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QUESTIONS

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

The recent outbreak of the Corona virus also known as COVID-19, has had an immense impact, and has been felt all over the world. The effects of this outbreak has negatively affected all our lives, it has forced us to change a lot of our habits such as how we relate with one another, how we go out, how we entertain ourselves, and most importantly how we buy our commodities. The buying of our commodities is one of the most important aspects of human existence, and has been greatly affected by the virus outbreak. The purchase of essential goods and services is what helps us get important items which are crucial, especially during these trying times, and it is also an avenue for social interaction, which is also essential for human existence, because man is a social animal, and as it is popularly said “no man is an island”. This shows us the importance of purchasing goods are for the individuals and the society at large. The effects to which this virus outbreak has affected the buying behavior of the consumer are numerous, but some of them include:

1. Panic buying: This can be described as the action of buying large quantities of a particular product or commodity due to sudden fears of a forthcoming shortage or price rise. This has been seen all over the world, and even in our country Nigeria. The cause of this mostly lies in the laws which promote “social distancing”, because of how easily the virus spreads, especially in crowded areas, governments all over the world are currently implementing measures to prevent people from gathering in public places. This has been done by closing down schools, places of worship, offices and most importantly shops and shopping centers. Due to the shutdown of shops and the limited times which they are opened, it has resulted in panic buying amongst the citizenry. Whenever a lockdown is announced, before it is implemented people rush out to the stores to see what they can buy, and items they can stock up on. This simultaneous rush for items leads to shortages as the supply can’t meet up with the demand, especially during the closure of industries for social distancing.
2. More thrifty: During this period people are more thrifty in the way they spend money. Due to the closure of places of work, the normal income which one expects to earn on a regular basis has stopped. Because of this people are being forced to rely on the savings which they have accumulated over a period of time, and manage it till the lockdown ends and work can resume as normal. People are now being forced to buy less or being selective in the types and quality of items they buy, instead of buying items which they are used to or accustomed to buying. People are now being forced to buy lower quality goods or goods that they aren’t used to in an effort to save some extra money for future purposes.
3. Buying only essentials: Normally when one receives his wages, and after making the traditional expenses, he or she has a little income left over, which is known as disposable income, which he or she can use to enjoy the finer things of life, like going on outings, purchasing gifts or expensive items etc. However due to the satiation that the world is currently facing, people are now forced to make a tough decision, between buying the things they like which give them pleasure, or buying the things they need which are essential for their survival e.g. food, clothes, water, and paying for their shelter. People have now been forced to choose between forfeiting the purchase of pleasure items and buying only the bare essential, without which they cannot survive especially during these trying times.
4. Shopping less: Because of the virus outbreak which has occurred around the world, governments the world over are beginning to put in place measure to contain its spread, and to encourage social distancing. To implement these measures, as earlier stated all public places have been shut down, and one of these public places include markets, shops and shopping centers. Because of how people are gathered are gathered and often clustered in these places, it aides in the spread of the virus. To counter the rapid spread, the government has shut down all public places, in an effort to contain the rapid spread of the virus. This has greatly affected the consumer behaviour of people because, now they are forced to shop less than they are normally used to, they now have to wait till the government allows the shops to reopen for a brief period, in order to re stock their provisions. This is also combined with the fact that, due to the outbreak, places of work have been shut down, the sources of people’s incomes have been closed off, now citizens have less money than normal with which they can shop with, they are now forced to be more conservative with their spending, in order to manage their savings properly, for it to last as long as possible. To make these possible people are shopping less, even when the lockdown has been temporarily lifted, or even using online shopping. Another reason for people shopping less is that, due to the rise in prices of commodities all over the federation, and the world at large, the people shop less, and go as far as looking for the cheaper products, or if possible pricing it to the lowest possible price to save money and prevent shopping too much.
5. Buying more products online: Due to the lockdown measure implemented by the government to contain the virus’s spread, people cannot go to markets, shops or shopping centers to make necessary purchases, in order to offset this, more and more people are relying on online shopping now more than ever. Online shops such as Jumia, Konga, Jiji, Alibaba, Amazon, Ebay etc. These online stores make use of the internet as their shops, due to them not having a physical store, they have taken advantage of the internet, and have used it as a point of contact between them and the consumers, on this platform the consumers can have a look at the products, their prices, and other alternatives to it, they can also use the platform to make payments for the products, and to arrange for its delivery to their various locations all around the country or the world at large. Consumers have also taken advantage of these platforms, in order to comply with the directives of the government of the government, and also to protect themselves from the spread of the virus, many people have taken to doing their shopping of these platforms, rather than going to physical stores, and in the process breaking the stay at home laws, and exposing themselves to the virus. These online stores provide the same services that normal stores provide, such as, sale of electronics, clothes, food stuffs, and even cooked food. The advantages of these stores are too numerous to mention, but the most important one to note is that, they enable people to do their necessary shopping, without exposing themselves to the risk of contracting the virus, or contravene the directives set by the governments of their various countries.
6. It has affected the buying of low income earners: While some people who are better-off such as the upper and middles classes, the low income earners aren’t so lucky. The upper and middle classes have savings which can sustain them for a long time or even throughout this crises, it enables them to make purchases online, or whenever the government temporarily lifts the lockdown, the upper classes have the resources to make their necessary purchases even when the price increases. However the reverse is the case with the people of the lower classes, these people normally live from hand to mouth. Meaning that whatever wages are earned that day or week are quickly spent on food and other necessary items, this leaves little or no money left in form of savings. The recent lockdowns all around the country have forced them to stay at home, they are unable to go to their various places of work to earn their wages. They now do not have the necessary funds to cover their expenses, this has led to complaints of hunger amongst people of the lower classes, and in order to survive some have now been forced into crime or into begging in order to make ends meet.
7. Buying on credit: Normally no one wants to owe or be indebted in the process of buying necessary items, however due to the situation at hand, and the resulting lockdown, places of work are closed, and some people are out of work. This has led to an increase in the number of people having to borrow money to buy, or buying directly from the seller on credit, with a promise to pay back as soon as money is available. The virus outbreak has increased the amount of people currently wallowing in debt, and who acquire these debts in the process of trying to purchase necessary commodities to survive.
8. Buying in bulk: While some people might choose to buy in smaller quantities, in order to save as much money as possible. Others choose to go a different route, rather than buying in smaller quantities over a longer period of time, they instead choose to buy in bulk, to stock up on supplies in order to have enough. This way they have less frequent visits to markets or shops, as opposed to those who buy in smaller quantities, and they reduce the chances of them coming into contact with someone who is infected with the virus. Buying in bulk also helps them to save money, because instead of trying to go out and shop more frequently, they have enough to last them for a long period of time, thereby spending less, it also helps them to stay quarantined, because now they stay indoors more instead of going out, and putting their health at risk, and in the process complying with the lockdown rules set by the government. The side effects of buying in bulk is that it might lead to some people hoarding essential goods, this means that they so much goods, more than they possibly need, leading to scarcity of goods as production can’t meet up with the amount being purchased, this causes a scarcity of essential goods for those who do not have the means to buy in bulk
9. Buying substitutes: Due to what the world is currently facing, no one really has a choice as to what he or she wants to buy. Because of the current economic situation most people do not have the means to purchase the items they normally buy of are used to, Now they are forced to settle for lower grade products in an effort to conserve what little money they have left. Also because of the shortages caused by people panic buying, or buying in bulk, most of the higher grade products have been swept off the shelf, leaving the lower grade, and oftentimes unwanted products to be left for the others to buy.

All of these reasons have shown us that this outbreak, has had a drastic effect on the ways in which we, the consumers purchase our goods and services. We the consumers have been forced to change what we buy, how we buy it, the rate at which we buy it, and the quality we buy. It has had an even disastrous impact on low income earners, who on a normal basis live from hand to mouth, and now can’t work to buy necessary items for themselves, and their dependents. The effects of this virus outbreak has been extensive, it has cut across all social classes, and it might affect the way in which we, the consumers purchase our goods and services, for the foreseeable future.