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**Question.**

In not less than 2000 words, explain explicitly how the pandemic (COVID19) has affected consumer buying behavior.

**Answer**

**Introduction**

 To understand this question, we’ll have to outline each concept and relate them to the given problem.

 First and foremost, **who is a consumer and** **what is consumer behavior?** A Consumer is any individual who purchases products or services for his personal use and not for manufacturing or resale. As such, consumers play a vital role in the economic system of a nation. Without a consumer demand, producers would lack one of the key motivations to produce, the consumer is also the last element on the chain of distribution. With this in mind, we can proceed to what is a consumer behavior, Consumer behavior can be said to be 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.

Now, this brings to the question, **what is consumer buying behavior?** Consumer Buying Behavior refers to the actions taken (both on and offline) by consumers before buying a product or service. Consumer buying behavior is an inter-disciplinary social science that blends elements from psychology, sociology, social anthropology, anthropology, ethnography, marketing and economics, especially behavioral economics. It examines how emotions, attitudes and preferences affect buying behavior.

There are several factors that may affect the consumer buying process, but I’ve summed it up into 4 major factors, one of which the global pandemic COVID-19 falls under, these include;

* Cultural Factors - Culture is not always defined by a person's nationality. It can also be defined by their associations, their religious beliefs or even their location.
* Social Factors - Elements in a person's environment that impact the way they see products.
* Personal Factors - These may include someone's age, marital status, budget, personal beliefs, values, and morals.
* Psychological Factors - A person's state of mind when they are approached with a product will often determine how they feel not only about the item itself but the brand as a whole.

We’ll be discussing the social factor (Pandemic) which is affecting consumer behavior. Before we proceed to discuss on how it affects consumer behavior, we have to understand why this pandemic truly affects consumer buying process in comparison to other epidemic, thus, the question, what is COVID-19? COVID-19 commonly known as Corona virus is a respiratory virus that is air borne and can be contacted true direct contact of facial organs to it, such as, the eyes, nose and mouth, it is easily transmittable because it can stay on surfaces for a long period of time and can be passed on even without its symptoms being vivid. This creates the concept of “social distancing” which prevents consumers from relating to their buyers.

With all these facts put to place we’ll look at how this pandemic affects consumer buying behavior.

**How the global Pandemic (COVID-19) affects Consumer buying Behavior?**

There are various vices that come to mind in respect to how the pandemic has indeed affected consumer buying behavior, these may include;

1. Increase in amount of food and other essential edibles at the farmer’s market, in essence bulk-buying:

 This idea to an extent is self-explanatory, since food is a necessity, consumers of all kind buy food. Now, given the situation at hand whereby there is limited and restricted movement due to curfew as a means to curb the pandemic. Consumers knowing, they have limited access to food supply engage to stock up enough food supply to last them for a long period of time. Bulk buying doesn’t work in a one-way lane; it is a two people game. There is high demand in high amounts which more or less motivate farmers or producers to increase the amount of goods they sell, this is a vivid relevance to the obvious law of demand which states, “all things being equal, the higher the demand for a commodity or service the higher the supply”, that is to say that the higher the demand for food produce, the higher the supply.

 Interest in stocking up on food with a long shelf life has certainly increased during the COVID-19 outbreak. The need to stay home for long stretches due to social distancing and self-isolation has consumers buying in bigger quantities as well. The fact remains that the rate of bulk buying is higher in the year 2020 than in any other year before this. This is a very clear result of the pandemic at hand. While it depends on the items, generally speaking, buying in bulk is cheaper. Without the excess packaging and branding that companies charge for, items tend to be cheaper than supermarket prices. Consumers can usually save money per unit, which adds up to real savings over time. There are different reasons why consumers feel the need to buy food in bulk at this period, these may include. Most people have never lived through something like this current health crisis, so they would rather buy more food than they usually would than risk going hungry. Scarcity of products leads people to perceive them as more valuable, meaning they are more willing to pay a premium price. It can even make us buy things we don't even want because we think they are suddenly worth more. In uncertain times, it's nice to feel like you have control over something. When looking at the apocalyptic sight of an empty aisle, buying up anything you can helps provide that control, because you know, if the worst comes to the worst, you can feed your family.

 In summary, bulk buying is caused by various psychological and environmental cues which throw rational thinking out of the window," said Fenwick. "When in survival mode, we let mainly our emotions drive decisions and are more susceptible to social influences. So, we will rush out and buy more because we believe others are doing the same.

1. Reduction in attention paid towards fashion, home décor and other sectors that don’t deal with human needs:

 There is a clear reduction in sales of any product that doesn’t affect needs, one could simply say that there is a clear cut increase in the prices of needs and high reduction in sales of wants, all economic luxurious goods have been put on hold due to the pandemic affecting the world. According to the report, industry sales have declined up to 85 per cent in China in the space of two months, during the country’s lockdown period. In countries like Italy, France and Spain, the decline has reached 95 per cent. This drastic drop represents an existential danger for fashion companies, which are traditionally poor in cash, are often dependent on private equity and can have high debt levels.

 This is however, the worse time for capitalist who specialize in any good or service that doesn’t help tackle human needs. Consumers at large don’t have time to focus their individual energy on commodities that can’t deal with their individual needs, because of this, there is high reduction in demand for trivial goods such as, clothes, decorations, tele-comm. Equipment etc. because they don’t help deal with our insatiable needs.

 On a fashion site online; fashion revolution.org, it was discovered that, In the global fashion industry, brands typically pay their suppliers weeks or even months after delivery, rather than upon order. This means that suppliers usually pay upfront for the materials or fibers used to make the products brand buy from them. In response to the pandemic, many major fashion brands and retailers are cancelling orders and stopping payments for orders already placed, even when the work has already been done, taking no responsibility for the impact this has on the people working in their supply chains. Factories are left with little choice but to destroy or keep hold of unwanted goods already made and lay off their workers in droves. This is to portray the extent in which the pandemic has affected every other sector.

1. Reduction in consumer spending due to restricted source of income:

 Consumers can’t spend the usual or average amount of money they do on a good day. This is as a result of the novel COVID-19 pandemic and as a result consumer can’t spend as much as they would usually would because there isn’t a stable source of income.

 In Nigeria, most of the slums, people cannot work in line with the government quarantine act of stated lockdown, this is because most people use their daily earnings to feed themselves and their family, with the more flexible curfew lockdown, people can only earn so little to feed themselves and their household, thus, leading to reduced spending on goods. In Nigeria, government response aimed at curtailing the spread of the disease has led to the significant restrictions in the movement of persons and goods virtually all over the country, especially in the places (namely Lagos state, Ogun state, and the Federal Capital Territory) which Nigeria’s president has put on technical lockdown. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to intensify and disrupt business across the globe, many international companies are facing the harsh reality of resorting to severe cost-saving measures to protect their financial health. One of the major points for consideration is whether multinational companies may reduce the working hours and/or pay of their international workforce.

 As an initial matter it is important to note that, in most countries, employers will not be able to simply change an employee’s work hours or pay unilaterally, even in times of crisis, given that these are material terms of employment. Some countries, haven’t only placed curfew, making it difficult to earn wages, some have deployed reduction in salary as a way to increase funds to fight the novel virus, such as, North Korea, Denmark, South Africa, etc. Not all companies have continued to pay employees their full salaries during South Africa’s lock-down. Some have reduced staff wages to cut cost during the extended lock-down while others have told workers to deduct time spent at home during the lock-down from their annual leave.

 In summary, due to the pandemic, it’s become very much difficult to spend the average amount on goods and services as before.

1. Increase in consumer online shopping and reduction in local sales:

 Due to the pandemic, people have been placed on lockdown and curfew, because of this, availability of access to the goods have become difficult, this procures individuals to involve in online shopping more often than before. People can’t go to shops so they rather bring the shop to themselves. One of the responses we’ve seen to how people are approaching this period of isolation and uncertainty is in huge overnight changes to their shopping behaviors. From bulk-buying to online shopping, people are changing what they’re buying, when, and how. As more cities are going under lockdowns, nonessential businesses are being ordered to close, and customers are generally avoiding public places. Limiting shopping for all but necessary essentials is becoming a new normal. Brands are having to adapt and be flexible to meet changing needs. Many consumers are turning to internet shopping during the crisis, opening up new opportunities for online retailers, supermarkets and other sellers of consumer goods. Those businesses, in turn, will need identity management software, cyber-security measures and distribution, as well as social and electronic media for advertising. The COVID-19 pandemic is having a significant impact on every aspect of life, including how people shop for their necessities, and their not-so-necessities. With online retail sales estimated to reach an eye-watering $6.5 trillion by 2023, the ecommerce sector was already booming. But since the outbreak, online shopping has been catapulted into complete overdrive. Even the largest retailers on the planet are struggling to keep up with the unprecedented consumer demand. As people come to terms with their new living situations, their buying behavior has adapted to suit their needs. While panic buying may have slowed in some countries, consumers continue to stock up on supplies, or “pandemic pantry products”.

 In summary, there has been high dependence on online sales than local sales as a virtue of the novel corona virus.

**Conclusion**

There are several divergent ways in which the global pandemic COVID-19 has affected consumer buying behavior, but we made judicious use of these few ways. They are many other ways. To place this in a nutshell, the major issue at hand is that this pandemic has cost a disturbance in the balance of the usual economic flow of business, not only in Nigeria but worldwide. This pandemic has brought about several flaws in the commercial sector of every economy.