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**18/LAW01/091**

**CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR II (BUS208)**

**EFFECT OF THE PANDEMIC (COVID-19) ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR**

There has been a recent pandemic that has affected the world in general, which is **COVID-19**, an illness caused by a virus called **Coronavirus.** Its symptoms range from common cold to middle east respiratory syndrome and severe acute respiratory symptoms. This virus can be gotten from civet cats, camels, and bats. The symptoms of this virus may be asymptomatic (No symptoms seen) or symptomatic. i.e. symptoms being visible or seen in the patients. This virus could also lead to death especially in old/elderly people, people with previous history of illness and those who have a weak immune system generally due to the less effect of the antibodies to fight against it. Most of the symptoms include Fever, Dry cough, Fatigue, Shortness of breath, Nausea and Vomiting, sore throat, sputum production, myalgia or arthralgia, headache, chills, nasal congestion, diarrhea, muscle pains, hoarse voiced, hemoptysis. The virus can be contracted when the virus is emitted by an infected patient through coughing, sneezing. And the droplets can get to an uninfected patient by handshake, infected surfaces and other means of contact and the virus gains entrance into the respiratory tract of an uninfected individual hence infecting him/her especially if the individual has an already existing health condition or a poor immune system.

Due to this fact, the Government had to take a strategic preventive measures, due to this pandemic outbreak, there has been over 442 confirmed cases in Nigeria, a low record of deaths (about 13 have ben recorded) and quite on overwhelming result of recovered patients (about 152 of them). In order to eradicate and prevent the virus from spreading, self-isolation was encouraged, infected persons and those with symptoms similar to that of COVID-19 were quarantined at isolation centers that the Government provided, a total lockdown was imposed by the Government hence prohibiting any form of movement and suspension of the usual daily activities of the citizens. Due to this lockdown, markets, trading activities generally were placed on hold and some in a lower range hence making only a few means of purchase of goods and items.

The effect of the pandemic, COVID-19 has affected consumers buying behavior, because people are in their houses and the restriction of movement people are unable to go out and shop and buy things and that is an economic problem. There is no doubt that the crisis caused by the globed Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has created an incredibly difficult business climate. Businesses shut their doors, borders closed, bricks and mortar businesses shuts their doors and people are told to isolate themselves at home. Many companies face temporary or even permanent closure with staffs facing months of financial uncertainty and worry. Consumers behavior has been affected due to the fact that people are not allowed to work at this period of time so most people are not being paid so consumers without money cannot purchase goods, or even the ones with money just purchase the necessary things they need to stock up their house. Like we can see for instance, people are more bothered about buying groceries, food stuffs, we can see that lately the things people are buying more are tissue papers, face masks, hand gloves and hand sanitizers to be on a safer side and due to the pandemic these goods can be scarce.

**How the pandemic (COVID-19) has affected the consumers buying behavior**.

The pandemic COVID-19 has affected the consumer buying behavior in the following ways:

1. **Reactive Health Management**: prioritization of products for infection containment such as face masks, sanitizers and hand gloves, etc. purchase of this items have been on an increase due to the pandemic.

2. **Proactive health-minded buying**: the pandemic has increased the interest in the acquisition of products that maintain well-being or health, like at this period of time is rare to see people buying clothes and hairs. People are mainly buying things that can help them like food stuffs and other essential things.

3. **Pantry preparation**: There has been higher purchases of shelf safe products and increased store visits. People have decided to start stock buying. i.e. buying in bulk in order to prevent frequent movement or scarcity of that particular products and embrace the lock down. Concerns about the availability of goods have encouraged panic buying of items in bulk.

4**. Quarantined living preparation**: Increased online shopping, decreased store visits and first signs of strain on the supply chain.

5. Financial uncertainty and the prospect of a serve and long term recession make for a stock back drop which has led to an impact on consumer’s outlook, perceptions and behavior’s.

6. **Restricted living**: Possible price gouging due to limited supplies and deterred online fulfillment.

7. **Living a new normal**: Increased health awareness even as people return to their typical daily activities.

Initial indications about what happen to businesses and the economy could be gouged by looking at the data from the countries which first suffered from the effects of COVID-19. While there’s no guarantee that others will follow the same tragedy. Analysis on these countries can reveal useful patterns and insight.

Online, the world is changing just as fast as offline. In early March 2020 The Drum repented on research that shows that, while annual and advertising growth rates in choice one predicted to fall from 7% growth in 2020 to 3.1%, economic advertising speed is predicted to grow by 177% and social media spending to rise by 22.2%.

This seems to reflect the changes in consumer behavior as they switch from buying offline to buying online. They also show that as people are spending time at home, brands have responded by shifting spend from offline media to online, with 14% reporting this cause of action. In the same piece of research, they go on to state that e-commerce as a platform has already seen exponential growth, especially in FMCG with save spending through e-commerce channels in china grow at least some times as fast as the sector overall in 2019, a trend that the coronavirus outbreak is likely to accelerate”. The same picture painted in research published by Business inside, intelligence and e-marketer analysis in March 2020, which supports that e-commerce is likely to grow as consumers avoid physical store. Their data supports that 74.6% of US internet was said they’d likely to avoid shopping centers and malls if the coronavirus outbreak in the country worsens, and over half of the world used shops in general.

A new study from Ipsos and MCRI from mid-March 2020 reveals that 50% of Chinese and 31% of Italian consumers say that they are now using e-commerce more frequently. In contrast, only 18% of United Kingdom respondents said that they were using online stores more frequently, with close to half reporting there was ‘no change’ in their e-commerce habits. However, now that the UK is in lock down these statistics are likely to change drastically, probably heading towards the figures seen in other countries with more advanced COVID-19 issues. While the types of goods people need to purchase these somewhere will remain, and we will likely see a general switch to online shopping.

Due to the social distancing and restriction of movements it has affected consumer’s behavior we can see an example where by before consumers can order food and they would be delivered to their door steps but due to the pandemic (COVID-19) people are unable to order foods to be delivered at their door steps so it has actually affected consumers and now they are forced to change and start cooking at home. Also we can see some online apps that you can use to order things globally like Jumia, Alli Express, Wish, etc. might not be able to deliver goods because of some goods are meant to be shipped from one country to another but due to this Coronavirus outbreak, it is going to be hard because of the borders being closed and other factors some people being aware of this it affects the consumer’s behavior because they have to cancel their orders and stop ordering goods till the pandemic is over.

In the week prior to the March 11, inflation point of an initial survey found 33% of consumers indicating that they have already changed their purchasing behavior due to the pandemic. This week has seen that number nearly double to 59% as school closures, travel bans, and the need for social distancing have impacted community’s worldwide.

To understand how this is changing Chinese consumer’s behavior and attitude during this time, and how they might resume or change their spending once the pandemic is over. In China we can see that the outbreak has also increased people’s spending in some industries, such as food and beverages (40% respondents spent more), household cleaning (48%), medical/life insurance (38%, significantly higher in Hubei than rest of China during the outbreak). Consumer’s demand for these industries will continue to be robust. Overall, luxury might experience the biggest negative impact from coronavirus in both short and middle term: 61% surveyed respondents reduced or cancelled their spending on luxury, after the pandemic is over, 21% said they would continue to reduce higher than any other industry. This might be related to more fundamental changes in people’s attitude towards how, why, they buy.

Lately we noticed due to the fact that people are meant to stay at home and isolate themselves consumers spend more money buying airtime, data, and the rest because people are bored and tired of staying at home so people mainly rely on social media to keep them busy, entertain them and for them to be able to communicate with their friends and loved ones. We can that such social medias platforms include; Instagram, Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Tic Tok, WhatsApp, Tinder, Thriller and the others. Basically, the social media platforms have been making more profit this period because the consumers are spending more on the social media during this pandemic.

So as we can see during this pandemic some industries gain more than the rest. Some industries lose. Because most consumers do not buy things from some industries during this pandemic. For instance, the food and grocery industry make more money than other industries. As we can see the high rate for demands for hand sanitizers, hand gloves, toilet rolls and face masks are high and expensive.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected consumer’s buying behavior in such a way that people buy only the essential items and people are more conscious on how they spend their money so it affects the consumer’s behavior towards buying and thus has reduced the rate of impulse buying. During this period as people are not working, some are not paid their salaries so many people are going through financial problems so it affects the consumer’s behavior towards buying.

The pandemic has also affected the consumer’s right to choice at the moment, due to this pandemic when people go out to get items/supplies, it depends on how early you get to the shop or mall and there is usually scarcity of items because the people who get there early buy most of the items so that they can stock up their houses, so the consumers who come afterwards are left with no choice but to buy what is left or just leave.

After this pandemic people would go through a lot of economic hardship because due to the change in consumer’s behavior towards buying, many people would lose their jobs and many people’s salary’s would be reduced. And people that did not have savings before would be at loss. And also people with private enterprises and business might likely face economic difficulties.

Since the cases of the Coronavirus became rapid, consumer’s behavior towards buying has changed because everyone is cautious of what they buy due to monetary reason. The pandemic has also resulted to poor circulation of money in the countries.

Most economic studies have shown that consumers typically moved from one stage to another in a period of two weeks in areas close to the initial outbreak, such places like China and Italy. It has also spread to different parts of the world like UK, Nigeria. For example, as at 8th of April there were about 276 confirmed cases of the COVID-19 in Nigeria. Due to this pandemic there has been different consumer behavior shifts. In general, the pandemic has changed almost the entire consumer’s buying behavior making some communities more prioritized than others and also changed the economic status in many countries.

The Government and other NGO’s have started making ways possible to aid consumers with low or no chances of survival during this pandemic in order for them to survive. Some measures include; provision of food items and toiletries to those consumers who cannot afford them, Provision of shelter to homeless persons in order to prevent the spread of the viral infection, Allocation of money to persons in order to purchase items to stock up during the lock down period. A few other measures have been taken in order to assist the consumers. Hopefully, the pandemic would soon be over and the consumer buying behavior will be regularized.

References:

Wikipedia

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