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**QUESTION**

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

**References**

1. [www.omniconvert.com](http://www.omniconvert.com)
2. [www.contentserv.com](http://www.contentserv.com)
3. [www.aljazeera.com](http://www.aljazeera.com)

**INTRODUCTION**

Consumer behavior is 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. It is the study of how consumers select, purchase, use and dispose of goods and services to satisfy personal needs, household needs or industrial needs.

It could also be said to be referred to the buying behavior of the ultimate consumer. The American Marketing Association (AMA) defines it as the dynamic inter-function of effects and cognition, behavior and the environment by which beings conduct the exchange aspect of their lives. There are many factors which influence consumer behavior, some of which are;

1. Personal factors such as consumer own thinking feelings and desire for the product
2. Environmental factors such as social influences – personal group, culture, family, opinion leader, psychological and perception.

Now these factors can boil down to six classifications;

1. The consumer’s decision, desire to buy or n to buy a product and the factors that influences him to take such a decision
2. The motives for his buying or not to buy the general or specific good which the product will serve to him
3. The benefits the consumer gets from the purchase and consumption of the product.
4. The choice of alternative products, the evaluation and the decision of a brand out of similar brands
5. The search for information pertaining to the product and the choice of selection of the right information that led to the decision

f. The purchase, post purchase, after sales feelings and services of the products.

**Types of buying behavior**

1. Complex buying behavior: This type of behavior is encountered when consumers are buying an expensive, infrequently bought product. They are highly involved in the purchase process and consumers’ research before committing to invest.
2. Dissonance reducing buying behavior: in this kind of behavior, the consumer is highly involved in the purchase process but has difficulties determining the differences between brands. Dissonance can occur when the consumer worries that they will regret their choice.
3. Habitual buying behavior: here, purchases are characterized by the fact that the consumer has very little involvement in the product or brand category. Imagine grocery shopping: you go to the store and buy your preferred type of bread. You are exhibiting a habitual pattern, not strong brand loyalty.
4. Variety seeking behavior: in this situation, a consumer purchases a different product not because they weren’t satisfied with the previous one, but because they seek variety.

**What are the things that affect consumer behavior?**

There are a lot of factors which influence consumer behavior, some of these factors influencing consumer behavior are:

1. Marketing campaigns: marketing campaigns influence purchasing decisions a lot. If they are done in the right way and with the right marketing message, they can persuade consumers to change from their former brands or even go for more expensive alternatives. They can even be used as reminders for products that need to be bought regularly but are not necessarily on the mind of the consumers.
2. Economic conditions: for expensive products like houses or cars, economic conditions play a big part. A positive economic environment is known to make consumers more confident and willing to indulge in purchases irrespective of their personal financial liabilities.
3. Personal preferences: Consumer behavior can also be influenced by personal factors, likes, dislikes, priorities, morals, and values. In industries like fashion or food personal opinions are especially powerful. Advertisement can, of course, help but at the end of the day consumers choices are greatly influenced by their preferences. For example a Christian woman will under no circumstances buy a hijab no matter how beautiful or attractive it may look.
4. Group influence: peer pressure can also influence consumer behavior. What our family members, classmates, immediate relatives, neighbors, and acquaintances think or do can play a significant role in our decisions
5. Purchasing power: our purchasing power plays a significant role in influencing our behavior. A person who is not excessively rich will definitely take his budget into consideration before making a purchase decision. It doesn’t really matter how good or effective a product is, if there is no money to purchase the good it will be useless to the consumer.

**HOW HAS THE PANDMIC (COVID19) AFFECTED CONSUMER BEHAVIOR**

The coronavirus disease 19 (COVID-19) is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in Wuhan, China and spread around the world. Genomic analysis revealed that SARS-CoV-2 is phylogenetically related to severe acute respiratory syndrome-like (SARS-like) bat viruses, therefore bats could be the possible primary reservoir. The intermediate source of origin and transfer to humans is not known, however, the rapid human to human transfer has been confirmed widely. There is no clinically approved antiviral drug or vaccine available to be used against COVID-19. The 2019 Corona virus disease is a pandemic that has affected at least 184 countries of the world with 1,432,577 confirmed cases, 82,195 deaths and 301,649 recoveries as at April 8, 2020. The virus started in the city of Wuhan in China and china has reported 82,718 cases and 3,335 deaths. A lot of countries in Europe and North America have reported thousands of cases. Countries like Italy, The United States of America, United Kingdom, France, Spain, Germany etc have had the worst hits so far. Many states in these countries have been placed on lockdown to prevent further spread of the virus. African countries haven’t had many reported cases with the highest being South Africa with 1,749 reported cases and 13 deaths as at April 08, 2020. In Nigeria, there have been 254 confirmed cases with 6 deaths and 44 recoveries as at April 8, 2020. Most countries have initiated a lockdown in areas majorly affected by the virus like in Nigeria, Abuja and Lagos have been placed on a 14 days lockdown.

 A Nielsen research that was conducted at the beginning of the pandemic in China and extended to other countries that were also affected by the virus studied the behavior and response of consumers to the ongoing pandemic. They monitored consumer trends, as COVID-19 news reached the general public and found out that consumers go through six behavioral stages based on their awareness of the COVID-19 spread in their communities:

1. **Proactive health-minded buying:** there was an increased interest in the acquisition of products that maintain well-being or health such as fruits and supplements to boost the immune system.

2. **Reactive health management: there was** prioritization of products for infection containment such as hand sanitizers, face masks, disinfectants etc.

3. **Pantry preparation:** Higher purchases of shelf-safe products and increased store visits

4. **Quarantined living preparation:** Increase in online shopping, decrease in visits to malls and stores and the first signs of strain on the supply chain

5. **Restricted living:** inflation of the prices of goods and products by marketers and sellers due to limited supplies, growing increase in demand and deterred online fulfillment.

6. **Living a new normal:** this is the final stage where everything begins to go back to normal as there is increase in health awareness, reduction in cases as people begin to return to their typical daily activities.

This pandemic has affected the buying behavior of consumers all over the world. Things that people would not buy on a normal day have become the things that people are scrambling for and doing everything possible to ensure that they have. Because the virus is a respiratory disease which is transmitted by fluid coming out the mouth, personal hygiene is key to preventing the spread of this virus and as a result of this, there has been increase in the purchase of goods and products for personal hygiene such as soap, disinfectants, tissue papers, face masks and hand sanitizers. Manufacturing companies have had to speed up the manufacturing process of these items because of the rapidly growing increase in demand of these goods. People have also started buying supplements rich in Vitamin C that can help boost their immune system.

A lot of stores have reported running out of all these items because of the way the customers rush these things. It has also been reported here in Nigeria that stores have inflated the prices of these items as a result of the high demand for these things. But despite the increase in prices, people still buy these goods because they have become a necessity for them. A lot of people even buy them in large quantities and stock their houses with these products.

It has also affected the eating habit of most people. Because it is necessary to have a strong immunity which will fight off the virus, a lot of people have switched to eating healthier meals and consuming more fruits. Although people still buy junk foods, there has been an increase in the demand for fruits especially those high in vitamin C such as oranges, lemon, lime and the like. And also, as a result of the lockdown that is being imposed in many major cities, people have started stockpiling and hoarding goods/products in their houses in order to avoid going out into the streets. Pictures and videos on the internet portrayed empty shelves in stores and malls as a result of panic shopping. A lot of people have also indulged in the habit of ordering stuffs online instead of going out to the market or stores to get them. They prefer to order for these from stores online and have them delivered to their door steps because that way they can avoid being on the street which exposes them to the danger of contacting the virus. Some of them even go ahead to get groceries online.

Restaurants have also been affected as people no longer want to eat outside of their homes to avoid contacting the corona virus disease. They prefer to eat their own home cooked meal and for cities where the lockdown has been initiated they have no choice but to eat at home because they cannot step outside their homes.

There has also been an increase in the use of digital technology which is as a result of people being forced to stay indoors all day. Statistics showed that Netflix is one of the companies to benefit the most from this corona virus pandemic as a lot of people have resorted to watching movies all through their stat at home. Telecommunication companies have also benefitted a lot as people now spend more time on their phones as they have nothing else to do. Online stores such as Amazon, Ali express and the rest have also benefitted a lot because there have been more people buying things from online stores as people are trying their best to avoid the streets. Airline companies are suffering as they have less passengers booking for flights because people no longer want to travel as it was as a result of travels that caused the fast transmission of the virus. Another contributing factor to this is also as a result of the fact that a lot of countries have placed travel ban restrictions on flights coming in from other countries especially countries with large number of reported cases.

Also, since the pandemic started there have been less people buying and purchasing luxuries such as clothes, shoes, cars, bags etc. apart from the lockdown factor which is preventing people from going out to purchase these things, most people no longer care about any of those things. They are more concerned about staying alive and surviving the pandemic as the cars and other luxuries can wait.

In conclusion, the corona virus (COVID19) has affected the buying habit of consumers as we have more people buying things which are considered as a necessity while the purchase of other things have been placed on hold.