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**Level:** 200 level

**Course:** Consumer Behaviour (BUS 208)

**QUESTION**

 In not less than 2000 words, explicitly explain how the pandemic (COVID-19) has affected consumer buying behaviour?

**Introduction**

 The current out break of the pandemic Corona virus (COVID-19), has brought a certain change to the approach on how consumers purchase things or their buying behaviour (the pattern navigates on how, when and what people purchase). At this moment, the behaviour of consumers is influenced by the coronavirus, which is a combination of both biological and enviromental factors due to how it spread. However, to reduce the infection rate, demands certain behavioural changes especially in the face of various lockdowns and selft-isolations not only in consumers in Nigeria, but also influenced the behaviours of consumers globally.

 It is important to understand some of the keywords we are dealing with, before emphasizing on the impacts above.With these,

**Who is a consumer?**

 A consumer is a person or a group who intends to order, orders, or uses purchased goods, products, or services primarily for personal, social, family, household and similar needs, It is obvious that people differ in their earning power, style and preference, and in that same manner a consumer have different motives which influences their choice of purchase when referring or addressing to his/her needs. In addition, a consumer is one that buys goods for consumption and not for resale or commercial purpose. The consumer is an individual who pays some amount of money for the thing or goods to consume and, or services required.

**What is Consumer Behaviour?**

According to Wikipedia **“**It is the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and all the activities associated with the purchase, use and disposal of goods and services, including the consumer's emotional, mental and behavioural responses that precede or follow these activities**”**. This behaviour focuses on the consumer’s related activities of that indvdual as he goes along in his buying interactions and exchange. It also investigates the reason he chooses to by a product or seek a service instead of that of a similar product or the entirely different one. Inclusive of the factors influencing that decision and purchase of such product to satisfy their needs.

 In this connection, consumer behaviour is concerned with all aspects of purchasing behaviour – **from pre-purchase activities** through to **post-purchase consumption,** **evaluation and disposal activities**. It is also concerned with all persons involved, either directly or indirectly, in purchasing decisions and consumption activities including brand-influencers and opinion leaders.

Consumer behaviour is concerned with

* purchase activities: The purchase of goods or services; how consumers acquire products and services, and all the activities leading up to a purchase decision, including information search, evaluating goods and services and payment methods including the purchase experience
* use or consumption activities: concerns the who, where, when and how of consumption and the usage experience, including the symbolic associations and the way that goods are distributed within families or consumption units
* disposal activities: concerns the way that consumers dispose of products and packaging; may also include reselling activities in a pawn shop or to someone else.

Consumers express response by the following; **emotional (or affective**) **responses**: refer to emotions such as feelings or moods, **mental (or cognitive) responses:** refer to the consumer's thought processes, or **behavioural (or conative) responses:** refer to the consumer's observable responses in relation to the purchase and disposal of goods or services.

 In terms of consumer behavior, it is important to know what factors that determines what one wants to buy or his or her purchasing decisions, which includes the followings:

1. The media and the Internet

The internet as a global villiage has unlimited options and the advertisement gets wide views at the same time tends to influence our buying behaviors. With the influence of the celebrities because of how we admire them they can make up our purchasing decisions. The online markets such as Jumia, Konga etc. Reading about the experiences of other consumers (e.g. TripAdvisor, Amazon customer reviews) with the reviews given on each product helps consumers make decisions on what they want to purchase in the best ways.

1. Culture:

Culture can be a set of values, beliefs, ideas, norms and attitudes that are seen as acceptable to certain group of people or society. It differs between each society which is inherent because this is passed down from generations to generations. In a culture, one could find that in each community lifestyles differ including mode of dressing, eating habits, their food etc. which states their demands and affects their purchasing decisions.

1. Social class or group:

Every consumer belongs to a social class or group in the society, as life progresses he finds his company such as peer group, religious groups etc. That individual tends to be most influenced by his social group because among them they have what is considered acceptable, it inevitably affects an individual’s lifestyle same as their buying behavior.

As for social class, in each society there are normally three (3) types of social class but in Nigeria, there are four (4) including upper class, middle class, lower class and working class. All class differs in ranging from their earnings to buying behavior within their limits.

1. The family needs:

Most of us belong to a family who is a huge part of the decisions we make in a lifetime. They constitute of the primary formation of ones buying behavior because of the close interaction of family members they show the norms of expected behavior including the buying behavior of their family members.

1. Opinion leaders:

They can act like reference groups in that they exert considerable social influence because of their product knowledge, expertise and credibility. In the marketing literature, opinion leaders are also known as influencers, mavens and even hubs. Opinion leaders are specific to a product category, so that an opinion leader for computers is not likely to be an opinion leader for fashion. Typically, opinion leaders have high levels of involvement with the product category, are heavy users of the category and tend to be early adopters of new technologies within the category. Journalists, celebrities and bloggers are good examples of an opinion leader due to their broad social networks and increased ability to influence people's decisions

In reference to the question, the sudden outbreak of corona virus and the behaviour of consumers are somehow complex as they intertwined.

**What is this Corona virus (COVID-19)?**

COVID-19 is the disease caused by the new coronavirus that emerged in China in December 2019. COVID-19 symptoms include cough, fever, shortness of breath, muscle aches, sore throat or unexplained loss of taste or smell. COVID-19 can be severe, and some cases have caused death.The new coronavirus can be spread from person to person. It is diagnosed with a laboratory test.There is no coronavirus vaccine yet. Prevention involves frequent hand-washing, coughing into the bend of your elbow and staying home when you are sick.

 Coronavirus is spread through droplets released into the air when an infected person coughs or sneezes. The droplets generally do not travel more than a few feet, and they fall to the ground (or onto surfaces) in a few seconds — this is why social and physical distancing is effective in preventing the spread.

**How does the measures taken by the government change consumer behaviour?**

 The outbreak of the COVID-19 virus has had a major impact on daily life and consumer behaviour. When the epidemic peaked in China at the beginning of March, it led to the lockdown in different regions and cities with a total population of 500 million people quarantined and a concurrent decline in production.

This disease outbreak has resulted to drastic change concerning the normal day to day activities globally. In view of the measures taken to prevent/curb the spread of this virus a strict lockdown has been initiated to encourage all citizens to stay at home any form of business has been from taking place. The following exceptions are laid out stating out the only reasons one can leave home it includes;

Travel to and from work where the work is considered an essential service.

 Except working in an essential (food or medication) shop, bank and post office. The full list of essential shops, post offices and banks is available here

To buy food, medicines and other health products for yourself, your family or someone who is vulnerable or 'cocooning'

To attend medical appointments.

Tor vital family reasons including caring for children, elderly or vulnerable people but excluding social family visits

An individual can only exercise within 2 kilometres of your house. You cannot exercise with people from outside your household.

 Looking at the activities that citizens globally are limited to, it is obvious to observe that there is a pause in a normal daily activities. This also limits what consumers are allowed to purchase. How and why?

Despite the negative social and economic impacts, the outbreak quickly led to an adjustment in people's behaviour – from fear to action, to cope with the unexpected situation – and a shift in daily activities from offline to online.

 For those who works daily, depending on the fact that each day, it is expected income must be earned to attend to basic needs have lost total hope on their daily meals so their consumer behaviour towards making purchases have reduced from little to nothing. As for those who are able to attend to their needs (people able to afford it), their purchase decision are limited to only basic needs such as food and medication.

Fear of this disease has also caused change to consumer’s behaviour. The fear of contacting this disease has brought resistance to purchasing of different things also including the basic needs such as food and medication. Believing that everything they touch is a means of spread to the corona virus and the process of purchase includes interaction with the shop attendant. So they choose to remain indoors at the same time reluctant and hesitant to buy anything. This is the consumer’s behaviour of majority in the society.

There has been a drastic increase in the price of goods (inflation) because of the current economic recession which does not only occur in Nigeria but it is a global issue too. The temporary shutdown bringing a pause to the running of industries, companies and worker that contribute to the economic growth has caused this. Not only that shop owners have also decided to raise the price further than the inflation has made it. Consumer try as much as they can to avoid product that are more costly than their worth or are expensive as a result of inflation. So the behaviour of consumers towards purchase is rather reluctant due to the costly price of goods currently.

 The strict adherence to lockdown in the society is a measure taken applied by the government to prevent the spread of the disease (COVID-19) has forced everybody to remain at home and stay indoors. If done otherwise, one can inevitably suffer punishment and consequences given by the court of residing area. The lockdown have prevented people from purchasing products and also the shop owners from selling theirs. So even the consumers that are allowed to get their essential needs, there is a limited time given to shop talk less of the excessive social distancing is highly inconvenient. So the consumer’s buying behaviour is rather hesitant if they are not desperate for basic needs.

In conclusion, the consumer behaviour being a pattern to how consumers make purchases responding to their words and needs. Naturally situations or events can occur to change or alter this usual pattern of buying things illustrated in the corona virus outbreak. With these one can understand how consumer’s behaviour can change due to factors that occur in their environment.

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