

Recent Trend in Consumer Behavior in India on Impact of Covid 19

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Abstract

The goal of this paper is to review the current literature on the impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior in India – to evaluate the progress of work that has been made to date. Numerous journal repositories were checked and 12 peer-reviewed journal articles from different disciplines were reviewed. Key attributes of each paper were recorded, and a content analysis was carried out. A literature survey showed that not much academic content has been published on the impact as the pandemic has been fairly new, globally. Majority of the researches that are published is by the industry experts.

By reviewing a wide body of literature on a relatively novel and timely topic, this research offers a succinct overview of consumer behavior during the times of COVID-19. This information will assist industry practitioners and academicians in adapting to the recent change in the behavior of the consumers. The academic significance of this research is to extend and advance current research and to fill the void in literature. The practical significance of this study can be very significant and influential for all industries.

In industry, understanding the consumer behavior, is a priority for many companies. Organizations can use this research for coming up with ideas about how to best target the consumers in the times of COVID-19 spread. It is the first paper to review the current literature directly on the effect of COVID-19 on the consumer behavior, in India.

Keywords Consumer behavior, Digital Marketing, COVID-19, Marketing strategy.

Introduction

The current pandemic of coronavirus presents a significant threat not only to our health and economic well-being, but even to the fundamental structures of social stability in our society and also to our democracy. But the pandemic alone is not what brings our society to its knees. A longstanding anti-human, anti-science, anti-democratic, individualistic, racism and xenophobia narrative is in conflict with the reality of a pandemic that can only be overcome by humanity, science, equity, collective effort and trust in democratic institutions that coordinate and deliver health services and economic relief. In spite of fear and anxiety, the counter-narrative of human compassion, social solidarity and government responsibility for all of us is played out in the daily stories of neighbors helping neighbors, state and local governments to take decisive action, and brave first responders and medical staff risking their lives to save those who have been struck by

e virus.

With the confusion surrounding lockdown measures in India last month, the burning question on most people's minds was whether it would be extended. In fact, this was the most up-to-date query related to the novel coronavirus on Google in April. When the pandemic spreads, so do the worries and uncertainty around it. Most have turned to Google for answers, "What are the signs of coronavirus? Others turned to Google for life-hacks to survive the pandemic and endure the lockdown. One of the most asked questions was, "How to: make a mask? Can you make a hand sanitizer? Do you use Zoom? "And like never before, how can you cut your own hair?" Worldwide, online mask searches (protective, medical, surgical, n95) were four times more than those for hand sanitizers. Searches for social distancing has increased (Livemint, 2020).

Infectious diseases have become more difficult and more difficult to control. For example, the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa, one of the deadliest outbreaks of the epidemic, has killed more than 11,000 people in six countries since the first report in March 2014[1], and SARS, which emerged in China in 2002, has infected more than 2,700 people and launched an unprecedented nation-wide campaign for preventing the spread [2]. Covid-19 has killed 312,000 people globally and 2872, as of now in India (Google, 2020).

Inevitably, aside from the direct medical costs of treating patients and introducing various disease controls, epidemics have detrimental effects on the economy. Restrictions on the transport of people and goods, usually placed in areas where the risk of contamination is high, dramatically disrupt production and exports, and seeds of potential development are also hampered by undercuts in Investors lose their trust in the market as investors. Apart from the effect of the outbreak on production and expenditure, there is a significant negative impact to remember that the extreme occurrence also triggers adverse shocks to consumer spending at the other end. In particular,

customers frequently delay travel and delay public places in an effort to minimize the risk of infection, and this disturbance in consumption affects the economy.

Consistently, common wisdom about the influence of a macro-economic factor, such as oil prices and market cycles, is that the main mechanism by which a macro-economic factor affects the economy is the disruption of goods and services (Hamilton, 2009). Understanding the indirect but strong effects of epidemics on consumer willingness to buy would therefore have important implications and guidance for policy makers as well as practitioners seeking to counteract economic disruption. Studies have generally been conducted on the total burden of epidemics on populations based on aggregate data (Bloom, 1997, Gubler, 2002, Kalia, 2002).

The attention paid to individual consumer behaviors has been limited in large part because microdata that would allow the measurement of indirect and behavioral effects of epidemics are not widely available to academics. Extensive studies of extreme events relied heavily on aggregate expenditure statistics, which are usually calculated at low frequencies, such as on a monthly or quarterly basis, and are often subject to revision. Due to the limited availability of data, the development of an evaluation of the economic impact of epidemics without knowing the actions of individual consumers may have limited consequenc

, because shifts in these microeconomic variables are at the root of these individual behaviors (Deleersnyder, et al , 2004).

In this paper, we explore the impact of the outbreak of the epidemic on consumer behavior discussing, how epidemic outbreaks impact the consumption and shopping behaviors of consumers. Consumers, in particular, have significantly reduced spending on conventional shopping outlets, but have seen a large rise in spending on e-commerce. The results are especially important in that the reaction of consumers to the outbreak was due to a psychological element, fear of contagion, rather than budgetary constraints.

In view of the growing challenges presented by infectious diseases due to improvements in transport capacity, our paper sets out important consequences for policies and strategies designed to support the economy when epidemics occur. For example, an improved policy climate for developing and sustaining an e-commerce platform would mitigate customer concerns of contagion from the purchase of goods and services and may enable producers and retailers to sustain their sales. In order to achieve sustainable economic growth with increasing concerns about more complicated outbreaks of the disease, the establishment and acceptance of e-commerce as an alternative shopping platform is of vital importance.

The position and impact of marketing departments has received a great deal of coverage in both mainstream press and academic literature in recent years (Gummesson et al., 2013). These articles commonly state that the marketing purpose has decreased (Verhoef and Leeflang, 2009; Webster et al . , 2005), that marketing has lost its strategic position (Murphy, 2005; Groenross et al . , 2013), and that marketing has lost its strategic role (Sheth and Sisodia, 2005; Klaus et al., 2013).

In Wuhan City, China, first human cases of COVID-19, was reported in December 2019 (WHO, 2020). Since then, it has spread across the globe causing many casualties. A rich body of literature on economics and marketing examines the effect of macroeconomic factors. For example , researchers explain how companies adjust their decisions on innovation and advertisement during a recession with a specific emphasis on the efficacy of these constructive actions (Deleersnyder,

2004, Frankenberger et al., 2003, Srinivasan, 2005) Examine the impact of market cycles on consumer trust in the sense of the selling of durable goods and private labels (Deleersnyder, 2004, Allenby, 1996, Lamey, 2007). As of now there isn't much academic literature present which guides the organizations about the current consumer behavior and the steps that needs to be taken next, to easily sail through this time.

This article is intended to partly fill this gap and therefore, the main purpose of the article is to study in detail the consumer behavior at an overall level, in India.

Objectives

1. To understand the recent trends in the consumer behavior in India, amidst COVID-19

ndemic.

2. To fill the gap in the academic literature where no research paper as of now focusses on understanding the behavior of consumer at the time of pandemic.

Research Methodology

This study aimed to look into articles from every peer-reviewed journal published in English by May 2020, when a literature search was performed. In order to be as systematic as possible, this review pursued industry papers published in all disciplines. As the pandemic is fairly new, not much literature was available online and therefore other publications such as conference proceedings and industry reports were included.

Review of Literature

Marketing

In addition, 64 per cent of "marketer-unhappy" CEOs indicated that they had eliminated essential roles from conventional core marketing functions, including product creation, pricing and channel management (Lukovitz, 2012). Nevertheless, as Verhoef et al. (2011, p. 59) state, "... discussion remains largely normative, without clear empirical evidence in multiple countries." Studies have empirically shown that strong marketing departments contribute to superior business success, irrespective of the general market orientation of the product (Moorman and Rust, 1999). Götz et al. (2009, p. 29) further argue that "marketing plays a key role in the implementation and effective management of market orientation." In other words, consumer-driven conduct in a organization can be improved when marketing function champions the customer's voice internally, and is often also responsible for gathering, analyzing and communicating internally relevant market, customer and competitor insights (Lovelock and Wirtz, 2011, p. 393-394).

The former study does not cover Asia, and the latter study does not investigate the impact of the marketing department on firm performance. This difference in cross-cultural research motivates us to compare the context and implications (i.e. firm performance) of the Western marketing department (i.e. North America and Western Europe) with that of the East (i.e. Asia). This comparison could provide interesting insights, as most Eastern companies, with the exception of a few such as Singapore Airlines (c.f., Heracleous and Wirtz, 2010), have been less advanced in their marketing efforts. Second, we are contributing to a growing body of literature reviewing a

decrease in the role of marketing departments due to their perceived lack of added value over and above a firm's overall market orientation.

Origin of the virus causing COVID-19 by WHO

In Wuhan City, China, first human cases of COVID-19, was reported in December 2019 (WHO, 2020). Retrospective inquiries undertaken by Chinese authorities reported human cases with symptoms at the beginning of December 2019. While some of the earliest known cases were linked to a wholesale food market in Wuhan, some did not. Many of the initial patients were either stall

ners, market staff or regular visitors to the market. In December, 2019, biological samples taken from that market and they have been tested + for SARS-CoV-2, further concluding that the market in Wuhan City was the origin of the outbreak. The market has been closed since 1 January 2020. SARS-CoV-2 was identified in early January and its genetic sequence shared publicly on 11-12 January.

All the reported gene sequences of SARS-CoV-2 isolated from human cases are quite similar. This indicates that the epidemic arose from a single point of introduction in the human population around the time the virus was first reported in humans in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. A good number of studies for understanding the origin of the pandemic outbreak in China are currently being planned, including the study of human with symptoms, environmental sampling from markets and farms in areas where first human cases have been reported, and detailed records of the types of animals sold in the market. The results of these studies are important to prevent further zoonotic introduction of SARS-CoV-2 into the human population.

Overall impact of Covid-19

The planet is facing the greatest human tragedy since the Second World War. Almost every country has been affected by the crippling Coronavirus disease (COVID-19). The outbreak from China has gone all over the world. In the last few months, Corona's epicenter has moved from China to Europe to the United States. To date, more than 1.5 million people have been infected by COVID-19, and about 80,000 people have died worldwide. Indirectly, billions of people have suffered as a result of the global pandemic of COVID-19.

Undoubtedly, this Coronavirus has put the world economy at a significant risk. Coronavirus is undermining the economic pillars of world trade. Commentators described this epidemic as the result of hyper-globalisation or the beginning of de-globalisation. Nonetheless, the world is going to face a recession; and, according to some analysts, global losses may surpass the combined First and Second World Wars.

Pandemic Popularity Quadrant (Apptopia and Moengage, 2020) : This is a quadrant which is designed for explaining the different types of apps which are growing /slowing based on the number of active users and the number of downloads. In this quadrant there are four major categories ie: explosion, growth, slowdown and emergence.

Explosion: This quadrant mostly includes industries which have seen an increasing demand in terms of both new users and maximum downloads. Industries that fall under this quadrant are named in the figure below:

GROWTH: In this quadrant only those industries are included in which the number of active users has increased but there is not a considerable rise in the number of downloads. Industries that fall under this quadrant are mentioned in the below mentioned figure:

SLOWDOWN: In this quadrant only, those industries are included that have seen decline in the

number of active users and new application downloads. Industries that fall under this quadrant are shown in the below mentioned figure.

EMERGENCE: In this the only industry that has been included is Health care(South East Asia), it includes only that industry that has shown promise of getting new users downloads but is does not have much active users.

Accenture (2020), has come up with a list of impacts that COVID -19 had on people in India. In the below mentioned figure, it can be seen the changes in the behavior because of COVID-19:

Postponing of the purchase decisions. People are postponing purchase decisions in many categories due to uncertainty. This will continue after the immediate threat has dissipated. In China, sales of gold and silver, for example, dropped by 41.1 per cent in January and February 2020, year on year.² There will be a waiting-and-see mentality. It will have an effect on many sectors.

Noise is a problem. There's a lot of information about COVID-19, and speculation — everybody has something to say, but should they say it? A mail from a hotel that you stayed at ten years ago asking you how to handle the situation is less than helpful. Those just virtue signaling in their brand communication about COVID-19 would pay a fee.

Flights during crisis. Some airlines, for example, were already providing May / June flight deals during the crisis without any confusion. In the face of difficult memes, the silence of Corona Beer was a model of good behavior.

Familiarity has an advantage. Familiar is going to be more useful. Known brands that manage the crisis well should increase in stature and value.

Less tolerance for risk. Danger would be less tolerable for most citizens. New social groups that emerge on the basis of risk attitudes — for example, some people may choose to socialize with those who have the same cautious or intrepid attitudes. Brands need to take notice of these affiliations and determine where to stand.

Insurance has gained importance — both with a small and a large 'i'—will be quite necessary, but only if it is trusted to deliver. Individualism may rise with more people adopting a policy of self-seeking.

Digital is growing. It is already clear that many users who have yet to fully adopt digital technology now have to do so. COVID-19 is a catalyst that is now gradually moving the laggards online and, having made an investment in effort and developed new patterns and interfaces, many will not go anywhere. It is more important than ever to streamline the virtual obstacles of any kind

of experience — banking, curbside collection, online shopping. Retail capacity constraints are a real issue — the result of the "digital shelf" not yet ready for this level of demand, because companies have repeatedly deferred the prioritization of full-scale eCommerce. There is also a lot

to know about in-store positioning in the modern world across a range of categories. On top of that, with the last mile delivery of the lynchpin of any online shopping brand, the question is: how much can you monitor the experience? Some, perhaps many, will feel discomfort at being virtual. Home job is not a habit for the majority of people. Not everybody is going to work virtually — for starters, farmers, delivery drivers and factory workers.

Using video can be frustrating with unwanted distractions — children in the background, dogs barking or bad hair days. But it's rising fast. Between January and mid-March, Microsoft Teams saw a 500 + percent rise in calls and conferences in China.

Internet usage has increased. Broadband and 5 G will be life-essential for most of them after their usefulness has been checked, hard, at the height of the pandemic when the world began to quarantine mass. At just one day in mid-March, the use of the internet in locked Italy grew by 30%.

Digital gaming, live streams and video apps have gained popularity. Disney’s decision to stream Frozen 2 three months early and Universal putting its film releases onto Sky TV underlines the central role of entertainment, and it will now carry higher market value.

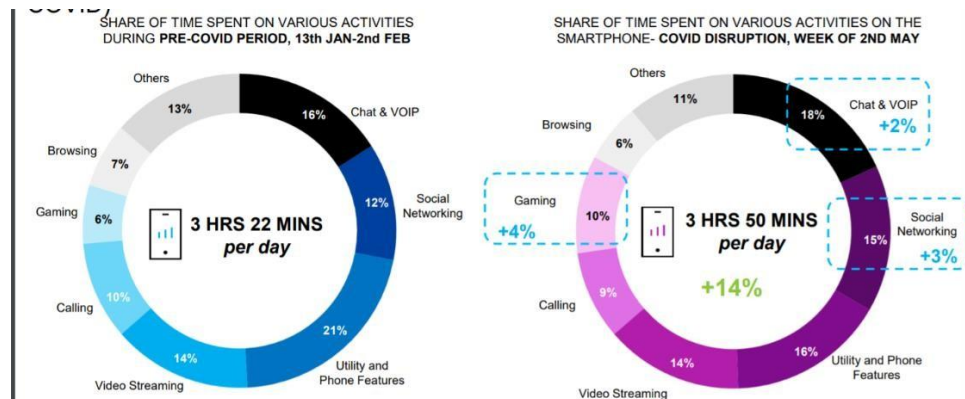


Figure: 1. USAGE IS NOW AT ~4 HRS PER DAY. SHARE OF TIME SPENT INCREASED FOR GAMING, SOCIAL NETWORKING, AND CHAT & VOIP (VERSUS PRE COVID) Source: Nielsen and BARC. (2020, May, 14th)

Virtual catch ups. Some may find being more interactive for reasons other than work — to stay in touch with the family, for example, or for health care and education. The Italian Institute of European Design (IED), the Austrian University of Innsbruck and hundreds of US universities, including Harvard University, are among the many to abandon in-person lessons and turn to digital learning. People participate in virtual gigs, drinks and dinner parties, make more calls to friends and family, and share more personal stories at the beginning of each work video call.

Social intimacy. Might "social distance" lead to a separate, more frequent "social intimacy" People will naturally turn to existing social platforms to meet the most basic human needs. But the

raving for "real" will also build up — fueled by an explosion of culture and activity when greater freedom and opportunities for fun return as restrictions are finally lifted. Conversely, the meaning and notion of "true" can shift or alter dramatically. Will "true" material or experience – virtual arts, for example, or virtual commerce – increase value over physical? Will virtual "routines"—exercise online, for example — develop additional physical routines, such as gym visits? At the height of the epidemic in Italy, yoga classes went online, and Google and Facebook moved fast to enable mass demand for this mode of virtual interaction at scale.

Person and government health spending will increase permanently. Employees should also receive support and guidance and treatment from employers. Those in non-permanent employment can feel severely disadvantaged. The freelance economy, which accounts for one third of the active labor force in the United Kingdom, may be less desirable to workers but could be more attractive to companies for cost reasons. The exact nature of the outcome will differ depending on the local health systems and how well they react to COVID-19. Cleanliness is now a problem that is likely to remain — along with sanitizers being a normal habit. There are still a lot of items being recycled. In the United Kingdom, Best Western was among the hotel chains to suggest that they could be re-established as temporary hospitals.

Impact on the TV viewership in India

In the figure shared below, it could be seen that the total TV viewership has increased 24% when

compared to the Pre-COVID period.

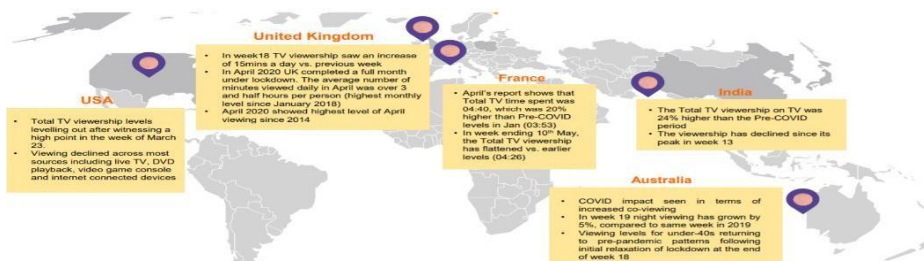


Figure: 2. GLOBAL SNAPSHOT OF TV VIEWERSHIP. Source: Nielsen and BARC. (2020, May, 14th)

Researches conducted on the impact of COVID-19

To get more clarity on this, the researcher looked into different journals if any research was done that explained the impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior, but like mentioned above, as of

no such research has been conducted in academics. During these tough times, some researches were found online that were done to understand the impact of the pandemic on consumer behavior in India, in detail.

LocalCircles, 2020

A study was conducted by LocalCircles, which is a community-based social network in India and the US that aimed on understanding the availability of essential goods ie milk, wheat, rice, pulses, salt and sugar, using Ecommerce apps during the corona virus outbreak. In this research the respondents were asked, "When you tried to purchase essential goods (milk, wheat, rice,

pulses, salt, sugar, etc.) via an ecommerce app in the last 48 hours, what was your experience?" Data was collected in the month of March 30-31, 2020 to which 8,480 internet users replied, aged 18+ and in 18 states of India. 10% of the respondents replied that they were able to get everything easily. 48% of the total respondents mentioned that they were able to get majority of the goods except a few of them. 13% people were able to get only a few items, 17% mentioned that they were not able to get most of the items and 12% mentioned that they were not able to get anything.

McKinsey & Company, 2020

There was another study that was conducted by McKinsey & Company that aimed on understanding the change in the time spent with the mentioned medias because of Coronavirus Pandemic According to Adults In India, march 2020. In this research 582 respondents were contacted aged 18+. Time spent in watching Live news has increased by 71%, video content viewership has increased by 67%, time spent in watching movies or other shows has increased to 66%, texting, chatting and messaging has increased to 58% and social media usage has increased by 58%.

Global Web Index, 2020

a). Review of literature clearly highlighted that there is progressive growth in Digital in India, and therefore studies were conducted that touched different aspects of digital. A study was conducted by Global Web Index that aimed on understanding the shopping behavior of Indians at the time of COVID-19. Some of the important findings of these study are: 47% of the respondents agreed that they buy products digitally for getting a home delivery, 47% people also agreed that they spend time online researching about the products before paying a visit to the store, 43% people visit stores less frequently, 38% said that they spend less time inside stores.

b). Another study was conducted by Global Web Index, that aimed on understanding that which digital feature is considered more important by Internet users in India. Here 60% of the respondents mentioned that for them most important feature is Free delivery, 52% opted for digital shopping because of reliable delivery, 47% respondents opted for digital shopping because of free return policy, 45% agreed for digital shopping because the website was reliable and 36% of the

respondents mentioned that they shop online because of same or next day delivery.

c). Global Web Index conducted another research for understanding that which items would the internet users in buy more in India once the Pandemic is over. 42% of the people mentioned that they would order groceries online, followed by 37% of the respondents who will order personal care products online, 35% of the respondent mentioned that they would buy clothes online, and 35% respondents mentioned that they will buy household products online. 31% respondents agreed that they would buy smartphones online, followed by 27% people who would buy other electronic products online, 26% of the people mentioned that they will buy cosmetics online with only 11% people who mentioned that they would buy alcohol online.

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