

the rise of video conferencing platforms amidst the covid-19 pandemic

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Academic Writing

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**Thesis statement:** The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst in the rise of video conferencing platform companies. The market is led by key players: Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. In spite of the competition against established major companies, Zoom Video was better strategically positioned than its competitors to seize the growth opportunity presented by the pandemic as work-from-home practices became the new norm. This is owed to Zoom’s simplicity, versatility and agility in reacting to changes in consumer demands.

The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as a catalyst in the rise of video conferencing platform companies. The market is led by Skype, Zoom, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. In spite of the competition against major established companies, Zoom emerged as a key player in the market. Zoom was better strategically positioned than its competitors to seize the growth opportunity presented by the pandemic as work-from-home practices became the new norm. This can be interpreted to be the effect of Zoom’s simplicity, versatility and agility in reacting to changing consumer demands. This essay will explore the reasons as to why video conferencing platform companies have been able to flourish amidst the pandemic, the role of the product in a company’s growth potential as well as the nature of the competition between communications technology companies. The outlined implications will provide companies, both within and outside the market, with strategies and practices to increase competitiveness.

COVID-19 restrictions and precautions led to the movement of employees from the physical office to a virtual space, therefore causing daily business practices to become highly reliant on technology. The pandemic presented video conferencing companies with a growth opportunity as the demand for robust communication channels rapidly increased. The video conferencing platform market has typically been dominated by key players such as Skype or Microsoft Teams, however Zoom was able to establish itself as a strong competitor. Despite having an existing strategy in place, Zoom reacted upon the changing consumer needs faster than its competitors and was thus able to increase the marketing of their product early. This resulted in Zoom becoming more widely used than the products of its direct competitors. It can be argued that if Zoom had not been presented with the opportunity arising from the pandemic, the company would not have otherwise been able to grow to this extent at such a rapid rate.

Given that Zoom did not have a strong influence on the market prior to the pandemic, many users have questioned the reasons as to why Zoom has become the default platform for many individuals and organisations. One potential reason for its success could be explained by the product itself. The simplicity of the platform has allowed those who lack computer literacy to easily connect with family and friends, contrary to the more complex Microsoft Teams or Skype. Zoom’s functions and capabilities are also versatile enough to cater to varying levels of needs. The functions to record meetings, conduct polls and install a waiting room allow for a more professional usage of the platform. This expands the consumer base further than that of Google Meet where the aforementioned functions are not possible. The company has also shown agility in reacting to changes in consumer demands: Zoom temporarily halted the development of new features to focus on fixing privacy and security issues which had been addressed by consumers. This agile change in strategy allowed the company to retain consumers who may have considered switching to another platform.

The nature of the competition between video conferencing platforms necessitates constant product development in order to retain a stable consumer base. There are very low switching costs for users, signalling that it is easy for a company to lose a consumer to a competitor at any point in time. This effect is further amplified by the fact that all four platforms have the possibility to be operated without a fee. This is an indication to communication technology companies that the need to respond and react to consumer feedback is paramount.

In conclusion, the COVID-19 pandemic provided a growth opportunity to all video conferencing platform companies as business practices shifted to a virtual space, leading to a proliferation in demand for robust communication channels. Zoom was able to flourish as it was better strategically positioned than its direct competitors Skype, Microsoft Teams and Google Meet. Zoom’s current popularity can be attributed to its simplicity, versatility and agility. Another factor affecting Zoom’s success can be explained by the nature of the communications technology market competition which requires responsiveness and constant development to retain a consumer base. This serves as a reminder to companies that flexibility in strategies and agility in responding to change are imperative in successfully seizing opportunities arising from unforeseen circumstances.