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**MATRIC NO: 18/LAW01/038**

**WHAT IS A CORONA VIRUS?**

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Corona viruses are a family of viruses that cause illnesses ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS). These viruses were originally transmitted from animals to people. For example, SARS was transmitted from civet cats to humans while MERS moved to humans from a type of camel. The name corona virus comes from the Latin word **corona,** meaning crown or halo. Under an electron microscope, it looks like it is surrounded by a solar corona. The disease causes respiratory illness like the flu with symptoms like fever, cough, shortness of breath, and difficulty breathing. In more severe cases, it can lead to pneumonia, multiple organ failure and even death. Current estimates of the incubation period- the time range between the infection and the onset of symptoms- range from 1-14 days. Most infected people show symptoms within 5-6 days. However, infected patients can also be asymptomatic, meaning they do not display any symptom despite having the virus in their system. People can protect themselves by washing hands daily frequently, avoid touching their faces and avoid close contact (1 meter or 3 feet) with people who are unwell.

**HOW DOES IT SPREAD?**

Corona virus spreads primarily through contact with an infected person when they cough or sneeze. It also spreads when a person touches a surface or object that has the virus on it, then touches their eyes, nose, or mouth. There is currently no vaccine to prevent the corona virus (COVID-19) however people can prevent the spreading of the virus to others by: washing hands for 20 seconds with soap and water or alcohol-based hand rub, covering mouths with a disposable tissue or flexed elbow when coughing or sneezing, avoiding close contact with people who are unwell, staying home and self-isolate from other in the house hold if you feel unwell.

**WHERE DID THE VIRUS ORIGINATE?**

China health authorities are still trying to determine the origin of the virus, which they say likely came from seafood market in Wuhan, China where wildfire was also traded illegally. On February 7th, Chinese researchers said the virus could have spread from an infected animal species to humans through illegally-trafficked pangolins, which are prized in Asia for food and medicine. Scientists have pointed to either bats or snakes as the possible sources of the virus. The corona virus which started as an epidemic in China within 3 months became a pandemic and quickly spread throughout the world. To curtail its spread, nations are forced to declare a lockdown where by citizens are forced to stay home so as to have minimal or no contact with anyone and so chances of being infected by COVID-19 are reduced or completely eliminated.

**HOW HAS IT AFFECTED CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR?**

The recent outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has inculcated a phobia in the minds of consumers which has deteriorated the rate at which good are being bought. As consumers take protective actions against the virus, their health/ financial concerns and behavioral adjustments will continue to have an enormous social and economic impact. In affected areas, drastic changes such as buying in bulk, a surge low contact commerce and crowd avoidance is being observed. Consumers are immediately coerced into panic buying and stocking the home with goods, essential commodities, medicines and food items that will last the period of the lockdown. People are now found buying according to the size of their families and how much money they have to stock the house. Early rush by the consumers to stock the house is all to avoid scarcity of goods, essential commodities, medicines and food items in the market, which will naturally lead to hike in the cost of these items. Consumers now have to adopt new ways of buying items needed at home when they run out of supply. Consumers now have to;

1) Purchase electricity recharge online. Most people in the third world are used to buying off the counter

2) Recharge phones online unlike buying from vendors on the street

3) Recharge television subscription online, as to buying from the vendor offices

4) Consumers have also learnt to buy some food items online as some essential services suppliers are allowed to operate

5) A number of persons, especially those living alone and a number of families, may resort to ordering food from food vendors because of lack of food ingredients and no near window opening to buy one, these persons will rather order for already prepared meals from restaurants who do readymade food deliveries rather than cooking at home. Many consumers may resort to this type of orders even after the lockdown is over

6) Consumers will learn to manage and be prudent about spending money and make wise choices of what is important to buy.

7) Consumers can no longer buy what they want, they can only buy what they need like stocking up on essentials rather than buying clothes, shoes or jewelry and so on

The ongoing corona pandemic is therefore impacting every part of our lives from the places we can go to the way we spend our time, to the way we spend our money. Of course, this has wide-ranging ramifications for marketing, advertising and ecommerce- as well as a number of other sectors like travel, entertainment and FMCG (Fast Moving Consumer Goods). Marketing is often choreographed to affect subtle changes in our environment to reinforce or incrementally shape automatic behavior. This works well provided the context, overall structure and logic of the options available to us are fundamentally stable but corona virus has caused upheaval, creating unstable environments around the world. As the disease spreads, so does instability with other areas becoming uncertain, subject to patterns. People are adapting to adapting to their changing, unstable environments and making different decisions. People are adaptive and contextual decision-makers. Consumer responses to corona virus are an extreme example of this. When context and behaviors shift, we are taken out of our automatic rhythms and we pay mindful attention. There is no doubt that we are now making decisions in a fluid, unstable time of distress- making us more likely to pay attention to the brands willing to engage with us in the right way.

I think we are seeing a perfect storm of psychological forces. One is scarcity; stores seem to be running out of certain items. We know that scarcity makes everything seem more valuable, diamonds being the best example of scarcity driving demand. Another factor is control; consumers feel out of control about many aspects of the pandemic, but they do have control to choose to stock up on things, so they can exercise control to feel better about the situation. There is tremendous uncertainty, and people worry about regretting not buying something, so this anticipation of possible regret leads them to buy, as regretting buying too much is not something they are too concerned about, compared to the regret of buying too little. Perhaps the best way to reduce this cycle of panic buying is for people to feel like there are downsides to buying too much, such as keeping that stuff from others who need it more. This provides a reason for moderation, which is less likely to come to mind spontaneously as consumers are thinking less about the additive effects of everyone hoarding then they are about the immediate effects of having more stuff for their own family. Waves of panic buying triggered by the rapid global spread of the corona virus (COVID-19) are a mass psychological phenomenon worth pondering. Irrespective of cultures and national borders, each stage of the epidemic’s escalation has quickly resulted in the affected population raiding shops. To be sure, some of the stocked piled items are directly associated with the disease prevention, such as face masks and hand sanitizer. But there has also been a mad rush for general household staples, despite there being no indication shortage.

The top financial priority of people should be ensuring that they have a sizable emergency fund. But unfortunately not every person has this therefore people left hungry unable to provide for their families. It is very much advisable that people who have money should help friends, families and neighbors who are struggling to provide for their own families in this pandemic period. At times like these, anyone would be grateful to receive even just a small bowl of rice just to be less hungry. Therefore any person that has excess to give to the needy should always give. Yes, this pandemic is unpredictable and no one is sure of what will happen next but the poor have to be fed due to the fact that people do unpredictable things for food such as stealing. From the time this pandemic began, medical masks and sanitizers have had a ripple effect triggering boarder consumer purchase behaviors. Consumers in affected markets have begun stocking up on essential health-safety products. Depending on what stage any country in the world is in, there are signs that spending behaves in a common way that may make it possible to understand what might happen next, county to county. Of course we cannot talk about how consumers are affected without talking about how companies’ actions during a pandemic like this changes the way they are perceived by customers. This is a time when emotions are running high, so both positive and missteps are likely to be remembered more than company actions at other times and disproportionate effect on people’s attitudes towards the companies. Of course, this requires that consumers are made aware of the actions –ideally in the moment rather than the crisis, when emotions will be less potent and less likely to drive long-term memories of the actions. It is a great time to express a company’s values in an attention-getting way that will stick with consumers for a long term, especially if its actions are unambiguously selfless and consumer-focused, such as distilleries producing hand sanitizes and giving it away.

**WILL THIS EXPERIENCE CHANGE CONSUMER BEHAVIOR IN THE LONG TERM?**

Personally, I think it will however it is very difficult to predict how. One potential change is similar to how millennials reacted to the 2008- 2009 recession. They seem to have taken a few long-term lessons from that, such as not trusting banks, and in general they seem skeptical of financial instruments and institutions. They will probably be lasting scars here, but we will not know how that will look until we know what narrative people adopt for this. The narrative could be about China, or about eating unusual animals or even about public health regulations, like lockdowns and whether they are seen as effective or ineffective.

**WHO IS MORE AT RISK?**

For major industrial nations, whose populations tend to be particularly concentrated in urban and suburban centers, the food supply chains are longer, more complex, and, possibly, more vulnerable. For less industrial, more rural, and agrarian economies, supply chains tend to be shorter and simpler. Consumers are fearing the possibility of shortages rush to buy more than they would otherwise would, thus causing the shortages they’d feared.

**WHAT IS FUELING THE PANIC BUYING?**

Social scientists have pinned it on a herd instinct that is triggered by fear and spread through social media. However, there is also evidence that this focus on buying practical goods is a behavioral reaction to feelings of stress and uncertainty. Think of it as a form of retail therapy, only instead of surging on the latest fashion garment or gadget, consumers purchase utilitarian products associated with problem solving, which may enhance their sense of control.

**CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, consumers will choose not to burn electricity when there is no need for it, like putting on the lights during the day time and also learn to put on only two air conditioners and not the four at once. People will learn to plait and cut their hair at home, consumers will be prudent with calls and data usage and consumers will stop gluttony and learn to eat prudently. They will reduce the amount of meat, fish and maybe go vegetarian. These behaviors will eventually change our habits of purchase after the pandemic and will adjust the consumers into cashless transactions.

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