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**ASSIGNMENT TITLE: CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

**Question**

In not less than 2000 words, Explain explicitly how the Pandemic (COVID 19) has affected consumer buying behavior.

**Answer**

This manuscript aims at exploring the concept of consumer behavior and the numerous factors that can influence or affect consumer behavior. The focal point of this essay will be primarily on the effects of the corona virus (COVID-19) pandemic on consumer buying behavior.

Two friends walk into a restaurant and order completely different meals from one another. One of them orders a diet coke and a salad, the other orders a can of soda and a cheese burger. Now, the friend who ordered the salad could have chosen a vegetarian meal for a variety of reasons including, health related purposes, religion and even individual perceptions. A look at this hypothetical scenario will indicate one thing; consumers have different motives for buying items to satisfy a wide variety of needs. These needs differ according to several things such as; cultures, economic situations, perceptions and so on. It is then in a bid to understand these various motives that lead individuals to purchase different things that we then study consumer behavior. The study of consumer behavior not only helps to understand the past but even predict the future.

According to ***Ecommerce Growth***, Consumer behavior is defined as the study of consumers and the processes they use to choose, use (consume), and dispose of products and services, including consumers’ emotional, mental, and behavioral responses. Consumer behavior incorporates ideas from several sciences including psychology, biology, chemistry, and economics. Consumer behavior can therefore be defined as the dynamic inter-function of effects and cognition, behavior and the environment by which beings conduct the exchange aspect of their lives. Be it to mean that consumer behavior is also the thoughts and feelings of people’s experience and the action they exhibit, perform during the process of consumption. This definition was given by the ***American Marketing Association (AMA).*** It can also be defined “as the study of how consumers select, purchase, use and dispose of goods and services to satisfy personal needs, household needs or industrial needs”. Another definition of consumer behavior can be seen as a body of knowledge or discipline and the study of the decision making processes and all the acts of both the immediate and final users in the purchase and consumption of goods and services.

Consumers and buyers encounter many circumstances and factors before deciding on what to buy, where to buy and what quantity to buy. A consumer buying behavior and choice is influenced and driven by a number of factors that surround him and his immediate environment.. Some of these factors include: culture, social class, reference groups, opinion leaders, the family, the media and internet, economic situations like (inflation, deflation and pandemics or epidemics)

As aforementioned, this essay has as its focal point, the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has affected consumer buying behavior but before the pandemic is discussed, this paper will briefly explore other factors apart from the pandemic that can influence consumer buying behavior.

Consumer buying behavior can be influenced by a number of things like:

* Culture: culture is simply a way of life of a certain group of people. Different countries have different culture all around the world. Marketers must understand the diversities of cultures in different parts of the world in order to produce what they need to be satisfied.
* Social class: ones class in society depends on the position he occupies in the society and this can influence the group buying behaviors.
* The media and the internet: the media and the internet and what we see in them, their advertisement tends to influence our buying behaviors.
* Opinion leaders: opinion leaders are those people, first buyers, trendsetters or pacesetters who first purchase new products before others in ad tends to influence others to purchase the product. In today’s society, they can be referred to as ‘social media influencers’.
* Economic situations or global situations: it is under this category that we find things like inflation, deflation and pandemics (corona virus) which is the centre of this essay.

The corona virus was first identified in Wuhan, china. The COVID-19 virus is a new virus linked to the same family of viruses as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) and some types of common cold. COVID-19 has been since described as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO). . A pandemic is the global outbreak of a disease. The World Health Organization on the 12th of March, 2020 declared the rapidly spreading [corona virus outbreak](https://www.statnews.com/tag/coronavirus/) a pandemic, acknowledging what has seemed clear for some time — the virus will likely spread to all countries on the globe.  Ever since the declaration by world health organization, and along with the corona virus cases spiking higher every day, human beings are resulting into a state of what we can term ‘panic’. The panic is somewhat understandable as there is still no exact cure for the disease. People have just been advised on some precautionary steps they can take to avoid the disease like; frequent washing and sanitizing of hands using alcohol based sanitizers and soaps, drinking of water every 15 minutes, social distancing i.e. maintaining at least 2 meters distance between individuals and so on.

To reiterate, Consumer Buying Behavior refers to the actions taken (both on and offline) by consumers before buying a product or service. This process may include consulting search engines, engaging with social media posts, or a variety of other actions.

Some countries in the world like the U.S.A, Nigeria, and United Kingdom amongst others have imposed a compulsory quarantine on most parts of the country as a method of curbing the number of cases that are likely to occur. Citizens are advised to stay in their homes and avoid gatherings with many people in a bid to curtail the spread of the disease. Schools have been shut down; employed people are being asked to work from their houses. All these recent developments are then causing people to do what has been termed ‘panic buying and stock piling’. It is here that we can see the effect the pandemic has on consumer buying behavior.

The first effect of the pandemic on consumer buying behavior that will be addressed in this essay is **panic buying and stock piling**. Panic buying is a situation in which many people suddenly buy as much food, groceries etc. as they can because they are worried about something bad that may happen. The pandemic has affected consumer buying behavior in such a way that people are now beginning to buy a lot more food and groceries than usual because of fear the pandemic. The government and other world organizations have been unable to come up with a cure for the disease and the cases are also spiking higher every day. This very situation is instilling fear and panic in the minds of people especially those in high risk countries like the United States of America and this is causing people to hoard a lot of food and grocery in their homes should the pandemic eventually get worse. A commodity like toilet paper is constantly being sold out in the United States currently.

The compulsory quarantine that is being imposed in a bid to tame the spread of the disease is also causing consumers to change their buying behavior from a ‘face-to-face’ way of purchasing items to a ‘face-to-screen’ way. People are now resulting to online shopping to reduce the number of human contact they have. Delivery companies are currently being used to deliver the items that were bought online to the consumers. According to a research carried out by ***Criteo,*** In the US online purchases of shelf-stable grocery items have grown substantially in the last few days, including Rice (+432%), Flour (+423%), Canned & Jarred Vegetables (+337%), Canned & Prepared Beans (+433%), and Canned & Dry Milk (+378%) compared to the first four weeks of January.

Another effect that the pandemic has had on consumer buying behavior is that people are beginning to purchase items like face masks, gloves, disinfectant sprays and wipes, alcohol based hand sanitizers and alcohol based soaps **irrespective of their prices**. Ever since the World Health Organization (WHO) advised that people begin using alcohol based washing soaps and sanitizers, there has been a very great increase in the demand for the product and other related products. The high demand is resulting in a sort of scarcity of the commodities which is in turn causing there to be an increase in the prices for these commodities in some places. Irrespective of the surge in prices, people are still purchasing these commodities in order to ensure that they remain clean and sanitary at all times. Consumer buying behavior is now somewhat changing as consumers are buying these commodities at prices that under normal circumstances they would not buy. Just like the increase in demand for sanitizers, there has also been an increase in demand for some medical supplies as people have been advised by some to take care of themselves at home when they fall slightly ill and only go to hospitals when they feel as though their ailment was getting worse. The reason for this is simply because the chances of contracting the virus when visiting hospitals are quite above average. It will be a disaster to go to the hospital to treat a little sore throat and end up contracting the virus. In Italy, people have prepared to take good care of themselves at home after a partial lockdown on February 25th. Sales of Medical Supplies spiked by +286% in early March. France, which has enacted a country-wide quarantine, saw sales of medical supplies outpace even food products in early March, rising by nearly +600%.

Another way the COVID-19 pandemic has affected consumer buying behavior has been effectualized through the internet and the media. Owing to the fact that we are in the 21st century, information is spread quite quickly. The information that is passed is however not always 100 true. Now, consumer buying behavior has changed in such a way that the second any information is passed through the internet on any item that could possibly prevent the virus, people begin to rush that commodity. There was some information that was passed but has since been refuted by doctors that consuming boiled ginger can cure and prevent the novel corona virus infections. This caused a surge in the demand for ginger during that period. Also, there has been a global surge in demand for drugs normally used against malaria like chloroquine to tackle the corona virus, as governments urgently seek out treatments for the new disease. The pandemic has created a buying behavior where any item that is perceived to help in the fight against the disease is immediately purchased irrespective for the price of the commodity. In relation to health, consumers are beginning to buy healthy fruits like lemon and lime and other vegetables in a bid to keep their immune systems up. The World Health Organization advised that this is the best time to work on improving your immune system as that would make one less vulnerable to the novel corona virus and so there has been an increase in the purchase of fruits and vegetables. Consumers who regularly purchase junk foods and other unhealthy snacks are now shifting to buy a lot more healthy fruits and vegetables.

With the above research work that has been carried out during the course of this essay, this writer opines that the effect that the pandemic has had on consumer buying behavior is a rather impactful one. It can be noted that the consumer buying behavior of purchasing commodities through face-to-face means, that is, going to crowded markets and supermarkets is drastically changing as people are now mainly resulting to online shopping because of the imposed quarantine and also fear of contracting the virus in crowded places. Consumers are also buying some particular commodities irrespective of the prices. This is different from the pre-corona virus era where a spike in the price of a commodity will result in little to no purchase of that commodity.

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