.0563	-0.1391	0.8895	-0.1188	0.1032
MarPress	0.1042	0.043	2.422	0.0163	0.0193	0.189
HypCons	0.9437	0.0244	38.7226	0.000	0.8956	0.9917

Afterwards, total effect amongst the variables was analysed as shown below. It was found that with a non-zero value for ULCI and LLCI, the relationship between marketing pressure to expand customer base and rise in sympathy-based marketing is not significantly causal.

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

SymMar

Table 6. Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.4877	0.2378	0.7885	61.7855	1.000	198.000	0.000

Table 7. Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	0.178	0.1641	1.0842	0.2796	-0.1457	0.5016
MarPress	0.8765	0.1115	7.8604	0.000	0.6566	1.0964

Table 8. Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_cs
0.8765	0.1115	7.8604	0.000	0.6566	1.0964	0.4877

Table 9. Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
0.1042	0.043	2.422	0.0163	0.0193	0.189	0.0579

Table 10. Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
HypCons	0.7724	0.0926	0.5862	0.9486

IN the next stage, regression analysis was conducted to examine the relationship among the variables by taking pressure to conceal information as the only independent variable.

Model: 4

Y: SymMar

X: InfoCon

M: HypCons

OUTCOME VARIABLE: HypCons

Firstly, model analysis was run to examine the relationship with respect to outcome variable of hyper consumerism. A moderate R-square value shows that the proposed model has only moderate predictive capability for predicting behaviour of variables.

Table 11. Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.6084	0.3701	0.6281	116.356	1.000	198.000	0.000

Table 12. Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	0.1081	0.1247	0.8668	0.3871	-0.1378	0.3541
InfoCon	0.7591	0.0704	10.7869	0.000	0.6203	0.8979

OUTCOME VARIABLE: SymMar

Meanwhile, when outcome relationship was gauged with outcome variable of rise in sympathy-based marketing, the model shows high predictive capability.

Table 13. Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.9637	0.9287	0.0742	1282.633	2.000	197.000	0.000

Table 14. Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-0.115	0.0429	-2.6786	0.008	0.1997	-0.0303
InfoCon	0.2255	0.0305	7.4	0.000	0.1654	0.2855
HypCons	0.8611	0.0244	35.263	0.000	0.8129	0.9092

Outcome variable of rise in sympathy-based marketing was again tested for its total, indirect, and direct effects. As shown in the tables below, the total effect of Pressure to conceal information is strong. However, it was also noted that hyper consumerism does not significantly mediates the relationship between Pressure for information concealment and Rise in sympathy-based marketing.

OUTCOME VARIABLE: SymMar

Table 15. Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.6917	0.4785	0.5395	181.686	1.000	198.000	0.000

Table 16. Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-0.0219	0.1156	-0.1896	0.8498	-0.2499	0.206
InfoCon	0.8791	0.0652	13.4791	0.000	0.7505	1.0077

Table 17. Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_cs
0.8791	0.0652	13.4791	0.000	0.7505	1.0077	0.6917

Table 18. Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
0.2255	0.0305	7.4	0.000	0.1654	0.2855	0.1774

Table 19. Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
HypCons	0.6536	0.0526	0.5508	0.7603

Finally, the regression analysis was conducted to examine the variables by taking Targeting vulnerable customers as the only independent variable.

Model: 4

Y: SymMar

X: TarCus

M: HypCons

OUTCOME VARIABLE: HypCons

As shown in the following table, with respect to the variable of Hyper consumerism, the model strongly predicts the relationship between the independent and mediating variable.

Table 20. Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.9571	0.916	0.0838	2159.435	1.000	198.000	0.000

Table 21. Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-0.1714	0.0379	-4.5237	0.000	-0.2461	0.0967
TarCus	0.964	0.0207	46.4697	0.000	0.9231	1.0049

OUTCOME VARIABLE: SymMar

Then, with respect to the dependent variable of Rise in sympathy-based marketing, the model also strongly predicts and explains the relationship.

Table 22. Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.9869	0.974	0.027	3695.182	2.000	197.000	0.000

Table 23. Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-0.1659	0.0226	-7.3414	0	0.2104	-0.1213
TarCus	0.9038	0.0406	22.2381	0	0.8236	0.9839
HypCons	0.1123	0.04	2.7824	0.0059	0.0327	0.1918

The total, indirect, and direct effects of the relationship between Targeting vulnerable customers, Hyper consumerism, and Rise in sympathy-based marketing was analysed. As shown in the following table, the model has a high predictive capability.

OUTCOME VARIABLE:

SymMar

Table 24. Model Summary

R	R-sq	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
0.9864	0.973	.0279	7139.525	1.000	198.000	0.000

Table 25. Model

	coeff	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
constant	-0.185	0.0219	-8.4631	0.000	-0.2282	-0.142
TarCus	1.012	0.012	84.4957	0.000	-0.9884	1.0356

While, there is insignificant direct effect of the Targeting vulnerable customers and Rise in Sympathy based marketing, on the other hand, a significant indirect effect between the two was observed. This indicates that the relationship is significantly mediated by the effect of Hyper consumerism due to Covid-19.

Table 26. Total effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c_cs
1.012	0.012	84.4957	0.000	0.9884	1.0356	0.9864

Table 27. Direct effect of X on Y

Effect	se	t	p	LLCI	ULCI	c'_cs
0.9038	0.0406	22.2381	0.000	0.8236	0.9839	0.8809

Table 28. Indirect effect(s) of X on Y:

	Effect	BootSE	BootLLCI	BootULCI
HypCons	0.1082	0.04	-0.03	0.1897

Discussion

The current study was aimed at examining the phenomenon of sympathy-based marketing which has been exacerbated during the Covid-19 pandemic. For this purpose, the study gauged this phenomenon with respect to the impact of the factors of Pressure to expand customer base, Pressure to conceal information, and targeting vulnerable customers for profitability. While latest research in the domain of sympathy-based marketing is scarce, the phenomenon has been observed mainly in the consumer product market, especially clothing and lifestyle markets. However, the current study was conducted without a market contextualisation, and showed that the factor of hyper consumerism mediates the relationship between the strategy to target vulnerable customers for profitability and increment in sympathy-based marketing. It is indicative that sympathy-based marketing is among the leading techniques used by marketers to increase their profitability. However, its mediation role in the relationship between motive to expand customer base and rise in sympathy-based marketing has been found to be low. This could be attributable involvement of a number of other factors which may be more influential on changes in marketing strategy for customer base expansion. The impact of sympathy-based marketing is predicated on the phenomenon of 'identified victim effect', in which people feel more empathetic feelings towards individuals or firms that identify themselves as victims of a calamitous situation. During Covid-19, literature shows that numerous firms benefited from financial subsidies by the government by

identifying themselves as victims of the economic downturn. However, the current research shows that this effect was also used by firms to profit from the customers as customers showed marked change in their inclination towards such brands. Here, the role of CSR and ethics gets pronounced. Several ethical traditions are included into this CSR paradigm. Finding the best course of action among conflicting options is a necessary component of making ethical judgments (Trevino and Nelson, 2017). As businesses respond with a wide range of options, the epidemic has brought to light such competing possibilities. In weighing human health and company economic risks during the beginning and recovery periods, business decisions have considerable ethical ramifications. According to Aguilera et al. (2007), a self-interested or instrumental incentive is the main driver for engaging in CSR activities when the company benefits, boosting firm survival. This is a particularly potent motivation in the USA since the importance of the market's effects on CSR choices is more prominent.

Table 29. Hypothesis status

S. No.	Hypothesis developed and tested	Status
1.	Marketing pressure to expand customer base has a significant and positive impact on rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing	Rejected
2.	Pressure to concealing important has a significant and positive impact on rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing	Accepted
3.	Targeting the vulnerable customers has a significant and positive impact on rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing	Accepted
4.	Hyper consumerism significantly mediates the relationship between marketing pressure to expand customer base and rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing during Covid-19	Rejected

5.	Hyper consumerism significantly mediates the relationship between the pressure to concealing important and rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing during Covid-19	Rejected
6.	Hyper consumerism significantly mediates the relationship between Targeting the vulnerable customers and rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing during Covid-19	Accepted



Conclusion

The current study was aimed at examining the rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing due to the Covid-19 pandemic. For this purpose, the study extracted market and business variables from thorough literature review that were aggravated by the economic effects of the pandemic. Afterwards, their impact on the rise in sympathy-based marketing was analysed with and without the mediating effect of hyper consumerism. The study employed a primary quantitative methodology in which responses were gathered from 200 participants belonging to the marketing sector in the UK. Through data analysis, it was found that the variable of the pressure to conceal important information has a direct impact on rise in sympathy-based marketing. However, this relationship was free from the mediation effect of hyper consumerism. Meanwhile, the independent variable of Targeting vulnerable customers for profitability was found to have a strong impact on rise in sympathy-based marketing both, with and without the mediation effect of hyper consumerism.

Future implications

The current study provides a holistic perspective on the rise in sympathy-based marketing which is unethical from customer care perspective. However, a number of other variables could also be influencing this fabric, which could be covered in future studies. Furthermore, since this phenomenon is highly interpretation based, therefore, future study should focus on studying detailed interview responses of the professionals from marketing industry.

www.ajbmss.org

References

- Abuznaid, S., 2012. Islamic marketing: addressing the Muslim market.
- Ali, B.J., 2020. Impact of COVID-19 on consumer buying behavior toward online shopping in Iraq. *Ali, BJ (2020). Impact of COVID-19 on consumer buying behavior toward online shopping in Iraq. Economic Studies Journal, 18(42), pp.267-280.*
- Ameer, I. and Halinen, A., 2019. Moving beyond ethical decision-making: A practice-based view to study unethical sales behavior. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management, 39(2), pp.103-122.*
- Bai, X. and Chang, J., 2015. Corporate social responsibility and firm performance: The mediating role of marketing competence and the moderating role of market environment. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management, 32(2), pp.505-530.*
- Boerman, S.C. and Van Reijmersdal, E.A., 2016. Informing consumers about “hidden” advertising: A literature review of the effects of disclosing sponsored content. *Advertising in new formats and media.*
- Butler, C., 2020. How to Survive the Pandemic’, Chatman House: The World Today.
- Butler, S., 2020. New UK taskforce to crack down on coronavirus profiteers. *The Guardian, accessible at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2020/mar/20/new-uk-taskforce-to-crack-down-on-coronavirus-profiteers>, accessed, 18.*
- Carrington, M. and Neville, B., 2015. CSR and the consumer. *Corporate social responsibility, pp.166-204.*
- Choi, B. and La, S., 2013. The impact of corporate social responsibility (CSR) and customer trust on the restoration of loyalty after service failure and recovery. *Journal of Services Marketing.*

- Coffin, J. and Egan-Wyer, C., 2022. The ethical consumption cap and mean market morality. *Marketing Theory*, 22(1), pp.105-123.
- David, O.U., Boniface, U.U. and Christian, U.N., 2018. Effect of audit quality on market price of firms listed on the Nigerian stock market. *Journal of Accounting and Taxation*, 10(6), pp.61-70.
- Drumwright, M.E. and Kamal, S., 2016. Habitus, doxa, and ethics: Insights from advertising in emerging markets in the Middle East and North Africa. *Consumption Markets & Culture*, 19(2), pp.172-205.
- Eger, L., Komárková, L., Egerová, D. and Mičík, M., 2021. The effect of COVID-19 on consumer shopping behaviour: Generational cohort perspective. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 61, p.102542.
- Flyverbom, M. and Reinecke, J., 2017. The spectacle and organization studies. *Organization Studies*, 38(11), pp.1625-1643.
- García-Sánchez, I.M. and García-Sánchez, A., 2020. Corporate social responsibility during COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity*, 6(4), p.126.
- Granot, E., Alejandro, T.B. and Russell, L.T.M., 2014. A socio-marketing analysis of the concept of cute and its consumer culture implications. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 14(1), pp.66-87.
- Gupta, S. and Srivastav, P., 2016. Despite unethical retail store practices, consumers at the bottom of the pyramid continue to be loyal. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 26(1), pp.75-94.
- He, H. and Harris, L., 2020. The impact of Covid-19 pandemic on corporate social responsibility and marketing philosophy. *Journal of business research*, 116, pp.176-182.

- Heath, T.P. and Chatzidakis, A., 2012. The transformative potential of marketing from the consumers' point of view. *Journal of Consumer Behaviour*, 11(4), pp.283-291.
- Jack, T., 2013. Nobody was dirty: Intervening in inconspicuous consumption of laundry routines. *Journal of Consumer Culture*, 13(3), pp.406-421.
- Jacobson, D., 2019. Vulnerable customers. *Agent, The*, 52(1), pp.16-17.
- Kontoghiorghes, G.J., 2021. Ethics in Medicines: Exposing Unethical Practices and Corruption in All Sectors of Medicines Is Essential for Improving Global Public Health and Saving Patients' Lives. *Medicines*, 8(9), p.54.
- Mathur, L.K., 2019. The impact of international gray marketing on consumers and firms. In *Ethical Issues in International Marketing* (pp. 39-60). Routledge.
- Mehta, S., Saxena, T. and Purohit, N., 2020. The new consumer behaviour paradigm amid COVID-19: permanent or transient?. *Journal of health management*, 22(2), pp.291-301.
- Murdock, G., 2018. Media Materialities: for a moral economy of machines. *Journal of Communication*, 68(2), pp.359-368.
- Ozili, P.K. and Arun, T., 2020. Spillover of COVID-19: impact on the Global Economy. Available at SSRN 3562570.
- Palmer, D. and Hedberg, T., 2013. The ethics of marketing to vulnerable populations. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 116(2), pp.403-413.
- Shafiq, A., Haque, A., Abdullah, K. and Jan, M.T., 2017. Beliefs about Islamic advertising: an exploratory study in Malaysia. *Journal of Islamic Marketing*, 8(3), pp.409-429.
- Sheth, J. and Kellstadt, C.H., 2021. Next frontiers of research in data driven marketing: Will techniques keep up with data tsunami?. *Journal of Business Research*, 125, pp.780-784.
- Sheth, J., 2020. Impact of Covid-19 on consumer behavior: Will the old habits return or die?. *Journal of business research*, 117, pp.280-283.

Zarrad, H. and Debabi, M., 2015. Islamic marketing ethics: A literature review. *International Journal of Management Research and Reviews*, 5(2), p.60.

Appendix: Survey Questionnaire

<i>Variable/ Codes</i>	0	1	2	3	4
	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
Marketing pressure to expand customer base					
Covid 19 exerted the pressure on marketers to maintain and expand their customer base					
Covid 19 changed the dynamics of customer interaction					
Covid 19 increased the latent risk of customer loss					

Pressure to concealing important					
Concealing some information from the customer is an integral practice in marketing					
Covid 19 pressured the marketers to diverge customer attention from market risks					
Covid 19 resulted in hyper consumerism which necessitated manipulation of product information					
Targeting the vulnerable customers					
Marketing during the pandemic focused on benefiting most from the vulnerable customers					
Marketers strategized to profit from product uncertainty during the early period of Covid 19					
New ethical practices were developed in marketing to protect vulnerable customers during Covid 19					
Hyper consumerism triggered by Covid-19					
Covid 19 induced hyper consumerism pressured marketers to expand their existing customer base					
Hyper consumerism during the pandemic was a major trigger behind information concealment by consumer firms					

Hyper consumerism intensified exploitation of vulnerable customers during the pandemic					
Rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing					
Pressure to expand the customer base caused a rise in unethical sympathy-based marketing					
Pressure to conceal sensitive information caused an increment in sympathy-based marketing					
The motive to profit from vulnerable customers triggered an increase in sympathy-based marketing during Pandemic					

www.ajbms.org