

IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

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Abstract

The study attempted to understand the effect of novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on the consumers buying behaviour. In India at early stage of novel coronavirus disease cases was more reported by international travellers. Domestic travellers by air, train and bus caused to increase the positive test of patients of COVID-19 in India. Indian market seriously affected by novel coronavirus disease. Consumer behaviour has suddenly changed in lockdown situation. At early stage, consumers were not more serious about the situation created by COVID-19. Government of India has taken preventative measures and news media uplift the issue of awareness. At that time people are hesitated and confused and taking care. When nationwide lockdown was declared the public went to the market to purchase the essential goods. Sellers were black-marketing of essential goods, drugs, face masks, hand gloves and sanitizers. After declaration of lockdown consumers experienced fear and felt unsecured. The news from television channels and multimedia drastically effected to change behaviour of people. Consumers predicted the shortage of essential goods and they rushed in the market for purchase. Online marketing companies suspended their services to protect and care the life of consumers and their staff during lockdown. In that period consumers were not more conscious about specific brands of goods.

Key Words: Pandemic, COVID-19 disease, Social Distancing, Consumer behaviour

1. Introduction

Globalisation creates opportunities and threats in international business. World economic growth depends on the level of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation. Apart from this economic growth depends on optimum utilisation of natural resources, funds invested, manpower, technology used in production and consumption level of peoples. Global peace and cooperative approach of the different countries results to enhance international trade. World Health Organisation officially declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic on 11th March, 2020. A pandemic is a disease situation that has person-to-person spread over different countries. It creates fear among the people. When first lockdown was declared rush in market was suddenly increased. The stocks of essential goods in shops were remarkable at lowest level. Face masks and sanitizers were out of stock in various medical shops during early stage of lockdown. It resulted to black marketing of essential and medical goods. A

fight against coronavirus is started by government and public. It's essential for everyone to act as a soldier in the war against the disease. Minimum distance of one meter between two persons must be required to maintain in breaking the chain of COVID-19. The role of common man is to break the chain of spread of disease is important. Consumers are required to obey the orders issued by the government to control of disease. Care taking instructions against COVID-19 given by medical team which are essential and required to followed by all consumers. During lockdown period, IPC section 144 was applied in some area to maintain the discipline and control the crowd. More enthusiastic people are wandering on the roads and police force is taking actions against such people. When lockdown was declared consumers entered in the market to purchase and stock the essential goods. Novel coronavirus has a global reference so every country has required aggressive action against it. Meat and chicken market collapsed in India due to rumours. Legal action was required for such persons who communicate fake information. COVID-19 disease affects buying approach of the consumers and market situation.

2. Review of Literature

Kaveh Peighambari et al.¹ (2016) they analysed 12 years of scholarly research on consumer behaviour published in the five leading international journals in this field. The results presented in this article suggest many implications for the consumer behaviour research community, researchers, journal editors, and reviewers, as well as for the practitioners. In this regard, this article not only serves to evaluate the structure and evolution of the literature in consumer behaviour field but also presents some assumptions about further developments in this literature.

T.Narayana Rao and K.Ratnamadhuri² (2018) both concluded that small differences exist in the income level that implies the different groups prefer or opinion differs on consumer buying behaviour. It created a curiosity to find out which group really differing on the opinions. Every person plays multiple roles in their daily life, professional role or social role. Each of these roles has a certain effect on consumers buying behaviour. Each role has a particular status in society and consumer behaviour is considerably depended on the status factor. If marketers understand the factors that mainly influence in buying decision the sales can be increased a lot.

Ankur Kumar Rastogi (2010)³ pointed that online shopping is having very bright future in India. Perception towards online shopping is getting better in India. With the use of internet, consumers can shop anywhere, anything and anytime with easy and safe payment options. Consumers can do comparison shopping between products, as well as, online stores.

Manu Nanda et al. (2019)⁴ they revealed that apart from 'income', 'friends', 'variety of models/range', 'ease of returns', 'delivery services', 'shelf display factors' and 'in-store advertisements' were also found to be significant influential in changing the perspectives of consumers' in purchasing computer peripherals from brick & mortar stores. In a scenario where product price, brand and specifications match, or are nearly the same, the Indian consumers prefer to choose the product according to their income and affordability perspectives.

Lia van der Hoek et al.⁵ (2004) they present a detailed description of a new human coronavirus. Thus far, only three human coronaviruses have been characterized if they include SARS-CoV; further characterization of HCoV-NL63 as the fourth member will provide important insight into the variation among human coronaviruses.

Chaolin Huang (2020) et al.⁶ they observed that in 2 January, 2020, 41 admitted hospital patients had been identified as having laboratory-confirmed 2019-nCoV (COVID-19) infection. Most of the infected patients were men; less than half had underlying diseases, including diabetes, hypertension, and cardiovascular disease. Median age was 49.0 years. 27 of 41 patients had been exposed to Wuhan seafood market. All 41 patients had pneumonia with abnormal findings on chest CT. Complication's included acute respiratory distress syndrome, acute cardiac injury and secondary infection.

3. Methodology

For understanding the consumer buying behaviour under COVID-19 disease the paper writers used an explanatory research design. The present study is based on the behaviour of the consumers in pandemic situation.

3.1 Sample Design

For the selection of sample, researchers used an empirical investigation conducted through the Google Form by asking dichotomous questions to the selected samples. Non-probability convenience sampling technique was used for the present study. The researchers had selected 33 respondents for the present study.

3.2 Objectives of the Study

1. To understand the factors that are affecting consumer buying behaviour in pandemic situation arisen due to COVID-19.
2. To identify the challenges faced by the consumers due to COVID -19.
3. To find the preventative measures taken by consumer at the time of purchasing of essential goods when India declared lockdown for 21 days.

4. To suggest the remedial measures required to be taken in the market to fight against COVID -19.
5. To analyze the influence of COVID-19 on the life style of the consumers in lockdown period.

3.3 Hypothesis of the study

H_0 = Pandemic situation arises due to COVID-19 and major factors influenced consumers behaviour during lockdown period is dependent.

H_1 = Pandemic situation arises due to COVID-19 and major factors influenced consumers behaviour during lockdown period is not dependent.

3.4 Research Design

3.4.1 Scope of the Study

The paper writers were focused on the consumer buying behaviour affected by coronavirus (Covid-19). In this study attempt was made to understand the various factors that effects on the buying behaviour of the consumer. Present study is only related to the pandemic situation arisen due to COVID-19 and how the buying behaviour of the consumer was changed. Mostly the research was carried in the period of situation of voluntary public curfew on 22nd March, 2020, nationwide 21 days' lockdown declared from 25th March 2020 to 15th April, 2020, second lockdown period (2.0) from 15th April, 2020 to 3rd May, 2020, third extended period (3.0) from 4th April, 2020 to 17th April 2020 and further extension of lockdown from 18th May 2020 to 31st May 2020.

Limitations of the Study

- i. The study was limited to the lockdown phases 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 declared in India due to COVID-19 disease.
- ii. Extensive literature relationship on COVID-19 and consumer buying behaviour was not available for in-depth reviews.
- iii. Due to nationwide lockdown the paper writers are unable to visit the consumers personally so they used telephonic communication to the respondents.
- iv. The study concerned only COVID-19 disease and consumer buying behaviour in lockdown period. If other aspects like market situation, demand and supply of goods, transportation of goods, legal aspects of lockdown, socio economic impact of disease could have been considered, the study would have had more comprehensive results.
- v. The time is an important constraint and there may be a chance for sample error.

3.4.2 Source of Data

To observe the consumer buying behaviour in the period of nationwide lockdown due to COVID-19 disease the following sources of data collection were used.

3.4.3.1 Primary Data

The following techniques were used to collect primary data.

i. Discussions

A discussion was made with respondents on mobile devices to understand their buying behavior and they were asked to fill up the questionnaire prepared in Google Form.

ii. Observation

Personal observation was carried out by the paper writers to understand the behavioural approach of the consumers.

3.4.3.2 Secondary Data

Secondary data was collected through the following sources which are most useful to secondary data.

- i. Government publications.
- ii. Published reports and survey concerned to COVID-19 and buying behaviour of consumers.
- iii. Published sources collected from research papers, periodicals and newspapers.
- iv. Web sites related to COVID-19 and buying behaviour of consumers.

3.4.4 Expected contribution of the study

- i. The study will reveal how to manage the consumer behaviour in pandemic situation arisen due to COVID-19.
- ii. The study will help for the policy formulation at the time of pandemic, epidemic and endemic.

4. Results and Discussion

On 25th March, 2020, lockdown for 21 days was declared by the Central government and suddenly changes occurred in the consumer behaviour. After declaration of first lockdown all shops of essential commodities were crowded with consumers. It becoming difficult for the shopkeeper to manage huge crowd who came to purchase essential goods. Rumours are widely spreading through the social media. Consumers were in confused state of mind due to shortage of goods in the market. Population was highly susceptible. Consumers were refocused for the application of preventative measures. Government arranged more attention to fight against COVID-19. Instructions were given to the consumers to obey the rules and regulations while entering for purchase of essential goods. Items such as face

masks, sanitizers and medicines were seen the large jump. In lockdown period financial, non-financial, psychological, social & cultural and some other factors were affected on the consumer buying behaviour. Financial items include family income, future earnings, credit facility, saving attitude of the consumers and government policies to control the prices of goods and services. Non-financial items include consumerism culture, family culture, and profession, surroundings such as rural-urban, fashions, technology development, advertisement and physical structure of the consumer. Psychological factors related to motivation to buy, perception, learning and beliefs and attitude. Social and cultural factors include culture, social class and reference groups of consumers. Apart from this other factors which influence consumer behaviour included economic development of the country, revolution in communication and transportation devices, import policy and development of consumer movement in the country. Supply chain management was disrupted due to nationwide lockdown. Central and State governments had taken appropriate decision at the right time to lockdown which was essential to fight against COVID-19 and protection of health of the public. Lockdown decision assists to restrict to spread of COVID-19 in the country. Researchers had used appropriate statistical techniques for data analysis and interpretation. The respondents were classified on the basis of factors influencing buying behavior during lockdown period.

Table No. 1
Change in Buying Behaviour

Response	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	28	84.80
No	05	15.20
Total	33	100

Source: Primary data

According to the discussion and observation of the respondents 84.80 percent respondents were admitted due to their buying behaviour changed during the lockdown period. During research it found that consumer buying behaviour was suddenly changed due to countrywide lockdown.

Table No. 2
Unsecured and Fear

Response	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	16	48.50
No	17	51.50
Total	33	100

Source: Primary data

The figures in the above table showed the percentage of respondents according to unsecured and fear about the COVID-19 disease. 48.50 percent respondents had opined that there is great impact of COVID-19 on buying behaviour. Therefore, it is concluded that there is great impact of unsecured and fear about the COVID-19 disease.

Table No. 3
Effect of Lockdown

Response	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	30	90.90
No	03	09.10
Total	33	100

Source: Primary data

The figures in the above table showed the effect of the lockdown on respondents. 90.90 percent the respondents agreed about the effects of lockdown due to COVID-19. Respondents faced the financial, non-financial, psychological, social and cultural factors that adversely influence on the buying behaviour of the respondents.

Table No. 4
Effect of COVID-19 News on Consumer Behaviour

Response	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	24	72.70
No	09	27.30
Total	33	100

Source: Primary data

The above table number 4 showed the classification of the respondents according to effects of new broadcasted data by channels. Out of 33 respondents 24 (72.70%) admitted the influence of news on mind. 09 Respondents said that the news channels do not affect the mind.

Table No. 5
Shortage of Essential Goods

Response	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	22	67.67
No	11	33.33
Total	33	100

Source: Primary data

During the research it is found that 67.67 percent respondents took care to purchase essential goods at the time of declaration of nationwide lockdown due to in future there may be shortage of essential goods. 33.33 percent respondents were confident that there will be no shortage of essential goods during lockdown period.

Table No. 6
Rush to Purchase of Goods within 24 Hours of Lockdown Declared

Response	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	06	18.20
No	27	81.80
Total	33	100

Source: Primary data

According to the discussion and observation of the respondents, 18.20 percent rushed to the market to purchase the essential goods within 24 hours of lockdown declared. 81.80 percent respondents did not rush to purchase of goods within 24 hours of lockdown.

Table No. 7
Online Marketing

Response	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	09	27.30
No	24	73.70
Total	33	100

Source: Primary data

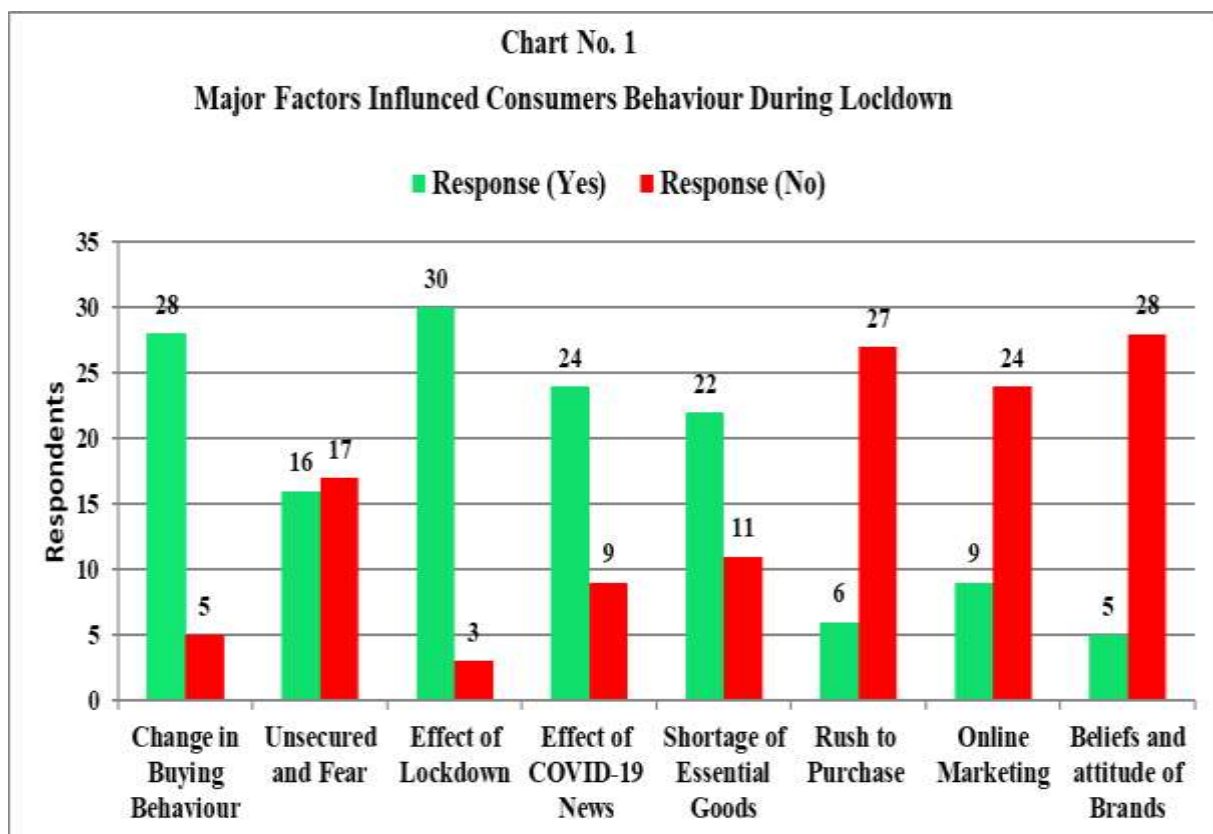
It reveals that almost all the respondents were not purchased online. The main basic reason is that major online marketing companies suspended their service during lockdown period for taking care of life of consumers and their staff. Restrictions on online marketing companies in 2.0 lockdown and 3.0 periods were relaxed.

Table No. 8
Beliefs and attitude towards Brands

Response	No of respondents	Percentage
Yes	05	15.20
No	28	84.80
Total	33	100

Source: Primary data

It is concluded from the above table that only 05 (15.20%) respondents adhere to purchase of branded essential goods and remaining 28 (84.80%) respondents accepted alternative brands. It showed that during lockdown period beliefs and attitude of the consumers were not strong. Consumers were easily accepting alternative brand of goods due to shortage of reputed branded goods. In phase 1.0, 2.0 and 3.0 of lockdown period restrictions on transportation of non-essential goods hampered seriously on the trade of branded goods in India.



Hypothesis testing

H_0 = Pandemic situation arises due to COVID-19 and major factors influenced consumers behaviour during lockdown period is dependent.

In the study, the researchers had used the chi square test for testing the hypothesis. They used the 0.05 level of significant for testing of hypothesis. It means there is 5% risk of rejecting the null hypothesis when it is true. In this study if the calculated 'p' value is greater than the level of significant (0.05) we accept the null hypothesis (P value > 0.05). While testing the hypothesis researchers found that "p" value arrived 79.18 which is greater than chi-square distribution table value which is 14.07.

∴ Calculated $X^2 = 79.18 > \text{table } X^2 = 14.07$

∴ The Pandemic situation arises due to COVID-19 and major factors influenced consumers behaviour during lockdown period is dependent so null hypothesis is accepted.

5. Findings, Suggestions and Conclusions

5.1 Findings

1. From the present research it was observed that social distancing is one of the safeguard against the COVID-19. It helps to break the chain of spread of disease.
2. Researchers had found that during nationwide lockdown period, Flipkart, Amazon and other online company's temporary postponed services for keeping and maintaining social distancing.
3. During the research it was found that in lockdown period consumer behaviour was highly susceptible.
4. From the research it was found that sale of grocery items is gone up in the lockdown period due to additional provisions of kitchen stock.
5. From the study it was found that different factors were affecting on the consumers buying behaviour in lockdown situation.
6. It was also found that government has attempted to build wider communication bridges to create awareness among the consumers.

5.2 Suggestions

1. From the researcher's point of view, it is suggested that there should be promote online transaction habits among the consumers to avoid the effect of COVID-19 disease.
2. From the research study it is suggested that appropriate measures should be taken by the consumers while taking grocery items, vegetables, milk, medicine and LPG gas cylinder. More alert about consuming services of banks, post offices and transportation.

3. Researchers give suggestions based on findings for improvement of market situation due to COVID-19. To taking aggressive steps by the administration against black-marketing, adulteration of food stuff, sale of forbidden goods, charging extra prices of goods and fabrication of weights and measures for protection of rights of the consumers.
4. It is high time to give an attention towards proper diet taken by the consumers to enhance the level of immunity power to maintain physical and mental health.
5. There should be required strong financial and food security schemes to the unorganised employees in different sectors for safeguard poor consumers.
6. Government and public should take care of homeless people and beggars and provide them shelter and food during nationwide lockdown.
7. In the COVID-19 disease situation every person should respect the doctors, paramedical staff, police and sellers of essential goods. Act as an aware citizen and develop the cooperative attitude by the consumers.
8. Consumers should not rely on rumours which creates hesitation in the market.
9. It is strongly recommended that consumers required keeping social distancing while entering for purchase of goods in the market.

3.5 Conclusions

It is concluded that there were not taken enough precautions by the consumers in the market. At the early stage of lockdown period, consumers were not keeping social distancing in the market. When government impose restrictions on the movement of people and strictly implementation of lockdown there after consumers were taking precautions in the market. It is concluded that maintaining of law and order by the administration and police resulted to develop the discipline among the consumers. 96.66 percent respondents were admitted that their buying behaviour effected by lockdown. 28 respondents out of 30 agree with unrest and fear of pandemic situation. All respondents suffered the effects of lockdown. 23 (76.67%) respondents admitted the influence of news related to pandemic. The perception of 40% of respondents was concern to shortage of essential goods. Only 30 percent respondents rushed to purchase of essential goods within 24 hours of lockdown declared. All respondents were not purchased online due to not accepting new orders by online companies. 93.33% respondents accepted alternative brands during lockdown. From the study it is concluded that the tendency of the consumers to store more essential goods during lockdown period is increased.

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