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**ASSIGNMENT:** IN NOT LESS THAN 2000 WORDS, EXPLAIN EXPLICITLY HOW THE PANDEMIC [COVID 19] HAS AFFECTED CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR

**INTRODUCTION**

**WHAT IS CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR?**

Consumer behaviour can therefore 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.

Consumer behaviour could also be said to be referred to the buying behaviour of the ultimate consumer. The term Consumer behaviour can be seen as those acts of individuals and organizations directly involved in obtaining and using economic goods and services, including the decision processes that follows and determines the acts. This motion encompasses those acts of before purchase and after sales of both intermediate and final users.

Another definition of Consumer behaviour 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.

Consumer Behaviour according to the American Marketing Association [AMA] defines Consumer behaviour as the dynamic inter-function of effects and cognition, behaviour and the environment by which beings conduct the exchange aspect of their lives. Be it to mean that Consumer behaviour is also the thoughts and feelings of people’s experience and the action they exhibit, perform during the process of consumption.

**WHO IS A CONSUMER?**

A consumer is a private person, or a corporate body of any organization, nation who as an end user buys a product from a seller, or uses goods or services bought through an agent. The consumer is one who sees a product, has the cash and willingness to buy and consume the product. The consumer may be seen by marketers as a consumer if he buys a product for consumption or use without selling it. It is very difficult for the marketer to automatically discover who a consumer is until a deal is closed or the cash bell rings, or the buyer discloses his personality at the point of buying.

**WHAT IS CORONA VIRUS?**

**Corona virus is** a type of common virus that infects humans, typically leading to an [upper respiratory infection](https://www.medicinenet.com/upper_respiratory_infection/article.htm) (URI.)  Seven different types of human coronavirus have been identified. Most people will be infected with at least one type of coronavirus in their lifetime. The [viruses](https://www.medicinenet.com/viral_infections_pictures_slideshow/article.htm) are spread through the air by [coughing](https://www.medicinenet.com/chronic_cough/article.htm) and [sneezing](https://www.medicinenet.com/sneezing/symptoms.htm), close personal contact, touching an object or surface contaminated with the virus and rarely, by fecal contamination. The illness caused by most coronaviruses usually lasts a short time and is characterized by [runny nose](https://www.medicinenet.com/runny_nose/symptoms.htm), [sore throat](https://www.medicinenet.com/sore_throat_pharyngitis/article.htm), feeling unwell, [cough](https://www.medicinenet.com/chronic_cough/article.htm), and [fever](https://www.medicinenet.com/aches_pain_fever/article.htm). Coronavirus is any virus belonging to the family Coronaviridae. Coronaviridae is generally considered to contain two genera, *Coronavirus* and *Torovirus*. In humans, a species known as [SARS](https://www.britannica.com/science/SARS) coronavirus (or [Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus](https://www.britannica.com/science/SARS-coronavirus)) causes a highly [contagious](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/contagious) [respiratory disease](https://www.britannica.com/science/respiratory-disease) that is characterized by symptoms of [fever](https://www.britannica.com/science/fever) and muscle ache, often with progressive difficulty in breathing. The virus emerged in humans in 2002.

The novel MERS coronavirus was similar to other coronaviruses known to have originated in [bats](https://www.britannica.com/animal/bat-mammal) and was thought to be passed from bats to other animals before being transmitted to humans. Camels were identified as one possible reservoir for the MERS virus. In late 2019 a virus apparently closely related to SARS coronavirus emerged in [Wuhan](https://www.britannica.com/place/Wuhan), China. The [Wuhan coronavirus](https://www.britannica.com/topic/2019-nCov), later named severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2), caused an illness known as COVID-19, which was similar to SARS and was being characterized primarily by fever and respiratory symptoms. The virus was likewise highly contagious. By early 2020 it had spread throughout regions of China and had reached the United States and Europe, having been carried by travelers from affected regions. In March the World Health Organization declared the outbreak a pandemic.

**HOW THE PANDEMIC HAS AFFECTED CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR**

Social distancing measures and self-isolation have created a similar environment prioritizing the bulk-buying of products deemed essential. Already, we are seeing the beginnings of cannabis consumers looking to bulk-buy their usual products from dispensaries, or turning to e-commerce. The pace of recovery from COVID-19 and, consequently, the patterns in consumer demand vary across countries and categories. Some retailers are facing spikes in demand of up to 800 percent in over-the-counter cold and flu medicines and between 25 and 50 percent in food items. Within food categories, we’ve seen consumers in some areas buying fruit over beer but, after a few days, returning to beer and snacks as they find themselves having to stay home for extended periods of time. Certain store formats ,convenience stores, for example are seeing steep declines in sales, while others (such as the aforementioned e-commerce players experiencing a 700 percent increase in demand) are unable to fulfill customer orders. Nigeria has a vast market of consumers that is only set to grow in the next few decades. Overall, Nigeria is a market with widespread opportunity for sellers. The population of the country is young and growing. The consumers are willing, and financially able, to make purchases. It is important to study and monitor Nigerian purchase behavior and their decision-making patterns throughout the foreseeable future.

**E-COMMERCE**

It has been well documented that the coronavirus pandemic has already been hugely damaging to the retail sector. This applies particularly to retailers selling non-essential goods, who, in many countries, have been forced to [**close their physical stores**](https://www.essentialretail.com/news/covid19-uk-lockdown/). This scenario seems certain to become the norm for a number of weeks, if not months. And as we step into and become accustomed to this new reality, how consumer and retailer behaviours will adapt beyond what we have already seen? The Covid-19 experience has changed the way people shop in the long term, especially in regard to eCommerce. In regard to non-essential retail, the picture has been markedly different, even for those with online and delivery capabilities. “People are scared to spend money that’s not essential.’ Nigeria has been an early adopter of e-commerce in Africa: In 2012 Nigerian e-commerce company Jumia launched and since it has “become Africa’s largest e-commerce platform.”

We found that 88% of respondents had purchased items online before, and also examined the frequency of their online shopping, and why they prefer shopping online. Yet this picture has the potential to change somewhat in the coming weeks. As people become used to the routine of staying indoors – either unable to continue working or working from home – there is likely to be a [**greater need for certain non-essential items**](https://www.essentialretail.com/news/covid19-dixons-carphone-surge/). In recent days, governments in countries such as the US and UK have announced radical packages to secure at least part of people’s incomes in the event their employer is forced to temporarily close. Whilst not ideal by any means, these measures can at least help alleviate some of the financial pressures many people are feeling.

Online shopping for anything that is essential to being quarantined will grow. It’s a huge range from exercise and hobby equipment, to gardening and home improvement. So there’s a massive surge in demand for anything that revolves around being at home, such as working from home and keeping yourself entertained when you can’t go out.

Additionally, as history has shown, it is in times of crisis when innovation is most likely to flourish; many companies are likely to try and find novel ways of encouraging home-bound consumers to purchase their products. One example so far is restaurants that have been forced to close, now offering takeaway and delivery services. Times of distress make people very creative because stores are making mini supermarkets in order for their goods to be sold this period. Shopping will undoubtedly become a heavily eCommerce activity during this period. Those retailers who do not currently trade on the internet, such as [**Primark**](https://www.primark.com/en/), will surely be wondering if ignoring online shopping all these years was the right decision.

As the stores are shut, the demand will almost certainly have to shift online. As people get used to this new reality, you might expect their shopping habits to extend past focusing so heavily on grocery and essentials, although we have to consider the economic environment.

Certainly in regard to grocery shopping, current events appear likely to speed up the growth of online shopping even after the current crisis is over. The thing about online grocery shopping is that for the most part, once people get into the habit of doing it, say after three or four purchases, it becomes a routine and you don’t go away from it easily. I believe if this continues for a while we will see a significant sustained shift to online purchasing even post-virus. This could well apply to high-risk groups like the elderly, many of whom would never have envisioned themselves undertaking online purchasing as recently as a few weeks back. In the UK, for example, these individuals have been urged to self-isolate for 12 weeks, forcing this behavioural change at least short-term. Currently, due to the huge demand for online grocery's, retailers are finding ways to ensure elderly patients are given [priority access to online delivery slots](https://www.essentialretail.com/news/tesco-sainsburys-asda-covid19/).

In conclusion, whether such a lasting growth in eCommerce activity will apply to non-essential retail is harder to predict. Physical exercise is one area in which it is possible to foresee behaviours changing – many may continue buying workout equipment to use in their homes rather than attending a gym for example. The at-home digital exercise bike company, spiked in mid-March as people began staying at home more due to fears surrounding Covid19. Covid-19 will precipitate a rapid increase in eCommerce activity .Individuals who have not interacted with online on an everyday basis will now, in many cases, be forced to do that. I also think it is very likely we will see an acceleration of the demise of the physical store. A much quicker expansion into automation, ensuring retailers can sell and deliver products efficiently during a crisis such as a pandemic, could also result from the experience of Covid-19, further shifting operations away from physical stores and warehouses. This could potentially range from the use of drone delivery to automated warehouse processes. There is no doubt the new Covid-19 virus has shaken up retail, and it is a distressing time for large parts of the sector. Nevertheless, it can be argued that the increase in online shopping over the coming weeks will, at least to some extent, accelerate the growth of eCommerce activity beyond the Covid-19 pandemic. The experiences of consumers during this depressing period may accelerate this process that was occurring at a much more glacial pace prior to Covid-19.

**GROCERY SHOPPING AND BUYING OF MEDICAL SUPPLIES, CLEANING PRODUCTS, FACE MASKS, HAND SANITIZERS AND GLOVES**

Grocery is one of the strongest retail sectors, with nearly twice as many new stores opening than closing last year. The positive growth of the grocery segment will be fueled by the outbreak of coronavirus in the globally and many states mandating people stay home. Over the past month, grocery sales have increased significantly and will be one of the strongest retail sectors for the first half of 2020. The shopping behavior for grocery has changed significantly from predominantly in-store to a pick-up and delivery model in many markets. Once consumers change their behavior and begin to order groceries online, they may not go back to only in-store purchasing. Added to this change in consumer behavior are the advancements in technology across major retail companies in the grocery sector. For groceries, some elements easily transition to online like cereal and milk, however fruit, vegetables and what’s for dinner tonight will require shoppers to go to the physical store.

Buying of cleaning products have been on the increase. Cleaning products like sanitizing alcohol, tissues , over-the counter products, bleach ,hand soap, toilet paper and also raw materials and long-shelf life products like Flour, pasta, rice, pasta sauce, frozen food and water. Almost all respondents encountered out-of-stocks of household essentials at their preferred retailer or grocery store as consumers nationwide rushed to stock up amid the coronavirus outbreak. These also items include toilet paper (cited by 97% of shoppers polled), hand sanitizer (93%), disinfecting wipes (91%), bottled water (69%), medical products (64%) and canned goods (54%). In addition, masks actually [do little to protect healthy people](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/28/opinion/coronavirus-prevention-tips.html?action=click&module=Opinion&pgtype=Homepage), the prospect of shortages created by panic buying worries some public health experts. Hoarding by those who are well means that hospitals, clinics and doctors’ offices could run short. [Doctors and nurses treating patients for respiratory infections](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/14/world/asia/china-coronavirus-doctors.html) should wear masks and replace them often as soon as they become soggy. There is now reaching out to manufacturers to head off the possibility of shortages, especially in hospitals, an agency official said. There is panic ordering and buying that doesn’t reflect the actual need.. The health care industry is their biggest customer.

In many countries, localized COVID-19 news developments have ignited consumer demand to the “pantry preparation” threshold. Reports of local transmission (and even deaths from COVID-19 in some markets) and government enforced containment measures drive consumer interest toward necessities one might need at home in times of ongoing crisis. Some of the more affected markets, such as Italy and South Korea, are, however, well past the mid thresholds of “pantry preparations” and even “quarantined living prep” moving onto the more advanced consumer thresholds of “restricted living”.

Looking ahead, learning from the purchase habits that were adopted in countries where consumers have progressed through the threshold levels, may help supply chain management in the countries entering the earlier threshold stages, particularly as governments enact more aggressive protocols as they learn more about the virus and its spread. The outbreak has already caused an array of changes in shopping behaviour.

In conclusion, The speed and global spread of coronavirus has brought about a huge shift in people’s behaviour, such as bulk-buying or self-isolating. The virus has led to our environment becoming increasingly ‘liquid’, subject to change and operating without familiar context and predictable patterns. With these shifts in consumer behaviour, how can brands stay relevant to want their customers want? Coronavirus means brands need to be flexible and adapt to change. When the context and pattern in which people live changes, brands should ask themselves how can I add value considering this new reality? While, of course, it is vital to avoid being seen as a crisis profiteer, there are a number of ways brands can play enhanced roles in people’s lives in a period of time where people are out of their automatic behavioural

rhythms. There is little doubt we are now making decisions in a time of distress, making us more likely to pay attention to the brands willing engage with us in the right way.

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