

Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Impulsive Buying Behaviour for Domestic Brands

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Abstract

Consumers' lifestyles and shopping patterns are disrupted by pandemics like COVID-19, which has a negative influence on the global economy. Consumer purchases of a country's own brand and products created in that country contribute significantly to that country's GDP and aid in the recovery of that country's economy. During the first phase of the corona virus lockdown citizens in India faced unique scenarios, resulting in an unexpected shift in consumer preferences. The goal of this research is to identify what factors influence a consumer's buying behaviour while making a brand purchase decision, and to apply linear regression model to figure out what those factors are. Consumers have started preferring the value of cleanliness in products, environmentally friendly products, regional (local) products, and satisfaction beyond shopping during the pandemic. According to the findings of this study, these aspects determine their desire to buy Indian brands and items made-in-India. Furthermore, following the lockdown and the COVID era, customers believe that purchasing Indian-made products and encouraging others to do so will positively benefit and revitalise the Indian economy. The findings of this study can help marketing managers to develop proper promotion techniques to encourage ethnocentric tendencies, and cues can be offered to elicit a sense of economic nationalism in customers when they buy products or services.

Keywords: *global economy, ethnocentric tendencies, impulsive buying behaviour, purchase decision*

Introduction

The COVID-19 epidemic presented the globe with a unique challenge. China was the first country to experience a large-scale outbreak of the novel Corona virus (Bennett, 2020), and the virus quickly spread over the world. The World Health Organization's Director-General designated the corona virus epidemic a "pandemic" on March 11, 2020. (WHO, 2020). Due to the lack of a vaccine to prevent the spread of the highly contagious virus COVID-19, countries all over the world have been compelled to take preventative measures such as social distancing and proclaiming country-wide lockdowns (Kaplan et al., 2020). Cross-border travel was banned, production was halted, and the entire supply chain came to a halt. Because India is the world's second most populous country, social distancing was a difficult assignment. On March 24,

2020, India's Prime Minister announced a 21-day state-wide lockdown to protect the country's 1.3 billion people from infection. On March 22, 2020, after 14 hours of voluntary public curfew, known as Janata (people) Curfew, a decision was made (The Economic Times, 2020)

Unemployment, uncertainty, and economic recession are common in pandemic-affected areas. Due to the uncertainty and unpredictability of pandemic events, people take precautions to lessen their perceived danger (Brug et al., 2009). During the swine flu outbreak, there was an increase in the purchasing of meals, face masks, and hand sanitizers (Goodwin et al., 2009). Citizens in India faced unique scenarios during the first phase of the corona virus lockdown, resulting in an unexpected shift in consumer preferences. Essential and non-essential commodities were separated, with only essential things available to citizens and no need for lifestyle products (Enormous, 2020). Another unusual behaviour was observed when people all over the world vented their feelings against China because they believed the country had not taken appropriate precautionary measures to prevent the epidemic from spreading. Furthermore, China was reopening its companies while other parts of the world, including India, were forced to adhere to a lockdown, which had a negative impact on the economy.

Furthermore, Indians became concerned about losing their jobs as a result of the economic slowdown (Ganesh, 2020). Many countries around the world have a strong sense of nationalism. People began to discuss the need of being self-sufficient and lessening reliance on China, which is regarded as the world's manufacturing hub. Even before the pandemic, the globe appeared to be drifting away from globalisation and toward localisation (Oba, 2020). As a result of global events such as Brexit, populism has risen, accompanied by anti-foreigner sentiments in a number of European countries. Previously, this was more evident in China, where multinational corporations such as Amazon were forced to exit the Chinese market due to the Chinese government's China First policy; in the United States, the Trump administration's America First policy caused the rest of the world to turn inward and strengthen their economies, giving rise to nationalism (Oba, 2020).

During the nationwide shutdown, there were changes in the type of commodities purchased, as well as the adoption of digital payment, particularly in emerging countries like India (Enormous, 2020). As a result, there is a need to comprehend new consumer behaviour in terms of new theories, marketing techniques in the post-COVID-19 environment, and variables influencing customers while purchasing goods or services following the lockdown. Because it's impossible to predict when the globe will be free of this contagious

virus, the current study encompassed both COVID-19 and post-COVID-19 timeframes. The study aims to address research questions based on three significant developments that occurred during the lockdown: First, economic activity came to a total standstill, signalling the economy's negative impact. As a result, it is necessary to investigate how citizens feel about the economy and who they believe should contribute to its recovery. Second, given the financial implications, would customers continue to buy on impulse or shift to planned behaviour? Would people be more ready to buy things from their own country, demonstrating their ethnocentrism? Has the mandate to stay at home changed how they think about work?

The study of individuals or groups who are looking to buy, use, assess, and dispose of things and services to meet their requirements is known as consumer behaviour (Rajagopal , 2020) It also entails researching the customer's emotional, mental, and behavioural responses that occur before or after these activities (Kardes , 2011). Consumer behaviour changes can be caused by a variety of causes, including personal, economic, psychological, cultural, and societal aspects. However, in severe situations such as a disease outbreak or a natural disaster, some elements have a greater impact on consumer behaviour than others. Situations that have the potential to disrupt people's social life or endanger their health have been shown to cause significant behavioural changes (Leach, 1994). Panic buying, for example, is a phenomenon that occurs when fear and panic impact behaviour, causing people to spend more than usual. Panic buying, in particular, has been defined as a herd behaviour in which people purchase a large number of things in anticipation of, during, or after a tragedy. When negative emotions like fear and worry hamper purchase decisions, similar changes in consumer behaviour occur, according to a recent analysis on the psychological reasons of panic buying (Yuen , 2020). Lins and Aquino (2020) found that panic buying was positively correlated with impulse buying in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Impulse buying has been defined as a complex buying behaviour in which the rapidity of the decision process precludes thoughtful and deliberate consideration of alternative information and choice. The study of the various psychological elements that influence consumer behaviour and purchase decisions is still a relatively unexplored field. During a potentially life-threatening circumstance, such as a health crisis or a pandemic, the primitive part of our brain is thought to become more prominent, prompting people to participate in activities that are (considered to be) vital for survival (Dodgson , 2020). Importantly, these instinctive actions can overrule logical decision-making, having a significant impact on typical consumer behaviour. As a result, the main component responsible for changes in consumer behaviour during a health crisis is humans' basic primal response. Fear and anxiety, which stem from emotions of insecurity and instability, are the driving forces behind these behavioural changes. Previous research have indicated that external

events that threaten an individual's safety stimulate compensatory reaction mechanisms to alleviate fear and anxiety, in line with the terror management theory (Greenberg, 1997). Individuals may be prompted to make purchases in order to achieve a sense of stability, comfort, and temporary escape, which can also function as a stress-relieving method. However, because buying motivation is an attempt to control people's bad feelings, the real necessity for the things purchased is frequently irrelevant (Kennett-Hensel PA, 2012).

Pandemics and natural disasters are highly stressful situations that can quickly trigger unpleasant emotions and severe mental health states. Core elements of emergency situations, such as perceived lack of control and unpredictability, contribute directly to stress. As a result, research has revealed that stress plays a significant role in shaping consumer behaviour. Individuals may retreat and become passive in reaction to stress, according to previous research, and this inaction can contribute to a drop in purchasing power (Henry, 1993). However, some research suggests that stress might trigger an active reaction, resulting in more impulsive spending (Burroughs, 2002). Furthermore, event-induced stress might result in a melancholy state of mind. In some situations, a depressed mood can lead to the development of dysfunctional consumer behaviour, such as impulsive (a sudden impulse to buy something accompanied by an exaggerated emotional response) and/or compulsive buying (repeated purchasing owing to an inability to resist the temptation (2005, Duhachek).

Literature Reviews

People began expressing their thanks to hospital staff (Lane, 2020) and neighbourhood kirana (grocery) stores for giving them with critical items for survival, according to various updates from around the world. The behaviour of residents expressed a sense of nationalism. Because of the increasing risk of unemployment owing to a big downturn in the global economy, the emphasis during the epidemic was on saving money (Holz, 2020). The literature overview on consumer ethnocentrism and attitude toward foreign products (ATFP), nationalism, and impulsive buying is presented in the next section.

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Consumer Ethnocentrism

Consumer ethnocentrism is founded on three points of view: first, the consumer's fear of causing economic harm to his or her own country by purchasing foreign goods; second, the morality of purchasing imported goods; and third, a personal prejudice against imports (Sharma et al., 1995). As a result, ethnocentric consumers believe that buying imported goods is unpatriotic, leads to job losses, and harms the domestic economy. Non-ethnocentric consumers, on the other hand, judge foreign products solely on their merits, regardless of where they are manufactured (Shanka Mahesh, 2006). The 17-item consumer ethnocentrism tendencies scale (CETSCALE) developed by Shimp and Sharma (1987) is widely used and verified from multinational perspectives to measure consumer ethnocentric tendency, which refers to consumers' preference for their own country-of-origin products. Consumer ethnocentrism is a construct in which native items are favoured over international ones. A 6-item version of the CETSCALE was designed to measure this construct (Klein et al., 2006). The ethnocentric emotions of Australian customers have been linked to their demographic profile and the prospect of losing their jobs (Josiassen et al., 2011). Consumer ethnocentrism has a considerable impact on domestic brand purchases, but only a minor impact on consumer purchase intentions for foreign companies. Ethnocentrism in product advertising may not stimulate the purchase of domestic products, but it may discourage the purchase of international brands (Han & Guo, 2018).

Some studies show a favourable attitude toward domestic products (Bannister & Saunders, 1978; Baughn & Yaprak, 1996; Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Batra et al., 2000), while others show a favourable attitude toward foreign products (Bannister & Saunders, 1978; Baughn & Yaprak, 1996; Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Batra et al., 2000). (Cleveland et al., 2009; Bartsch et al., 2016). Because of their attraction to foreign countries and self-identification with global consumers, consumers in developing and rising economies choose international brands; a cosmopolitan consumer who wants novelty and wishes to be globally linked has an affinity for foreign products (Bartsch et al., 2016; Cleveland et al., 2009; Strizhakova & Coulter,

2015; Zeugner-Roth et al., 2015). Foreign-made products are preferred over native brands in durable consumer goods and luxury goods because they are connected with higher perceived quality and symbolic value (Batra et al., 2000; Zhou et al., 2010). While low-involvement products, particularly food, have shown less affinity (Zsomer, 2012). The setting has a big impact on how people react to foreign products. In the current study, two questions on willingness to buy Indian brands, two questions on ATRP, and six questions on product categories where consumers would prefer to buy Indian brands or made in-India products were asked, taking cues from previous studies to measure the influence of ethnocentrism on purchase decisions during pandemic and post-pandemic situations.

Impulse Buying Behaviour

Unplanned purchase—purchasing a new product without any past experience—is what Stern (1962) defined as impulsive buying. Impulse buying is a complicated behaviour that is impacted by factors such as the consumer's demographic profile (Dittmar et al., 1995) and in-store stimuli such as point-of-purchase posters and other features of the retail store environment that elicit a favourable emotional response (Abratt & Goodey, 1990; Zhou & Wong, 2004). Involvement in the product affects emotions during shopping (Youn & Faber, 2000) and product-specific impulse buying. Signs, displays, and packaging at the point of purchase, according to Peck and Childers (2006), encourage a touch of the goods, which is important for impulse purchases and money availability. Individuals who desire diversity have a higher proclivity for spontaneous purchases (Sharma et al., 2010). In several nations, panic buying was evident during the pandemic, leading in hoarding of goods like as food (Wang & Na, 2020), cleaning and hygiene products, and medicines (Islam et al., 2020). Only four out of ten Danish and British shoppers did not do any extra shopping during the early stages of the epidemic, according to a poll conducted to assess the stockpiling behaviour of shoppers during the early stages of the pandemic (Dammeyer, 2020). According to Ganesh (2020), consumers may not have a lot of spare cash or may be very cautious about how they spend it. As a result, after the lockdown is lifted, shoppers may refrain from making impulse purchases. In the short term, they may prefer need-based scheduled shopping. In the long run, though, they may return to inspirational purchasing. With this assumption in mind, the current study looked into three issues about post-lockdown need-based and planned purchases (NBPPL). In addition, five questions were given to assess customer impulsive purchase behaviour prior to the lockdown to see if the lockdown had caused any behavioural changes. The mandated stay-at-home mandate has provided ample opportunity for people to consider environmental issues. Thus, the purpose of this study was to see if lockdown emotions and sustainable (LSSA) living had an impact on the WBIB.

Objective of the Study and Methodology

The goal of the study was to see if the stay-at-home mandate has caused any changes in consumer buying behaviour as a result of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as the elements that will impact purchase decisions once economic activity resumes. During the second and third weeks of the lockdown, from March 30, 2020 and April 18, 2020, data was collected online utilising a standardised questionnaire in a unique context. The respondents had already experienced the lockdown and were aware of the pandemic's potential impact on the global economy as well as its implications for the Indian economy. The questionnaire contained questions about unplanned purchases before and after the COVID-19 situation; ethnocentric purchase behaviour. Data was collected using simple random sampling and snowball sampling. The respondents were contacted by sending survey links via email and social media sites including WhatsApp and Facebook. Although 267 replies were received, the response rate was only 50%, which is a drawback of conducting an online survey. Out of these, 250 consumers were selected for the study.

Hypothesis

H₀₁: There is no significant impact of COVID-19 on Impulsive Buying Behaviour for Domestic Brands.

Table 1: Model Summary on Impulsive Buying Behaviour for Domestic Brands

					Change Statistics				
					R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.632 ^a	.399	.398	2.29396	.399	430.126	1	248	.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), COVID-19

b. Dependent Variable: Impulsive Buying Behaviour

Over all model summary shows the value of linear correlation coefficient $R=0.632$, it is the linear correlation coefficient between observed and model predicted values of the dependent variable, Its large value indicates a positive relationship. R^2 , the coefficient of determination is the squared value of the multiple correlation coefficients. Adjusted $R^2=0.398$, R^2 change is also 0.399 and these values are significant which shows that overall strength of association is noteworthy. The coefficient of determination R^2 is 0.399 therefore, 39.9% of the variation in Impulsive Buying Behaviour of consumers for domestic brands is explained by Covid-19 Pandemic. Hence, in this context, the null hypothesis stands rejected.

Results and Discussion

According to the study's findings, the COVID-19 epidemic has caused customers to practise economic nationalism by purchasing Indian brands in electronic home products, personal electronic products, fashion products, and cosmetic products. These findings are consistent with the findings of the Castelló and Mihelj (2018) study, which claims that when individuals experience feelings of nationalism, they begin to consume nationalised items. It also supports the assertion that economic and socio-psychological factors have a significant effect in a consumer's preference for home-grown brands (Verlegh, 2007). Furthermore, the findings of this study show that customers have acknowledged the importance of cleanliness products, environmentally friendly products, regional (local) items, and satisfaction beyond shopping; these variables influence their WBIB / made-in-India purchases. Furthermore, they believe that purchasing Indian-made products and encouraging others to do so will positively impact and reinvigorate the Indian economy. A study by Castelló and Mihelj (2018) makes a similar argument, stating that national products and services are designed to produce money for the country and have an impact on the economy. Consumer ATRP, such as avoiding and propagating foreign-made products, positively promotes the purchase pattern of Indian-made products, demonstrates ethnocentric behaviour, and displays economic nationalism among Indians, according to the current study.

Conclusion

The COVID-19 epidemic has presented the world with enormous problems and ushered in a new way of life. Most countries imposed a lockdown to stop the virus from spreading, resulting in job losses, uncertainty, and economic downturn. Countries began to consider manufacturing goods and services on their own, lessening their reliance on other countries. India is no exception, and has begun to promote the manufacture and purchasing of goods and services made in the country. This has a significant impact on consumer purchasing decisions. According to the findings, the COVID-19 lockdown has sparked economic nationalism among Indian consumers, resulting in a rise in WBIB. This was predominantly driven by ATRP, which was precipitated by the epidemic. The study's findings can help marketing managers develop proper promotion techniques to encourage ethnocentric tendencies, and cues can be offered to elicit a sense of economic nationalism in customers when they buy products or services.

Limitations and Future Scope

The research was conducted in India from March to April 2020 and revealed the attitudes of Indian customers. However, because of the limited sample size, the findings cannot be applied to the entire country. Since the lockdown in many regions of the country lasted until May 2020, attitudes may have

shifted over that time, which might be reflected in behaviour shifts. The lockdown was lifted in June 2020, and markets began to reopen; this may have resulted in other behavioural shifts. In the future, similar research could be conducted to determine the actual change in behaviour. These are exceptional times, and more research from other countries is needed to gain insight into customer attitudes and determine whether consumer behaviour in different countries is similar or different. This can help marketing managers of country-of-origin products and brands, as well as managers of multinational brands, maintain their market share.

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