

Purchaser Behaviour following the Global Pandemic

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ABSTRACT: The goal of this study is to better understand the trends and effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer purchasing methods. The findings reveal shifts in consumer behaviour patterns that emerged during the commencement of the COVID-19 pandemic's first wave in India. The research examines the function of Covid-19 as a moderator variable in the link between consumer advantages perception and online buying activity using data gathered from 219 Indian respondents during the social distancing phase caused by Covid-19. The findings demonstrate that Covid-19 has a moderating effect on consumer utility awareness, which promotes shoppers to shop online. The attachment of society, on the other hand, can be a factor in customers' reluctance to shop online. These insights can assist enterprises to understand customer behaviour more thoroughly, as well as provide recommendations for the government to support businesses more efficiently in the future.

KEYWORDS: Online Shopping, Covid-19, Consumer Behaviour, Consumers, Pandemic.

I. INTRODUCTION

It should be said unequivocally that thanks to strong internet penetration, online shopping has become a popular shopping method for Indian consumers in recent years. Indians are currently spending more time online because of which online purchasing has rapidly increased.

Due to the lack of a vaccine to prevent the spread of the extremely contagious COVID-19 virus, countries all over the world were compelled to take preventative measures such as social distancing and proclaiming country-wide lockdowns. Cross-border travel was banned, production was halted, and the entire supply chain was disturbed. Because India is the world's second-most populous country, social distancing was a difficult assignment. On March 24, 2020, India's Prime Minister announced a 21-day state-wide lockdown to protect the country's

1.3 billion people from infection. During the nationwide shutdown, there were changes in the type of

commodities purchased, as well as the payment method shifted from offline to online (Enormous, 2020). As a result, there is a need to comprehend new consumer behaviour in terms of new theories, marketing techniques in the post-COVID-19 environment, and variables influencing customers while purchasing goods or services following the lockdown. Because it's impossible to predict when the globe will be free of this contagious virus, the current study encompassed both COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 timeframes.

The study aims to address research questions based on three significant developments that occurred during the lockdown: First, economic activity came to a total standstill, signalling the economy's negative impact. As a result, it is necessary to investigate how citizens feel about the economy and who they believe should contribute to its recovery. Consumers' online buying behaviour has been studied in a number of study articles. However, because the majority of previous studies were conducted prior to the introduction of Covid-19, it is still unclear how this pandemic would affect consumer behaviour when it comes to online buying. Furthermore, the authors intend to use this research to investigate the situation in India's specific setting. Because of this, the authors include the Covid-19 as a factor in the research model to account for its impact on online consumer behaviour in India.

Behavioural responses to outbreaks of Ebola, SARS, MERS, swine flu, and dengue fever have all been examined in the past. Because of motivated individuals and government initiatives, similar improvements were observed during pandemics and outbreaks such as SARS (Wen et al., 2005). Unemployment, uncertainty, and economic recession are common in pandemic-affected areas.

Due to the ambiguity and unpredictability of pandemic events, people take precautions to lessen their perceived danger (Brug et al., 2009). During the swine flu outbreak, there was an increase in the purchasing of meals, face masks, and hand sanitisers (Goodwin et al., 2009). Citizens in India faced unique scenarios during the first phase of coronavirus lockdown, resulting in an unexpected shift in consumer preferences. Essential and non-essential commodities were divided into categories, with only essential things available to citizens and no desire for lifestyle products (Enormous, 2020). Another unusual behaviour was observed when individuals all around the world expressed their displeasure with China because they believed it had not taken appropriate preventive efforts to prevent the pandemic from spreading around the world.

II. LITERATURE SURVEY

Many studies have been conducted on online shopping. The majority of the authors agree that online shopping must meet the needs of clients based on their previous search history and experience. To fulfil the growing demand for purchasing a product online, internet shopping has relied on consumers' culture, attitude, risks, and trust, while most corporations focused on customers' education, income, and reviews. The majority of the characteristics influencing online shopping in other research studies are based on our research, as well as gaps and limitations. Consumers' online buying habits can be influenced by a variety of variables other than having access to the internet. Customers' demographic traits such as age, gender, and occupation, among other things, have been shown to influence online shopping behaviour in prior studies. but also by two kinds of elements: the

customer's perception of risk factors and the customer's perception of benefit factors.

According to Nielsen research conducted in March 2020, when Covid-19 occurred, more than 50% of customers reduced their frequency of visiting physical stores, 80% reduced their out-of-home consumption situations, and 39% purchased more frequently via online shopping channels. Since the introduction of Covid-19, the kind of commodities sought and purchased have changed dramatically, with 76 percent of searches focusing on hygiene items, 63 percent on travel plans (albeit 22 percent were cancelled), and home-cooking and eating becoming more popular (63 percent). One of the most notable difficulties is that approximately 64% of Indians are willing to continue their new habits of using food delivery or shopping things online even after the pandemic has passed.

During the nationwide shutdown, there were changes in the type of commodities purchased, as well as the adoption of digital payment, particularly in emerging countries like India (Enormous, 2020). As a result, there is a need to comprehend new consumer behaviour in terms of new theories, marketing techniques in the post-COVID-19 environment, and variables influencing customers while purchasing goods or services following the lockdown. The current study included pre-COVID-19 as well as post-COVID-19 periods due to the uncertainty regarding when the globe would be free of this dangerous illness. The literature review and observed behaviour during the lockdown time are discussed in the next portion of this research report, which helps to create the conceptual model. The study's goal and methods are discussed in the third section, which is followed by the results and commentary. The management implications, study limitations, and future scope are all discussed in the final section.

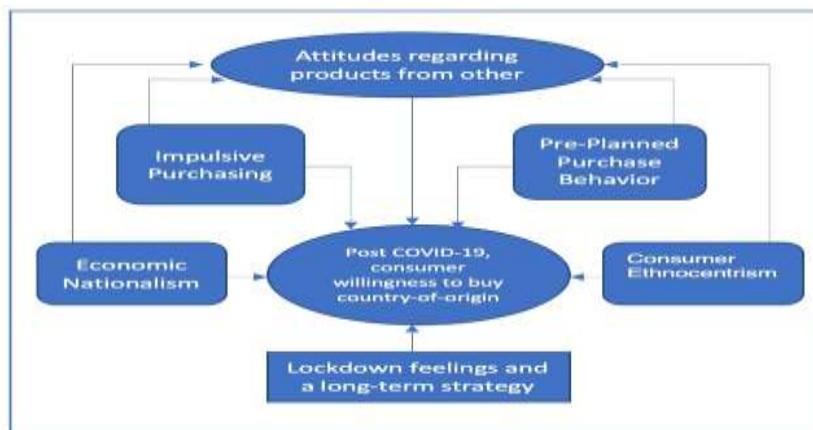


FIG.- Post-COVID-19 Pandemic Buying Behaviour Framework

III. METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted to determine whether the stay-at-home mandate has resulted in any shifts in consumer purchase behaviour as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the factors that may influence purchase decisions once we go back to old normal. After the second wave of COVID 19 hit India, data was collected online using a structured questionnaire. The respondents had already experienced the lockdown and were aware of the potential impact of the pandemic on the global economy and its repercussions for the Indian economy. To gather data, simple random sampling was used, and respondents were contacted by sending survey links via email and social media platforms such as WhatsApp and Facebook. The total number of responses collected was above 200.

IV. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS:

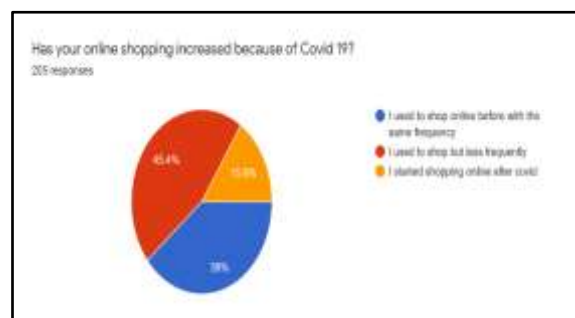
Our sample consists of around 200 Indian consumers. The majority (61.9 per cent) are men, indicating that the gender ratio differs slightly from the target population. The participants' ages range from 16 to 75. The respondents' average age is 34 years. In total, 19.7% are undergraduate students, 22.9 % are graduate students, 32.1 % are employees, and 22.9 % are business owners. While the vast majority of respondents i.e., 94 per cent of a sample population shop online, 6% still do not prefer E-commerce. This shows that while India has accepted online shopping methods, there is still scope for the E-commerce industry to grow its market. Consumers of our sample population

purchase all types of products such as groceries, household items, apparel, electronics, cosmetics, etc.

While the majority of our respondents had started shopping online before the start of the pandemic, about 20% of them started after Covid-19 began. Also, out of the 205 respondents that shop online, 35.6% of consumers do not shop frequently and 37.1% of consumers say that they shop monthly while the rest of them claim to buy weekly or even twice/thrice a week. The rest of them shop very frequently. There are many reasons for such a shift such as people have started spending more time on their gadgets because of their work from the home situation as well as lectures being conducted online for students. This analysis shows us how there is one set of consumers who are not very comfortable with purchasing online while the other set is very comfortable. It wouldn't be wrong to assume that consumers have still not accepted E-commerce and merchants should work on building the trust of the consumers.

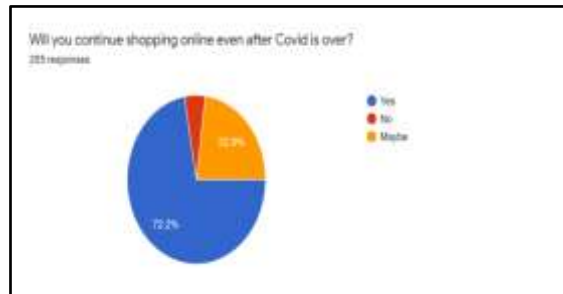
V. ANALYSIS OF THE SURVEY

As shown in the graph above, the majority of our sample population increased their buy frequency after Covid 19. There are a variety of causes for this trend, including people spending more time on their gadgets as a result of their work from the home scenario and online lectures for students. With the help of the next question in our survey, we were able to go deeper into the causes.



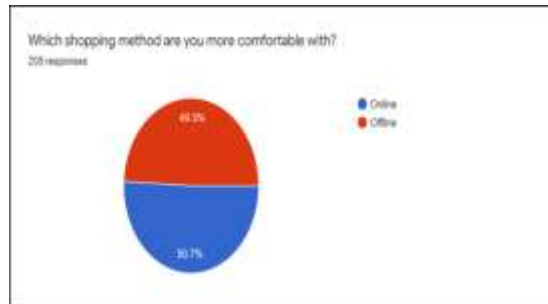
This graph paints a clearer picture of why people have shifted to E-commerce websites for their needs. While the majority of our sample population believes in the benefits of online shopping, such as lower prices, and in avoiding the risk of contracting Covid-19 by going out, there are many respondents who have other reasons as well. Some of the reasons include more variety online,

many brands closing their physical stores, shopping malls being inoperable, products being unavailable offline, and so on. Shopping portals can capitalise on these reasons by attempting to add more offers and rewards in order to retain customers even after the pandemic has passed.



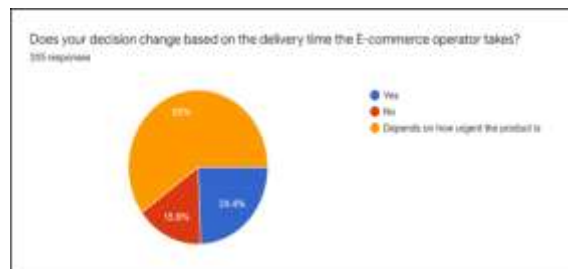
The pandemic's impact has resulted in a significant shift in Indian consumers' purchasing habits. With the majority of the sample population indicating that they will continue to shop online after the pandemic is over, approximately 23% are still unsure, and approximately 5% of the sample population is adamant about not purchasing

products online. While the majority of the population has accepted E-commerce, there are many who are still hesitant, and shopping portals should target these customers in order to grow their customer base. They should work hard to gain these customers so that they can reap the benefits, such as increased profits.



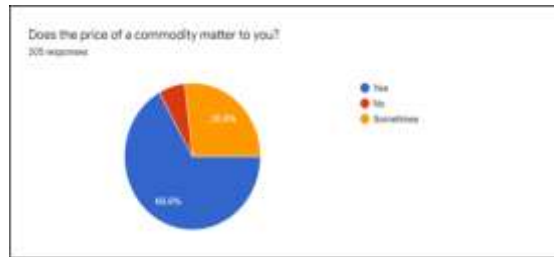
Previous charts demonstrated how many people have shifted from offline to online shopping, with 94% of our sample population shopping online. However, only 50.7% of this 94% of consumers (205 respondents) are comfortable with online shopping. It is safe to assume that once

the pandemic is over or physical stores reopen, the chances of the remaining 49.3% of consumers shifting to offline shopping are high. Shopping portals should investigate what is preventing these customers from shopping online and address those issues.

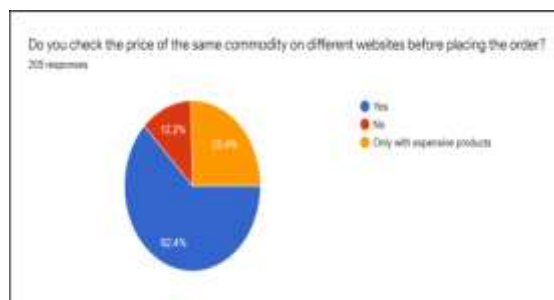


According to the responses, even when the product is not urgent, a large proportion of our sample population considers delivery time to be a deciding factor when making a purchase. One thing that shopping portals should consider is offering express delivery for all necessary goods such as

medicines, groceries, and so on, as well as the standard delivery for other goods. In the case of luxury goods, an express delivery fee can be charged, whereas necessary goods should not be charged for fast delivery. This will also improve customer satisfaction.

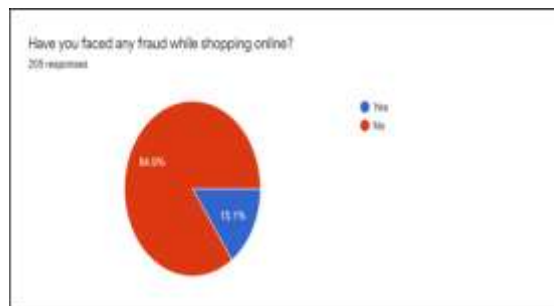


The Indian market is thought to be price sensitive. The chart above also shows that only 6.4% of 205 respondents do not buy products based on their price. Everyone else is price-conscious, which may be one of the reasons they shop online.



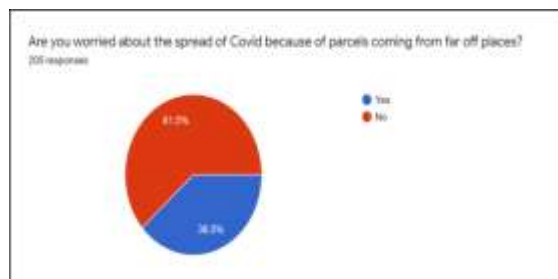
This question provides evidence for the conclusion reached in the previous analysis. Because the majority of consumers check the price of the same commodity on different websites before purchasing the product, it provides us with

insight into our customers' behaviour. To avoid this, shopping portals can offer discounts and rewards to customers who shop on the website frequently, and the portal can also offer products at competitive prices to attract new customers.



This chart helps us understand that one of the reasons people do not prefer to buy online is because of the frauds that occur with people. The chart shows that a minority of the sample populations have experienced frauds while shopping online, but the portal cannot avoid the fact that cases of fraud must be taken seriously so

that customers feel safe when paying for their product online or any other frauds such as fake product delivered with poor quality. At all costs, the portal must make every effort to avoid all frauds. The government should also take preventive measures to increase citizens' trust.



When we asked questions about the spread of Covid due to E-commerce, such as whether they trust E-commerce websites with their minimal contact services and whether this affects their buying decision or not, we could easily conclude that the majority are not concerned about the virus's spread and still prefer buying online due to their trust in the company's minimal contact services. They also believe that the risk factor is low when compared to shopping in traditional stores. E-commerce companies should try to ensure customer safety by regularly monitoring their employees' temperatures and providing reports. This will help to ensure customer satisfaction and loyalty to the portal, ensuring that the customer does not use it as a deciding factor when shopping online in the future.

VI. DRAWBACKS

In this study, the presence of a problem that hasn't been fully exploited is unavoidable, and this piece is no exception. While age and gender have a significant impact on online buying decisions, this essay focuses on the pandemic's consequences rather than these aspects. Finally, the scope of this study's survey is limited to one country, India. This allows for follow-up studies to analyse differences in online purchase intentions across economies and cultures by expanding surveys across countries.

VII. CONCLUSION

The study examines how Indian consumers' online buying intentions have altered as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, based on linked advantages, while also examining the impact of the Covid-19 moderator variable on their online shopping behaviour. The hypothesis is based on past studies with the goal of assisting businesses in better understanding the influence of Covid-19 on Indian consumption behaviour in order to gain the preparation in a more proactive manner in the future. The determinants utilised are valid and dependable, and the model structure is also adequate, according to the results provided in the study equation. The findings suggest that during

the Covid-19 outbreak, customers' perceptions of the benefits of internet buying changed dramatically. As indicated in the results, Covid-19 has a moderating effect on consumers' utility awareness, encouraging them to purchase OS, whereas society's affection may be the factor that causes customers to hesitate. As a result, the contribution of this article is the use of Covid-19 as a moderator variable to assess its impact on Indian customers' perception of online shopping benefits, whereas other studies with the same research goal did not use a moderator variable, or if they did, it was not Covid-19. The findings revealed that the Covid-19 outbreak had a substantial impact on Indian customers' internet shopping habits. As a result, the research goal of this article has been met, and it can be observed that it helps businesses understand the influence of the condition on customers' online shopping behaviour so that they can respond quickly in the future.

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