

# Consumer Buying Behaviour during COVID-19 Pandemic

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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The aim of this study is to attempt to understand the effect of the novel coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19/ SARS-COV2) on consumer buying behaviour in India. The crisis caused by the pandemic has undoubtedly wreaked global havoc and has created a very difficult business climate.

The virus was first identified in Wuhan in Hubei Province of China. WHO declared the outbreak as a pandemic on 11 March 2020. In India, the first case was reported in January 2020 in Kerala. Ever since then, the cases have been rising exponentially in successive virus waves. To restrict the transmission of the virus, the government of India declared a nationwide lockdown. This disrupted transport, logistics, work patterns and hence, lifestyle. Businesses were forced to have temporary or permanent closures owing to great losses. This gave rise to financial instability and feelings of worry and concern.

Among the lockdown and loss of jobs, the consumers were forced to change their buying behaviour and purchase patterns to adapt to the new normal. Since their purchase motives and values changed, there was a sudden and massive shift in consumer behaviour. Several studies reveal that the consumers experienced product shortages, non-availability of even essential items during the pandemic. Concerns about availability of goods and rumours about shortages gave rise to impulse and panic buying.

The fear of contracting the virus forced people to reduce their purchase frequencies and there was an increased inclination towards online platforms for shopping, payments, etc. To support the Indian businesses during such times of distress, consumer ethnocentrism emerged wherein consumers prefer domestic brands over imported ones.

Thus, this study attempts to gauge and analyze the change in buying behaviour during this period in India. It also attempts to find out the correlation between the variables influencing consumer behaviour during the pandemic to bridge the research gap. Results and findings of the study could be helpful in developing policies and marketing strategies during such situations of pandemic and lockdown.

## 1.

## Introduction

The emergence of COVID-19 has caused a disruption in social, economic and health systems of the world ensuing a global crisis. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by the newly discovered coronavirus (SARS-CoV-2). This virus was first identified in Wuhan, Hubei Province, China in December 2019 from where it soon spread to other parts of China and then the world, resulting in a global crisis. The World Health Organization (WHO) declared a pandemic on 11 March 2020. A pandemic is basically a global epidemic, spanning continents and crossing international boundaries, thereby affecting people worldwide. Since then, several variants of the novel coronavirus have been detected in various parts of the world

- with Delta, Alpha and Beta variants being the most dominant - as the virus mutated. As of 23 August 2021, more than 210 million cases and 4.4 million deaths have been confirmed, making it one of the deadliest pandemics in human history.

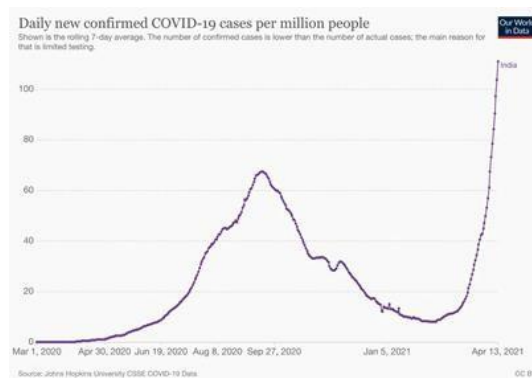


Fig 1.1: Confirmed COVID-19 Cases in India(Source: John Hopkins University)

In India, the first cases of COVID-19 were detected on 30 January 2020, in Kerala where three medical students had returned from Wuhan, China- the epicenter of the pandemic. In an effort to restrict the transmission of the disease, lockdown was declared in India on 25 March 2020. In absence of the COVID-19 vaccine at that time, the government was forced to take certain preventive measures in the early stages of the outbreak: (1) Maintain social distancing (2) Avoid social gatherings and crowded places (3) Mandatory to wear masks (4) Regularly washing hands (5) Imposing IPC section 144 which prevents unlawful assembling of people.

Due to these measures, the supply chain was disrupted as transport was curbed, people were forced to work from home in accordance with the new norms and many people were retrenched due to the economic distresses faced by companies. Moreover, on the announcement of the

nationwide lockdown, the market witnessed a sudden panic and rush. Since the supply chains were disrupted, this was followed by very low levels of inventory of essential goods in the market entailing panic buying among consumers. Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) like face shields, masks, sanitizers along with other essential goods were hoarded and black-marketed in view of the lockdown declared. Rumours about the virus and lockdown further worsened the situation for the consumers. The average spending increased with a reduction in the frequency of purchase leading to an altered purchase behaviour. Among this, a feeling of nationalism emerged among the people wherein they emphasized on the importance of buying local goods to support the economy to encourage “self-reliance”. The average spending increased with a reduction in the frequency of purchase along with increased popularity of online platforms.

For entrepreneurs and businesses, this crisis entailed problems and opportunities. Businesses became more vulnerable as the COVID-19 pandemic transformed people’s life and the global economy, of which the long-term implications are yet to be determined and analyzed. To deal with the dynamic changes in consumer behaviour, the entrepreneurs need to come up with effective coping strategies.

*Keywords:*

Coronavirus, COVID-19, Consumer buying behaviour, Pandemic, Online Shopping, Purchase Patterns, Lockdown, Impulse Buying.

**2.****Review of Literature****2.1. Consumer Behaviour**

Consumer behaviour is defined as: "The behavior that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products, services, and ideas." A study by Schiffman & Kanuk elaborates on the concept by explaining that consumer behaviour is, hence, the study of how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources i.e., time, money, effort on various products as well as includes the study of what, why, when, where and how often they purchase and how they use the purchased product. Moreover, it helps marketers uncover consumer needs and wants that are still unmet or partially satisfied by the available offerings and helps to promote better products. (Schiffman & Kanuk, 1997)

Using consumer behaviour, companies can then make their marketing offers and implement them. Consumer behaviour, like human behaviour, is largely individual/personal and mostly hidden. It is affected by various factors that are not directly measurable, so they can affect behaviour only in the mind of the consumer. These variables, on the other hand, can be measured, but it is not possible to accurately measure exactly how they affect behaviour itself and the final purchase decision of the consumer. (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020; Hall et al., 2020)

In addition to understanding consumer characteristics, it is important for businesses to understand the purchasing decision-making process. The basic model of the purchasing process has five phases: problem recognition, information retrieval, evaluation of alternatives, purchasing decision and post-purchase behaviour. (Kotler & Keller, 2009)

Buying behaviour is influenced by multiple factors such as social, cultural, personal and psychological factors (N Ramya & Dr. SA Mohamed Ali, 2016). One of the most important factors that affect consumer behaviour is cultural factors, including: buyer culture, subculture, and social class. Culture is a part of every society and is the essential basis of a person's need and wants. Similarly, every society develops some form of social class which holds special importance for marketers as the people in the same social class tend to display the same buying behaviour. This enables them to tailor marketing activities according to each social class. Social factors also impact the buying behavior of consumers. These consist of: reference groups, family, roles and status. Among these, reference groups have great potential in forming a person's attitude or behavior. However, their impact varies for different products and brands.

For example, if the product is tangible such as cars, clothes, etc. then the influence of reference groups will be high. Family buying behavior is also strongly influenced by the members of a family. (Lenka Veselovska et al., 2021)

Personal factors also affect the buying behavior. Some of the important personal factors that influence consumer behavior are: lifestyle, occupation, age, personality, economic situation and self-concept. Consumer's economic situation has significant impact on his buying behavior. Given that the consumer's income and savings are high, he tends to buy more expensive products. Personality varies from person to person and also changes with place and time. Therefore, it affects the buying behavior of customers. In addition, there are four psychological factors influencing the consumer buying behavior. They are: perception, motivation, learning, beliefs and attitudes. The level of motivation affects the buying behavior of customers in a way that every person has different needs such as physiological needs, biological needs, social needs etc. Selecting, organizing and interpreting information in a way to produce a meaningful experience of the world is called perception. Customer possesses specific belief and attitude towards various products which make up brand image and affect consumer buying behavior. Therefore, marketers are interested in them. (Dr. Nilesh B. Gajjar, 2013)

## 2.2. COVID-19

L. Van Der Hoek presented a detailed study of the human coronavirus, a genus of the *Coronaviridae* family. Till now, only three human coronaviruses have been characterized if we include SARS-CoV; further characterization of HCoV-NL63 as the fourth member will provide important insight into the variation among human coronaviruses. (Lia Van Der Hoek et al., 2004)

A new threat to global health is identified as an outbreak of a new respiratory disease that was given the name Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19). It was recognized in December 2019. It was found to be caused by a novel coronavirus that is biologically related to the virus that causes severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) (Thirumalaisamy P. Velavan In, 2020). In their study, Anthony S. Fauci and his colleagues provide an elaborate clinical description of the first 425 cases reported in the origin of the outbreak- Wuhan in the Hubei Province of China. This study provided critical information essential to take an appropriate response to fight the

epidemic, though it faced the limitation associated with the real-time reporting of the rapidly evolving pathogen in its earliest stages (Anthony S. Fauci et al., 2020).

The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark reminder of the current challenge of emerging and reemerging highly contagious pathogens and the urgent need for constant surveillance along with prompt diagnosis and robust accurate research to understand the basic behaviour of new organisms and our susceptibilities to them, as well as to develop efficient and effective countermeasures (Marco Ciotti & Massimo Ciccozzi 2020).

### 2.3. Consumer Behaviour and COVID-19

Adolfo Di Crosta and Irene Ceccato present a detailed analysis on how pandemics and natural disasters, in general, affect consumer behaviour. As mentioned by Di Costa, pandemics and other disasters are characterized by extremely stressful situations, which easily induces negative emotions and deteriorates mental health such as perception of the lack of control and disturbs mental stability. The study further throws light on how stress plays a critical role in affecting consumer buying behaviour. For instance, research shows how a stressful individual withdraws and becomes passive and this response can reduce purchasing action. On the contrary, some forms of stress can also lead to active and quicker responses like impulse buying behaviours. (Adolfo Di Crosta & Irene Ceccato, 2021)

Another study elaborates how COVID-19 has changed the way an individual works, shops and communicates with others in the social system. While the new work from home norms were enforced, people stepped out only to buy essentials and necessity products. Moreover, people have a constant fear and worry of visiting crowded places like supermarkets and malls with an increased risk of infection. It further described how the novel coronavirus presents numerous problems and challenges to policy makers and brands. In addition, the pandemic has had a huge social and economic impact globally due to people's health and financial concerns as well as behavioral adjustments to the new normal. Research also delves into how drastic changes have already been observed in consumer behaviour of the affected areas in the form of increased impulse buying, online shopping and crowd avoidance/ cocooning. (Chauhan & Vilas, 2020).

Stern defined impulse buying as unplanned purchase- buying a new product without any prior thought or experience (Stern, 1962). Impulse buying behaviour is a complex behaviour which is affected by factors like consumer demographics and stimuli within stores like point of purchase advertising in the form of posters which create a positive emotional response (Dittmar et al., 1995). The findings of the research showed that the fear of illness, price increase and empty shelves along with vulnerable strata, led to an increase in impulsive panic buying behaviour among customers. Many studies attributed this change to disinformation and rumours about the stock of certain goods. Finally, the risk of contracting the virus, increased awareness about preventive measures by authorities, increasing rate of infections and mutations contributed to the increase (Muhammad Naeem, 2020).

Another factor that significantly influenced consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic is the extensive spread of misinformation and rumours through various unverified sources. This instantly shot up the rates of panic buying by instilling a sense of fear and haste in people. Research suggests rumours and misinformation regarding remedies and cures led to panic buying during the outbreak, and timely clarification of rumours effectively reduced irrational behaviour. (Zhiyuan Hou, 2020)

A.Kumar, in his detailed study, pointed that online shopping has a huge potential in India. Perception towards online shopping is improving along with increased awareness. By the advent of internet, customers can shop and pay anytime and anywhere through safe and secure interfaces (A.Kumar, 2010). Consumers consciously limited their consumption in fear of virus contraction. For essential and necessity goods, consumers preferred to shop and pay using online platforms instead of visiting stores and shops to avoid crowded areas. Research suggests that this shift is mainly due to the conveniences and low contact of online platforms. Awareness about online shopping, marketing policies and ease of use have led to a behavioural shift (Bhatti et al., 2018).

Since the pandemic has transformed consumer behaviour, it has also changed the marketing dynamics globally. When consumers are forced to re-evaluate their life priorities in times of distress, there is a change in the spending criteria and new values emerge. This is supported by a study by Dekimpe and Deleersnyder who proposed the effectiveness of various marketing strategies and efforts during downturns and upturns of the business cycle (Dekimpe & Deleersnyder, 2018). New marketing strategies focused on establishing regular communication



using situation specific content, temporary discount offers to deal with price sensitivity and critical evaluation of product supply (Janny C. Hoekstra, 2020).

A feeling of consumer nationalism also emerged as suggested by a study by Meghana Verma. Consumer nationalism has received only little attention in marketing literature. Wang (2005) defined consumer nationalism as a response of the consumer's feeling of collective identities based on their nationality to accept or reject products/ brands from foreign countries. It involves using consumer behaviour as a political statement by discouraging consumption of goods from offending countries and consuming those goods manufactured in one's home country (Gerth, 2011). Present study reveals that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly influenced the willingness to buy country's own brands and products. (Meghana Verma, 2021)

Consumer Ethnocentrism define complex construct consisting of consumers, cognitive, behavioural, affective orientations towards foreign-made products (Terence Shimp, 1984). This concept is based on three views: (i) Consumer's fear regarding harming his own country economically through buying foreign-made products. (ii) morality involved in buying imported goods. (iii) individual prejudice against imports (Sharma et al., 1995). Consumer ethnocentrism has a huge impact on purchase of domestic brands but a relatively moderate impact on purchase of foreign brands. For instance, product advertisements that display consumer ethnocentrism may not induce purchase of domestic products but might discourage purchase of foreign products (Han & Guo, 2018). Certain studies reveal a positive attitude towards domestic goods and certain towards foreign goods. In developing countries, consumers prefer foreign due to their attraction towards foreign countries, seeking novelty, and identification as a global consumer (Bartsch et al., 2016).

Research indicates evidence that the COVID-19 pandemic has induced consumers to exercise consumer ethnocentrism with respect to buying Indian brands for various electronic products, personal use products like fashion and cosmetics (B.R Naveen; Meghana, 2021). These results are also supported by the study by Castello which proposed that consumers start engaging in purchase and consumption of domestic goods when they have feelings of fear and nationalism, as in case of the pandemic (Castello & Mihelj, 2018).

A survey by Nidhi Arora and colleagues from McKinsey and Company reveals some key consumer behaviour changes during the COVID-19 outbreak in India:



1. 56% of the respondents experienced a decrease in their income in the first two weeks of the pandemic, affecting their buying patterns.
  2. 61% of the respondents gradually shifted to more mindful shopping, with some trading down in value.
  3. More than 50% respondents continue to concentrate their spending on essentials.
  4. More than 50% respondents expect to make a portion of their purchases online post-COVID-19 than before.
  5. 91% of the respondents believe that they have significantly changed their shopping behaviour.
- (Nidhi Arora, 2020)

### **3. Rationale of the Study**

The novel coronavirus or COVID-19 has wreaked global havoc by completely transforming every sphere of life. It has not only caused loss of lives, but also resulted in loss of hundred thousands of jobs worldwide, followed by financial insecurities and some major lifestyle changes. These changes in the life priorities of the consumers have changed their purchase behaviour and purchase values. This, hence, has resulted in a sudden and paradigm but meaningful shift in consumer behaviour. These shifts are brought about by a number of factors such as new norms of the government, etc. and result changes in overall spending, preference of brands, frequency of purchase, rationale of purchase, marketing etc.

Thus, it has become imperative to explore, understand and analyze the changes in context of the COVID-19 pandemic in India. Though studies by several authors (Bharat Patil, 2020; Meghana Verma, 2021; Chauhan 2020; Muhammad Naeem, 2020) have discussed about these shifts in their work, these studies are focused only on certain few factors or regions such as consumer ethnocentrism or impulse buying, but do not provide a general overview of these factors.

Hence, this study addresses the research gap by proposing an overview of factors affecting consumer behaviour during the initial stages of the pandemic in India and determining correlation between them.

#### 4. Objectives

1. To snapshot the change in buying behaviour of consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic in India.
2. To understand the factors affecting consumer buying behaviour during the pandemic and assess their importance.
3. To find correlation between different factors influencing consumer behaviour during the pandemic.

#### 5. Method Used for the Study

The present study is of descriptive nature with an explanatory research design. It is based on the objective of understanding the changes in consumer behaviour during COVID-19 pandemic. Hence, an empirical study is performed to examine the opinion of the consumers.

##### 5.1. Data Collection

Non-probability convenience sampling technique was used to collect primary data by surveying people who were in close contact with the researcher. Primary data used for analysis was collected using a structured non-disguised, self-administered questionnaire prepared using Google Forms. The link of the Google form was disseminated using various platforms like WhatsApp, Instagram, LinkedIn, etc. The questionnaire consisted of several dichotomous questions and some also required the respondent to rate the given statement on a 5-point Likert scale as (1) Strongly Disagree (2) Disagree (3) Neutral (4) Agree and (5) Strongly Agree. These questions related to the consumer experiences in context of change, concern, impulse buying, use of online platforms, etc. during the COVID-19 outbreak. The period for which the respondents described their buying behaviour ranged from the initial stages of the 21-day lockdown starting 25 March 2020, through various phases of unlocking, overall period- as specified in the questions.

A pilot test of the questionnaire was first administered on select respondents and feedback was collected from them. The feedback was evaluated and necessary adjustments were made to form a revised questionnaire to improve accuracy. Respondents who were a part of the pilot group were not excluded from the main study as they were anonymous.

The questionnaire was shared with a total of 172 targeted respondents, out of which only 64

responded. Thus, the response rate was around 37% owing to the limitations of online surveys. However, after data cleaning, the responses of 57 respondents were finalized for the study. Out of 57 respondents, 30 were male and the remaining 27 were female respondents. Majority of the respondents were from the 18-22 age group.

## 5.2. Statistical Analysis

The primary data collected using the structured questionnaire has not been subjected to statistically complex methods of analysis, rather analyzed using simple statistical tools. Use of tables and graphs made it easy to present data collected in a presentable and meaningful manner.

To analyse the responses obtained from the questionnaire, pie charts and tables were used to get an overview of data. To find out the relation between these variables influencing consumer behaviour such as gender, concern, change, impulse buying, domestic brand preference, influence of news and rumours and usage of online platforms., correlation matrix for categorical data was used.

Statistical Tool	Formula Used (MS-Excel)
Count	=COUNT(value1:value 2)
Sum	=SUM(value 1: value 2)
Correlation	=CORREL(data_y, data_x)

Table 5.1: Statistical Tools in Use

## 6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

### 6.1. Analysis of Individual Variables

Following is the analysis based on the questions included in the questionnaire:

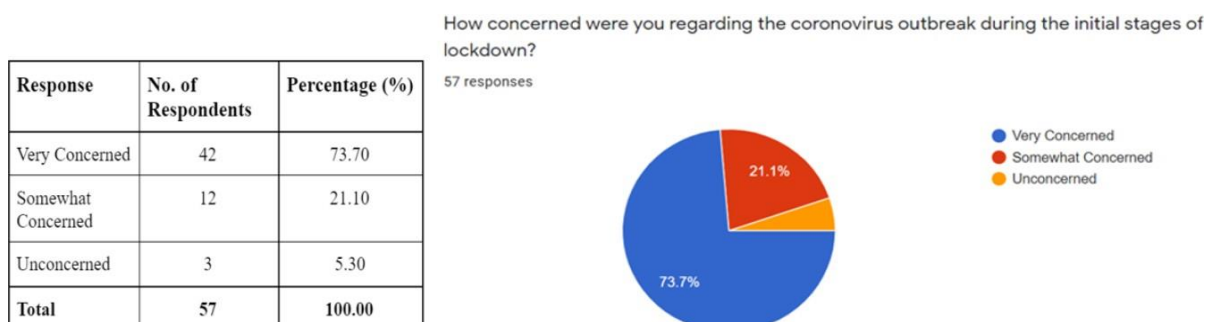


Table 6.1 & Fig 6.1: Distribution of Level of Concern Regarding COVID-19 Pandemic

1. Table 6.1 reveals that 73.7% of the respondents had insecurity and fear due to COVID-19 pandemic. 21.1% respondents considered themselves only 'somewhat concerned' about the ongoing

situation at that time. A meagre 5.3% opined that they were unconcerned about the pandemic and had no fear or insecurity. Thus, from the above figures, it can be concluded that the pandemic caused fear, concern, worry, insecurity and instability among people.

However, it must be noted that fear and consumer behaviour have an inconsistent relationship (Michael S. LaTour; Shaker A. Zahra, 1988).

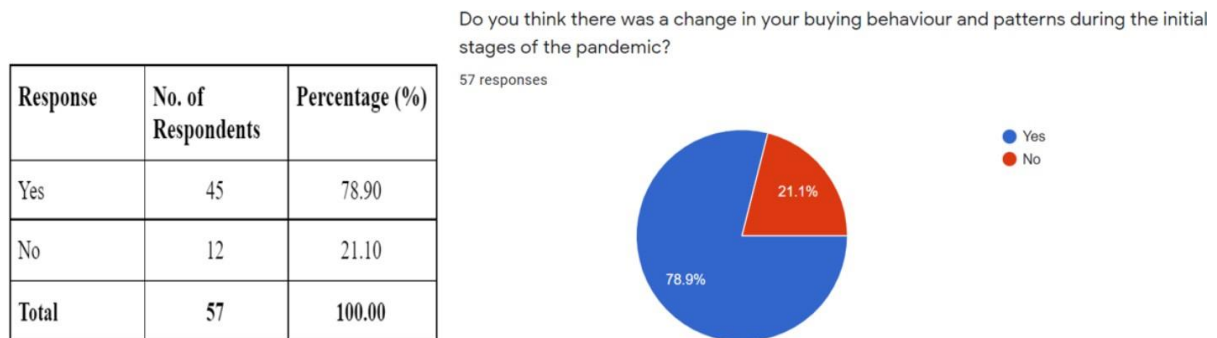


Table 6.2 & Fig. 6.2: Distribution of Perception of Change in Buying Behaviour and Patterns

2. As mentioned in Table 6.2, a majority of 78.9% of the respondents admitted that their buying behaviour or patterns were influenced by the initial stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic. However the rest 21.1% of the respondents felt no impact of the pandemic on their shopping behaviour. Thus, the outbreak has not only resulted in change of habits, but also lifestyle, values, etc. This ascertains the fact that COVID-19 has resulted in a sudden, yet meaningful shift of consumer behaviour which can further be explained by analysing various aspects of this change.

Please rate your agreement or disagreement to the statements given below in relation to the impact of COVID-19 on your shopping behaviour.

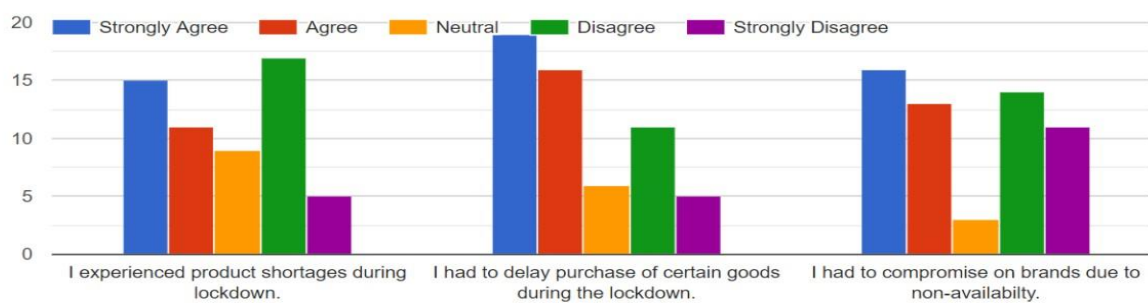


Fig. 6.3: Distribution of Likert Scale Responses

3. Among 57 responses collected for each statement, as many as 26 respondents experienced product shortages during lockdown. 35 respondents had to delay purchase of certain goods during the lockdown. Whereas, 29 respondents had to compromise on brands due to non-availability in this period. However, these are only mixed responses as a considerable number of respondents also disagree with these statements. Thus, looking at these figures it is possible to conclude that the primary impact of the pandemic on consumer behaviour is in the form of experiencing product shortages,

having to delay purchases and having to compromise on preferred brands due to shortages or non-availability at stores where the purchase was intended.

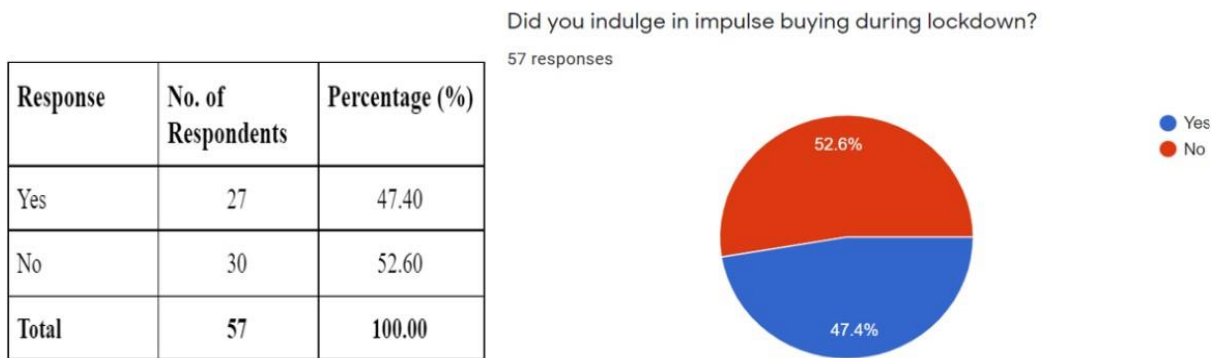


Table 6.3 & Fig. 6.4: Distribution of Impulse Buying Behaviour during Lockdown

4. According to Table 6.3, 47.4% of the respondents engaged in impulse buying during the lockdown, while, the rest 52.6% did not engage in impulse buying. This leads to the conclusion that the pandemic has increased the consumer impulse buying behaviour to a large extent. This can be attributed to the fear of empty shelves, fear of shortage, price increase, fear of illness or the inclination to have a backup and make optimal decisions. Certain conformist tendencies further advanced this behaviour.

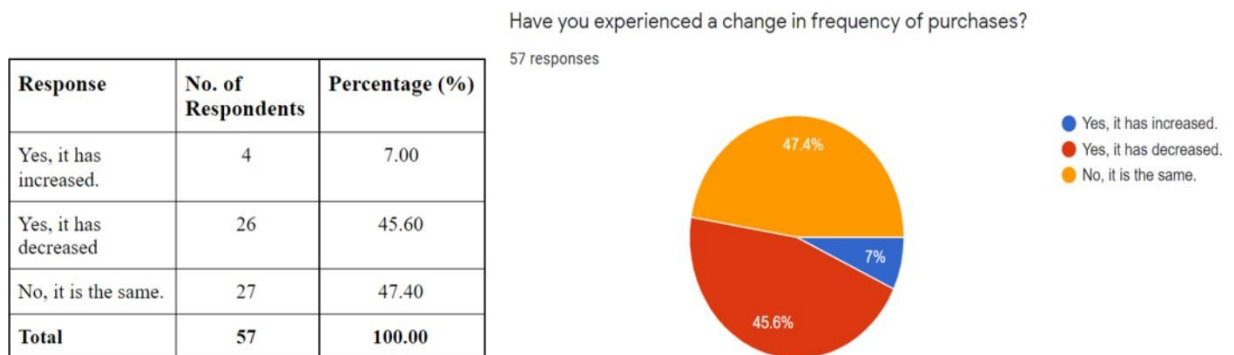


Table 6.4 & Fig. 6.5: Distribution of Change in Frequency of Purchases

5. Regarding the change in frequency of purchases, Table 6.4 reveals that a meagre 7% of the respondents believed the frequency has increased whereas 45.6% of the respondents opined that it has decrease than that before the pandemic. This is true both for online as well as in-store purchases. It is possible to conclude that the lockdown gave rise to a panic situation among the consumers as they feared virus transmission, which not only led to impulse buying but also significantly decreased the rate of purchases.

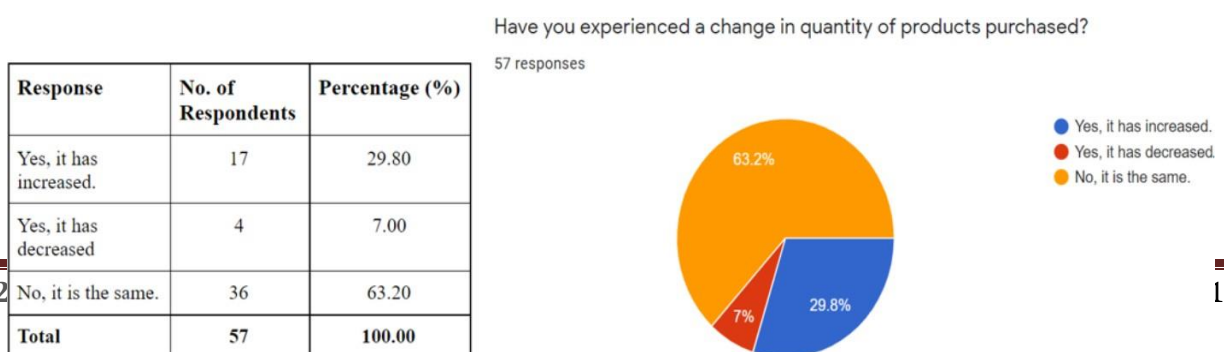


Table 6.5 & Fig. 6.6: Distribution of Change in Quantity of Products Purchased

6. As mentioned in Table 6.5, 29.8% respondents felt that there has been an increase in the quantity of products purchased, while 7% believed that the same has decreased. However, a majority 63.2% of the respondents did not experience changes in quantity. The increase in quantity can be attributed to the risk of going outside to crowded places and hence reducing the store visits. However, largely, there was no change in the quantity of products purchased.

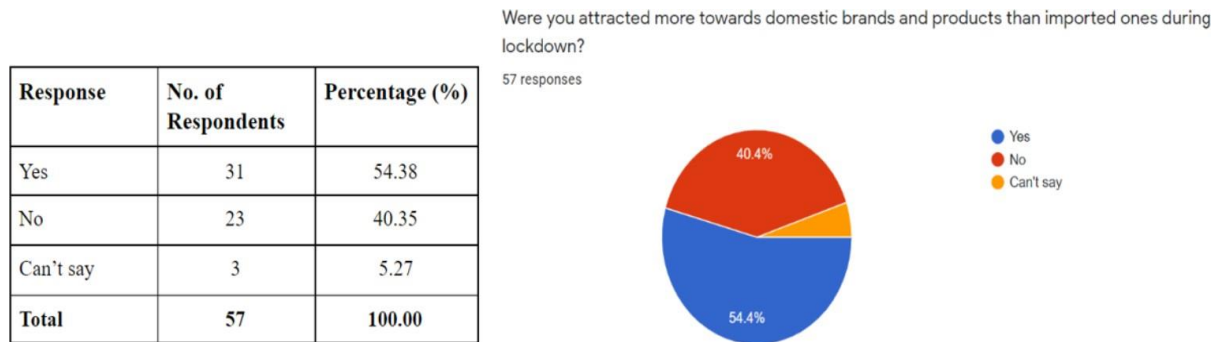


Table 6.6 & Fig. 6.7: Distribution of Domestic Brand Preference during Lockdown

7. This question was aimed to find out consumer ethnocentrism and consumer nationalism during the pandemic. Table 6.6 indicates that 54.38% of the respondents felt more attracted towards domestic brands than imported ones during the lockdown. 40.35% experienced no change and a meagre 5.27% of the respondents couldn't decide. Thus, it can be concluded that COVID-19 pandemic prompted consumers to exercise consumer nationalism in preferring local and national brands over the rest. This strengthens the argument that economic interests and social & psychological motives play an important role in consumer's inclination towards domestic brands.

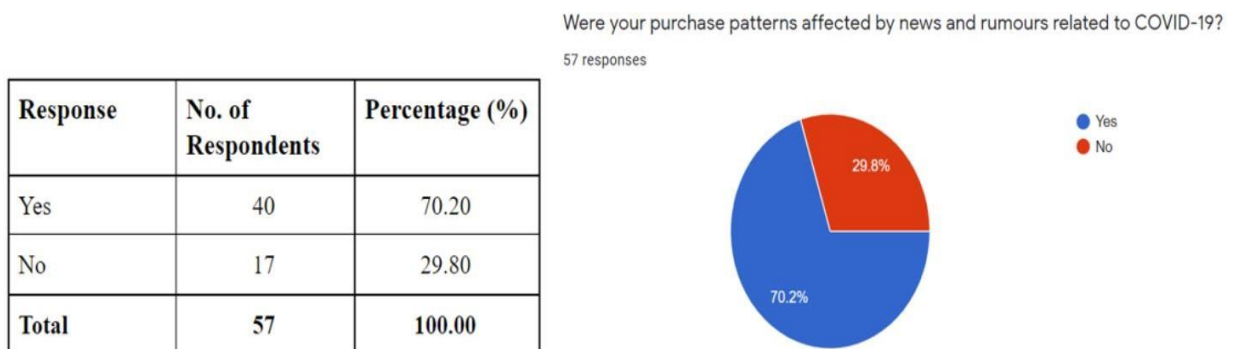


Table 6.7 & Fig. 6.8: Distribution of Influence of News & Rumours on Purchase Patterns

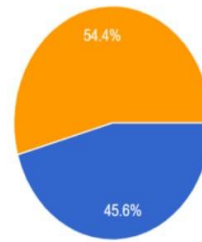
8. Regarding influence of news and rumours on purchase patterns, a majority 70.2% of the respondents experienced some change in buying behaviour as a result of news and rumours while the rest 29.8% experienced no such change. This was obvious as news and rumours about virus transmissions, mutations, food shortages, possible lockdown, new virus waves, etc. were rampant on all platforms during the pandemic and hence affected the consumers in some way or the other.



Have you experienced a change in the usage of online platforms for payment, purchases, advertisements, etc.?

57 responses

Response	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Yes, it has increased.	26	45.60
Yes, it has decreased	0	0.00
No, it is the same.	31	54.40
<b>Total</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100.00</b>



● Yes, it has increased.  
● No, it is the same.

Table 6.8 & Fig. 6.9: Distribution of Perception of Change in Usage of Online Platforms

9. Table 6.8 reveals that 45.6% of the sample opined that there has been an increase in the usage of online platforms. This can be attributed to better privacy, wider access, low contact to prevent virus spread, convenience and lower financial risk offered by online platforms of e-commerce or payments. However, 54.4% of the respondents felt that there is no change in their usage. This can be explained by the scenario in the early stages of the pandemic when major e-commerce platforms had shut operations owing to the lockdown, disruption of logistics and prevention measures.

## 6.2. Correlation between Variables

To find the correlation between select variables from the questionnaire, correlation matrix was calculated. Each cell in the matrix represents coefficient of correlation (r) between two variables influencing consumer behaviour during COVID-19 pandemic.

Correlation	Gender	Concern	Change	Impulse Buying	Domestic Brand Preference	Influence of News & Rumours	Usage of Online Platforms
Gender	1						
Concern	-0.09460770203	1					
Change	-0.05896919751	0.319642201	1				
Impulse Buying	-0.1555555556	0.218576415	0.2313406979	1			
Domestic Brand Preference	-0.04344140636	0.1995220788	0.2812245238	0.2203099894	1		
Influence of News & Rumours	0.1495636354	0.1780272787	0.03960590172	-0.1495636354	-0.1061134642	1	
Usage of Online Platforms	-0.1893570157	0.1994955991	0.1273253519	-0.02227729597	-0.1047251397	-0.09590392275	1

Table 6.9: Correlation Table



As it can be seen in Table 6.9, correlation between these factors isn't too high, all below 31%.

1. Concern and Change in consumer behaviour share the highest correlation among any two factors in the matrix. They share a moderate positive linear correlation which indicates that as the concern for the pandemic increases, the change in consumer behaviour also increases moderately and vice versa.
2. Change in consumer behaviour and domestic brand preference share a weak positive correlation of 0.2812, which again means that as there is a change in the consumer behaviour, the consumer tends to slightly prefer domestic products over the imported ones to support economic and social interests.
3. Similarly, change in consumer behaviour and impulse buying also hold a weak linear positive relation.
4. However, correlation between factors like concern & domestic preference, concern & influence of news and rumours and concern & usage of online platforms where the correlation coefficient is 0.1, there exists a minimal or no relationship at all.
5. Hence, looking at the moderate to weak or no correlation between these variables, it is possible to conclude that these variables influence consumer behaviour independently and have their own effects on purchase patterns.

## 7. Findings

The following findings can be inferred from the study conducted using self-administered questionnaire:

1. The COVID-19 outbreak was not merely a global health and economic crisis, but also evoked feelings of insecurity and fear in the minds of people. 73.7% of the sample agreed with these feelings of instability. This result is in accordance with the study by Bharat and Nerita Patil (2020), wherein similar results were obtained.
2. It can be inferred from the study that the pandemic brought about sudden yet meaningful shifts in the buying behaviour. 78.9% of the sample experienced this change. This follows the research by Chauhan and Shah (2020) and Nidhi Arora (2020) who got similar results on administering their questionnaire.
3. From the study, it is found that due to the pandemic, the buyers were forced to postpone their intended purchases, compromise on brands and even suffer product shortages.
4. The study produced similar findings related to impulse buying to those by Muhammad Naeem (2020), where 47.4% respondents engaged in impulse shopping behaviour. The vulnerable people

feared shortages and had a social inclination towards buying more and storing extra while staying indoors.

5. Research by Chauhan (2020) and Lenka Veselovska et al. (2021) suggested a decrease in purchase frequency during the pandemic, which was also proved in the course of this research. However, there was not much change in the buying quantity.

6. From the study, it was concluded that the pandemic gave rise to consumer ethnocentrism wherein 54.3% of the sample was more attracted towards domestic brands. This is in accordance with the study by Meghana Verma (2021).

7. News and rumours rampant on various platforms also influenced consumer behaviour considerably, by inducing fear, anxiety and anxiousness among the people. The study concludes that there is a need to check on their dissemination with stringent measures.

8. As mentioned in the research, there were mixed results about usage of online platforms.

9. There exists a very minimal correlation between the variables discussed in the questionnaire on their effect on consumer behaviour. The highest correlation of 0.3196 is between concern for the situation and change in consumer behaviour.

## 8. Conclusion

The aim of the study was to present a broad understanding of the changes in consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic, to identify the factors influencing purchase behaviour in the pandemic and determine correlation between them.

The worldwide health emergency of COVID-19 pandemic provoked a global economic crisis and created unparalleled situations and changes for the society as a whole. One such change was observed in consumer behaviour. Consumers were forced to adapt their needs and lifestyle imposed by these conditions. This study tries to analyse such changes and draw a correlation between them to help the marketers formulate future policies following these results. To achieve its objectives, the research has used a structured non-disguised questionnaire which was disseminated using various platforms. The research uses a non-probability convenience sampling method. After data cleaning, 57 responses were considered for analysis and interpretation.

Major findings on analysis of the responses were: a feeling of fear and insecurity among people, delay in purchases, rampant product shortages, increase in impulse buying, increasing attraction towards domestic brands, slight increase in usage of online platforms, decrease in purchase frequency and meagre changes in purchase quantity. It was also found that there exists a moderate positive

correlation between concern towards the pandemic and change in consumer behaviour. However, overall, there were minimal or no relations between these individual variables.

The data from this study can help marketers formulate new strategies in line with these changes. Moreover, this study contributes to the current research pool and further promotes similar socio-economic studies in context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

#### *Limitation and Scope for Further Research:*

The primary limitation of this research is its sample size. The sample is obtained using convenience sampling method and might not be as representative of the population as it could have been. Its size is rather small to explore small changes in consumer behaviour and to elaborate on them. In future, it is ideal to reconduct this study on a much larger and more representative sample.

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