

ZONG 4G – (DIGITAL EDGE) DEVELOPING A STRATEGIC SEM CAMPAIGN

Hafiz Muhammad Jawad Arshad, Superior University
Adnan Asghar, Superior University
Muhammad Rafiq, Superior University

ABSTRACT

Zong 4G, a leading telecom network provider under China Mobile Pakistan, has faced challenges in network coverage, customer service, billing, charges, technical issues, regulatory issues and pricing strategies. The company's revenue per user fluctuated significantly over the past five years, leading to customers switching to other mobile network service providers. Zong 4G should focus on improving its network infrastructure and customer service to maintain market share and revenue growth. A year-long SEM campaign was initiated to address these issues, achieving a 57% share compared to competitors. Zong 4G has outsourced its digital marketing domain to Digitiz, an award-winning Pakistan-based agency.

In 2021, Zong 4G subscribers increased by 3.8 million. Zong 4G has collaborated with PSDF and Huawei to digitally empower the youth of Pakistan by offering 300 Huawei smart tablets and a strategic alliance with Data Network and Foundation for International Community Assistance (FINCA) Microfinance Bank Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

One fine morning Mr. Mughal and Ex. The company's executive is thinking about the major issues of dissatisfaction of the consumers and may cause them to switch to a different mobile network operator of Zong 4G, the wide-ranging telecom network provider under the umbrella of China Mobile Pakistan, which is entirely possessed by the corporation of China mobile communications. The company was not only the greater base of 4G¹ subscribers and the broadest 4G reporting across the nation, along with the 4G marketplace leadership and the traits of services and network leadership. Zong 4G, a telecommunications giant led by the visionary CEO Muhammad Akram, has been at the forefront of innovation and customer satisfaction for years.

4G, broadband mobile communications that precede and surpass 3G² and 5G³. The ITU⁴ created the 4G wireless cellular standard, which outlines the standard's major aspects, such as transmission technologies and data throughput. Zong pioneered 4G technology by building its nationwide 4G LTE network in 2015. It was the first to introduce 4G services in Pakistan and it has since increased its network coverage and strengthened its infrastructure to give its consumers high-speed internet access. Zong 4G services have helped drive digital transformation and improve connectivity across the country.

However, in a rapidly evolving digital landscape, Zong 4G, under the leadership of CEO⁵ Muhammad Akram, embarked on a mission to grab and capture the attention of consumers and seek their issues by developing a cutting-edge strategic SEM⁶ campaign. With the help of their team of expert SEOs⁷, including the CFO and COO, they set out to dominate the online market and emerge as the top player in their industry, as SEM is the strategy of gaining or receiving traffic through payment positioning, usually with the help of advertisements. In an emerging country where the majority of the population is youth and usage of the internet is rising, particularly on mobile phones. Hence, the need for SEM

emerges as a need of time to compete with other telecommunication companies such as Telenor and Mobilink. Hence, they believed that SEM campaigns could be done on several digital platforms like Facebook and others. The team starts by observing the entire company, its management and its organizational structure. The team further proceeds to discuss the issues that are linked to the company and how those issues influence the SEM campaign. Moreover, the top-level management team explored SEM campaign goals and objectives, the demographic and target audience of the campaign and monitoring and optimization of the campaign.

Key Problems Faced by Zong

As the telecommunications industry grew increasingly competitive, Zong 4G, under Muhammad Akram's leadership, faced several daunting challenges and key issues that Zong faced in recent years. Despite its reputation for excellence, the company needed help to maintain market share and revenue growth. As depicted in Figure 1 although Zong enjoyed consistent revenue, its revenue per user fluctuated considerably over the 5 years. This shows the fluctuations in Zong revenue per user in recent years.

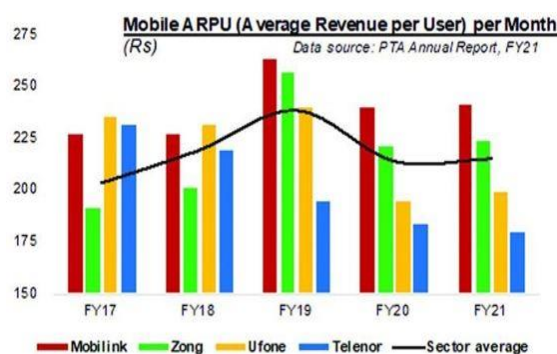


FIGURE 1
REPRESENTS MOBILE ARPU PER MONTH

The CFO⁸ and COO⁹ of the company were tasked with finding the solutions to these problems; however, through an initial analysis of their marketing and sales domains, it soon became clear that a new approach was needed. With the help of their expert SEO¹⁰ team, they set out to develop a strategic campaign that would address these issues and position the company for long-term success.

Network coverage is one of the most often reported issues with Zong. Customers have complained that the network could be more consistent and present in some locations, particularly in rural or distant areas. Customers need help to make calls or use the internet, which may be irritating and lead to displeasure with the provider. Another issue that the team discovered was that consumers had complained about bad customer service. Some customers were dissatisfied with the long hold times and inefficient agents.

Customers may have become dissatisfied with the company, so they may have switched to other different mobile network service providers. The team also found that some customers have reported issues with the Zong billing and charges, including unexpected charges and difficulties resolving disputes. Additionally, technical issues with Zong 4G services included low internet speeds, connectivity issues and dropped calls. This can be frustrating for customers and may lead to dissatisfaction with the company. Moreover, Zong has also been facing regulatory issues, where PTA¹¹ has imposed fines over the years for non-compliance with regulations and for not providing the required information to the regulator on time. This can lead to negative publicity for the company and may cause

customers to question its reliability and trustworthiness. The mobile market in Pakistan is highly competitive and Zong's pricing strategy has faced criticism in recent years. Some customers have reported that the company's prices are too high compared to its competitors.

COVID-19 worsened customer dissatisfaction for Zong as many people started to spend heavy time on internet services for remote work, online classes and entertainment. This increased demand led to network congestion, slow speeds and dropped connections, causing frustration and dissatisfaction among Zong customers. Additionally, the Zong customer service centres and call centres were temporarily closed, only a few agents receiving calls from the customers and it was very difficult to entertain all consumers well in time, making it more difficult for customers to resolve their issues, further exacerbating their dissatisfaction. The pandemic highlights the need for better network infrastructure and improved customer service for a seamless customer experience.

One of the most significant impacts of the problems with Zong observed by the Chief operating officer on its campaign is that it can lead to low CTR¹². Customers who are unhappy with the network coverage, customer service, billing, charges, or technical issues may be less likely to click on Zong ads when they appear on SERPs¹³. This can lead to lower CTRs, making it more difficult for Zong to generate leads and acquire new customers.

High bounce rates can also occur, where customers leave the site quickly after landing on it, which can negatively impact the company's search engine rankings and CPC¹⁴ metrics.

Potential Benefits of SEM Campaign

The project team conducted the holistic study and found the potential benefits of implementing an SEM technique:

1. SEM¹⁵ helps to target areas where network coverage is weak or non-existent. By running geo- targeted ads, the company can promote its network coverage in these areas and encourage people to switch to its network. The company can also run surveys and collect data on areas with poor network coverage to improve its infrastructure and services.
2. It also promotes transparent billing and pricing policies. The company can run ads highlighting its commitment to clear and simple billing and use keyword targeting to reach customers searching for information on unexpected charges.
3. With the help of this technique, the company can promote its network speeds and reliability and use targeted keywords to reach customers searching for information on internet speeds. The company can also run surveys and collect data on areas with slow speeds to improve its infrastructure and services.
4. Adopting this technique helps increase brand awareness and reaches a wider audience. The company can run ads targeting specific demographics, such as age, gender and location and use keywords that are relevant to its target audience. The company can also run surveys and collect data on its target audience to better understand their needs and preferences.

SEM is becoming highly relevant in today's marketing domain because of its multifaced benefits. Recent data shows that the global SEM market size was valued at \$98.6 billion in 2020 and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 12.2% from 2021 to 2028. This growth is due to the increasing use of digital channels for marketing and advertising and the growing number of internet users worldwide.

In response to the identified issues and the potential of the SEM technique to ameliorate the situation, the team formulated the roadmap for implementing SEM plans (Qayyum, 2017).

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SEM PLAN

Zong initiated the SEM campaign in a stage-wise manner as Zong 4G looked at the holistic picture and did in-depth research related to what people are searching for when it comes to telco brands; as an outcome, the key searches that were made were related to the

internet packages, online recharge, MBB¹⁶ and devices. Zong SEM¹⁷ campaign was a year-long campaign where the major goal was to develop powerful SEM for Zong in comparison with the marker competitors. It has been observed that through strategic direction based on the company's objectives, the SEM share rises to 57%, which is more than any other competitor. With an effective approach of SEM and media planning, this strategic campaign of Zong 4G managed to gain total impressions of 8,350,124, where the total clicks attained were 607 212. Zong 4G can change the way it works.

Zong 4G is fast and reliable as the quick availability of information would be the aphid will be the decision-making. Zong 4G has a complete emphasis on providing customers with different indoor as well as outdoor solutions for enhancing the capabilities that enable businesses to grow exponentially. With the widest 4G network in Pakistan, connectivity is not a problem in Pakistan. Retrieving emails, presentations and daily tasks can be catered to feasibly and reliably.

Through careful planning, CEO formulated a plan to outsource the entirety of its digital marketing domain to a marketing agency that is an expert in handling the marketing of network brands. As a result, Zong 4G's digital marketing is now managed by Digitz, an award-winning agency in Pakistan that offers online marketing and solutions for involvement to bigger brands such as Coca- Cola Company, UBL¹⁸, National Foods and GSK¹⁹. Therefore, Digitz is accountable for handling content strategy and creating content that could be utilized on Zong 4G's different digital properties to maintain and develop its websites. Zong 4G is considered the pioneer in adopting evolving technologies, it offers an effective telecommunication experience to valued customers that are devoted to fulfilling the emerging needs of the customers with the help of unrivalled services and solutions. Zong 4G is committed to delivering high-quality communication solutions for supporting the digital lifestyles of customers and participating in Pakistan's Digital Agenda. Zong 4G is being the foremost operator for connecting Pakistan through its services of the state-of-the-art 4G, CEO took the lead with its successful 5G testing last year. Therefore, envisioning the initiative of empowering itscustomers and providing them with maximum functionality with the help of its digital network has bigger strategies for the company's future in digital opinion (Branding in Asia, 2016). Currently, it is going through an effective rebranding, entirely with stimulating TVC²⁰ that could entice customers to increase its impressions. However, Zong 4G is a driving force within the digital world that involves its customers and possesses towards being loyal. As a positive result of its marketing efforts, recent years have witnessed a healthy increase in its income and market share. In 2021, Zong 4G subscribers increased by a significant 3.8 million new customers. Depicts the latest market shares of the leading network companies in Pakistan (Figure 2).

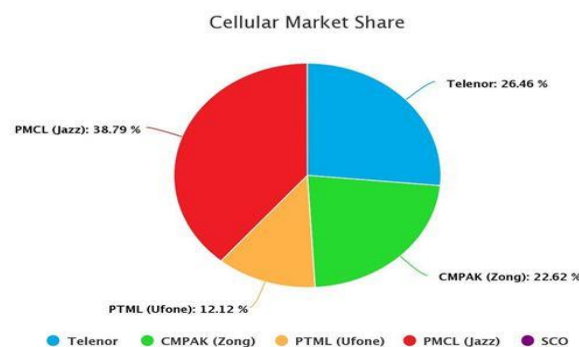


FIGURE 2
REPRESENTS CELLULAR MARKET SHARE

To increase the impressions and total reach of the customers, with the help of collaborative effort made by Zong 4G to narrow the digital divide in Pakistan, the cellular and digital services frontrunner of Pakistan, Zong 4G, has collaborated with PSDF²¹ (Punjab Skills Development Fund) and the leader of worldwide technology Huawei. Now being business companions, PSDF has obtained 300 smart tablets of Huawei from Zong as well as Huawei Pakistan. The partners are working together to digitally empower the youth of Pakistan by offering critical digital resources and equipment enabling the development of skills. For this purpose, PSDF achieved MetaPad tablets and used them for the integration of online learning and hybrid training programs that target nurturing the skillsets of the learners so that they are capable of getting employment and increasing the opportunities for generating more income.

Zong 4G, Data Network and Foundation for International Community Assistance²² (FINCA) Microfinance Bank Pakistan get into a strategic alliance where the main objective is to elevate Pakistan's digital and monetary ecosystem. Influence Pakistan's best 4G services, the strategic combination among the two firms enabling the FINCA clients to perform all kinds of banking actions over the digital mobile application “*SimSim*”. The collaboration between Zong and FINCA Pakistan they expertise for ensuring digital monetary inclusion and experiences for FINCA's customers across the joint footprints of both organizations. Zong 4G is an advocate of 4G brilliance for nurturing the digital ecosystem in the nation. Therefore, it has been observed that 4G has more than 11 million customers that are spread across the reporting impression for more than 10,000 4G sites. Collaborated with FINCA's exclusive monetary link of more than 130 branches in more than 120 cities, the partnership will possess towards raising the outreach for potential and present microfinance customers. This exhibits that the partnership will advantage Zong 4G's customers across the nation as it simplifies the procedures for branchless connectivity that offers a continuous experience for quickening digitalization through the widest, seamless and matchless connectivity in the rapidly moving market. It further empowers people through digital monetary inclusion. Together the firm enabling pervasive connectivity for their users led their customers to enjoy the new experience.

RESULTS FROM THE ZONG 4G SEM CAMPAIGN

Zong's SEM campaign targeted specific demographics, such as young professionals and students, who were looking for affordable mobile phone plans with good network coverage. The company used targeted keywords, such as “*best mobile network in [city name]*,” “*affordable mobile plans*,” “*and reliable network coverage*”. These keywords helped Zong's website rank higher in search engine results pages (SERPs)²³, increasing its visibility and driving more traffic to its website. The increased traffic led to an increase in conversions, resulting in a higher market share for Zong. The SEM campaign for Zong resulted in an increase in its market share to 57%, which is the highest among its competitors. This suggests that the SEM campaign was successful in driving more traffic to Zong's website and increasing its visibility among potential customers. The high market share implies that Zong was able to reach and engage a large number of customers through its SEM campaign and convert them into paying customers, leading to a higher market share. The data also mentions that the SEM campaign achieved a total of 8,350,124 impressions and 607,212 clicks, indicating that the company's ads were widely seen and engaged by potential customers. This suggests that Zong was able to effectively target its audience and create ads that resonated with them, driving higher engagement and more conversions.

Overall, the data suggest that Zong's SEM campaign was successful in driving higher market share, reaching a large number of potential customers and increasing engagement

with its ads. The high market shares and high engagement levels suggest that Zong's SEM campaign was effective in addressing customer complaints and improving customer satisfaction, as well as driving sales and revenue growth for the company.

The CEO examined the reports from 2020 and 2021 and expressed that the company has made significant efforts to expand its network coverage in recent years. In particular, the website mentions the expansion of Zong's 4G network in the regions of Sindh and Balochistan in Pakistan. This expansion aimed to provide better network coverage and faster internet speeds to customers in these regions. The CEO also emphasized that Zong's website states that the company worked closely with local communities and stakeholders to ensure that its expansion plans were aligned with local needs and priorities. This helped to ensure that the company was able to meet the unique needs of customers in each region, while also contributing to the economic development of the areas it served. Aspects of campaign monitoring in SEM (Figure 3).



**FIGURE 3
REPRESENTS GOOGLE AD WORDS**

For optimizing a particular marketing campaign, it is important to determine the KPIs²⁴ that are required for improving the monitoring of the campaigns. KPIs are the main part of the digital marketing strategy. It involves ROAS²⁵, which is one of the conversion values that are compared to the amount spent on the ads. This is a big indicator of how effective the overall paid marketing channel is, which begins from the initial click till the last click process. The first step in monitoring and optimizing an SEM campaign is to analyse the performance of the campaign by tracking key metrics such as CTR²⁶, conversion rate and CPC. Cost per click is essential for paying the right amount to beat the competition for prime slots, for which there is no need to pay too much per click.

In this respect, Zong is monitoring and optimizing its SEM campaign through a series of steps. The first step involves analyzing the performance of the campaign by tracking key metrics such as CTR, Conversion Rate and CPC²⁷. The CPC metric is particularly important as it helps Zong pay the right amount to beat the competition for prime slots without overpaying per click. The conversion rate is also monitored to ensure that the company generates higher revenues by making the checkout process as easy and compelling as possible. Once the performance of the campaign has been analyzed, Zong sets targets for the number of leads generated, conversion rate and ROI²⁸. The company then identifies areas where the campaign is underperforming and makes improvements accordingly. This includes reviewing and optimizing keywords that are being targeted, testing different versions of landing pages and experimenting with different ads and ad variations to see which ones are most effective (Monnappa, 2020).

Zong also monitors its remarketing campaigns and makes adjustments as needed. The company tests different ads and targeting strategies to reach potential customers who have previously engaged with the company's website or content. To optimize Google Ads campaigns, Zong is adding negative keywords, using auction insights, increasing quality

scores and making other related bid adjustments. Constant optimization is crucial for a successful digital campaign and Zong is well aware of this. The company uses pixels and tags to measure the performance of its SEM campaign. Pixels and tags are short snippets of JavaScript code that gather data about visitors to the website and their behaviour, which is then sent back to the advertising platform for processing and reporting.

The company should also monitor and optimize the landing pages that are being used in the campaign. This includes testing different versions of the landing page to see which one performs best and making changes to the design and content of the landing page to improve its effectiveness. Moreover, the next step is to optimize the campaign by testing different ads and ad variations to see which ones are most effective in generating leads and acquiring new customers. The last step includes monitoring the performance of the company's remarketing campaigns and making adjustments as needed. This includes testing different ads and targeting strategies to see which ones are most effective in reaching potential customers who have previously engaged with the company's website or content.

Zong has achieved a lot of benefits through its SEM campaign and network expansion in recent years. The SEM campaign helped Zong to improve its market share, as well as its customer satisfaction reviews. The increase in revenues and network infrastructure is a result of Zong's successful SEM campaign. Zong monitored its campaign performance by tracking key metrics such as CTR, conversion rate and CPC and set targets to achieve the desired performance. The company also optimized its campaign by testing different ads and ad variations and monitoring its remarketing campaigns. By using pixels and tags, Zong was able to measure the performance of its SEM campaign. Constant optimization was key to the success of Zong's SEM campaign, as it allowed the company to identify areas for improvement and make adjustments as needed. To summarise, Zong's SEM campaign and network expansion have helped the company to achieve its goals and become a leading telecom provider in the market.

DISCUSSION

1. How does the Zong SEM campaign facilitate the spread of the network in remote areas?
2. What could be notable challenges soon regarding Zong's SEM campaign?
3. What are the creative elements regarding the wicked problem that Zong has been facing? How does SEM approach this problem?

END NOTES

1. 4G is an abbreviation for fourth-generation wireless
2. Third-generation wireless
3. Five generations wireless technology
4. International Telecommunication Union
5. Chief Executive Officer
6. Search Engine Marketing
7. Search Engine Optimization
8. Chief Financial Officer
9. Chief Operating Officer
10. Search Engine Optimization the process of improving website visibility in Google.
11. Pakistan Telecommunications Authority
12. Click-through rates.
13. Search Engine Results Page
14. Cost-per-click.
15. Search Engine Marketing
16. Devices have a special Data only SIM card packed with the device
17. Search Engine Marketing
18. United Bank Limited

19. Glaxo Smith Kline a health care company
20. Television Commercials
21. Punjab Skills Development Fund
22. Foundation for International Community Assistance
23. Search engine results pages
24. Key Performance Indicators
25. Return on Ad Spend
26. Click-Through Rate
27. Cost-Per-Click
28. Return On Investment

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