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Course: Consumer Behavior (BUS 208)

Question: How Corona Virus affects Consumer Behavior

The reality of this new pandemic took the world by surprise. People worldwide are still trying to adapt to idea of prolonged indoor stays. Coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is an infectious disease caused by a newly discovered coronavirus. With the Coronavirus Pandemic spreading worldwide, the economic market is being affected severely. Corona virus is not a pandemic to be joked with, at all. Some may say that it is deadly.

Consumer Behavior focuses on the consumer’s related activities of the individual as he goes along in his buying interactions and exchange. It investigates the reasons he chooses to buy a product or service instead of the other similar product, and the forces, factors that influences the selection, purchase, use and disposal of product, goods and services so as to satisfy personal or industrial needs.

**Factors that Affect Consumer Buying Behaviour**

For marketers to successfully achieve their marketing goals and objectives they must understand the consumers and have full link with them knowing about them, their daily activities and if possible where they live will serve as a good connect. This makes the marketers and manufacturers know what the consumers want and to produce them for the consumer’s satisfaction, at the right time. A consumer buying behavior and choice is influenced and driven by many factors that surround him and his immediate environment. These factors may be cultural, social, reference group, the family, opinion leaders, personal or psychological influences.

1. Culture: a subculture is a similar group within societies that have their own models or behavior defined by ethnically, race, region, age, religion, gender, social class or profession. Marketers must design specific marketing strategies to satisfy them because strategies that prove successful in one society, or country, often cannot extend to another country and expect the same success. These subculture groups have their own modes of behaviors. Understanding differences among cultures, subcultures can help marketers develop more effective marketing strategies. These strategies could be in designing specialized goods and programs to suit their taste and demands.

2. Social Class or Group: every consumer belongs to a social class or group in the society. Our early group starts with the family where we are born, and as we grow up, we join our relatives and later to various groups in life, like peer groups, religious, groups, etc. Group membership influences ones buying behavior. Individuals in the group must conform to the groups’ norms, values, attitudes and behaviours by buying what the group likes and adheres to the group. Individuals, who want to associate to the group, must comply with its regulations and standards of behaviors. One’s role, position or class in a society depends on the position he occupies in the society and this can influence the group buying behaviours and decisions as others would like to imitate him and see him as their model.

3. Reference Group: reference groups are groups whose value, structure and standards can influence or influences other person’s behavior. A person’s reference group consists of all groups that have a direct or indirect influence on him or his buying behavior. Consumers would like to make their buying decisions look like what their groups perceive to be adapted to them. Reference groups have strong influence on what other members would purchase to strongly belong. They expose members to new behaviours, lifestyles, attitudes, concepts and creates pressure of conformity, which he must depict that of the group members.

4. Opinion leaders: opinion leaders are those people, first buyers, trendsetters or pacesetters who first purchase new product before others in the group and tend to influence others to purchase the product. Opinion leaders can persuade others in the group, community, class to purchase a product.

5, The Family: most of us belong to two families in our lifetime. The first is the one we are born into, the next is the one we later find ourselves into. The family is the first reference group in the society where we all grew from- a nuclear family with the father, the mother and the other siblings. The family exhibits and teaches us our first buying behavior. They constitute the first primary buying behavior reference. From the family, one is first oriented towards things, how to behave and what to hold on to. The family is the most important determinant of consumer behavior because of the close and continuing interactions among family members. The family also shows the norms of expected behavior different patterns and status relationships and buying behavior for its members.

6. Children Buying Behaviour: the children buying behavior can be exhibited to through watching the television, talking about the latest play gadgets, fashions and trends and what they see their mates buy. Children can have influence on what their parents would buy, like indomie, cereals, chocolates, etc. they can do this by requesting and demanding.

The psychological influence is the one that this writer will be most focused on.

7. The Media and the Internet: the media and the internet and what we see in them, their advertisement tends to influence our buying behaviours. Advertising spots about our stars, celebrities, attires and wears makes us admire them and prompt us to behave like them in our buying behavior. Children of today have internets and can see products advertisements in the internet for views, and marketing like Amazon, Konga, and Jumia online shops.

Coronavirus is a disease that is harmful and extremely deadly once gotten. It is mainly transmitted through droplets generated when an infected person coughs, sneezes or speaks. Not only is it affecting the human race, but it is also affecting Consumer Behavior. It is changing consumer’s perceptions. It is very important for marketers to develop strategies that reflect on products, and promotions that consumers would perceive to be relevant to their needs so as to stir them up to action.

Consumer’s perception could be defined as the selection, organization and interpretation of marketing and environmental stimuli into coherent picture. And, Stimuli are a physical, visual or verbal communication that can influence an individual consumer’s behavior response or action. This could be marketing stimuli or environmental stimuli, as we are facing during this pandemic time.

Due to the widespread outbreak of Coronavirus, the governments of each country have encouraged their citizen to perform the act of social distancing, and some countries have declared lockdown on their citizens to try to cub the pandemic, some industries will be affected more than others. Restaurants and bars are particularly vulnerable, as well as event spaces and retail stores, while at the same time, as consumers shift their spending habits, some companies and product categories are actually growing. Everyone is trying to avoid crowded places to prevent the spread of the Virus. Restaurants, bars, parks, supermarkets, etc. are examples of crowded places, and they are being greatly affected because consumer’s perspectives have change. People are now focused on how to keep themselves and their environments clean. No surprise, the sales of face masks, surgical gloves and household cleaning agents are increasing as the days go by. These items are used to reduce the chance of contacting or spreading the virus.

One of the very noticeable impact of the outbreak is its influence on how and what people purchase. This is having a knock-on effect on various industries and key groups. This writer is going to list most of the influence the Coronavirus has on Consumer Behavior.

**The Influence of Coronavirus on Consumer Behavior**

1. Consumers are struggling to buy essentials: many of us are now familiar with the sight of empty supermarket shelves, devoid of the essentials we usually buy. Fear has undoubtedly taken over consumer’s usual shopping behaviors. Food stuff, toilet rolls, hand sanitizers, and other long-life foods are just some of the products that consumers have been loading up on in recent weeks. Many retailers are struggling to get items into stores as fast as they can to meet up with the purchasing of consumers. They struggle because they were not properly prepared for this. And now that all borders have been shut down, their supplies are limited and they have to ration them so that they can be enough for the consumers

 2. Medical supplies are in high demand: face masks and hand sanitizers are the top items globally that consumers are struggling to purchase. They struggle to purchase these items to help protect them from the virus. The masks are used to protect their nose and mouth from inhaling the virus or allowing the virus enters their mouth because the virus is in the form of droplets. And the buy the gloves and sanitizers to help keep their hand clean after coming in contact with unclean surfaces or items. Pharmacies and stores have sold out. And stores that still have some of these items are using the pandemic to inflate the prices of these items. But some brands have been lending a hand. Louis Vuitton owner started making hand sanitizers to meet demand and SpaceX is also manufacturing its own hand sanitizer and face shields with plans to donate materials to hospitals.

3. Impact on Tourism: due to the fast spread of Coronavirus around the world, tourist sites will be greatly affected, putting a dent in their usual income or revenue. This is so because people are practicing social distancing and most of these sites attract crowds, and the virus can be easily spread from one person to another. So to prevent this, all tourist sites have been shut down till further notice.

4. Import and Export: countries have closed down their borders to prevent the spread of the virus to their people. By doing this, it prevents international traders from performing their importing and exporting duties. Coronavirus is a disease that can survive on surfaces for more than a day. And if these surfaces or items are not properly cleaned, the virus can be contacted. So to prevent this, the government has decided to stop importing or exporting for the safety of their citizens. The lack of import and export has been a great strain on supermarkets, because they need these foreign transactions to help provide to the consumers who are in need.

5. Online Shopping: in most countries, e.g., America, they consumers now use the internet to access stores that will provide them with essentials since they are being restricted and advised to stay indoors.

**Panic Buying**

Panic buying or panic purchasing, occurs when consumers buy usually large amounts of a product in anticipation of, or after, a disaster or perceived disaster, or in anticipation of a large price increase or shortage. Panic buying is a type of herd behavior. It is of interest in consumer behavior theory, the broad field of economic study dealing with explanations for collective action. Panic buying can lead to genuine shortages regardless of whether the risk of a shortage is real or perceived. Examples of panic buying occurring before, during or following tragic incidents are:

* The first and second World Wars
* The global influenza pandemic, also known as Spanish flu, which led to the panic buying of quinine and other remedies for influenza.
* 1922-1923 German hyperinflation
* 2001- panic buying of metals, gold and oil on international commodity markets following the September 11 attacks, and of recent,
* 2019-2020 coronavirus pandemic- Panic buying became a major international phenomenon in February and March 2020, when stores around the world were depleted of items such as face masks, food, bottled water, milk, toilet paper, hand sanitizer, rubbing alcohol, antibacterial wipes and painkillers. As a result, many retailers rationed the sale of these items. And online stores, such as eBay and Amazon have pulled certain items and listed them up for sell at an inflated price.

As we can see, due to this pandemic, consumers have changed their perspective to focus on what is really needed to protect them from infection. And this change of mind has benefited some manufacturers greatly, while the others, not so much.

Reference:

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2. [www.wikipedia.com](http://www.wikipedia.com)

3. [www.foodnavigator.com](http://www.foodnavigator.com)