

The Interplay of Transformative and Collaborative Marketing to Spur Relationship Quality in Business-to-Business Context

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Abstract

Both transformative and collaborative marketing have been signaled as the future of marketing in Business to Business (B2B) context. While the earlier motivation for both was the yearning for more meaningful interface with customers, the complications occasioned by COVID– 19 pandemic has propelled the need for improve corporate adaptive behaviour and practices. This paper review transformative and collaborative marketing as a potent approaches to spur relationship quality in Business-to-Business (B2B) context. To accomplish the aforementioned objective, in-depth review of scholarly articles and practices relating to transformative and collaborative marketing in the B2B context was carried out. The paper highlights the relevance of transformative and collaborative marketing as a basis for steering relationship quality in B2B setting. This paper contributes to literature and business practices in two important ways: firstly, from a theoretical viewpoint, the paper extends the theoretical generalizability of transformative and collaborative marketing, and secondly, from a managerial perspective, the paper shed light on the practices that underpin relationship quality in B2B context. The paper recommends that business activities and operations in B2B setting should be proactively linked to key performance metrics to accomplish improve benefits from corporate network and enduring relationships.

Keywords: Business to business, covid-19, collaborative marketing, new normal, relationship quality, transformative marketing,

1.0 Introduction

Towards the end of the year 2019, businesses across all sectors were engulfed in an unfamiliar and strange crisis, arising from COVID -19 pandemic. The epidemic was second to none in the history of mankind and resulted to worldwide lockdown and restriction of movement. The declaration of COVID-19 pandemic resulted to undesirable and substantial negative impact on people and commercial activities in a way and manner that is generally view

as unusual and remarkably different from what has been experienced before (“new normal”). The narrative of Jack Ma, cofounder of Alibaba Group of companies that – “today is problematic, tomorrow is even more likely to be complicated” succinctly illustrate the huge complexities and uncommon crises businesses faced during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consequently, the general question that engages the mind of businesses, policy makers, investors, and civil society alike is: how do we reimagine the future not only to endure and resuscitate from the devastating consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, but how to flourish in the new normal? According to numerous scholars and business publications, the transition will comprise distinctive levels manifesting concurrently (McKinsey, 2020; Egan, 2020; Narayana, Shaik, Ramarao, Cristina, & Balaji, 2022). Firstly, is the ‘survival’ stage where businesses will have to struggle to cope with the prevailing crisis, secondly, a ‘Reboot’ or ‘Reactivation’ stage where companies will need to adjust to the new normal where some clusters will experience demand obliteration, i.e. some emerging trend will surface while numerous pre-crisis tendencies will gain faster pace, and thirdly, when the catastrophe recedes; businesses must develop capacities to brace up for the ‘next normal’ with some pandemic tendencies curbing, some lingering at preeminent degree, some fragments recuperating, whilst new prospects and industry dynamics will be continuously redefined. For businesses, particularly, those in Business to Business (B2B) context; the situation will propel the need to rethink on how to connect deeply with customers through improve emphasis on collaborative and transformative marketing.

The narrative “new normal” was created during the 2008 global financial crisis to describe the intense cultural, economic, and social alterations that extremely impacted collective perceptions and people lifestyles (Elerian, 2010). The notion resurfaced during the COVID-19 epidemic, to elucidate how the pandemic totally distorted human life, supply chain interruptions, economic survival, work life, family structure, education, and in turn, demanding a fundamental reconsideration of the conventional approaches and business practices (Manuti, Van der Heijden, Kruyen, De Vos, Zaharie, & Lo, 2022). The questions- “How normal is the new normal? And why and how has the new normal propel the need for transformative and collaborative marketing to promote relationship quality in Business-to-Business context- constitute the motivation for this study.

Kumar (2018) coined the term “transformative marketing” prior to COVID-19 pandemic in the light of the compelling forces that are altering marketing theory and business practices, namely: growing firms rivalry, rapidly changing consumer preferences, growing government regulations, uncertain economic circumstances, environmental concerns, and pace of technological advancement to mention a few. According to Kumar (2018), transformative marketing refers to the convergence of company’s marketing undertakings, ideas, metrics, approaches, and initiatives in reaction to marketplace changes and future trend to offer customers with greater value (goods or services) for the purpose of improving corporate bottom line and benefits to all stakeholders. Transformation of marketing undertakings institute reflective reconfiguration in critical structure and arrangement of corporate activities. This encompasses changes in how goods and services are manufactured and consumed, as well as changes in social arrangements and basic frameworks surrounding marketing practices (Hannon, Foxon, & Gale, 2013; Ma, Rong, Mangalagiu, Thornton, & Zhu, 2018).

The focus on corporate individualistic efforts, though very valuable has occluded based on the enormous benefits connected to collective action – through collaborative marketing. Consequently, businesses are able to create what is generally perceived as a common good (Rao, Morrill, & Zald 2000). According to Solis (2011), collaborative marketing refers to the course of actions and undertakings that permit a firm to coordinate its capabilities, benefits and resources with other non-competing businesses in order to accomplish more than what the firm could be able to do if it has acted alone. Fea (2007) defines collaborative marketing as a notion that exists largely in the mind, and is used to describe corporate processes and practices that encompasses at least two companies having interconnected, but non-competing value in the areas of capabilities and competences to foster synergy. Collaborative marketing institute relationship that works for the mutual benefit of the parties involved. It can take the form of very informal and simple one-time tasks or very prescribed and long-term ventures or even the formation of a new company (Solis, 2011). Realty on ground has proved that incremental undertakings such as automated customer service, effective supply chain systems, and innovative drive are no longer sufficient to cope with the escalating business and competitive threats. Therefore, to effectively address systemic challenges, there is need for transformative and collaborative action, which suggests fundamental reconfiguration and realignment of firm resources and competences.

Over the years, B2B relationship has emerged as a vital area of managerial practice and domain of academic inquiry (Wolfgang, & Andreas, 2006). From an academic viewpoint, there is a strong and progressive body of research focusing on buyer-supplier relationships in business context (Ulaga & Eggert, 2006). According to Sheth and Parvatiyar (2002) and Vargo and Lusch (2004), the time is ripe for scholars and business practitioners to contend the need for paradigm shift in marketing from transactional viewpoint to relational one. According to Wolfgang and Andreas (2006), in a B2B context, suppliers and/or service providers are more desirous to comprehend the nature and situation of their customers because of the distinctive features of the customers acting as corporate organizations. As a result, business practitioners and academics are raising fundamental questions propelling shift in marketing thinking and the need to develop a robust understanding of what constitute relationship marketing practices.

However, many, if not all, B2B organizations struggle during and after the COVID-19 pandemic (Weng, 2023). According to Sherman (2020), roughly 94 percent of the Fortune 1000 experienced disruptions to their business activities due to various restrictions imposed to mitigate coronavirus disease. Some of the teething complications many businesses faced during lockdowns include deteriorating cash flow, dipping client demand, disruptions of supply chain, adoption of remote operations, and high regulatory uncertainty among others (Weng, 2023). All the aforementioned complications underline the need for B2B firms to develop resilient and agility through improve business relationship to manage the crisis. Transformative and collaborative marketing have been signaled as the future of marketing and much more needed to transverse crisis situations. Although the early promoter of both concepts hinged their relevance to the yearning of clients for more expressive and rewarding engagement, however, a number of disruptions such as global economic crisis, stiff rivalry, internationalisation of

businesses, supply chain disruptions, and the complications created by COVID–19 pandemic have accelerated the growing recognition and adoption of both transformative and collaborative marketing. On the basis of the aforementioned, this study seek to study transformative and collaborative marketing in a new normal to spur relationship quality practices in B2B context.

2.0 Literature Review

Conceptual Review

Transformative and Collaborative Marketing

According to Kumar (2018), both transformative and collaborative marketing recognize and place customers at the centre of the organisation. To make this happen certainly involve a revolution in how business operates and serve its target market. In other words, attempt to deliver product (goods or service), must be driven by an inside-out, rather than an outside-in orientation (Kumar, 2018). As a result, companies must not only develop improve understanding of their customers, but how they buy, what they buy, how price sensitive they are and more importantly, their motivations, which transforms into more opportunities to accurately design and deliver marketing messages and superior products. The fundamental issue that promote transformative marketing is the rapid and continues change in the business environment, such as improve access to data, technological development, and privacy influences (Kumar, 2018). According to Weng (2023), the precursor to transformative marketing in particular was the yearning of clients for more improve engagement.

Collaborative marketing encourages businesses to work together so as to exploit business opportunities and seek access to larger markets (Brown, & Sylva, 2016). According to Ochterski (2012), issues such as like-mindedness, improve communication, superior market opportunities and enhanced profitability among others are some of the success factors for collaborative marketing. Collaborative marketing enable numerous likeminded companies to harness resources formally to exploit market opportunity, but not essentially under the governance or exclusive control of one partner (Brown, & Sylva, 2016). Adoption of collaborative marketing may impact many aspects of the company, because by choosing to opt for collaboration, the firm may need to modify its pattern of operations, rules and procedures to accommodate the overall interest of other parties (Samiee, 2008). The overriding purpose of collaborative marketing is to accomplish shared objectives and values, thus there is need to agree on the ideologies of their respective marketing strategies, how it will be implemented and how to measure success (Bititci, Martinez, Albores, & Parung, 2004). According to Robson and Farquhar (2021), the significance of collaborative relationships upsurges in circumstances where companies experience uninterrupted instability and find themselves in a very compelling crisis situations that require improve relationships. In particular, collaborative marketing upsurge brand cognizance, improve customer value and tendency for customer retention for each of the participating companies (Shimizu, 2003, Brown & Sylva, 2016).

Relationship Quality (RQ): Definition and Meaning

The notion of RQ has been a topical issue in a number of conceptual and empirical papers aiming to foster a better understanding of its scope, dimensions and determinants

(Ghazayel & Fathi, 2012; Qin, 2020). The notion of relationship quality was coined from relationship marketing (Berry & Parasuraman, 1991; Qin, 2020). RQ has no generic meaning, however, it has been recognized as a higher-order concept consisting of several diverse, but connected components (Ka-shing & Christine, 2004; Md Rufayat, Rushan, & Sadrul, 2022). A number of academics offer a more context perspective description of RQ, others viewed RQ in line with a specific outcome of interface (Moorman, Deshpande, & Zaltman, 1993), while others contemplate RQ as an appraisal of the interaction over time (Bulut, 2015). According to Ka-shing and Christine (2004), in order to progress on the conceptualisation of RQ, there is need to develop a more generic viewpoint concerning its meaning. Therefore, rather than focusing or recognizing the concepts that create relationship quality, focus of attention should be on its meaning and practices that are germane to relationship formation, development and sustenance (Ka-shing & Christine, 2004).

Jarvelin and Lehtinen's (1996) conceptualised RQ as the degree to which the company customer's relationship management accomplishes all of the customer's anticipation, forecast, desires, or objective. Relationship quality connotes a strong association between firms and clients founded on acceptable level of satisfaction, and solid trust which can be further developed into loyalty formation (Oliver, 2014). According to Yee and Cheng (2008), relationship quality imply strong focus on relationships and inclusive technique of evaluating the relationship strength between firms and clients. Relationship quality also describes the tendency of customers to demonstrate solid trust and self-confidence in the future engagement with a client's (Ndubuisi, 2007). Relationship quality can be defined as a dyadic process, such as the quality of conflict handling, compassionate transactions, strong relations, or emotional intimacy between firm and customers (Dorsch, Swanson, & Kelly, 1998). According to Crosby, Evans, and Cowles (1990) and Nurbasari and Harani (2018), RQ is a higher order concept that deliberated on aggregate evaluation of the degree or depth of interaction between two parties to fulfill mutual exchange. According to Bejou, Wray, and Ingram (1996), RQ is a circumstance that encourage development and sustenance of business relationships. Berry (1983) defines RQ as the depth of firms' participation or engagement with customers that influence their level of satisfaction, trust, and loyalty formation. Gronroos (2000) views RQ as the interface between the history of successful engagements/events or unsuccessful interface to foster mutual business relationship.

Academic scholars agree on the multidimensional nature of relationship quality in an attempt to discover its dimensionality. Ka-shing and Christine (2004) view RQ as apparent in numerous distinctive, but interrelated concepts, comprising conflict handling, trust, commitment, inclination to invest in the relationship, and expectation of continuity. Lang and Colgate (2003) elucidate level of commitment, degree of trust, satisfaction, social bonds and conflict handling as a major component of RQ. Morgan and Hunt (1994) claim that trust and commitment are the most significant antecedents of RQ. Mohr and Spekman (1994) identify the primary characteristics of any successful relationship as consisting of commitment, participation, coordination, trust, depth of communication, and conflict management. Storbacka, Strandvik, and Gronroos (1994) identify relationship strength, longevity, service

quality, client satisfaction, and customer relationship profitability as the major dimensions of relationship quality. Carruthers (1996) suggests collaborate efforts, congruence, and depth of partnership as a basis for building relationship. Ulrich (1989) accentuates level of commitment and customer satisfaction. Relationships quality, according to Hakansson, Ford, Gadde, Snehota, and Waluszewski, (2009) and Biggemann (2010) develop through interface with partners on the basis of trust formation, commitment, interdependence, tie, distance, and improve communication.

Changing Customer Journey and Reimagining Business Model in the New Normal

New normal has put up huge challenges to face-to-face interface. Thus, with the transition into digital era, many proactive businesses have come to realize that the old way of doing things is no longer feasible and relevant. As a result, businesses must ensure continuous focus on the pulse of their customers/market to retain, and increase their share of the industry (Chrystele, 2020). COVID-19 pandemic has not only changed consumer behaviour but also business behaviour in many scope (Chrystele, 2020). In particular, the changing customer journey will impact B2B marketing arising from transformation of the primacies and preferences that propel purchase decision (Nick, 2024). Thus, changes in the customer journey necessitate equivalent adaptations in marketing strategy and implementation. For instance, there will be a massive shift to online channels and this will create a new set of challenges for marketers. Consequently, building a new route to market or crafting marketing campaign will require new levels of creativity and risk tolerance. More fundamental, the marketing mix will shift significantly as a result of the changing customer journey (Narayana et al., 2022). According to Nick (2024), as firms particularly those in B2B transit to new and next normal, there are five major areas that will help them to build momentum and foster future-readiness. First, it is important to harness the influence of digital platforms and information technology to broaden the market size. Second, businesses must gather relevant/accurate data, analyze them properly, and use it speedily, sensibly and efficiently. Third, there will be a critical shift from exclusive products to highly trustworthy products that meet target market needs and expectations. Fourth, there is need to build promising brand that stand out and make a huge difference. Fifth, it will be imperative for companies to localize the nature of their operations and customer experience.

Understanding Relationship quality in Business-to-Business Context

Business-to-business commonly abbreviated as (B2B) is a popular and widely known corporate business model. B2B markets account for huge size of corporate entities in developed and developing economies (Kim & Kumar, 2018; Lawrence, Andrew, Lisa, & Ashutosh, 2019), and as such rely on innovative business model for growth (Aspara, Jan, Xueming, & Henrikki, 2018). The notion of 'Business-to-Business' can be summarized as the exchange between a firm acting as a buyer and another business acting as a supplier. While a Business to Consumer (B2C) relationship describes the relationship between a business and its customer (Rauyrueen & Miller, 2007), B2B is contemplated as a form of interface between a firm and customer, but usually another company. In a B2B context, suppliers need to understand the nature and conditions of their customers because of the fact that the clients is acting as a firm. Scholars such as Ka-shing and Christine (2004) and Qin (2020) view the quality of the B2B

relationship as a vital influence in ensuring success in the marketplace. B2B describes business engagement that is consummated between firms, rather than between a company and individual customer. B2B for instance, is a form transaction between companies, such as one comprising a manufacturer and wholesaler, or a wholesaler and a retailer (Vinod & Gagandeep, 2012). According to Saha, Hussain, Islam, and Rodela (2014), products (goods or services) involved in B2B are particularly meant for further production. Vinod and Gagandeep (2012) allude that business to business applies to those businesses who market their products exclusively to other firms and not to consumers. Thus, under B2B setting, procedure connected to buying and selling require relatively longer time to implement. Therefore, in a B2B context, the success and level of business performance is strongly connected to the depth of inter-organisational dealings and quality of relationship (Palmatier, Dant, Grewal, & Evans, 2006).

Literature on relationship quality in B2B context proposes that no single relationship quality element can evaluate the full depth and complexities of the concept (Oluyomi & David, 2017). Therefore, the multi-dimensionality of relationship quality echoes distinctive yet connected structural characteristics that are rooted in B2B setting. According to Lusch and Brown (1996), B2B context demonstrate some distinguishing characteristics such as (i) relatively longer duration of doing business, (ii) long-term view of customer and (iii) relational behaviour between the company and customer which are not only distinctive but connected in a remarkable way. Wilson and Mummalaneni (1986) state that successful B2B engagements and quality of relationships are connected to seven features: degree of goal compatibility; trust formation; level of satisfaction; volume of investments; structural connections; social affiliations, and the level of investment in substitute relationships.

Over the last three decades, RQ has become one of the mainstays of relationship marketing (Gummesson 2008) and has gained prominence as a basis of successful business relationships not only in B2C, but B2B contexts (Oluyomi & David, 2017; Atmaja, & Yasa, 2020; Slawomir, Zanesa, & Mladen, 2020). Empirical studies on marketing practices have provided evidence that companies operating in B2B setting are more likely to adopt relational marketing tactics compared to goods-dominant companies (Coviello & Brodie, 2001). Contemporary scholarship on the consequences of relationship quality in the B2B domain demonstrate that it has positive impacts on sales volume (Huntley, 2006), tendency of repeat purchase intentions, and loyalty formation (Bhagat, 2016). According to Kim and Cha (2002), improve relationship quality leads to relationship growth, greater share of purchase, and positive word-of mouth recommendations among others. According to Berry (1983), building strong relationships leads to clients satisfaction, loyalty formation, positive word-of-mouth, and enlarged business referrals. Kristaf and Gaby (2003) stated that in a market where businesses offer comparatively high levels of product quality, the depth of an ongoing relationship become a major basis of securing competitive advantage.

Theoretical Review

Transformative Learning Theory

Transformative Learning Theory-TLT (also refer to as Transformational Learning theory) has its origins in Humanism in the 1970s. TLT is linked to the research and writing of Jack

Mezirow, who is often named as the "father of Adult Learning". Mezirow's preliminary research led him to speculate that adults don't apply their old understanding to new circumstances, instead they look at new viewpoints in order to get a new understanding of things as they change (Mezirow, 1990). However, critical consideration and review could result to a transformation of their understanding. Mezirow alludes that transformative learning has two major dimensions—instrumental learning and communicative learning (Mezirow, 1995). Instrumental learning highlights task-oriented problem solving, and assessment of cause and effect affiliations. Communicative learning on the other hand, emphasise on how people communicate their feelings, desires, and yearnings. TLT seeks to comprehend and promote human development through active learning. Transformation theory is based on the assumption that human being are meaning making by nature, either intentionally, accidentally or unconsciously, therefore, they use previous views, opinions, and interpretations to construe new or modified interpretations of the meanings as a guide to action (Mezirow, 1990; Craton, 1996). According to Mezirow (1991), people struggle with learning anything that doesn't align with previous meaning, but also develop the impulse to understand previous experiences. Therefore, when an experience doesn't tally with existing meaning structures, people are compelled to reevaluate as a basis of developing a better understanding of the world. According to Clark (1991), TLT alludes that the procedure of "perspective transformation" has three scopes, namely: psychological (modifications in understanding of the self), convictional (adjustment of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle). Transformative learning is the process of effecting change in a frame of reference at individual and corporate levels (Mezirow, 1991, 1995). Therefore, corporate learning and knowledge development encompass comprehensible structure of experience, ideas, morals, approaches, and conditioned reactions that define and shape corporate worldview and the way and manner they react to emerging threats and new developments.

Collaborative Learning Theory

Collaborative Learning Theory was developed in the 1960s to describes a process or procedure where a group (or groups) of individuals learn from each other by interacting or working together to solve a teething problem, accomplish a task, create innovative product, or share views or thinking. Some scholars view collaborative learning theory and cooperative learning theory as synonyms, while some claim that cooperative learning is a subset of collaborative learning, others treat them as two ends of a continuum (Barkley, Cross, & Major, 2014). According to Jeong and Hmelo-Silver (2016), there is a theoretical justification to differentiate the two, but in practice, it is problematic to separate them because collaboration and cooperation often co-exist in many work processes. In the opinion of Bruffee (1999), collaborative and cooperative learning are complementary and supplementary, and their dissimilarities is primarily due to their origins. According to Roschelle and Teasley (1995), collaboration elucidate mutual engagement of participants in a coordinated effort to solve problem. Collaboration theory encompassed a satisfactory and acceptable general philosophies and abstractions that have been generated by observing the phenomenon of multiple individuals or entities working together to create an alliance. Oxford (1997) recognised the philosophical orientation of collaborative learning as a basis of knowledge development. Collaborative learning is now adopted as a generic term for numerous instructional tactics to

small group learning, including but not restricted to cooperative learning, project-based learning, team-based learning, problem-based learning, and learning communities (Koschmann, 1996; Udvari-Solner, 2012).

Both transformative and collaborative learning theories are relevant to this study because coping with complications generated by the COVID-19 pandemic require new and innovative orientations to succinctly deduce and reinterpret previous knowledge/experience which are very fundamental to learning as a basis of analyzing underlying premises. Therefore, collaboration is necessary to ensure that corporate organisations acquires relevant understandings, competences, and dispositions essential for coping with the challenges brought about by COVID-19 pandemic. With this premise in mind, the goal of collaboration is implied by the nature of learning to help the individual firm negotiate his or her own values, meanings, and purposes rather than to acting on those of others for mutual benefits.

3.0 Conclusion

This paper reviewed transformative and collaborative marketing in an era of new normal to spur relationship in business-to-business context. Societal changes and competitive intensity propel businesses to transform, because when disruptions sweep through business landscape, they upset critical structures, such as processes, procedures, market dynamics, competition, and fundamental institutional arrangements etc. that regulate and govern business activities. Consequently, contemporary market forces such as swift dissimilarities in client requirements, changing market circumstances and pressures from competitors, amidst scarce resources have continued to prompt remarkable shifts in the business landscape, thus pushing businesses to adopt both transformative and collaborative marketing. Transformative and collaborative marketing are critical elements to trigger opportunities that is not only responsive but adaptive. Both concepts signal the desire and commitment to integrate relationship development and sustenance into core business practices. In a B2B context, firms need to develop a better understanding of the nature and circumstances of their clients, because the customers is also another corporate organizations.

While it is apparent that businesses across the globe are recurrently transforming themselves through improve marketing practices, occasioned by state of tension, context interdependence and time constraint, the declaration of COVID -19 pandemic has created additional challenges and severe complications, particularly for those in B2B (Kumar, 2018). The COVID -19 pandemic which occurred towards the end of the year 2019, resurfaced the notion "new normal" to point out how the pandemic completely transformed human life, including economic existence, nature of work and inter-organisational practices/dynamics to mention a few. Although proactive businesses are desirous to return to acquainted practices and routines, it is evident that a lot has changed, and those that are not hands-on will continue to experience enormous difficulties adapting to this new normal. Consequently, the growing complexity of the scenario propel sense of urgency to proffer solutions to the most evident implications of the contemporary business challenges arising from the pandemic.

In an ever intensifying and fast changing business environment, businesses must be responsive by developing agility not only to attract but retain clients for profitable and mutual benefits. To accomplish the above, transformative and collaborative marketing are very relevant, this is because, clients in B2B are well informed, and enjoy expansive access to several options, therefore, they can easily defect to competitors (Jung & Park, 2020). According to Hsu and Tang (2010), businesses have progressively discovered the difficulty to effectively manage the demands and anticipations of the contemporary business environment on their own due to restricted resources and capabilities. Based on this obvious fact, Baker, Faircloth, and Simental (2005) propose that integrating transformative and collaborative marketing to foster relationship quality are prerequisite to surmount a number of corporate challenges. Transformative and collaborative marketing serve as formidable framework to propel improve relationship in business-to-business context, because of their potency to promote enduring relationship that is remarkably different from the exchange paradigm. The two concepts reflects new ideologies of doing business, which dislocate the exclusive focus on profit maximization with a complementing emphasis on practices such as customer satisfaction, commitment, bonding, shared value, empathy, loyalty formation, trust, communication, and effective conflict management to mention a few as a basis of value creation. Consequently, the two notions (transformative and collaborative marketing) do not only enable opportunity to save costs, but offer collective strength and improve performance to business partners. When company transform its activities and collaborate in a number of important ways, they create a basis to command market presence that could be far greater than what they could accomplish individually.

4.0 Implications and Policy Recommendations

COVID-19 pandemic has reinforced the need for improve resilience, which is exhibited in the robustness of a firm's ecosystem to cope with the immediate context, capability to spot future opportunities and agility to leverage institutional strengths to remain competitive. While no one can sufficiently contour how the next normal will look like, businesses across industries know that things will not go back to the way they were before the pandemic. However, it is clear, that a supportive and compassionate tone are needed to survive in the era of new normal. Therefore, businesses need to steadily monitor trend and indicators, genuinely commit to bold reappraisal of marketing strategy, and build strong agility to cope with the changing business world. As businesses across the globe are entering a recovery stage, there is need to reimagine their brands and businesses in a post-COVID-19 world. In particular, businesses are not only compel to cut budgets through lean approach, they must also recognise the difficulties of keeping up with changing client priorities and behaviours, arising from the complications connected to COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, marketing function must extend beyond crafting marketing strategy to developing an adaptive mindset that capture changing customers' needs and expectations as a basis of strategy development and implementation. Also, marketers have to be more innovative to accelerate digital transformation and connect effectively with clients in a more collaborative and transformative way.

No doubt, the future certainly belongs to purposeful corporate organisations that continuously build competitiveness with agility and improve innovation to react speedily to

shocks and changing business landscape. It has never been more imperative than now to institute timely partnerships to sharpen corporate competitive advantage. To achieve this feat, businesses must embrace transformative and collaborative marketing as a paradigm of growth that empowers them to remain competitive, while simultaneously address the expectations of their target market. Therefore, in the wake of the global crisis occasioned by COVID-19 and associated catastrophes, the expansive and nearly widespread opinion is that businesses across sectors will have to transform and collaborate to transverse the challenges. More important, they need to deepen the quality of their relationships with others firms to improve their performance and sustainability. Consequently, the new normal has no doubt propel a change of strategies and approaches that promote greater role of digital technologies which is unstoppable in the corporate world as a basis of navigating the emerging business landscape. The contribution of this paper is twofold: firstly, from a theoretical viewpoint, the paper extends the theoretical generalizability of transformative and collaborative marketing, and secondly, from a managerial perspective, the paper shed light on practices that underpin relationship quality in business-to-business context as a basis of navigating and speedily recover from devastating challenges of COVID-19. On the basis of the aforementioned, the paper recommends that:

- i. In complicating times, business activities and operations have to be linked to key performance metrics. Therefore, to accomplish more benefits from corporate network, it is important to bridge internal siloes and promote inter-functional relationships organisational wide.
- ii. There is no hesitation regarding the devastating influence of COVID-19 pandemic on businesses, but with greater investment in digital technology, enlarged emphasis on internal collaboration, and more focus on delivering expressive customer experience, firms in B2B will be able to meet the demands of the post-pandemic world.

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