# The impact of COVID-19 on consumer buying behaviour

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**Abstract**

COVID-19 influenced and disturbed normal human life so much that it was noticed in earlier and recent years. This pandemic is not only a health crisis, but also has changed the whole scenario of living. COVID-19 is an infectious disease of the respiratory tract caused by the Coronavirus. It disrupted the entire normal life, including jobs, occupations, working conditions, routine activities, and social and economic changes. Because of the economic, social, and psychological changes in behaviour, people have altered their buying and shopping habits. During the COVID-19 pandemic, consumers spent more on healthy diets and hygienic products. They preferred digital payment of money and online shopping from different e-shopping channels. Online shopping continuously increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Consumer buying behaviour has adapted to new lines for shopping for their needs and necessities, like digital channels etc. Therefore, this research work aims to study the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer buying behaviours with special reference to different age groups, gender, and occupations. Thus, the findings that came from this study will be helpful for further investigation in the future.

**Keywords-** COVID-19 pandemic, consumers, buying behaviour, online shopping, digital payment, healthy diets.

**Introduction**

COVID-19 influenced and disturbed normal human life so much that it was not seen in earlier and recent years, resulting in millions of people being infected, millions of people dying, and millions of people becoming unemployed. This pandemic is not merely a health crisis but also has changed the whole scenario of life. It is an infectious disease of the respiratory tract spread by the Coronavirus. This disease was first detected in Wuhan of China. Impacts of COVID-19 were loss of life, occupation, disturbance in routine, social and economic life, forced to live in self-isolation, and social distancing during the lockdown period for a long time, leaving a long-term effect on human beings. Under constant fear of being infected, mental and psychological stress, and other behavioural changes increased. According to the United Nations, the impact of COVID-19 is not equal and similar for all human beings. It depends on their respective conditions of livelihood, age, poverty, residential status, and other demographic variables. Because of the changes in economic, social, and psychological behaviour, people have altered their buying and shopping habits. During this pandemic, consumers are forced to become more conscious of health and hygienic conditions. Market studies showed that consumers spend more on healthy and hygienic products. During the lockdown period in this pandemic, people were forced and encouraged to use digital ways of paying, preferring home-delivered products, use of social media, and doing online shopping quite often, which showed that consumers have developed new ways of purchasing. One of the reasons for this change in consumer behaviour was the government. policies. Several steps were taken by the government. to restrict the spread of this disease, such as lockdown, social distancing, closure of schools and colleges, and restrictions were imposed on religious, social, and other gatherings like marriage functions, etc. Due to govt. policies of complete lockdown from 23rd March 2020 and social distancing, consumers were restricted from moving, and they now had a limited choice of places for shopping. Shopping from retailers and shops located nearby became very difficult and risky. To meet the needs, demands, and necessities of consumers, online shopping channels introduced contactless delivery of new kinds of products such as masks, face shields, and many types of sanitizers that were necessary items during the pandemic period. The alteration in consumer behaviour encouraged researchers to study the impact of COVID-19 on consumer behaviour during this pandemic period.

This research study aims to observe the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer buying behaviour. It was a new field for researchers. This research work is concerned with the information and knowledge about the change in consumer buying behaviour brought by COVID-19.

**Review of Literature**

According to Charumati and Rani (2017), online buying or E-buying is an electronic business that gives service to consumers to buy products from e-retailers by using Internet technology. Lacto et.al. (2020) stated that consumers have shown various unusual behaviours and spend more on essential things. Rogers & Casgrove (2020) stated that consumers spend more on groceries and health and hygiene products. Madnani et.al. (2020) reported that during the pandemic period, wellness for health and entertainment were delivered through digital platforms. Pham, V.K. et.al (2020) found that online shopping activities were promoted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Sudden Lockdowns and restrictions led to panic buying that caused a shortage of essential goods in markets. Spending of money on cosmetics decreased, and investment in self-care products increased during the pandemic in India. According to WHO (World Health Organization), Corona disease was declared a global pandemic. Chirumbolo et.al. (2021) study stated that job insecurity and uncertainty of life were experienced during the pandemic, which affected the consumer buying behaviours. Nielson (2020) noted that consumer buying behaviours changed during the pandemic, led to a global manifest change in spending levels. Degli et.al. (2021) noticed that some product categories, such as clothes, decreased sales, and sales of other categories, such as entertainment products increased. According to Arafat et.al. (2020), fear of scarcity and losing control over the environment, insecurity, social learning, anxiety, etc., were the basic primitive responses of humans that were responsible factors for the panic buying phenomenon. Bentall et.al. (2021) reported that inhibitors of over-purchasing were supported. J. Bus Res. (2020) and J.Sheth (2020) reported that lockdown and social distancing were so combating that the Covid-19 virus has generated significant disruptions in consumer buying behaviour. Gustav & Alexander (2020) worked on consumer buying behavior turned to buying cheaper brands, local things, smaller packages, and essential goods (food, personal healthcare, medication, immunity boosters, sanitizers, etc.) Mehta et.al. (2020) observed that consumers changed diets, purchasing essential goods, leaving the need for hygienic conditions and how to save money, their measures for entertainment changed. Now, consumers are doing quality shopping.

**Research Objectives**

The objectives of this research study are-

1. To study changes in the buying behaviour of consumers (essential and healthy diets).
2. To study changes in the mode of purchasing or buying, such as digital shopping from home.
3. To study changes in payment modules, like digital payment options.
4. To study the change in the paying capacity of a consumer.

**Research Methodology**

The present study is based on a survey of the buying of products and materials by consumers. The primary data was collected from direct interaction with consumers. The secondary data was collected by using books, newspapers, magazines, websites, online research papers, reports, and journals etc. Samples were collected from people of different age groups, genders, and occupations in the city through direct interaction with them. The size of the sample is 50.

## Results and Findings

**Observation and Analysis of the data-** samples were collected from people of different age groups, gender, and occupation in the city through direct interaction with them. The size of the sample is 50.

Table 1. shows respondents of 30-40 years age group came forward with a higher percentage followed by 10-20 years (number 11), age group 20-30 years (number 09), age group 50-60 years (number 08) and age group 40-50 years (number 07) respectively. The percentage of male respondents is higher than that of females. A higher number of respondents were students, followed by Businessmen, Govt., and Private employees, respectively.

Table 2 indicates that respondents of different age groups, different genders and different occupations preferred online shopping more than going to the market.

Table 3 shows that there was a change in the payment module. The respondents preferred paying digitally to paying via cash.

From Table 4, it was found that the purchasing capacity decreased during the pandemic period. Consumers bought only necessary products and materials needed for daily use, such as milk and milk products, fruits and vegetables, edible oil, flour, pulses, spices, snacks, biscuits, masks, medicines, immunity increasing products, gloves, sanitizers, healthy diet products, nutritious items, disinfectants, etc.

**Table 1: Respondents of different Age groups, Gender, and Occupation.**

| **Age group** | **Numbers** | **Percentage** |
|---|---|---|
| 10-20 years | 11 | 22% |
| 20-30 years | 09 | 18% |
| 30-40 years | 15 | 30% |
| 40-50 years | 07 | 14% |
| 50-60 years | 08 | 16% |
| **Gender** | | |
| Male | 30 | 60% |
| Female | 20 | 40% |
| **Occupation** | | |
| Govt. employee | 13 | 26% |
| Private employee | 07 | 14% |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| Businessman | 10 | 20% |
| Students | 20 | 40% |

Source: Authors' calculation using the collected data

**Table 2: Mode of shopping (online from home or directly from the market)**

| Age group | Numbers | Respondents | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Online | Market |
| 10-20 years | 11 | 07 | 04 |
| 20-30 years | 09 | 05 | 04 |
| 30-40 years | 15 | 10 | 05 |
| 40-50 years | 07 | 05 | 02 |
| 50-60 years | 08 | 04 | 04 |
| **Gender** | | | |
| Male | 30 | 20 | 10 |
| Female | 20 | 12 | 08 |
| **Occupation** | | | |
| Govt. employee | 13 | 13 | NIL |
| Private employee | 07 | 05 | 02 |
| Businessman | 10 | 08 | 02 |
| Students | 20 | 10 | 10 |

Source: Authors' calculation using the collected data

**Table 3: Change in the Payment Module of Consumers.**

| Age group | Numbers | Paying module | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Digital | Cash |
| 10-20 years | 11 | 08 | 03 |
| 20-30 years | 09 | 06 | 03 |
| 30-40 years | 15 | 08 | 07 |
| 40-50 years | 07 | 06 | 01 |
| 50-60 years | 08 | 05 | 03 |
| **Gender** | | | |
| Male | 30 | 22 | 08 |
| Female | 20 | 15 | 05 |
| **Occupation** | | | |
| Govt. employee | 13 | 13 | NIL |
| Private employee | 07 | 06 | 01 |
| Businessman | 10 | 07 | 03 |
| Students | 20 | 13 | 07 |

Source: Authors' calculation using the collected data

**Table 4: Change in the paying capacity of Consumers.**

| Age group | Numbers | Paying capacity | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | Before COVID-19 | During COVID-19 |
| 10-20 years | 11 | More | Less |
| 20-30 years | 09 | More | Less |
| 30-40 years | 15 | More | Less |
| 40-50 years | 07 | More | Less |
| 50-60 years | 08 | More | Less |
| **Gender** | | | |
| Male | 30 | More | Less |
| Female | 20 | More | Less |
| **Occupation** | | | |
| Govt. employee | 13 | More | Less |
| Private employee | 07 | More | Less |
| Businessman | 10 | More | Less |
| Students | 20 | More | Less |

Source: Authors' calculation using the collected data

The findings of this research work showed that internet marketing and online shopping have become very common now. The findings could help develop new shopping strategies to meet the actual requirements of the consumers.

**Research Discussions**

The present study aimed to evaluate the changes in the buying behaviour of the consumers. Specific interest was given to the study of change in modes of purchasing, such as shopping from online retailers and online channels of shopping. As shown in the findings of this research study, consumers of different age groups, different genders, and different occupations preferred online shopping more than going to the market.
Changes in modules and ways of paying, like digital payment services as shown in the findings, resulted in the respondents preferring to pay digitally to pay via cash.
Consumers are likely to adopt new technologies that facilitate work, study, and consumption in a more convenient manner (14). Change in paying capacity due to change in the livelihood, it was observed from the findings of this study that the purchasing capacity decreased during the pandemic period. Consumers bought only necessary products and materials needed for daily use, such as milk and milk products, fruits

and vegetables, edible oil, flour, pulses, spices, snacks, biscuits, masks, medicines, immunity increasing products, gloves, sanitizers, healthy diet products, nutritious items, and disinfectants, etc.
Buying behaviours regarding price sensitivity and perceived quality of meat, fruits, and vegetables changed during the COVID-19 pandemic (15). Our findings highlighted that changes in consumer behaviour were associated with changes in spending levels. Collected data and findings are interpreted in the light of information obtained from the earlier studies on this pandemic. The present study exhibited an increased tendency to buy necessary products during pandemics. This was supported by the studies of (8,11and16). The findings of the study showed that the consumers' buying behaviour changed; they bought healthy diets, and their brand preference has also changed.

**Conclusion**

The lockdown and social distancing during the COVID-19 pandemic have had a significant effect on consumer buying behaviour. People were working from home, studying from home, shopping, and buying from home. As the consumers were forced to remain in their homes for a long period so they learned new techniques to facilitate their work, study, and buying in a very convenient way. So it is concluded that a vast number of consumers developed new buying habits from online stores and channels, and are paying digitally. Dietary habits of consumers also changed for fresh fruits, vegetables, cereals, groceries, soaps, masks, sanitizers, medicines, immunity boosters, etc.
Occupation, age, and gender were found to have a significant impact on the changed buying behaviour of the consumer. The impact of age and gender was also noted by (15). Online shopping was a better idea for stopping the spread of the infection of Coronavirus. The findings will be helpful for retailers and service providers to understand the motives of the shopping and in preparing their marketing strategies according to the needs and necessities of the consumer in dealing with the occurrence of future pandemics and disasters.

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