

From Crisis Adoption to Behavioral Continuity: Post-COVID Online Shopping Patterns in an Emerging Market

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Abstract

The given paper explores online shopping usage in the context of the COVID-19 crisis that was transformed into long-term consumer behavior in a growing economy. It proposes the research question though using the conventional behavioral theories. Based on the Habit Formation, Protection Motivation, and Behavioral Inertia theories, the analysis will compare consumer behavior in the pre-pandemic, pandemic, and post-pandemic situations based on the changes in frequency of purchase, channel choice, and spending patterns.

The results indicate that online shopping has significantly gone up during the pandemic compared to the time before the pandemic and the situation remains the same even after the crisis. There is no backlash to off-line purchasing of non-essential items, which showed high behavior continuity. Nevertheless, the monthly online expenditure has been comparatively stable during the post-pandemic period, which implies the stabilization instead of the continuation of the growth.

The results confirm the habit formation and behavioral inertia to maintain the online shopping, and the motivation to adopt in the form of protection, practically matters to the growth of e-commerce are the presence of omnichannel strategies, the investment of digital infrastructure, and supportive policies.

Keywords: *Online shopping behavior, COVID-19 pandemic, Habit formation, Behavioral continuity, Emerging markets*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic stimulated the unparalleled changes in the consumer behavior, especially increasing the use of online shopping platforms by different demographics and geographic areas (Genc & Arzaghi, 2024). This radical change, which is necessitated in the first place by lockdowns and restrictions, is a unique chance to explore the long-term effects on buying behavior in new markets because digital infrastructure and consumer behavior in such markets was not usually as developed before the pandemic (Gazi et al., 2024).

The study aims to find out whether the increase in online shopping during the pandemic has created a lasting change in the behavior of consumers or there has been a relapse to the pre-pandemic offline shopping patterns (Genc & Arzaghi, 2024). In particular, it is a research on the persistence of online shopping habits within a post-pandemic new market setting, evaluating issues that lead to stabilizing or changing these new behaviors. The ability to comprehend this dynamic is important to retailers adjusting to a new consumer environment as well as policymakers seeking to create digital economic activity in these areas (Valdivino et al., 2025).

In a bid to do this, the theoretical frameworks that were incorporated in the study include Habit Formation Theory, Protection Motivation Theory, and Behavioral Inertia to reflect the psychological processes that change these observed changes.

In this paper, it is proposed that the first wave of online adoption is explained by the need to respond to the conditions of the pandemic under protection, and the second wave of these trends cannot be explained by any other factors except the establishment of new habits and the inability to go back to the old ones (Prymon-Rys, 2023; Wu et al., 2023).

This research will thus give essential findings on how the behavioral changes due to the crisis can become permanent consumer behavior, especially in the prevailing socioeconomic environment of the emerging economies (Dabija et al., 2024; Lysenko-Ryba & Reveniuk 2025).

Literature Review

Before the pandemic, the rate at which the Internet penetration in most emerging markets was defined as the slower growth rate than in developed ones, and the causes of such a situation could be linked to the lower level of internet penetration, low digital literacy, and a high level of submersion to the physical retail experience. Nevertheless, the necessity of social distancing due to the COVID-19 pandemic greatly boosted the adoption of the online platform, thereby driving a massive number of previously resistant customer groups to online purchasing (Urbonavicius and Sakalauske, 2023).

This online activity did not only constitute a short-term adaptation but new habits were nurtured, and most consumers stated that they intended to engage in their online purchasing experiences after the pandemic (Wu et al., 2023). This effect underlines the disruptive nature of the pressing conditions in changing the existing consumer patterns and even establishing new sustainable market relationships (Nguyen, 2024).

This study can help address this gap by contributing carefully to the analysis of the post-pandemic environment of online shopping, which will provide a subtle insight into the continuity or regression of behavior in a fast-changing emerging market environment. In particular, it will examine the effect of the concept of convenience, in addition to the aspect of perceived usefulness and ease of use, on a prolonged utilization of the online retail outlets in such a circumstance in these economic settings (Oloveze et al., 2021; Sundstrom and Radon, 2016).

In addition, the research will examine the influence of trust and perceived risk in determining continued loyalty to online shopping among the consumers, particularly in areas where the issue of digital transaction security may be immature. This kind of analysis is also essential to grasping the long-term role of a crisis-driven digital adoption and developing specific strategies to facilitate the rise of e-commerce in the volatile markets (Aguilar et al., 2023; Alshohaib, 2024).

The Effect of the COVID-19 on the Consumer Behavior.

The pandemic significantly changed the consumer priorities shifting to safety and convenience that helped to significantly increase the popularity of online shopping of a wide range of products (Patrakosol, 2024). This never-before scenario resulted in the tremendous growth of online sales and paved the way to the need of the businesses to improve their digital selling capacity (Verma, 2024). The development of the e-commerce sphere across the globe was spectacular, and a new trend where consumers focus on contactless payments and do not want to visit large crowds (Alshohaib, 2024; Nguyen et al., 2020). A pivotal change in consumer attitudes also occurred at this time, as it became more digital, safety-aware, and practical as a paradigm of satisfying the purchasing needs (Alshohaib, 2024). This compelled adjustment has further resulted in the creation of new shopping behaviors, as most consumers have discovered some unexpected advantages in online platforms, including a wider product assortment and price-saving deals (Sajid et al., 2022). This fast paradigm shift pushed online shopping to the mainstream consumerism, even featuring products that were not bought in other than brick-and-mortar stores (Alshohaib, 2024). This compelled change of behavior should be explored further to determine whether these new online shopping preferences have continued beyond the short-term crisis in the

emerging markets (Shahidi-Hamedani et al., 2024). As an example, the recent research in Bangladesh and Pakistan revealed that fear of COVID-19 and perceived usefulness had a significant impact on the adoption and usage of the mobile shopping application by the members of Generation Z and general consumers, respectively (Shetu, 2025; Uddin et al., 2023). Furthermore, the requirement to implement digital solutions in the lockdowns resulted in a dependency on e-commerce that opened the prospects of disruption-based technological progress, which necessitated an insight into the digital trust mechanism after the pandemic (Berezka et al., 2021).

Research Gap and Significance

Although the acute effect of the pandemic on the fastening of e-commerce usage is well-documented (Aziz et al., 2024; Berezka et al., 2021; Gazi et al., 2024), there is still the critical gap in the literature regarding the long-term behavior regulation of the pandemic-induced patterns of online shopping, especially in the fine-tuning socio-economic context of the emerging markets. In particular, the literature review tends to emphasize the rate of e-commerce growth exponentiation during the crisis but tends not to explore its long-term usage and spending habits of people in these areas after the crisis (Sajid et al., 2022; Thi et al., 2022). Also, the complexity of the cultural preference, digital infrastructure constraints, and the changing perception of trust in emerging markets is what requires a specific investigation to determine whether these changes introduced by the pandemic have been adopted as a new behavior or reverted to previous standards (Sajid et al., 2022).

Research Question and Objectives.

In order to cover these gaps, this paper suggests the following research questions in order to explore the trend of online purchasing behavior in a developing market setting. The study will help to explain the aspects that contribute to the continuation of online shopping behavior and the amount of money spent by using a theoretical framework like Habit Formation Theory and Protection Motivation Theory. This question will also look into the role of Behavioral Inertia in the stabilization of consumer spending in the post-pandemic period hence provide an in-depth insight into the changing online retail situation (Davis et al., 2021). In particular, the study will examine how the original fear of contagion that has made people resort to online platforms has turned into new habits and inclinations toward digital shopping (SAMSA, 2022; Shetu, 2025). Thus, this research project is expected to add to the existing knowledge on the factors that support the continued participation in online shopping beyond adoption to provide the explanation of the long-term behavioral patterns.

The development of theoretical Framework and Hypotheses.

In this section, the theoretical framework by which this study is conducted will be outlined, combining existing theories to describe the intricate nature of post-pandemic online shopping habits. In particular, the Habit Formation Theory will be used to trace a shift in the repeated online purchases throughout the crisis turning into regular habits, whereas the Protection Motivation Theory will also be applied to explain an initial shift to online purchasing following the threats to health posed by the pandemic. Lastly, Behavioral Inertia will be applied to describe the following stabilization or continuation of online spending patterns despite the impending danger of the pandemic waning, therefore providing an integrated prism through which to understand the actions of the consumers (Nikolic et al., 2022). This comprehensive theoretical model makes possible a solid analysis of the idea of how a behavioral change caused by the crisis can be transformed into stable, after-crisis consumer behavior, especially in the context of the peculiarities of an emerging market (Anh and Hue, 2023; Gusti, 2024).

H1 (Adoption Effect - Pandemic Shock): The frequency of online shopping was also significantly higher during the pandemic (Covid-19) than in the pre-pandemic period.

H2 (Behavioral Continuity - Post Pandemic Persistence): Consumers are still practicing online shopping at a rate similar to pandemic levels in the post-COVID-19 era.

H3 (Behavioral Reversion - Channel Shift): There is no significant step-up in offline purchasing of non-essential products of the post-COVID-19 period as compared to the pandemic period.

H4 (Expenditure Dynamics - Stability of Spending): Monthly online spend in the post-COVID-19 period does not differ significantly in post-Covid period expenditure levels compared to pandemic expenditure levels.

Hypotheses Development. Relying on Behavioral Theories.

Three behavioral theories that complement each other are the basis of the proposed hypotheses because these theories may be used to explain the various phases of online shopping adoption and persistence during the COVID-19 crisis.

According to the **Habit Formation Theory**, when the behavioral patterns are repeated under steady conditions and reinforced by positive results, they develop into auto-response and routine-based (Malekpour et al., 2023). Convenience and necessity contributed to the continuous positive reinforcement of habitual purchasing behavior, which is why during the pandemic customers resorted to online shopping constantly because of convenience and necessity (Dang et al., 2020; Wu et al., 2023). The theoretical approach assists in justifying **H1**, the hypothesis that the frequency of online purchases will increase during the pandemic, and **H2**, the hypothesis that the frequency of online shopping will remain high in the post-pandemic period (Mondal and Hasan, 2023).

The **Protection Motivation Theory** describes the first step towards online shopping as the protection measure against the perceived health threat of COVID-19 (Stalinov, 2025). Consumers evaluated the threat of infection and online shopping became one of the effective coping mechanisms, which remained the support of online payment and purchasing behavior (Le and Quyet, 2022; Urbonavicius and Sakalauske, 2023). This model is the theoretical foundation of the H1a considering that the perceived threat is a key factor that boosted online purchases throughout the pandemic.

The **Behavioral Inertia Theory** also elaborates why customers might not want to revert back to offline shopping habits before the pandemic because once accustomed to online shopping, they will not want to go back to the old days. The mental work needed to alter the existing behaviors promotes the consumers to continue with the same tendencies even when external forces have reduced (Chiu et al., 2010). This point of view justifies **H2** since it explains the persistence in online shopping after the pandemic, and it also supports **H3 and H4**, which examine whether consumers returned to offline shopping and whether online spending rose or leveled off, which is the persistence of behavioral inertia (Shaw et al., 2022).

These hypotheses collectively explore the transition from crisis-driven adoption to sustained online shopping behaviors, offering a nuanced understanding of how environmental shocks can instigate lasting changes in consumer habits within emerging markets (Canio et al., 2023; Urbonavicius & Sakalauske, 2023).

Methodology

Research Design:

This study uses a quantitative research approach, in the form of cross section, to investigate the changes in online shopping behavior during pre-pandemic, pandemic and post-pandemic periods in an emerging market. The design allows for the comparative analysis of continuity and change in consumer purchasing patterns caused by the impact of the Covid-19 crisis.

Sampling and Data Taking:

Data was collected using a structured questionnaire using online survey. A non-probability convenience sampling method was used to achieve consumer samples that had prior experience of online shopping. It was necessary for the respondents to have made online purchases before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic to ensure that the comparisons made were valid in time. A total of usable responses were retained for analysis after data screening.

Measuring and Operationalization:

Key constructs were identified as online shopping frequency, channel choice and monthly online expenditure. All measures were operationalized with multi-item scales based on previous studies and measured on a Likert-type scale. Demographic variables were taken as controls. The data was analysed by making use of appropriate statistical techniques in order to test the hypotheses and theoretical framework that were proposed. Data Analysis Techniques

Data Analysis Results

The respondent profile is clearly brought out makes the study more credible, transparent and generally more generalizable to the results of the research, as well as makes sure that the conclusions made are based on the attributes of the population being researched on.

Variable	Category	Frequency
Age	18–25	242
	26–35	31
	36–50	89
	51+ years	24
Gender	Male	116
	Female	270
Education Level	High School	50
	Bachelor's Degree	209
	Master's Degree	92
	PhD	14
	Others	21
Monthly Household Income	< 20,000	66
	20,001–40,000	71
	40,001–60,000	117
	60,001–80,000	132
Occupation	Student	222
	Employed (Government)	16
	Employed (Private)	67
	Self-employed	65
	Unemployed	12
	Retired	4
Area of Residence	Urban	315
	Rural	51
	Semi-urban	20
Smartphone Ownership	Yes	367
	No	19
Internet Access	Yes	365
	No	21

Table 1 Respondent Profile

The importance of the **scale reliability assessment** is that it can be stated that the constructs under measure are not affected by random error and that the items that are in this or that scale are coherent to reflect the same underlying concept. All scales in your the have **Cronbach's Alpha above 0.70**, meaning **every construct demonstrates acceptable to good reliability**.

Scale / Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Reliability Level
Frequency of Online Purchases	0.731	Acceptable
Spending on Essential vs. Non-Essential Goods	0.704	Acceptable
Preference for Offline Shopping	0.747	Acceptable
Product Categories and Shopping Channels	0.759	Acceptable
Health Safety Concerns	0.804	Good
Access to Digital Infrastructure	0.858	Good
Changes in Household Income	0.839	Good
Influence of Convenience vs. Price1	0.825	Good
Continued Use of Online Shopping	0.769	Acceptable
Reversion to Offline Shopping for Non-Essential Products	0.767	Acceptable
Monthly Online Expenditure	0.770	Acceptable
Preferred Shopping Mode Across Timeframes	0.732	Acceptable
Improved Hygiene and Safety Measures	0.865	Good
Adoption of Digital Payment and Home Delivery Options	0.876	Good
Personalized Shopping Experience	0.880	Good
Expanded Product Range	0.847	Good

Table 2 Scale Reliability (**Cronbach's Alpha**)

Hypothesis Testing

H1 (Adoption Effect - Pandemic Shock): The frequency of online shopping was significantly higher during the pandemic (Covid-19) than in the pre-pandemic period.

To test this hypothesis the Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test, was used for comparing Frequency of Online Purchases During and After the COVID-19 Pandemic

Comparison	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Negative Ranks	31	65.42	2,028.00
Positive Ranks	98	64.87	6,357.00
Ties	257	—	—
Total	386		

Table 3 Ranks

Statistic	Value
Z-value	-5.266
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000

Table 4 Test Statistics

The findings reveal a statistically significant difference between the two variables ($Z = -5.266$, $p < 0.05$), leading to rejection of the null hypothesis. Online shopping frequency was significantly higher during the pandemic than post-pandemic. Although many consumers continued shopping online, a substantial proportion reported reduced frequency after the pandemic, indicating a partial return to traditional purchasing behaviors.

Thus **H1 was Accepted** which implied that frequency of online purchases increased during the COVID-19 pandemic compared to the pre-pandemic period.

H2 (Behavioral Continuity - Post Pandemic Persistence): Consumers are still practicing online shopping at a rate similar to pandemic levels in the post-COVID-19 era.

Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test is a non parametric statistic tests was applied to compare two related or paired measurements of the same subjects or matched items.

Hypothesis	Test	P value
The median difference between continued shopping online and consistent shopping habits post pandemic is significant	Related Sample Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test	.005

Table 5 Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test

The Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test indicated that the difference between continued online shopping and consistent shopping habits during the post-pandemic period was statistically significant ($p = .005$). The null hypothesis is rejected since the p-value is lower than the standard significance level of .05. It means that the median difference between the continued online shopping and regular shopping habits after the pandemic is statistically significant, which implies that the behavior of consumers regarding their shopping activities has changed significantly and it is not the same as it was in the post-pandemic environment.

Thus, hypothesis **H2 was accepted** which denotes Consumers continue to shop online regularly post-pandemic.

H3 (Behavioral Reversion - Channel Shift): There is significant step-up in offline purchasing of non-essential products of the post-COVID-19 period as compared to the pandemic period.

Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test was used to test whether there was a significant difference in preference of offline shopping of non-essential items by the respondents, with the post-pandemic time, compared to their actual willingness to go back to the shopping of non-essential products offline in the post-pandemic period

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Negative Ranks	57 ^a	60.25	3434.00
Positive Ranks	58 ^b	55.79	3236.00
Ties	271 ^c		
Total	386		

Table 6 Ranks

	Value
Z	-.291 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.771

Table 7 Test Statistics

The rank table indicates that 57 respondents indicated lower preference scores than reported returns to offline purchasing (negative ranks), whereas 58 respondents indicated higher preference scores (positive ranks) with the most respondents being (271) having no difference in the two measures. The average positive (55.79) and negative (60.25) difference rank are quite close, which shows that there is no definite directional variation. This observation is also confirmed by the test results since the difference between the two related measures was not statistically significant ($Z = -0.29$, $p = .771$).

The median differences in preference of offline shopping of non-essential products and preference shopping do not differ significantly and this does not imply that the behavior of consumers during the post-pandemic period would be largely similar to the reported preferences.

Hypothesis H3 was Rejected implying consumers did not revert to offline shopping for non-essential items post-pandemic

H4 (Expenditure Dynamics - Stability of Spending): Monthly online spend in the post-COV-19 period differ significantly in post-Covid period expenditure levels compared to pandemic expenditure levels.

The Related-Samples Wilcoxon Signed-Rank Test has been used to determine whether the difference between the perceptions of the respondents regarding spending more online now than they were during the pandemic is significant or not and whether their perception of their average monthly online spending during the post-pandemic period is similar to that of 2020.

	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Negative Ranks	86 ^a	91.22	7844.50
Positive Ranks	91 ^b	86.91	7908.50
Ties	209 ^c		
Total	386		

Table 4.11 a Ranks

	Value
Z	-.048 ^b
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.962

Table 4.11 b Test Statistics

The ranks show that there was an almost equal amount of negative ranks (86) and positive ranks (91) and a big number of ties (209) which indicates that the majority of respondents did not see a difference between the two statements. The average scores of negative (91.22) and positive (86.91) differences are also quite close thus showing that there is no significant directional shift in monthly online spending. The test statistics prove this tendency because the difference between the two **related measures was not statistically significant ($Z = -0.05$, $p = .962$).**

No statistically significant difference in the median between increased current online spending and the stability of monthly online spending after the pandemic is found, which shows that consumers mostly perceive their level of online spending to be stable and not significantly increased after the pandemic.

Thus, hypothesis H4 was rejected which meant that *monthly online expenditure remained unchanged post-pandemic.*

Interpretation of Findings

The long-term loyalty to online platforms, even in relation to non-necessity items, proves how consumer preferences have changed, and they do not only depend on the convenience of transactions but a wider scope of e-commerce integration into the lifestyle (Inoue and Todo, 2023; Tinonetsana and Msosa, 2023). It implies that

the forced adoption that appeared because of the pandemic has become a favorable form of consumption, as it is backed by a more convenient and expanded range of access that digital platforms provide (Bhatti et al., 2022; Boudechiche and Bouchareb, 2023). Moreover, the perceived usefulness and ease of use of the online shopping platforms, as emphasized by the previous studies, must have led to this continued engagement through lessening the cognitive burden and improving the overall shopping experience (Alshohaib, 2024). The results also indicate that the crisis was also a catalyst, increasing the already existing tendency towards the digitalization of retail and especially in the emerging economies where the infrastructure of online commerce was rapidly growing (Wu, 2022). This increased adoption must have cemented a new category of consumer behavior, so it is unlikely that a significant portion of the population will revert to the pre-pandemic patterns of offline shopping (TINOETSANA & Msosa, 2023). The importance of such a dramatic change is the transformative capability of disruptive events in changing the core behavior of consumers and thus requires the re-assessment of the conventional approach to retail (Diaz-Gutierrez et al., 2023; Tinonetsana and Msosa, 2023). These reconsiderations in strategy should have the inclusion of online and offline approaches, to meet a hybrid consumer experience where seamless interaction and custom experiences are emphasized. The continued online shopping status after the pandemic also shows that once new habits are formed, particularly the ones that provide certain advantages such as convenience and a bigger product range, consumers will not be encouraged to revert to the previous behaviors, even in case the original external force is eliminated (Inoue and Todo, 2023). It is also supported by the phenomenon of the stickiness of newly gained digital competences and the rising digital infrastructure in the developing markets that together reduce the obstacles to further online activities (TINONETSANA & Msosa, 2023). It means that the consumers, who acquired skills of online shopping during the pandemic, are more prone to keep those habits and change a temporary need into a permanent behavioral change (Genc & Arzaghi, 2024). Such a behavior permanency is especially applicable to the businesses that are located in the emerging markets: since this requires a strategic shift to strong omnichannel retailing that slowly incorporates digital and physical touchpoints. The focus of this combined strategy is essential in terms of addressing the changing consumer demands and harnessing the long-term effect of the pandemic-driven acceleration of digital systems (Huong et al., 2024). This is also backed by the fact that the consumers are slowly moving back to physical stores, but still use online platforms hoping to create a combination of convenience and experience shopping (Apryadhi et al., 2024; Inoue and Todo, 2023).

Discussion

This section is a synthesis of findings derived through the empirical studies and theoretical frameworks that explain how the pandemic-changed consumer behavior can be transformed into the long-term post-crisis consumer online shopping tendencies in the setting of an emerging market. Particularly, the fact that the frequency of online purchases has increased in the pandemic (Hashem, 2020; Zim et al., 2025) and continued to increase regularly after the pandemic (Alshohaib, 2024) can be attributed to the ideas of Habit Formation Theory and indicates that online shopping might have become a deep-seated component of everyday life. Such continuity emphasizes how the early crisis-induced adoption, in most cases, driven by the Protection Motivation Theory, went beyond its direct causes to make it a habitual behavior (Dang et al., 2020; Genc and Arzaghi, 2024). In addition, the case findings that consumers were not eager to back to offline shopping when purchasing non-essential goods after the pandemic are indeed typical of the Behavioral Inertia Theory, which presupposes resistance to changing the existing patterns once adopted (Cici & Ozsaatci, 2021). Additionally, the fact that the monthly online spending is stable or rising after the pandemic further confirms the effect of behavioral inertia to show that the new spending behavior that was formed during the crisis has been slightly more permanent (Sy & Luu, 2025). These conclusions highlight the importance of psychological theories in describing how temporary adjustments turn into long-term consumer patterns, which will be of significant relevance in the

context of dynamic emerging markets where the rate of digital adoption is growing rapidly (Gundararasan, 2023).

Theoretical Implications

The continuity of behavior in the observed situation, especially the maintenance of a high rate of online purchases and unchanged online spending, is a strong support of the Habit Formation Theory because it demonstrates how situational prompts in the case of a crisis can lead to the development of new habits that will endure even when the triggering factors are minimized (Lopez & Gutierrez-Leefmans, 2022). It proves that the exposure and subsequent practice with online platforms, which were predetermined by the external factors, actually reduced the cognitive and practical barriers to adoptions, making these practices the routine (Genc & Arzaghi, 2024). The persistently maintained interaction shows that the perceived value of online convenience and availability exceeded the original motivational forces, which resulted in the establishment of online shopping as a choice buying method (TINONETSANA & Msosa, 2023). Moreover, the fact that online shopping has become a part of everyday life demonstrates how habit forming such behavior can be and how initial stimuli in the behavior transform into automatic reaction supported by pleasant results (Genc & Arzaghi, 2024). This shift in conscious choice to automatic help to realize the fact that repeated exposure and positive reinforcement is powerful to fix new consumption patterns (Genc & Arzaghi, 2024). Besides, the results are in line with the hypothesis that long-term commitment to a crisis may result in the habitualization of the new practices and their resistance to the reversal (Eriksson and Stenius, 2020). This effect aligns with the results that underline the stickiness of new habits once they are instilled through the repeated positive experiences (Genc & Arzaghi, 2024). This, in its turn, implies that the crisis served as a turning point to the formation of habits, making episodic transactions online permanent consumer behavior (Genc & Arzaghi, 2024).

Practical Implications

In the case of businesses, this will require a strategic change towards omnichannel forms of retailing to incorporate a smooth integration online and offline touchpoints that will meet a mixed consumer experience (Imschloss & Schwemmle, 2023). By doing so, the retailers can get value out of the already existing digital behavior, as well as the long-standing attraction to in-person interactions, and maximize customer retention and engagement (Apryadhi et al., 2024; Tinonetsana and Msosa, 2023). Moreover, it is essential to invest in well-developed logistics, individual marketing approaches, and improved online customer services to leverage the long-term move to online consumption in the new markets (Eriksson and Stenius, 2020; Urbonavicius and Sakalauske, 2023). To policymakers, their changing trends are essential in formulating conducive regulatory measures that strengthen e-commerce expansion and at the same time protection of consumers and digital equity. The lessons learned during this study can be used when developing efforts to address the digital divide, enhance financial accessibility by adopting digital payment platforms, and develop a strong digital economy in the emerging markets. Moreover, the further data about the behavioral inertia after the pandemic point to the stagnation of online spending, which once again proves that companies should be innovative and be ready to keep the customers interested in acquiring new products and services to avoid returning to the previous patterns of consumption before the crisis (Qaiser et al., 2023).

Limitations and Future Research

Cross-Market Generalizability:

The company should have the capability to generalize its strategies to other markets. The main weakness of the current studies is the poor applicability of results to new markets. There is evidence that online consumer behaviour is strongly influenced by cultural differences and standardized uneven digital infrastructure, which

implies that comparative, cross-country analyses are essential to delineate how the patterns are general and context-specific (Ahmed and Kumari, 2022; Hashem, 2020).

Limitations of Data and Methods:

The common use of self-reported data can result in recall bias. It is recommended that future research should include transactional or behavioral data to make the results more objective and reliable (Inoue & Todo, 2023).

Dynamic Retail Processes and Customer Loyalty:

More studies need to be conducted to learn the long-term implications of the changing supply chain and growing competition in e-commerce on consumer loyalty and buying behaviors (Alwan et al., 2023).

Technology Implications: Policy Implications:

The impact of the use of advanced technologies, including AI personalization, and augmented reality on long-term engagement on the online platform and regulatory and policy framework may help to gain a better understanding of the future development of e-commerce in emerging markets (Alshohaib, 2024; Gazi et al., 2024).

Conclusion

This study highlights important insights into post-COVID online shopping behavior in emerging markets while also identifying areas that require further investigation. Consumer behavior in these markets is strongly influenced by cultural differences and unequal access to digital infrastructure, which limits the broader applicability of current findings. Future research should therefore compare multiple emerging economies to better distinguish shared trends from market-specific behaviors. In addition, greater use of objective data, such as actual purchase records, would improve the accuracy of consumer behavior analysis. The long-term effects of changing supply chains and increasing competition among e-commerce platforms also warrant closer examination, particularly in relation to consumer loyalty. Moreover, continued technological advancements, including personalized digital experiences, are likely to shape future online engagement. Finally, understanding the role of regulatory and policy environments is essential, as these factors significantly influence the development and sustainability of e-commerce markets.

This research, therefore, contributes significantly to understanding the long-term implications of crisis-induced digital transformation, particularly within the dynamic context of emerging economies.

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