

# Shifting Paradigms: Systematic Literature on Impact of COVID-19 on Global Consumers Buying Behaviour

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**ABSTRACT-** This study reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced consumer buying behavior and their preferences through online and panic buying. With social distancing and subsequent local restrictions and lockdowns becoming the new norm, the sphere of e-commerce captured a record level of development. Hysterical buying because of pictures people posted from supermarkets with empty stores when fear, anger, and sadness drove the purchase decisions of consumers, resulted in stockpiling and revenge buying. These were such as perceived scarcity, social influence and an increased risk sensitivity related to health and finance. This paper makes a systematic review of the shifts in consumer behaviour paradigms in the lockdown period especially regarding online shopping, pick up options, and changing in-store experience. Trust, privacy, and ethical issues any self – service operations in e – retailing were found to play a significant role in governing customer loyalty. This article underlines the concepts of Consumer Learning theory which help retailers to adjust to change in consumer needs to survive in the “new normal” and maintain good relations with the customers.

**KEYWORDS-** Consumer Buying Behavior, COVID-19 Pandemic, Online Shopping, Panic Purchasing, E-commerce Trends

## I. INTRODUCTION

This paper posits that COVID-19 has brought about significant shifts of consumer waves both in terms of process and content. When the world moved to the sweating tone down, the health priorities and other basic needs arose as if preparing to encounter an unpredicted future [3] Malls and outlets suffered closures, while online purchasing was done to address the confined and secure needs of people [4]. Moreover, it is worth noting the boom in offline shopping after the lockdown caused by concern with social contacts and recognition [25].

So, the long pandemic changed not only the what of consumption but also the how. Consumer buying behavior became more cautious replacing impulsive consumer behavior with conservative paradigms [28]. For this reason, it is essential for business organizations and government to grasp with this change as consumers' behavior has wide reaching consequences on the economy and the society.

Analyzing these patterns will enable the companies to know customer needs, changes in the market or changes in the economy affecting its functions. It helps the business to adjust its sales approach, advertisement, and goods to the change in customers' needs. Decision makers must look at social, cultural, psychological and economic factors to understand these changes and act accordingly [27]

The other impact of the pandemic related to many people's loss of life, work and income, as well as long-term social and economic problems [2]. Asymptomatic measures such as quarantine and isolation contributed to mental strain and behavioral alteration and an awareness of health issues led to alteration in lifestyle and diet regimens [26]. These impacts were not the same in severity and intensity, though poverty, age and similar demographic factors had contributed towards it.

In the light of COVID-19 expenditure preferences changed drastically from the economic point of view. Consumers were also became wise, shifting their spending to things that they could not do without in the household such as food and health [23]. For these, consumer responses were divided into reactive, coping, and adaptive behaviours; authors have demonstrated how environmental demands such as the current pandemic impacted parts [10] Such behaviours were seen as switching from one brand to another, delaying purchases and focusing on health and hygiene. Market data also featured such trends as hype buying, hoarding and shifting towards the essentials [1], [9]. The disruption by the pandemic in supply and demand, in addition to a significant increase in social media awareness also played its part. For example, stockouts and supply chain disturbances shifted the consumer towards product substitution and expenditure patterns [22]. Other reasons include; Economic difficulties for example reduced family income, unaffordability for many households and consequently changing consumption patterns [18], [7]. These shifts in behavior profile are research incentives. Such studies can relate to the pandemic influence on a way of life, expenditure, and the population density. This kind of research enables organizations to easily analyze markets and offer integration suitable promotional strategies when matters reach the disaster and recovery stages. Consumer behavior analysis basically involves trying to uncover changes in consumption patterns and substitution inversions so that firms adjust appropriately in an unstable environment.

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a worldwide enabler of change for consumers. Analyzing these shifts, the business and academia may understand existing threats and opportunities within the scope of continuously evolving consumers' world.

**II. RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

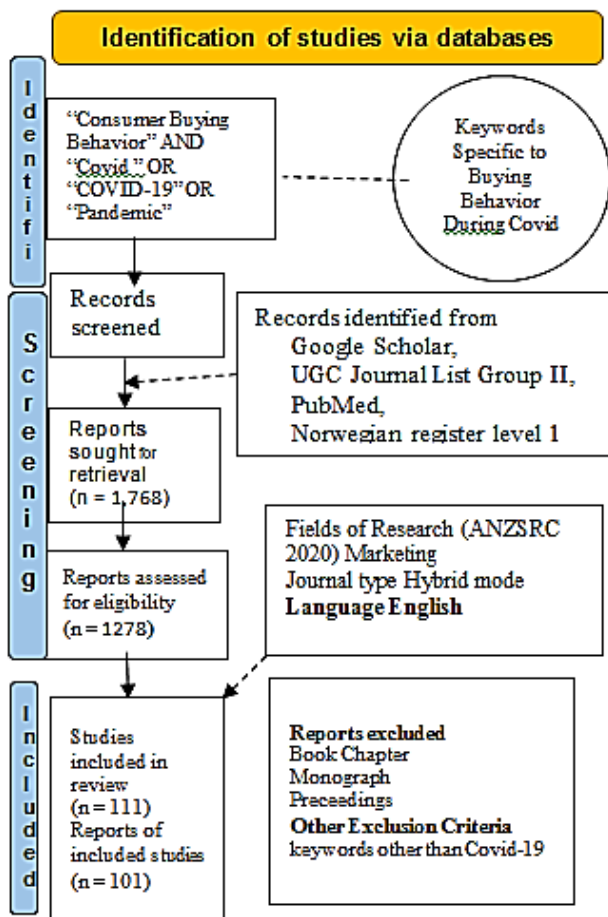
For the current study the following three research questions have been framed.

**RQ1:** Was COVID-19 and the ensuing distress a cause for panic and revenge buying?

**RQ2:** To what extent does Convenience, trust and privacy concerns with post pandemic online shopping?

**RQ3:** Is health and environment concern applicable for organically purchased foods and increase organized consumption of sustainable products among existing customer segments?

**III. METHOD FOR SLR**



(Source: Created by Author)

Figure 1: PRISMA Flow Diagram

The approach adopted in this current study is a structured one using systematic literature review (SLR) following the guidelines of PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses). This method makes it easier to have a clear judgment as well as the findings are also easily repeatable. This is accompanied by a good research question, then a more comprehensive search conducted in different databases. Thus, while selecting studies, there are some standard principles,

including the definition of inclusion and exclusion criteria. There are many articles returned in an initial search, and then, the articles which meet the needs of the research question are selected after screening. The PRISMA workflow (figure 1) also gives a picture of the records searched, retrieved and screened. Last, the findings are reviewed in terms of emergent themes, research directions and areas of outstanding questions.

**IV. SUMMARY OF MAJOR TRENDS IN THE LITERATURE**

On analyzing the data it was found that maximum articles were published in the year 2023 based in the search keyword, ie., "Consumer Buying Behavior" AND "Covid " OR "COVID-19" OR "Pandemic". It was found that total of publications from the year 2021 and up to year 2024.

2021: About 140 journal articles, 2022: Raising it greatly to as high as 210 publications, 2023: A slight rise to around 230 publication (highest level on record) finally 2024: Projected to decrease to an average of approximately 190 publications as projected. The data clearly indicates that research on this issue gained popularity post pandemic. But again there is a steep decrement in publication.

**V. IMPACT OF THE PANDEMIC ON BUYING DECISIONS OF CONSUMERS (2023)**

Summaries that were made in 2023 showed the impact of the pandemic on consumers and changes in their buying preferences towards online shopping, health awareness and purchasing capabilities. The scholars investigated how these behaviors either remained or changed as nations transitioned. Better data quality in 2023 enhanced information and made it easier for business and researcher to decide whether some changes were cyclical and just temporary or not. Companies also changed their tactics, which called for research on the enduring effects of the pandemic on consumers.

Here, as the economies grew or fell toward recovery by 2024, the need to investigate the behaviors associated with the pandemic lessened. Research drew to the strategic areas of focus like economic revitalization; inflation; and, business resilience. The studies published from 2020–2023 increase the extent of pandemic-study type research and also contribute to the decrease of novelty within the them.

In consumer behaviour research in 2024, the impacts of pandemic were taken under big picture factors such as digitisation, globalisation and environmental changes. There was a shift from the Covid-19 pandemic reactions to identify behavioral patterns unique to ongoing trends, from Covid-19 research to consumer behavior research.

**VI. PUBLICATIONS**

The vast majority of articles appeared in such top-tier journals as Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services; International Journal of Consumer Studies; and Journal of Business Research. Others are Journal of Consumer Behaviour with 99, 630 and 6.36, Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science 28, 501 and 17.89 while Journal of Marketing Research 20, 248 and 12.4 respectively.

## VII. MAJOR THEMES AND KEYWORDS USED IN STUDIES

The research identified was based on various keywords and major themes, categorized as follows:

**Consumer Behavior:** Majority of the papers dealt with terms like consumer behavior, shopping behavior, purchasing behavior, buying intention, consumer preference, emergency and vengeful buying, consumer psychology, decision to purchase, and consumer experience shopping. These themes focused on shift in behaviours, drives and shoppers segments such as; 'timeless retailing behaviour' and switch mentality' among consumers.

### A. COVID-19 Pandemic:

COVID-19 or post COVID-19, pandemic influence, and zero COVID terms such as COVID-19, post-COVID-19, pandemic effects and the zero COVID terms were used in the study. These studies examined the extent of deviation of customers and markets due to the pandemic.

### B. Health and Wellness:

Terms like health consciousness, incorporation of wellness items, hygienic issues, health anxiety, mental health, and precautionary measures were used to find out that how much the pandemic pushed the customer towards the health-related product and related concerns.

### C. Market and Economic Factors:

Issues such as market demand, disruption of the retail sector, market segmentation, profitability, competition, and retail strategies raised and analyzed the economic impact of the pandemic on sectors and consumer buying behavior.

### D. Online and E-commerce:

Some topics also included, online shopping, Electronic commerce, digital payment, mobile commerce and online customer behaviour, emphasizing on increase in digital purchase and online shopping during and post COVID-19 pandemic.

### E. Psychological and Emotional Factors:

Studies examined the COVID 19 uncertainties, consumers' information processing, and perceptions through the lens of fear, anxiety, emotional arousal, psychological distress, mood enhancement and hedonic motives.

### F. Digital and Social Media:

Terms such as social media advertising, customer-generated content, social media influencer, and digital transformation ginged discus sion on how social media platforms impacted the consumers' behaviour and the strategies employed in the services sector.

### G. Trust and Security:

Issues like privacy consciousness, perceived trust and security issues focused on the intricate place of trust in e-business and electronic relationships.

### H. Sustainability and Environmental Factors:

Topics were concerned with environmental awareness, green consumption, green goods, and sustainable processes, with the increasing consumer concern for the enhancement of his/her environmental stance and purchase of sustainable goods.

## VIII. RESEARCH STRATEGY USED

Many scholars conducting studies regarding consumers' behavior during and post-pandemic employ frameworks such as SEM to investigate linkages between certain variables including the ones presented above. Psychological, technological and behavioral changes are explained by TPB, SOR, PMT, UTAUT, PPM and Values-Beliefs-Norms theories. Quantitative analysis, Latent Profile Analysis, and EFA use patterns and segment identification, whereas more regression models provide choice perspective.

### A. Behavioral Theories and Models:

Some theories adopted for analyzing consumer behaviours include the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), Stimuli-Organism-Response (SOR), Protection Motivation Theory (PMT), UTAUT, Social Cognitive Theory and more. These models assist in understanding psychological concerns, decision making and on technology as well.

### B. Demographic and Socio-economic Factors:

Main variables to be investigated are location, age, gender, income, education level, and the household income of participants. Socio-economic factors such as generational, and socio-demographic segmentation are other categories that mattered in analyzing changes in consumers' behavior during the pandemic and in the post-pandemic period.

### C. Methodological Approaches and Models:

Multiple REGRESSION analysis, Latent Profile Analysis, Mixed-methods, Statistical analysis of Sampling distributions and SEM. A method that should be included in the list is Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), Fuzzy-set Qualitative Comparative Analysis and Topic Modeling.

### D. Keyword Analysis:

The frequency of the top 8 common keywords in the provided LSI (**Latent Semantic Indexing**) data. LSI is a technique from the NLP domain employed in the analysis of a given corpus of texts with the aim of establishing the correlation that exists in between words and the concepts they refer. It is in line with the assumption that words that are similar with each other are used in similar contexts.

The common keywords immersed in different categories of researches on consumer behaviours. Among all the category names, "Consumer Behavior" has the most keywords, then "COVID-19 Impact", and "Shopping Channels." There are the categories: "Health and Wellness," "Emotional and Psychological Factors," and "Marketing and Retail Strategies" which have a moderate number of keywords. Several papers with these keywords are identified: "Online and E-commerce Behavior" is mentioned considerably frequently, as is "Structural Equation Modeling." "Social Media and Digital Interaction" and "Economic Factors" are named somewhat less frequently. This distribution shows that consumer behavior is a key area of focus while also noting the self-visits during pandemic and e-commerce and marketing strategies.

The Countries in which the studies have been conducted are United States published most with 10 publications while Germany came second with 4. Other countries which are also represented are Malaysia, China and Italy with 5 publications each. Canada and India have two while France,



Czech Republic, Singapore, Romania, Australia and Portugal, Spain, Turkey and Vietnam have one each. This data reveals that the United States of America is most active on research and several other countries were less active researching than U.S.A. on this topic.

#### ***E. Key Themes with Notable Studies:***

It is prudent to note that this COVID-19 crisis brought about some behavioural changes such as panic buying, emotional reactions to offers and revenge consumerism. The transition was enabled down the pillars of convenience, trust, and value. Stress, anxiety and some trust related factors came out of the paper. Concerns for health and for the environment emerged, as well as an influence of social networks in consumption. It is prudent to note that this COVID-19 crisis brought about some behavioural changes such as panic buying, emotional reactions to offers and revenge consumerism. The transition was enabled down the pillars of convenience, trust, and value. Stress, anxiety and some trust related factors came out of the paper. Concerns for health and for the environment emerged, as well as an influence of social networks in consumption.

## **IX. ANALYSIS AND RESULTS**

### ***A. RQ1: Was COVID-19 and the ensuing distress a cause for panic and revenge buying?***

Some real works have examined the impact of COVID-19 outbreak on consumers' buying behaviour and psychological consequences. The study of E. Sánchez-Sánchez et al. [25], centred on the continuance of online shopping post-pandemic in Canada, Germany and the US. Their study was useful and highlighted to others that unlike prior research, perceived utility and enjoyment were still relevant to online shopping when pandemic limitations were removed. As a result, they discovered whether consumers considered online shopping as easy, secure and enjoyable, were affected by the restrictions that the pandemic and the following vaccination process put forward.

Echoing this line of research, K. Dogerlioglu-Demir et al. [4], studied how collaborative living spaces could remove concerns during the pandemic. They mentioned that the ornaments that are inside living units and public places created a feeling of togetherness that made consumers opt for shared rooms for togetherness. This resilience of social practices somehow eased anxiety during such periods.

C. Guthrie et al. [31] examined e-commerce consumers' pandemic resilience by conducting a pre and post lockdown and during the lockdown study in France. The authors noted increased growth of electronic commerce that they attributed to shift of consumption patterns under stress. They found out a "react-cope-adapt" pattern which explained the manner e-commerce responded to, coped with and minimised the impacts of the pandemic. Other observed behavioral changes were seen as: Panic buying. In their recent article, C. Prentice et al. [32] looked into panic buying induced by TV programmes and the FOMO for panic buying and found that it resulted in guilt and pronounced susceptibility. As NPR reported, M. Naeem [19] found out that panic buying was significantly alleviated because of social media platforms that provide live updates of the virus information. In the same research,

W. M. Lim [33] showed that pictures of empty shelves being on social media resulted in panic buying.

Panic buying in Malaysia topic was related panic buying with scarcity and lack of vaccines. Walmart's data can be seen in eight representative stores covering each of the US regions and includes five waves of data collected from March 15 to April 20, 2020 Over time, panic buying moved from fear to precaution, and some stores/buyers returned to normal levels. I. Park et al [34] S. W. Rayburn et al [35] found that, revenge buying, a concept whereby consumers spent lavishly after being angered, depressed and/or humiliated linked the two emotions to buying as a coping mechanism.

Other investigations on post lockdown consumer behavior also mentioned revenge buying. Y. Liu et al.[36] compared the SOR and TPB models to ascertain the effects of perceived scarcity and social influence on the purchase behaviour during and after lockdowns. Z. M. Obeidat et al.[37] established materialism and envy as precursors to revenge buying stating that rising purchasing abilities was driving this behavior. M. Li et al.[38] in their study focused on customers' loyalty in the hotel industry in relation to contactless services. They discovered that whilst sociability with customers was a positive attribute in this setting, it practically diminished the efficiency of contact less services since fear and uncertainty shaped consumer commitment. B. Mittal [39] deals with consumers' durability, so the creative ways to get rid of anxiety can help to build post-pandemic durability. These investigations emphasize that the stimulus of behavioral changes by the pandemic involves emotions, social contexts, and technology.

### ***B. RQ2: To what extent does Convenience, trust and privacy concerns with post pandemic online shopping?***

Several studies have examined how consumer behavior and shopping habits have shifted during the COVID-19 pandemic. Truong and Truong (2020) explored changes in customer purchasing behaviors, emphasizing the rise of online shopping, curbside pickup, and in-store shopping, with health and financial concerns significantly influencing decisions. M. S. Alzaidi et al. [40] studied the moderating role of COVID-19 in purchase behaviors via social media, highlighting the importance of trust and privacy concerns in driving purchasing intentions. Similarly, E.-N. Untaru et al. [41] investigated the influence of COVID-19 protective measures on retail enterprise strategies, revealing that improved protective measures led to increased customer satisfaction and altered attitudes toward shopping.

N. Shaw et al. [26] compared online shopping continuance in Canada, Germany, and the U.S., finding that, although health concerns eased post-pandemic, consumers were likely to continue online shopping beyond pre-pandemic levels due to factors like convenience, efficiency, and security. C. Ngoh et al. [42] conducted a segmentation study, noting significant shifts in consumer behaviors, particularly in channel switching from physical stores to online shopping during the pandemic. They identified six distinct consumer segments with varying motivations for online shopping.

In post-COVID research, E. Higuera et al. [43] found that socio-demographic factors had little influence on online shopping intentions in the post-pandemic era, where behavioral variables were more influential. E. W. Mainardes et al. [44] examined ethical dilemmas in e-

retailing during COVID-19, finding that ethical practices such as data protection and transparent pricing played a crucial role in determining customer satisfaction.

D. Jeong et al. [45] focused on the shift to contactless shopping, using push-pull-mooring theory to understand how factors like perceived risks and value influenced consumer preferences for contact-free purchases.

**C. RQ3: Is health and environment concern applicable for organically purchased foods and increase organized consumption of sustainable products among existing customer segments?**

The COVID-19 pandemic had changed the consumer behavior and many scholars investigate its changes on distinct sectors and locations. D. Das et al. [3] also studied the socio-economic impact. With regard to consumers, the unorganized sector has got significantly affected by the pandemic, thus resulting in method driven demands for lower net cost substitutes to essential products and healthcare items. This highlighted the increasing demand for wellness as well as hygiene products occasioned by changes in family income as well as employment status. The findings of this study give useful information for positioning segments for the Wellness and Hygiene products during such emergency instances.

S. Sohn et al. [46] discussed the impact of Covid on O-FP, they found that health and quality concern has gone up but not environmental concern. Analysing consumer segments, the authors noticed that they were different depending on key factors such as, for example, income, which affected their attitudes towards the health risks of the COVID-19 pandemic. In the same vein, N. Shaw et al. [26] on the experience of the Canadian, Germany, and the U.S. markets and how the increase in online shopping after the pandemic, due to health risk factors and lockdown measures was sustained even after the easing of restrictions. Still, considerations such as convenience, efficiency, and security were persisting to define consumer preferences, and thus it is possible that such buying will be sought for in the future. In a global study launched by L. Eger et al. [47] they looked at the intergeneration perspectives with regard to consumer behavior during the pandemic and concluded that health and economic concerns made new shifts in shopping profiles with considerable gaps between generations. Building on the generation cohort theory, this research adds value by making recommendations that will assist retailers in formulating strategies specific to separate age segments. Protection Motivation Theory was used by J. Kim et al. [48] to examine the intended consumer behaviour in the hospitality industry during pandemic. The authors showed that both hope and fear affected perceived behavioral intentions and directed the consumers' attention to health-related behaviors and support for domestic producers. The present study provides framework to explain consumer behaviour when there is an outbreak of public health issues. A. M. Peluso et al. [49] sought to establish the correlation between age and environment-sustainable purchase during the COVID-19 era; older consumers were the least adversely impacted by the pandemic and only increased their buying of sustainable goods with elevated optimism. However, T.-S. Chang et al. [50] investigated the impact of the social distancing practice on store atmosphere, and established that perceived crowding and self-efficacy

affected the perceived risk among employees stressing the need to control employee impression in such situations.

I. Park et al. [35] investigated the psychological needs motivating post pandemic revenge consumption in china: in store purchases of apparel and footwear products as reward for satisfaction after release from restrictions. Using theory of compensatory consumption [51] found that due to fear of disease during the pandemic, consumers moved towards consuming more colourful products. According to their research, consumers sought to acquire colorful goods in order to deal with their thanatophobia.

## X. CONCLUSION

Therefore, the COVID-19 pandemic had a lot of influence to the consumer behaviour by enhancing the online buying and panic purchases. The pandemic has boosted e-commerce as people were forced to practice social distancing, and governments locked down cities, social media spread panic purchases and pictures of the shopping aisles. Several studies pointed out that anger, fear, and sadness defined consumers' purchase intention and therefore created stockpiling and revenge buying. The elements include perceived scarce resources, influence of others, and feeling in the enhancement of consumers' behaviors during crises. An understanding of these shifts assists retailers in a bid to common new consumer needs and be in a position to strategize well.

This paper also discusses consumer behaviour changes due to COVID-19 especially in online purchasing, Pick up options and modified in-store purchasing. Evaluating fear appeal theory reveals that adopting health and financial threats, as well as demographic factors, influence purchase behavior. COVID -19 affected the normal shopping and prompted customers to shift towards online shopping where trust and privacy played the key role. Measures to safeguard people in retail bore correlation with changes in consumers' attitude and view concerning safety in stores.

The research indicates that ethical practices in e-retailing are important to the customer. The study also shows that consumer migration and behavior alterations should be monitored to maintain consumer engagement and loyalty in the new normalcy state of the world after the pandemic.

## CONFLICTS OF INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest.

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