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MATRIC NUMBER: 18/LAW01/084

INTRODUCTION

Firstly, Consumer behavior can be defined as 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 behavioral responses that precede or follow these activities.

While Consumer buying behavior can be defined as the sum total of a consumer's attitudes, preferences, intentions, and decisions regarding the consumer's behavior in the marketplace when purchasing a product or service. The study of consumer behavior draws upon social science disciplines of anthropology, psychology, sociology, and economics.

Coronaviruses are a group of related viruses that cause diseases in mammals and birds. In humans, coronaviruses cause respiratory tract infections that can range from mild to lethal. Mild illnesses include some cases of the common cold (which has other possible causes, predominantly rhinoviruses), while more lethal varieties can cause SARS, MERS, and COVID-19. Symptoms in other species vary: in chickens, they cause an upper respiratory tract disease, while in cows and pigs they cause diarrhea. There are yet to be vaccines or antiviral drugs to prevent or treat human coronavirus infections.

Corona virus also known as Covid-19 is a deadly pandemic situation which not just Nigeria but the whole world is facing and trying to tackle. And no doubt, this epidemic has affected consumer buying behavior.

Consumer buying behavior has been forced to immediately change, and change on a massive scale. Those in isolation or under lockdown can’t perform their usual routines, especially since many local shops have been forced to close their doors for safety reasons. Concerns about the availability of goods have encouraged panic buying of items in bulk. Financial uncertainty and the prospect of a severe and long-term recession make for a stark backdrop which has led to an impact on consumer outlook, perceptions and behaviors.

The writer here shall give you reasons how covid 19 has affected consumer buying behavior;

**Online shopping**: There is no doubt that covid has affected the means of shopping for goods.

When consumers are faced with shopping restrictions, they find and adopt newer ways to shop through technology. This is especially true when it comes to health and essential items.

since most stores and shopping malls has closed down as a result of the order by the government to prevent the spread of this pandemic disease, individuals who were unable to stock up goods are now left with the only option of purchasing what they want online and get it delivered to them. As you can see, Covid 19 has affected the way people or individuals buy their goods. People are now left with online shopping which some individuals dread because sometimes the picture of goods online is not what it is in ‘real life’ and we can see evidence in some social media post tagged ”what I ordered v what I got” . As a result of this, online stores of all sizes stand to benefit from the switch of consumer buying behavior to online shopping since they are already well-positioned to serve the increasing demand for goods and services.

However, due to the pandemic, older generations are starting to see online shopping as a valid and safe option to obtain groceries. For example, Alibaba reported that in China, online grocery orders placed by people born in the 1960s were four times higher than normal during the Spring Festival or the period were China was still discovering new cases of COVID-19 each day

Some question may arise if it is safe to order online during covid 19. As it becomes even more clear just how infectious COVID-19 is, some shoppers have raised questions about the safety of receiving their online orders. Experts are finding that the virus can live on surfaces from three hours to up to three days, depending on the material. (Note that conclusive findings are difficult to come by in these early days of the virus, and as experts continue their study of it, these numbers may change.

That said, it’s unlikely that COVID-19 would survive on your purchased items from the time they were packed to the time you received your package (especially with the slowdown in the delivery system). And shipping conditions make a tough environment for COVID-19 as well, so it’s not likely you’ll be exposed via the package itself, either. The World Health Organization addresses the concern as well, by saying that it is safe to receive packages from locations with reported COVID-19 cases. From their website: “The likelihood of an infected person contaminating commercial goods is low and the risk of catching the virus that causes COVID-19 from a package that has been moved, travelled, and exposed to different conditions and temperature is also low.”

PANIC BUYING:

According to Paul Marsden, a consumer psychologist, Panic buying can be understood as playing to our three fundamental psychology needs.” These needs are autonomy (or the need to feel in control of your actions), relatedness (the need to feel that we are doing something to benefit our families), and competence (the need to feel like smart shoppers making the correct choice).The global spread of COVID-19 has been accompanied by a lot of uncertainty and at times contradictory information. When people are hearing differing advice from multiple sources, they have a greater instinct to over-, rather than under-, prepare.

As news of COVID-19 spread and as it was officially declared a pandemic by the World Health Organization, people responded by stocking up. They bought out medical supplies like hand sanitizer and masks and household essentials like toilet paper and bread. Soon, both brick-and-mortar and online stores were struggling to keep up with demand, and price gouging for supplies became rampant.

Humans respond to crises in different ways. When faced with an uncertain, risky situation over which we have no control, we tend to try whatever we can to feel like we have some control. Seeing other people buying up the shelves and then seeing a scarcity of necessary products validates the decision to stock up. No one wants to be left behind without any resources.

PROBLEM RECOGNITION (awareness of need)

This is one of the six stages in making decisions when a consumer is buying goods. During this stage, the consumer becomes aware of an unfulfilled need or want. As a result of covid 19, individuals needs and wants will change. Individuals who planned to buy different types of foods, clothes and also travel are now left with goods that can protect themselves. This situation has changed individuals’ needs and wants. This period, individuals needs will be foodstuffs, hand sanitizer, face masks, gloves rather than their previous needs like new shoes, clothes, phones or even cars.

ECONOMY

Individuals such as hawkers, drivers and other jobs, who earn daily income have been greatly affected by this pandemic. Individuals will not be able to buy foods or to buy the quantity of food they usually buy because there is no income coming. As a result of this, food vendors who they usually buy foods some will also be losing financially as her customers will reduced and foods might go bad especially if it is a perishable food.

All these will affect the economy if this pandemic situation continues and also for a long run affect even salary earners. Gradually, the money people spend will reduce and this will affect the economy in a society

HIKING OF PRICE BY RETAILERS

Consumer buying behavior has changed as a result of hiking of prices by retailers. Retailers who has goods that are needed by consumers in this pandemic period to protect against covid 19 such goods include, hand sanitizers, gloves, and face masks will increase the price of their goods to have more gain of a particular goods. Before the pandemic, hand sanitizers that were sold for the prize of #4000 are now been sold for #14000. This will discourage some consumers from buying such goods.

RELYING OF MANUFACTURES

As the population of most countries starts to move from quarantine preparations to restricted living, online fulfillment will be challenging due to strains in the supply chain. This has prompted many consumers to turn to Direct to Consumer (D2C) manufacturers to order and receive goods within a normal timeframe.

These Direct to Consumer (D2C) manufactures are a growing segment that caters directly to consumers by bypassing standard distribution channels, effectively gaining direct access to consumers. Several of these manufacturers have seen a significant boost in sales due to the pandemic. For example, Peach, a brand that manufactures high-end bath tissue saw new customers increase by 279% over the last two weeks compared to the two weeks prior.8

Awareness o Direct to Consumer (D2C) manufacturers has increased in the last few years, with almost 48% of manufacturers racing to build D2C channels, and 87% seeing these channels being relevant to their products and consumers.9 Initially boosted by younger audiences, Direct to Consumer manufacturers have found success by focusing on specific target audiences and catering to their needs and identities. This Direct to Consumer trend is expected to continue, and perhaps accelerate, as manufacturers that are still on the fence might finally see the benefits of Direct to Consumer and make they directly available to consumers

However, even Direct to Consumer manufactures that have found themselves positively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic will be affected by supply chain issues as consumers start living in quarantine. This means they can’t afford to stand idly by and must find a way to maintain their e-commerce growth once the pandemic is over as well.

If people are buying more goods now, it is not necessarily because they are using more—they are stockpiling. When things get back to normal, consumers will have a lot of canned soup and toilet paper at home and won't need to buy more. It's not an easy decision for companies to invest significant resources to meet the spike in demand that might be unnatural and result in future losses. Producers and distributers are facing increased demand for consumer packaged goods such as food, beverages, and cleaning products due to shoppers panic-buying in bulk. This is why we see empty shelves at grocery stores. But I don't think there is shortage in the food supply chain. We have the manufacturing, transportation, and storage capacity to deal with consumer packaged goods. In fact, it's not critical for people to be stocking up in their homes. There is no fundamentally broken piece of the food supply chain.

Despite all of this, there have been efforts by manufacturers and retailers to improve things for consumers even though it might not be immediately beneficial for business. For example, grocery stores have established dedicated periods of the day for the elderly to have access to stores without exposure to others and stores have been imposing limits on the number of people permitted to shop at one time to allow for social distancing. Many stores are rationing in-demand products by putting a limit on quantities per customer.

Some of the responsibility is on the consumers themselves to realize that our actions have impact on others. The people most impacted by shortages at grocery stores are those with limited mobility and limited income who may not have dependable access to transportation, have limited amounts of cash, and may not be able to stockpile.

While the world is reeling from the effects of the Coronavirus pandemic, consumer behavior is being forced to change and shoppers are increasingly moving online. Ecommerce sites are in a position to be able to capitalize on this, but only if they are able to be found by customers in the first place.

While tactics may need to be adapted to the new environment we find ourselves in, businesses should consider retaining investment in their analytics, online marketing and online content so that they can remain competitive and meet the needs of shoppers.

In these uncertain times, there are still opportunities; it just takes a slightly different mindset and approach, and a positive attitude.

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