

AN EMPIRICAL STUDY ON REASONS FOR CHANGE IN CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR DURING COVID-19

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ABSTRACT

The emergence of the coronavirus has caused a new normal to develop, and its effects have been felt all around the globe (Covid-19). Lifestyle, health, and, by extension, consumer behavior, have all been profoundly affected by the epidemic, which has thrown conventional wisdom into disarray. Economic and social processes and systems are also experiencing disruption. Businesses are seeing the formation of a new cohort influenced by the demands, behaviors, and inclinations of the younger generation. Nonetheless, it is unclear if this change is fleeting or here to stay. For as long as people are worried about a pandemic, companies must monitor how customers' mindsets and actions have changed. The purpose of this study is to determine what variables have caused these shifts and to rank them according to the extent to which they have affected consumer behavior. A total of 180 people took part in the online survey that was administered at COVID-19. The first two parts of the survey asked about variables that influence consumers' actions, while the third part focused on industry sector analysis.

Keywords: Economic, Pandemic, Bulk, Products, Brand

I. INTRODUCTION

In today's fast-paced and ever-evolving business world, it's crucial for companies to have a good grasp of consumer behavior and how different types of consumers seek to meet their needs through product purchases. This knowledge allows them to come up with effective strategies to attract and keep customers. Location and time are the only constants in consumer behavior, and customers create routines about when, where, what, and how they buy, get information, and dispose of trash after using products. Ad hoc natural catastrophes like earthquakes, hurricanes, and worldwide pandemics are one of four main settings that control consumer behaviors. The other three are social and technical. Epidemic diseases—known by many names such as swine flu, smallpox, cholera, SARS, H7N9, and others—have afflicted the whole globe for over a century, causing immense societal damage.

By mid-March 2, 2020, the global announcement of the COVID-19 virus has prompted millions of individuals to isolate themselves and keep their distance from others. Things haven't been the same since then because of all the safety measures put in place to prevent the spread of the COVID pandemic. The distinctive aspect of the pandemic is the way it embodies a perfect storm, uniting a myriad of crises—public health, economic, social, and

environmental—into one swift and upsetting nation and society.

The COVID-19 epidemic has disrupted every facet of society. Individuals and communities must shoulder the burden of social isolation when health care providers implement efforts to reduce patient interaction. The consumer's health, the health of his loved ones, and society's health are all put at risk when he shops at stores because of the many social ties he makes there.

During a pandemic, two factors—which can be conflicting or even unfair—determine consumer behavior. One side has the wants, habits, or even bad habits of consumers, while the other side has the personal and societal responsibility for one's own health, the health of one's loved ones, and the health of society overall. Along with these two considerations, there is also the dread that comes from customers' need for safety. It would be fascinating to know their real thoughts and discover different things that impact their behavior during a pandemic, as behavioral patterns differ based on consumer variety. The conditions of buying have altered virtually instantly as a result of the national emergency. Retail therapy has become a thing of the past. While some shoppers were able to make immediate adjustments to their routines in response to the restrictions and weathered the additional scrutiny effectively, others had to adjust to more fundamental shifts in their lives. Additionally, vendors have had to deal with a number of pressing issues related to customers' safety during purchases. Store hours were cut, some non-essential goods outlets had to close, and other retailers experienced issues with stock and delivery; customers waited in long lines outside the stores.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Das, Debadyuti et al., (2022) This study looks into how COVID-19 has affected consumers' lifestyle changes and purchasing habits according to their socioeconomic status. The impacts of COVID-19 on customers' affordability, lifestyle, and health awareness, as well as how these factors affected their purchasing behavior, were investigated by a questionnaire survey. Using structural equation modeling, 425 valid responses were examined, with customers' socio-economic background being treated as an exogenous variable and their changing lifestyle and adaptation in purchasing behavior as endogenous factors. According to the research, COVID-19 has had a disproportionate impact on consumers in the unorganized sectors, leading to a rise in the desire for cheaper alternatives to essential daily items. Affordability and lifestyle changes moderate the relationship between customers' occupations and family earning status and the demand for health and entertainment items. In addition, the results demonstrate that consumers' present work and family earning position have a mediating role in the demand for health and hygiene goods, with affordability and awareness to a lesser extent. The decision-makers can use the model produced by this study to determine which socio-economic groups might be marketed wellness products and which could be marketed health and hygiene items. Also, the model gives managers a lot of information about what kinds of product replacements might work in the market if the pandemic were to happen.

Ahmad, Paiman et al., (2022) This study focuses on examining consumer purchasing behavior during the COVID-19 epidemic. Amidst the epidemic, consumer behavior, purchasing patterns, and habits have been undergoing significant changes. This study demonstrates that COVID-19 has expedited anxiety among consumers. Throughout the many stages of the pandemic, individuals have expressed profound apprehension over fulfilling their daily necessities, particularly during periods of lockdowns and curfews. The anxiety and terror caused by COVID-19 have generated confusion among customers over the purchase of vital supplies such as food, medication, and hygiene items.

Anifa, Mansurali et al., (2021) A pandemic such as COVID-19, which has the ability to completely disrupt any economy, will inevitably have a profound impact on the social behavior and habits of populations worldwide. The COVID-19 pandemic presents an unprecedented challenge for any economy, as they were not adequately prepared for it. The absence of adequate testing kits, limited availability of ventilators, and the occurrence of community transmission have compelled nations to enforce an extended closure, resulting in significant repercussions for important markets. The objective of this work is to examine the purchasing patterns of customers throughout the covid-19 pandemic. This article specifically examines the determinants that impact consumer behavior and perceptions amidst the epidemic. The study has employed a quantitative approach to accomplish its aims. Given the restricted availability of online purchasing alternatives and the increased danger of contracting the virus through in-person shopping, it is crucial to comprehend consumer purchasing behavior. This understanding can assist policymakers, manufacturers, and enterprises in effectively managing such crises in the future.

Candrawati, Krisnita & Nuvriasari, Audita (2021) The objective of this study is twofold: (1) to examine the progression of consumer behavior research amidst the Covid-19 pandemic, and (2) to ascertain the theoretical and empirical advancements derived from research findings on consumer behavior throughout the Covid-19 pandemic. The first study aim was addressed by co-word analysis using VOS Viewer, while the second research objective was addressed through quantitative analysis. The findings indicate that consumer behavior research during the Covid-19 pandemic primarily focuses on investigating the shifts in consumer requirements, product preferences, and prioritization of needs in response to the epidemic. Conversely, there is a need for further research on the impact of online consumer behavior on purchasing decisions. This research should focus on the psychological factors influencing consumer buying behavior, particularly in relation to fresh food ingredients and staple foods. Additionally, it should explore the consistency of changes in consumer habits, the level of consumer risk awareness, and consumer behavior during a pandemic. The fundamental ideas employed in this research encompass the Fear Appeal theory, Maslow's theory, the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). The findings indicated that a model was constructed using the S-O-R computational decision tree ensemble model with Bagging.

Tien, Nguyen et al., (2020) This research seeks to outline the prospects and obstacles that

Vietnamese firms face in response to the shift in consumer behavior during the post-Covid-19 period. This is a novel issue that has not been addressed or covered in any existing articles. The study has curated a selection of articles pertaining to consumer behavior that can gather analytical data, forecast circumstances, and provide particular variables for the research. The research findings indicate that during the post-Covid-19 phase, firms might capitalize on numerous chances to restore normalcy. Specifically, firms must prioritize adapting to changing customer behavior, as it is crucial in the current global pandemic. becoming intricate. This is also the time when firms may conduct personnel reassessments and develop improved policies and strategies for future endeavors. Additionally, businesses can validate the viability of their items in the market. Which firms demonstrate resilience in the consumer industry and capitalize on possibilities to navigate through this crisis. Following the post-Covid-19 period, Vietnamese businesses encounter numerous challenges alongside the opportunities. Despite the ongoing Covid-19 transition, the most concerning aspects for businesses are their financial stability, workforce management, and, notably, the altered consumer behavior. Customers now prioritize safer products and exhibit a heightened aversion to risks compared to the pre-pandemic era. The research provides insights into both the opportunities and problems faced by firms, and offer some solutions that may serve as valuable references and guidance during this period.

III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to ascertain the determinants and their influence on customer purchasing behavior. A preliminary research was done to assess the appropriateness of the analytical procedure. A survey was conducted using a questionnaire, and the replies were analyzed by performing univariate linear regression analysis to determine their dependence on the dependent variable.

After distributing a structured online survey to collect primary data, a total of 180 answers were collected. The poll focused on the determinants that influence customer behavior while purchasing a product during a pandemic. The respondents consisted of individuals from various age categories, including employed males and females, housewives, students, and teenagers.

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

- **Impact of Availability of product on Buying Behavior**

The availability of items was identified as one of the elements influencing customer behavior.

Table 1: Impact of Availability of product on Buying Behavior

Factors	R Square	Adjusted Square	R

Not known brand – Bought in bulk	84.0%	79.0 %
Bought In bulk even if it's out of buyer's estimated budget	70.0%	58.0%
Brand not known but only few pieces are available in stock	75.0%	66.0%
If the product is out of your estimated budget	76.0%	68.0%
If the product is not of a known brand	83.0%	80.0%

When a product is purchased in large quantities but is not from a well-known brand, there is a significant 84.0% difference in purchasing behavior that can be explained, with an adjusted R square value of 79.0%. Similarly, purchasing a large quantity of items, even if it beyond the buyer's expected budget, has a significant effect, explaining 70.0% of the observed differences. The limited stock availability of an unfamiliar brand leads to a 75.0% deviation, but exceeding the projected budget and purchasing an unknown brand contribute to deviations of 76.0% and 83.0%, respectively.

- **Most Preferred Reasons for Change in Buying Behavior**

The table below presents the key elements that have the greatest influence on consumer buying behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic, as determined by the research. It also includes the corresponding R square and modified R square values.

Table 2: Most Preferred Reasons for Change in Buying Behavior

Factors	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Personal Care and pharmacy	85.0%	79.0%
Time Preference	84.40%	79.20%
Household & cleaning supplies	84.50%	79.00%
If the product is not of a known brand	84.70%	80.00%
Not known brand – Bought in bulk	85.0%	79.0%

Significantly, personal care and pharmacy goods, together with time preference, demonstrate a substantial impact, with a R square value of 85% and an adjusted R square value of 79%. Additionally, the variables of housekeeping and cleaning supplies, together with the factor of the product's lack of a recognized brand, both have substantial contributions. They are associated with R square values of 84.50% and 84.70%, and adjusted R square values of

80.00%. Furthermore, the impact of an unfamiliar brand on large-scale purchases has a R square value of 85% and an adjusted R square value of 79%.

- **Least Preferred Reasons for Change in Buying Behavior**

We have also included the least influential aspects that have not affected the consumer's purchasing decisions. The table below displays the data, as well as the corresponding R square and corrected R square values.

Table 3: Least Preferred Reasons for Change in Buying Behavior

Factors	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Bought In bulk even if it's out of buyer's estimated budget	47.50%	30.50%
Packaged food item	63.90%	51.90%
Bought In bulk even if it's out of buyer's estimated budget	69.90%	59.90%
Baby infant & products	73.90%	65.0%
Brand not known but only few pieces are available in stock	74.40%	65.90%

The propensity to make large purchases, regardless of whether they are inside or outside of the buyer's budget, accounts for 47.50% of the variation and has an adjusted R squared value of 30.50%. With an adjusted R squared value of 51.90%, packaged foods had a somewhat larger effect, explaining 63.90% of the observed variation. Additionally, there is a second instance of buying in bulk, even while going over budget, which has a bigger influence at 69.90% (R square) and 59.90% (adjusted R square). With an adjusted R-squared value of 65%, baby newborn and products also significantly contribute, accounting for 73.90% of the variation. Finally, an adjusted R squared value of 65.90% is attributable to the fact that there are only a small number of units available for an unknown brand, which increases the variance to 74.40%.

V. CONCLUSION

Consumers rethought their spending habits in response to the unprecedented global crisis, which in turn prompted new preferences and trends. Various product categories are significantly impacted by variables such as budget, brand familiarity, and product availability, according to the research. One common thread that surfaced was the inclination to purchase in bulk, regardless of whether it went over budget, suggesting that this was a reaction to the uncertainty of the period. The complexity of consumer demands during the

pandemic was further demonstrated by the importance of some product categories, including as newborn and infant goods, packaged food, and personal care and pharmacy items. Businesses and governments may use this study's findings to adapt and prosper in today's fast shifting market circumstances. It adds to our understanding of the intricacies influencing consumer behavior during crisis situations.

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