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Effect of pandemic COVID-19 on consumers behavior: A review

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Abstract

The paper aims to identify the effect of pandemic COVID-19 on the behavioral pattern of a consumer. This paper shows the change in buying behavior of a consumer from offline to online mode in every safe way and provide certain suggestions to improve and secure online transactions. The study concludes that there are various aspects that is important to keep in mind as a consumer which is studied by different researchers.

Keywords: pandemic, COVID-19, consumer, buying behavior

1. Introduction

The year 2020 has been a nightmare which causes disruption in the socio economic status quo of consumers. The world has witnessed an unpredictable pandemic of its kind in Covid-19. This has disrupted the business models, life style, thinking patterns, learning methodologies and what not. The pandemic has disrupted life as we know it, so is its impact on lifestyle, health and consequently the consumer behaviour as well. The impact of corona virus has been felt around the world, when buying basic products – food, drugstore goods, clothing and footwear and electronics during the pandemic. The paper shows the effect of pandemic as a change in consumer behaviour and marketing strategy because of political, legislative, and economic factors caused by the spread of illness COVID-19. The result will be the evaluation of changings in consumer behaviour because of the pandemic of COVID-19.

1.1 Change in the status quo of consumers

With the onset of the pandemic, we have been witnessing lower incomes and an unexpressed dissatisfaction towards shrinking economy, which has made the Indian consumers to cut back purchases on categories like travel, recreation, entertainment, apparels etc. the focus is more on keeping purchases limited to only groceries and other house hold supplies. with each passing day, living with the virus, majority of the consumers in India have adopted a new minimalistic shopping behaviour (Thich, 2019) [13]. A critical situation pushes human behaviour towards different directions with some aspects of behaviour being irrevocable. COVID-19 pandemic is not a normal crisis, and to control the spread of disease various measures were taken including complete and then partial lockdown. Since all elements of the economy are intricately interrelated with public health measures and lockdown, this resulted in economic instabilities of the nation's hinting towards change in market dynamics (Seema, 2020) [11].

During the pandemic, people are spending less of their income on items perceived as nice-to-have or non-essential (such as clothing, shoes, make-up, jewellery, games and electronics). Globally too, during COVID-19, the developed nations are shifting towards steady state purchasing post-stock piling as per iRi POS data (2020).

1.2 Moving towards local products

This turbulent situation has huge impact on everyday consumers' life. The pandemic of COVID - 19 has significantly dramatically changed both the businesses acting and consumers behaving (Donthu and Gustafsson, 2020; Pantano et al., 2020) [3]. Economic nationalism, lockdown sentiments and sustainable approach (LSSA), and product-specific ethnocentric

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behaviour (PSEB) tendency significantly influenced by the willingness to buy country's own brands and products. Author reveals that during pandemic consumers have realized the importance of hygiene products, environment friendly products, regional (local) products, and satisfaction beyond shopping; these factors determine their willingness to buy Indian brands (WBIB)/made-in-India products (Verma, 2021)^[9].

The main factor detrimental is the demand creation which is always induced at the consumers end. So, what has changed at the end consumer end which is affecting the businesses that have existed for a longer time to wither against this uncertainty? Hence it becomes imperative to understand the behaviour that influences the behaviour of consumer which shapes the businesses models disruptions (Philip Kotler 2019). Changes in the choice of purchase destination, type of goods purchased and adoption of digital payment, especially in developing countries such as India, were observed during the nationwide lockdown (Enormous, 2020)^[4].

Post lockdown and post COVID era, consumers felt that buying Indian-made products and encouraging others to buy them would impact and revive the Indian economy constructively. It was also found that the influence of factors such as economic nationalism, LSSA, and PSEB on the WBIB is mediated by attitude towards foreign products. (Verma, 2021)^[9]

1.3 Consumers are moving from offline to online and safe mode.

The COVID-19 outbreak made the online business deals spike up to 45% in July 2020 alone. The web based application is boomed in this pandemic situation and technology has to be adopted by the business persons to capture the consumer. It is mandatory to have online portal for all types of business scale application despite whether it is small scale, medium scale or large scale. The door of internet has opened and make life for many retailers, people feel that purchasing through online mode is safe than that of visiting physical store the business people want to perceive this thought of consumers and they want to convert this thought process to profit (Jamunadevi *et al*, 2021)^[2]. Digital adoption is here to stay (Anupama Sharma, 2020). With the virus, comes one of the biggest digital waves – be it entertainment, financial transaction, purchases, social interaction or integration of class room learning with distance. Online will be the new dominant channel in the New Normal. Shopping online, greater media consumption (Netflix, Amazon Prime, Hotstar), home delivery of food (Swiggy, Zomato, Amazon) and groceries (Big basket, Amazon, Flipkart, Grofers), work from home, EdTech startups – virtual tutoring, online education apps, Meditation apps – Headspace, Unmind etc. All these indicates customers resorting to safer ways of indulging in daily tasks. Learning from the exercise showcased the glaring vulnerabilities in pandemic preparedness and response across the system, and while participating stakeholders began to incorporate the learning from the simulation, the inevitable COVID-19 occurred and witnessed an exponential increase in the number of cases across countries (Relief Web, 2020)^[10].

1.4 Effect of changing buyers behaviour on market.

Marketers should follow the positivism theory which stipulates that if marketers predict correctly the consumer behaviour then they can influence behavior. Global Web Index (2020) in its study on impact of corona virus showcases higher growth rates of digitalization. The study aimed to

understand the Indian consumers purchasing behaviour (Covid-19 time), Majority (60%) of the respondents were found to purchase online because of free delivery and reliability and agreed to spend significant time online researching the brands or products they intend to purchase.

Švajdová (2016) concluded that change in consumer behaviour because of restrictions that have been introduced to reduce the spread of COVID-19. In all analysed sectors - sales of food, drugstore goods, clothing and footwear, electronics, there was an increase in sales volumes through online channels. For drugstore goods and food, there was a change in the structure of purchases and the frequency of purchases. Demand for clothing, footwear, and electronics, which were closed due to government measures, decreased, despite a growing number of online purchases. The current situation currently prevailing in global markets is mainly influenced by external factors - the COVID-19 pandemic and the effects of political and legislative steps and the economic situation.

Sheth (2020)^[12] claims that there are four major contexts which govern or disrupt consumer habits. They are social context (e.g., changes in the workplace and in interaction with neighbors and friends), the implementation of new technology (including online shopping and delivery), the impact of consumption habits due to new rules (the COVID-19 pandemic regulations), and less predictable context (the development of the global COVID-19 pandemic). Kirk and Rifkin (2020)^[6] studied that history shows a period of crisis can and is often perceived as an impetus for significant transformations in society and recommend paying attention to consumer behaviours in each of these three phases: reacting, coping, do-it-yourself behaviours, and then also longer-term adapting. During pandemic the consumers satisfaction level is totally dependent on the available service of free shipping or consumers preferred to load their cart until they get the privilege to free shipping. The study shows more influence on customer product purchase decision. The free return and exchange has the next major influence on product purchasing (Jamunadevi *et al* 2021)^[2].

2. Methodology

The study is exclusively based on the secondary data. The researcher has collected the relevant data from various articles and research papers.

3. Conclusion

Based on the research, it can be concluded that there has been a change in consumer behaviour because of restrictions that have been introduced to reduce the spread of COVID-19. Sales volumes through online channels is drastically increased. The structure of purchases and the frequency of purchases changes as well. Demand for clothing, footwear, and electronics, which were closed due to government measures, decreased, despite a growing number of online purchases. The markets are now implementing new strategies to stay in race and gain profit.

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