

## CHANGED PERCEPTION AND BUYING BEHAVIOUR OF WOMEN CONSUMERS AMID COVID-19- A literature Review

**M.Meerabai\* K.Selvasundaram\*\***

\*Department of Commerce, Faculty of Science and Humanities, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur- 603203, Tamil Nadu, India.

\*\*Department of Corporate Secretaryship and Accounting Finance, Faculty of Science and Humanities, SRM Institute of Science and Technology, Kattankulathur -603203, Tamil Nadu, India.

**Corresponding author mail id: selvasuk@srmist.edu.in**

### Abstract

Coronavirus (Covid-19) is an infectious disease which lead to a great disaster worldwide which cannot be erased from the history. Consumer perspective towards products ranging from groceries, health products, Durable goods, luxury items to cars has changed and their buying pattern also affected due to the impact of said disease. Marketers are under fear of decreased sales and profit because of the changed mindset of consumers. Consumers became cost and quality conscious, buy in large quantity. Today most of the industries targeted on female consumers who play major role in decision making in a family, it become important to study the impact of Covid 19 on their perception and their behaviour. The study concludes that Digitalisation played a major role during this pandemic situation.

**Keywords:** Covid-19, Pandemic, women consumer, consumer perception, digitalisation.

### INTRODUCTION

Buyers tend to exhibit different types of buying behaviour when they are in the process of purchasing the goods and services and the behaviour witnessed are influenced by the product, he/she wants to buy and the circumstances in which the purchase decision is made. The consumer buying behaviour can be defined as the way in which consumer or buyers of goods and services tend to react or behave when purchasing products, they like. It is the sum total of a consumer's attitudes, preferences, intentions, and decision regarding the consumer behaviour in the market place, when purchasing a product or service.

During Covid-19 pandemic consumer's buying habits has been changed. They gave importance to health and hygiene products. The present study focuses on changed perception of women consumers towards various products and their behaviour during the pandemic crisis. The present study is based on secondary data collected from various journals, articles and books. The study is divided into two sections. The first section concentrates on change in buying pattern of consumers. The second section concentrates on factors influencing buying behaviour of women consumers.

### RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study based on secondary data. The data is collected from various articles published in various journals, news -papers, conference proceedings and books.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Change in buying pattern of women consumers

Due to lockdown and fear of going out for purchase, there is a transformation from offline purchase to online purchase. (Afzal Basha, et.al 2020) [1]. Women consumers who are considered to be very cautious buyer and who will take a decision after verifying the product physically, have changed their mindset and they depend on digital stores for their purchase out of fear during the pandemic situation. They were comfortable in buying products ranging from groceries to computer through online mode. A segment of consumers, advocates of traditional commerce has been forced to appeal to modern methods of trading, online shopping and specialists' estimations provide the maintenance of trade behaviour. (Silviu STANCIU, Rian Iren RADU, et.al 2020) [2].

Ulpian J. Vazquez et.al., (2021) [3] Pointed out the following changes in the buying pattern of consumers during the crisis:

- Relating to their purchase mode, women consumers used to buy few things, they never order for clothes and food through online before pandemic, but now a days they make 100% of their purchase online.
- They visit all stores including small stores online due to the non- availability of products in the super market where they usually buy it.
- Due to increased volume of purchase and reduction in the variety of products purchase, their frequency of visit to physical store has been considerably reduced.
- Work from home culture made the consumers to purchase in bulk to satisfy the need of their family members especially relating to food items because they cannot go out for hotels and restaurants.
- The products which usually don't occupy their purchase basket also brought in their purchase cart due to the necessity such as face mask, hand wash, video games, MP3 etc. (Djamel Ghermao et.al 2020) [4].

All consumption made by the consumers is time bound and location bound as stated by Sheth (2020) [5]. There are three factors influence and modify consumer's purchase decision. Policy of government relating to lockdown area, lock down timings, people desire of demographic location to stay and work, technology acceptance for purchase shape the buying pattern of consumers in the market (Sheth 2020 [5a])

Although many companies succeeded in doing their business through social commerce that is through internet commerce and social media, they are of the opinion that consumers are interested only in gathering information and choosing a product but they return back to normality once the lock down is lifted. Marketers are of the view that consumers are not willing to forego the physical mode of purchase (Anupam Sharma and Deepika Jhamp 2020) [6].

As per Nielson report on buying behaviour during crisis suggested consumer behaviour model consists of six levels that depicts changing, spending pattern of consumers, emergency purchase of products by consumers. In the first level consumers are interested in buying those products which will maintain their health and wellness, which is called as **Proactive health minded**

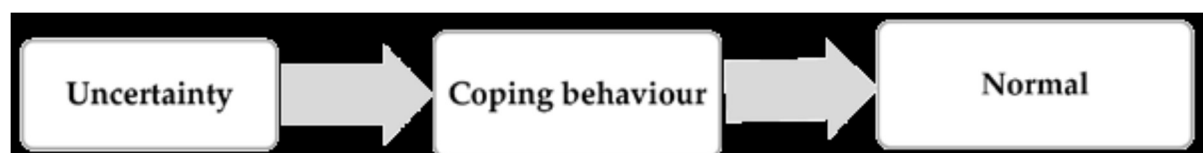
**buying.** Then they move to second level of buying consists of virus containment product such as sanitizer, mask, and this level called as **reactive health management buying**. At this level government took various preventive measures and organised health campaigns to create awareness among people. The third level is termed as **pantry preparation buying**, where consumers buy stable food and packed items for stockpiling to meet their requirements during lock down. The fourth level represents **Quarantined living preparation** level shows change in shopping behaviour of consumers; they buy online due to shortage of goods in off stores. Fifth level was **restricted living**, consumers are concerned about pricing and reduced their shopping time and trip. Last threshold level was **living normal**, consumers return to normal life but they are highly health conscious and risks, price sensitive at the time of buying (Nielson 2020a) [7].

Some of the research pointed out the crisis paved way for **Panic buying** due to announcement of lockdown in various countries. It was the outcome of fear about resource availability. Continuous broadcasting of information about supply of goods during pandemic period by various news media and social networking service such as Face book and Twitter lead to crowd buying behaviour because the consumers are highly sensitive towards supply scarcity. Prevalence of high risk of uncertainty during crisis, they consider change in economic condition and government norms were indicators of availability of resources and consumers are sensitive to these changes when they feel nervous about pandemic situations (Cheng 2004) [8]

When high risk of uncertainty prevails, panic buying is considered as a response to the expectancy of resource scarcity because of large scale stock out during pandemic crisis (Hatak and Snellman,2017) [9]

Anu Sarah Daniel and Mamath Varier (2022) [10] developed a model on theory of panic buying behaviour which was shown below:

**Figure 1: Model of purchase attitude of people during pandemic**



Source: Anu Sarah Daniel and Mamath Varier (2022)

According to them people always fear the unknown. They are always comfortable with the situation which they are familiar with. During pandemic people always fear about future uncertainty relation availability of jobs, goods and other services. Then they understand the stressful situations and cope up themselves by bringing change in their choice and preferences. New buying pattern is evolved which is entirely different from past trends.

In one of the report McKinsey & company (October 2020) [11] pointed out the change trends in spending pattern of consumers and they are most likely to stick even today.

- **Digital Adoption:** Women shifted from purchase through physical mode to online. Remote working, learning and shopping made digital during pandemic.
- **Shift to value:** Overall spending habit of consumer was not affected. Due to decrease in income they are very careful in spending. They reduce their spending on apparel, vehicle and travel and increase their spending on groceries and household supplies.
- **Decrease in loyalty:** consumer tried different shopping method, different retailers and prefer lower prices, promotions, larger package size and less expensive shopping. There has been unexpected shift to different brand and products that are less expensive.
- **Solitary economy:** Restriction for out of home activities during crisis made the consumers to spend more on at home activities such as gardening as well as software and electronics for working or learning from home. When they venture out they spend time in purchase of groceries and necessities.
- **Less holiday shopping:** There was shift in holiday spending. Consumers are more cautious in spending due to financial uncertainty.

### Shift in purchase priorities by women

The societal impact of quarantine is big stressor than the virus itself among women consumers. As per Alex Kirk, [12] director of consumer insights reports that financial and economic uncertainty, home schooling, managing new routines, concerning health of themselves and their families, women are highly stressed, bored during pandemic situations. Women changed their purchase priorities as follows:

**Before Pandemic:** 1. Quality 2. Price 3. Brand name

**During Pandemic:** 1. Availability 2. Price 3. Quality

The above statement further confirmed by a study conducted in collaboration by DMC Insights, Mom Junction and Her HQ Media in April 2021 [13], they said that “While quality, price, brand remain three top deciding factors, there was a rise in preference for the availability of products, assurance of hygiene and nutrition. ‘Healthy over tasty’ was the mantra adopted by women” (Consumer insights 2020, DMC insights 2021) [14].

Rapid innovation in information technology and pandemic crisis have transformed conventional behaviour in to website visitor behaviour through provision of lot of information relating to local and international information, high flexibility, affordable prices, timely service and product information (Nada Mallah Boustani et al 2021) [15].

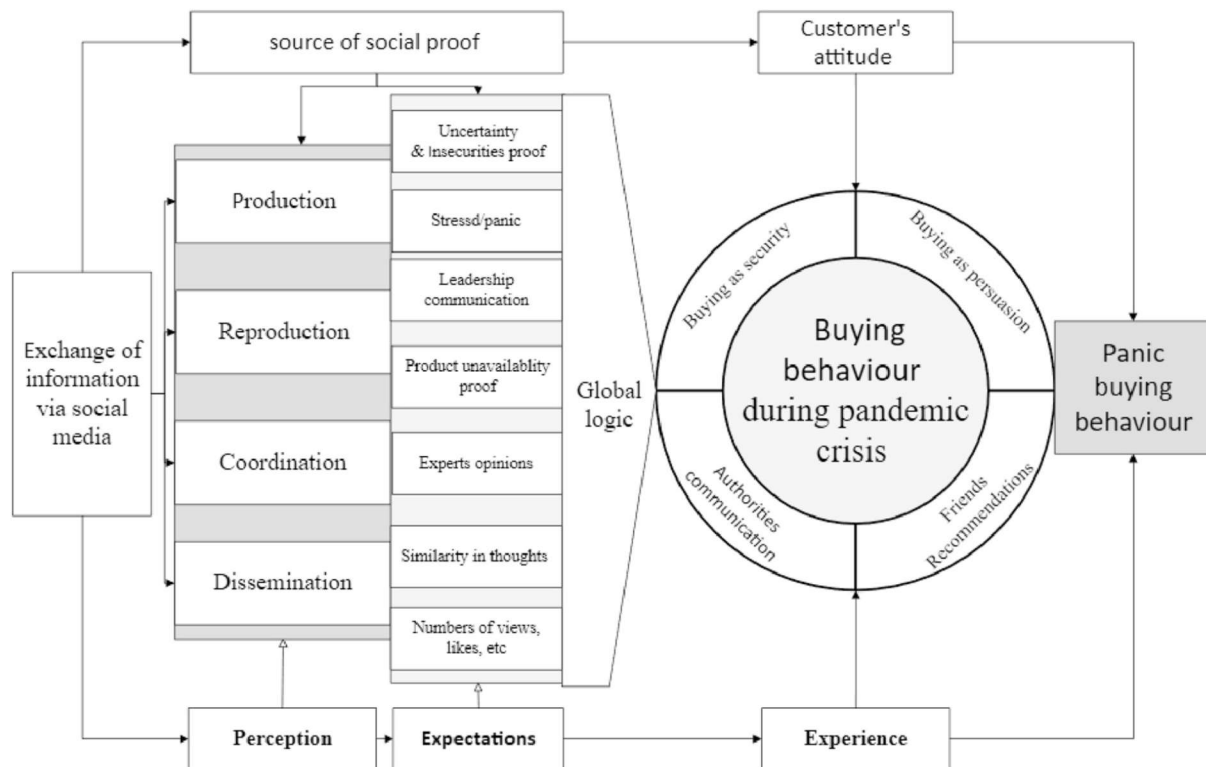
### Impact of social media platform on consumer behaviour during covid 19

Social media platform plays important role in making people more engaged and connected, which increases information sharing (Aslam et al., 2018, Muqadas et.al., 2017) [16] but at the same time

allowing sensationalism and spreading of misinformation regarding covid-19 due to the reason that shocking and emotionally charged content gets people’s attention (cogley 2020, Mao 2020) [17]. Experts are of the view that social media makes people more anxious about what is to come, which had an impact on stock supplied (Reuters, 2020) [18] and because of this consumer panic buying increased across the globe based on socially constructed meaning of covid-19 that led to stockpiling behaviour of consumers.

Due to the presence of social commerce, consumer buying behaviour become highly complicated and subjective reality (Aragoncillo and orus 2018, Algharabat et.al., 2020) [19]. Many countries announced social distancing as a measure to control the disease, the role of social media has increased for engaging and exchanging information. (Muhammed Naeem 2021) [20].

Social Media provides various features for communication among people about their common interest such as sharing of videos, audios, pictures, tag, view sharing. Tweeting, retweeting and other feature (cogley 2020 [17a]. During pandemic people shared their experiences, stories, videos, pictures on covid-19 through Twitter, face-book, WhatsApp, and other social platform which further worsen the panic buying among consumers. Based on the above fact panic theory was developed by Muhammed Naeem in 2021 [20a] which says that social media allowing society to enhance the social exchange regarding unprecedented kind of threat which produced social proof through interpretation of expert’s opinion, information’s, rumours, sensationalisms and other forms of disinformation’s. The theory is diagrammatically represented below;



Source: Adapted from Muhammed Naeem developed theory on panic behaviour (2021).

## **Reshaped consumer behaviour during covid 19 in India**

As per the study conducted by BCG insights in India, they categorised behavioural changes in consumer behaviour into four categories “accelerating behaviours,” “sustained momentum behaviours,” “sensitive behaviours,” and “transient behavioural changes.” Each of these categories has its own distinct characteristics and trajectories (Aparna Bharadwaj et.al., 2021) [21]

Accelerating behaviour developed during the initial stage of pandemic and during this time consumer use chat groups for getting information and purchasing healthier and nutritional supplement and healthier packed food items for the first time. Even those consumers who already in usage of chat groups and bought healthier food items started purchasing the goods more frequently during pandemic period.

Usage of wide range digital devices for various services such as online retailing, digital payment services, online education services, free video apps like you tube, hot stare always at elevated levels during pandemic period. This behaviour is regarded as sustained momentum behaviour.

Shopping at modern trade stores such as super markets and hyper market chains and relying on online consultation doctor services tend to rise and fall in response to intensity of pandemic and associated lockdown measures is termed as sensitive behaviour.

Transient behavioural changes found during the early lockdown period of pandemic and later on these behavioural changes declined when lock down eased due to lack of interest on the part of consumers. Example demand for online fitness and hobby classes and do it yourself grooming.

During the pandemic consumer initially concentrate buying and storing goods out of fear of unstable situation. They found retail store purchasing was unsafe, they depend on online mode of purchase through online platforms. This change in consumer behaviour theory of planned behaviour’ which says the individual’s intended behaviour is controlled by the attitude, subject norms and perceived behavioural control (Ajzen, 1985) [22]

## **Conclusion**

Consumer behaviour has changed during the corona virous pandemic in many ways. Most of the consumers all over the world shopped through internet. The turnover of the e-shopping multiplied during this period. There was a change in consumers’ willingness to spend because of uncertainty about future job availability, earnings and government restrictions. Social media played an important role in brought out a change in consumer behaviour.

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