

## CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR DURING COVID TIMES

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### ABSTRACT

*Consumer is considered as king of the market place. Consumers' have diverse mind set but their behaviour is dominantly affected by stress full conditions like pandemic. Moreover, commonality can be found by closely observing their buying behaviour. Present study generates qualitative information by analyzing available literature extensively. Study finds major patterns of buying behaviour during COVID as stock piling & panic buying, safety and hygiene priorities, Health and wellness priorities, change spending priorities, support for local businesses, preference for sustainable products, adoption of e-commerce and online business etc. Towards end study gives managerial implications and suggests adjusting previous marketing efforts with new norms experienced during COVID. The suggestions are offered considering that if buying experiences during COVID were more convenient than they are likely to overtake previous buying behaviour or pattern.*

**KEYWORDS:** *Buying Behaviour, COVID, Local Businesses, Sustainable Products, e-Commerce.*

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### Introduction

The markets have become the voice of consumers. Products and services are adjusted to satisfy the desires of consumers. The taste, preference, likings, dis-likings of consumers play a dominant role not only in buying of a product but also staying with product or brand for longer time period. Marketers have realized that without reading the behaviour of consumers, buying cannot be influenced. Thus, they have started studying how consumers behave in certain buying conditions. The recent pandemic COVID 19 has affected not only market conditions but also the thinking and behaviour of consumers in buying situations. The key considerations for making choice of products are now supplemented with COVID safety norms and measures. Due to this change in behaviour of consumers was visible not only for buying purposes but also for consumption of products. To develop a theoretical base for the study and overview of consumer behaviour, we need to understand the related aspects of the study.

### Consumer

The term consumer itself reflects that the one who consumes a product or service is known as consumer. In the context of study a person who purchases and uses a product or service for own need is known as consumer. More specifically for a FMCG product one who eats is treated as consumer. The end user of a product or service is considered as consumer (<https://byjus.com>). An individual or a group

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of individuals who is willing to order or uses bought product or services for own, society, family or like needs which are directly not related to entrepreneurial/ business or professional activities (<https://en.wikipedia.org>). Most of the times, terminology consumers and customers are used interchangeably. But consumers and customers are different in the sense that consumers are end users of products while customers purchase product or services for others use. Many a times buyer is a consumer also if he uses the product himself and do not buy for manufacturing or trading. While in many instances he may simply be buyer and consumer is someone else. In such situation, buyer will be called as customer. The consumer may be an individual or a group of persons also. A parent buying clothes for him-self is consumer which buying cloths for children case parent is customer. Thus, consumer is a person or group of persons who purchases a goods or services based on his own taste, preferences, wants for their own use. Understanding and taking care of consumers have been the key for increasing sale and existing in markets. Manufacturers and traders are required to have continuous watch on changing patterns and behaviour of consumers. This enables them in launching product or services according to wants and needs of consumers thereby directly influencing their sales. If a firm is unable to foresee correctly taste and preferences of consumers they may have to face defeat with competitors. Each individual is unique as far as mind set is concerned. Thus, judgment of taste, preference and attitude is a complex task for a marketer. Especially in times of COVID 19, speedy change in the behaviour of consumers was observed. The fear, frustration, imposed scarcity, liquid fund non-availability etc has largely affected consumers' attitude, preferences and buying pattern. Therefore, it became essential for marketers to minutely observe the behaviour of consumers.

### Consumer Behaviour

Behaviour simply means that how an individual act or what he does in a given situation. The Cambridge dictionary defines behaviour as the way that an individual behaves under a particular condition (<https://dictionary.cambridge.org>). Usually, the act of individual is observable and measurable. Thus, it can be said that observable and measurable actions that an individual has displayed under a given situations is known as behaviour. Mainly behaviour is affected by emotional/personal, physical, life or family experience and desires (<https://www.health.nsw.gov.au>). The actions and motivations underlying find, buy, use and dispose of products and services are studied in consumer behaviour. Broadly these actions can be categorized in three category i.e. obtaining, consuming and disposing (<https://www.geektonight.com>). The actions that lead to purchase of product are noticed in obtaining while situations under which these products are observed in consuming. Finally how consumers get rid of these products and packaging is noticed in disposing. In all marketers are interested in finding out consumers' decision making process. Therefore, understanding behaviour will assist marketer in correct estimation of needs and wants of consumers. That is how they would be able to judge what products are in demand and which one are going to be obsolete in near future. Every marketer thus wants to understand that what motivates consumers to buy particular goods and services. Understanding buying behaviour is not only important from the point of understanding what products and services are liked by consumers but it also is important to know which of the marketing campaigns/ advertising were effective. In all it helps in understanding why consumers make their decision. What are the factors which are contributing in making such decision?

### Types of Consumer Behaviour

The consumer behaviour is observed to be of various types. It is important to understand different types of consumer behaviour as it can help organizations to design their marketing strategies. The marketing strategies designed after proper understanding of types of consumer behaviour would be an effective way to target probable consumers. In most of the literature four types of consumer behaviour has been identified i.e. Complex buying behaviour, Dissonance-reducing buying, habitual buying behaviour and variety seeking buying behaviour. Here in forthcoming discussion some simpler form has been used to explain types of consumer buying behaviour.

- **Habitual Buying Behaviour:** Such kind of behaviour is visible when consumer buys routine consumption products like milk, bread, eggs etc. They do not put much thought for buying such products as they are their regular buying items and are not emotionally attached to these products brand. Therefore, here they exhibit habitual pattern even they are least concerned with exhibiting brand loyalty.
- **Impulsive Buying Behaviour:** Many a times it can be observed that consumer takes buying decision driven by emotions or feelings. Such buying decisions are not well planned neither

consumer has thought of buying such before. Tendency of buying a product or service without planning in advance. Such kind of buying can be observed across the variety of product categories. Most of the times attractive display of the product, discounts etc. promote consumers to enter in to impulsive buying. Consumers usually do not put much thinking or research while doing impulsive buying. In COVID times lot of such impulsive buying of FMCG products was visible in the emotion that scarcity of such products or materials may exist in the market.

- **Limited Decision-Making Buying Behaviour:** Usually such behaviour is observed when consumers tend to purchase occasionally. Limited decision-making buying behaviour case consumers have knowledge about product or utility of product but they need to gather some more information for making buying decision. It may be like they have knowledge about product or product utility but they need to gather information about which brand would be best fit to them. Thus in this case consumers will supplement their knowledge about product with acquired knowledge to buy a product. (<https://study.com>)
- **Extensive Decision-Making/Complex Buying Behaviour:** In this consumer is highly involved in studying, researching and comparing with alternatives for buying a particular product. Usually, such kind of behaviour can be seen in non-repetitive or less repetitive, costly, high value investment buying items. Deep sense of buyer commitment is seen in such kind of buying decision. Normally such behaviour is observed when consumers are buying vehicle, house etc.
- **Variety Seeking Buying Behaviour:** This is when consumers look for variety of products. They look for another similar product even if they are satisfied of previous product. A behaviour of switching brand is observed irrespective of satisfaction of brand used previously. Consumers are found to be searching for new brands of deodorant; creams etc are examples of variety seeking buying behaviour.
- **Brand Loyalty Buying Behaviour:** This is when consumers tend to purchase particular brand even if other brands offer discounts. This shows that consumers have strong attachment with a particular brand. They tend to stick with that brand over a time period. For example, fashion freak male used to make choices of their jeans buying from Levis, Killer, Lee cooper, flying machine etc.

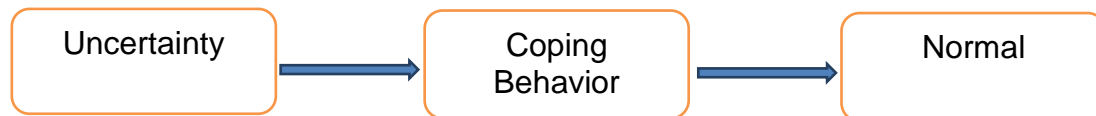
### Consumer Behaviour during Covid 19

The COVID has not only created a shift in buying behaviour but has also created disruptions in existing supply chain (Samal et. al., 2020). Marketers understanding and adapting changes to meet evolving needs and priorities focusing on safety, health and essential goods are supposed to be more successful in tapping potential consumers. Not only on marketing grounds but also on financial grounds changes in spending patterns have been observed. The importance of savings is one of the meaningful learning of the COVID and lockdown period. Major changes in consumer behaviour observed during COVID 19 and lasting impact has been discussed in forthcoming discussion.

### Stockpiling and Panic Buying

Trend for stockpiling and panic buying of groceries and essential items was visible world over in initial few months of COVID 19 strike. More specifically the fear of groceries being out of stock at homes was the basic reason for such behaviour. Imposing lockdown as a preventive measure of spread of COVID 19 has given push to such behaviour as it resulted in limited time or time bound buying which developed a feeling among consumers that they may have shortage of essential groceries. It was observed that they bought whatever was available at retail shop leaving aside all the brand preferences. In some cases even items which are not of immediate or short term need were also purchased by them. Which resulted in food waste also. Cariappa et. al. (2022) confirms that lockdown and pandemic caused panic purchase that led to food wastages. Consumers were unsure about future thus purchased commodities excessively and avoided frequent visits to store during lockdown (Patil et. al., 2022). Nielsen (2020) conducted a market research survey in March 2020 and found change in behaviour of Indian consumers, 69% consumers either did stock piling or were planning for stock piling. Similarly, in United States of America also 85% respondents of a survey reported change in grocery shopping behaviour with 50% of them involved in stocking household items as reported by survey conducted by International food Information council in March 2020. In Australia also similar trend was visible in study conducted by YouGov in March 2020. The results of study shows that 46% of the respondents showed purchasing

more than usual groceries and even 16% have piled stock of food and household items. The growth in sale of food and household products by 31.4% as compared to previous year in United Kingdom also represents stock piling as reported by Office of National Statistics in March 2020. More particularly the increase in sales of food and household goods was 15.3% and 18% respectively on monthly basis as compared with previous year of 3.3% and 1% (<https://www.ons.gov.uk>). Thus it can be concluded that COVID 19 has led to panic buying, stock piling and bulk buying of groceries and household products world over. The behaviour of consumers during COVID seem to confirm Daniel and Varier (2022) proposes a model 'theory of panic buying' representing purchase attitude consisting of three phases viz. Uncertainty, Coping Behaviour and Normal.



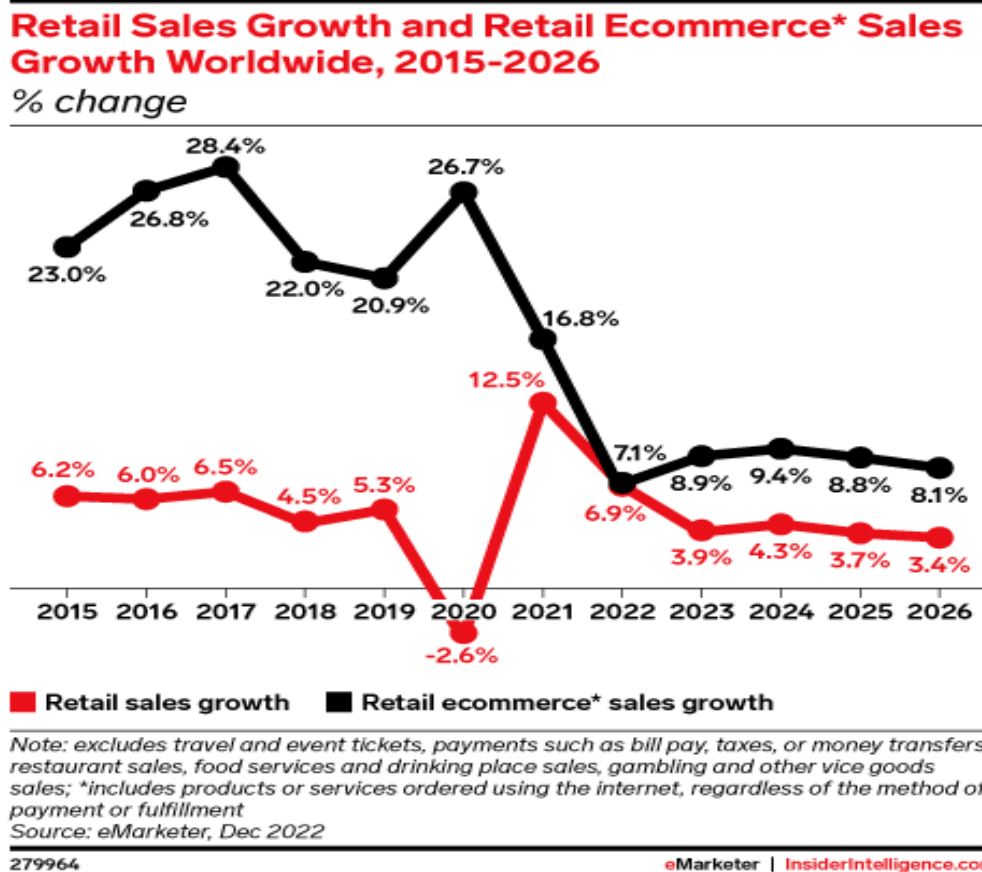
**Figure 1: Theory of Panic buying: Model Representing Purchase Attitude**

Source: Daniel, A. S., & Varier, M. (2022). Changing Consumer Behaviour during the Pandemic in India: The New Normal, *Amity Journal of Management Research*, pp. Vol. 5, Issue 1, 651- 662.

### **Adoption of Ecommerce and Online Shopping**

During COVID 19 social distancing norms were introduced and as an immediate precaution and cure lockdowns were imposed to stop the spread of virus. Due to which consumers were forced to stay at home or less frequently visit retail stores. Thus, they looked for alternative option of shifting to online purchase. Which looked safer and more convenient to them as they could get what was needed without travelling to physical stores. This lockdown has given an impetus that online consumption is no longer a synonymous for status and convenience rather need and pattern of buying (Daniel and Varier, 2022). As there were no or few instances of spread of COVID. Moreover, online companies have adopted COVID protocol and safety measures to develop faith of consumers in them. Increase in ecommerce sales, more particularly of groceries and household supplies is a testimony to the fact. Even it was visible that consumers used to use online platforms for their daily requirements. Office for National Statistics reported that online sales have shown record hike in March 2020 of 22.3% in United Kingdom (<https://www.ons.gov.uk>). US department of commerce reports growth in US ecommerce in the year 2020 of 32.4% (<https://www.digitalcommerce360.com>). Renowned ecommerce giant Amazon captured 38.3% of all ecommerce spending in US. Similar growth in ecommerce is visible in around the globe. Ecommerce growth data of 2020 in few dominant economies was Europe 25% (Ecommerce Europe) and China 14.8% (National Bureau of Statistics, China). The growth figure of ecommerce sales in India was 36% in year 2020 (eMarketer). Consumers bought online or relied more on ecommerce during COVID 19 as they found it convenient as they were not required to visit physical stores. Their concern for safety and hygiene was also taken up well by ecommerce channels as they adopted immediately COVID protocols. Moreover, they also have given communication widely about adoption of COVID 19 protocols by spreading their strategy of contact less delivery. The shortage of products which consumers found while visiting stores was well resolved by online platforms by offering a wide range of products from daily routine products to groceries and even medicines also. Many ecommerce sites have taken COVID period as an opportunity to attract consumers thus they offered discounts too. Due to which many of the customer could taste digital process and that may have reduced their digital fear.

This shift of consumers towards online purchasing seems to persist as even after COVID 19 bad time growth in ecommerce industry is visible. However, the growth seems to be much slower as compared to COVID period and is expected to be 8.9% this year as per the estimates of eMarketer (<https://www.insiderintelligence.com>). Indian consumers seem to still focus on online shopping. According to Unicommerce in Financial year 2022 year on year growth in order volume was 69.4% in comparison to 2021 reporting 44.9%. Even it was also reported that many first time online shoppers who started their online journey in previous year have continued to shop online (<https://retail.economicstimes.indiatimes.com>). Further according to report on Indian retail and ecommerce trends the online channel has continued as fastest growing with year on year growth of 32% in the year 2022. Thus, it can be said that the trend of shifting consumers from physical to virtual or online seems to have long lasting impact. Thus, marketer needs to restructure their retail marketing strategies. More particularly emerging businesses need to incorporate not only availability of their products online but also continuous tapping of changing needs of consumers which can give them a lead over competitors.



**Figure 2: Retail Vs Ecommerce Sales Growth Worldwide**

Source: <https://www.insiderintelligence.com/content/global-retail-ecommerce-forecast-2023>

### Safety and Hygiene Priority

COVID 19 transmission was considered to be through touching infected person or place. Before COVID, it was common practice to greet friends and family by shaking hands or hugging but none of them used to have fear of contamination thorough touch. That is why use of sanitizers, washing hands with soap etc was not practiced by a common man. However, in medical profession it was a common practice. During COVID it was found that people have adopted these practices to stay away from contamination from the Virus. Even many countries have started adopting "Namaste" as popular practice of greeting following "Namaste India" movement. In India, luckily Swachh Bharat Abhiyan campaign has already spread awareness about cleanliness even before COVID. This was more or less about cleanliness of spaces, public places and parks etc. It was observed that along with public places hygiene, focus of individuals shifted towards personal hygiene during COVID 19 period. World over increased consumption of cleanliness products is a testimony to the fact. A report by Nielsen has shown growth of 470% in sales of sanitizers and 300% in sales of soap bars and liquid soaps in US in March 2020 as compared to previous year. Even trend of stockpiling was visible in safety products like sanitizers as 73% respondents faced difficulty in buying this as reported by Local Circles in March 2020. RedSeer Consulting reported that hand sanitizer market in India grew by 1400% in March 2020 as compared to same period in last year. Even in France, increase in sales of hand sanitizers was 1000% in first week of lockdown i.e. March 2020.

The demand of safety and hygiene products seems to be higher even post COVID period also. However, growth may not be as steeper as it was in the March 2020. People may have been used to such products now as many of them may have developed it as habit. Nielsen reports that growth in sales

of hand sanitizers in India was 20% in January 2021 as compared to similar period in previous year. Even Research and Markets projects a CAGR (growth) of 15.6% during post COVID period (2020-2025) in Indian hand sanitizer markets. Thus, marketers need to continue reminding consumers about safety and hygiene priorities. It would not only contribute in their sales and revenue but would also contribute in keeping their consumers healthy. Even policy makers also need to take some innovative steps in this regard like considering expenses in advertising campaign for promoting safety and hygiene under CSR.

### **Health and Wellness Concerns**

Consumers have realized that the persons with weak immune system are more prone to such contamination during COVID strike. Thus, they have been more concerned about their health and wellness even post COVID. The health and wellness primarily is concerned about overall wellness which includes mental, physical, nutritional and sleeping disruption focused. A survey conducted by WHO found that 1 in 3 people experienced anxiety and depression during COVID times. Similarly Indian Psychiatry Society reports that there has been a 20-30 percent increase in mental issues in India post COVID. Thus, pandemic has affected mental wellness. Similarly, even physical wellness is also affected by this pandemic. COVID and Lockdowns have developed sedentary lifestyles among people. Their regular healthcare routines have also been disrupted. Moreover, these have now become part of their habit. Increasing health prone deceases like BP, diabetes and obesity can be observed post pandemic. Local Circle survey reports that 42% of Indians have experienced weight gain in pandemic period. The food habits of people in India have also changed and a shift towards consumption of processed food was visible. Indian Council of Medical Research has reported that there has be increase in consumption of processed food by almost 30-40% and decline in consumption of fresh vegetables and fruits. Ministry of Health and Family Welfare has issues a press notification sharing information about ill effects of ICMR stating that junk foods or processed foods is one of the cause for chronic diseases like diabetes, heart diseases and liver diseases (<https://pib.gov.in>). Similarly sleep disturbance was another major health wellness factor. Sleep solution provider, Wakefit, reported that 59% of Indians has poor sleep quality during pandemic.

Yoga was considered to be one of the cure for most of the health and wellness concerns by Indians. Most people were asked to practice yoga not only to physical but also for mental wellness. Ministry of Ayush, India reported that in 2021 a significant increase in adoption of Yoga was observed. Globally also similar practice may be observed. The Statista data reported shows that people practicing yoga in America has grown by 63.8% from 2010 to 2021 i.e. 34.4 million from 21 million (<https://www.thegoodbody.com>).

### **Spending Priorities**

It is usually assumed that individuals having financial literacy plan their spending in advance. More specifically they prepare monthly as well as annual budgets and do spending accordingly. Even people with less or no knowledge also prioritize their spending before incurring expenses. Pandemic times have disrupted spending patterns of both of such groups. The major trend of spending visible during pandemic times is discussed in below headings.

- Enhanced Spending on Essential Items: Food, safety, household supplies and healthcare products were spending priorities of consumers during pandemic times. NielsenIQ reported increase in packaged products by 34% and home care products by 37 % in 2020 as compared to same period in previous year. Mostly such spending were previously done with physical retail stores. During pandemic it was seen that consumers tend to buy such products online. Due to which many stores were either closed or operated with limited capacity. Retailers Association of India expected closure of 25-30% of retail stores in one year's time post pandemic. Similar was the opinion of Confederation All India Traders which expected that 20% or more small retailers have to close their businesses due of pandemic. Thus it can be said that consumers' spending priorities have changed during COVID, along with enhanced spending on groceries and essentials, a shift from physical store buying to online buying can also be observed. Post COVID it is expected that consumers continue to shop online but their focus on buying essential items may shift and they may be diverted towards buying of luxury items also. Bain and Company projects that Indian luxury market is expected to attain three and half time of the current size. It is expected to be US dollars 200 billion by 2030 (<https://retail.economicstimes.indiatimes.com>).

- **Shift in Entertainment modes:** COVID 19 spread and lockdowns have resulted in closing of most of entertainment venues or operating with limited capacity. Along with this fear of being infected by visiting such entertainment venues have resulted in change in spending patterns for entertainment. Movie theaters and box offices have shown decline in revenues. Consumers preferred to make choice of at home entertainment modes. They preferred streaming services as a replacement of movie theaters. An increase in streaming hours globally is a testimony to the fact (<https://www.conviva.com>). The subscribers to streaming services have also surged with remarkable numbers. Some of such popular companies include NETFLIX, DISNEY, AMAZON Prime etc. The similar trend was also visible music industry also. The entertainment industry has started gaining with easing of COVID situations. Even box office has hit highest revenues in case of some movies. The sports industry was also badly affected due to suspension and cancellation of many sports events worldwide. It not only has affected sports events but commercial sports industry was too badly hit. It is expected that the sports industry would boom up. However the complete recovery of sports would take little time. Successfully organizing of IPL is the onset of revenues from sports events.
- **Travel and hospitality:** Travel and Hospitality sector was the one which was hit the most by COVID 19. Sharp decline in occupancy rates of hotels is the testimony to the fact. A decline of 65-85 % occupancy of luxury hotels during pandemic in India was reported by Economic Times (<https://economictimes.indiatimes.com>). In other words, consumers have reduced hanging out and dining out. Similarly their spending on travel and hotels have also reduced. A complete vacuum at tourist places was visible even after few months' major COVID strike. It is expected to boom after COVID 19. However, online interaction habit developed during pandemic is going to hamper some portion of business of travel and tourism industry. As many organizations which earlier were sending representatives would now resolve issues online.
- **Spending in Luxury Items:** Consumers' focus during pandemic time was on essential goods and their spending on high end fashion was less during COVID period. The uncertainty about economic resources was the major reason for such behaviour. Global luxury markets have seen a dip of approximate 20-22 percentage (<https://www.bain.com>). The Bain and Company reports that the luxury goods sale is declined by 40-50% in India as compared to previous year. The demand for such products was expected to rebound post pandemic. Most retailers faced difficulties post pandemic, but retailers having solid luxury brand portfolios have attained growth in Korean economy. Further, sales of seasonal clothing, leather and jewelry have increased in this market (Peng and Chen, 2021). The sales growth in luxury goods in almost all categories viz. fashion, beauty, luxury vehicle can be observed during last year. The role of marketers in this post COVID era is going to play a dominant role to bring luxury goods industry on track. They need to design a strategy which removes fear of uncertainty among consumers and bring them back for buying may be with discounts.
- **Health and wellness:** During pandemic times consumers have realized that health which they would not have given priority earliest should be given top most priority and even have closely observed that 'health is wealth'. Many consumers were found doing yoga and exercise to stay fit and healthy. Not only this many of them even have started taking immunity booster, healthy drinks. Thus, spending on health and wellness items like exercise equipment, health drinks and associated items have increased sharply. There is strong possibility that with fading of memories of COVID, health priorities of individuals may also fade and they may again enter in to relaxing mode. The marketers are required to keep reminding consumers about health concerns by formulating marketing campaigns. It would not only result in sustained demand of health and wellness products but would also contribute towards fit India movement.

### **Support for Local Businesses**

Consumers were found to be using local product choices. Many studies have quoted that even buyers' have given preference to local products over branded items. The movement for 'Vocal for local' has grabbed attention of consumers and this has increased awareness about supporting local businesses to recover from economic impact during the pandemic times. Non movability, disruptions in existing supply chains, increased awareness about local products, social media movements and awareness efforts, government advocacy for local adoption etc. has led consumers to make local products choices. Even to meet this local product demand, local businesses were also promoted by

government. Growth in registered MSMEs is a testimony to the fact. Ministry of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises has reported that the registered MSEs have grown to 42.5 million in 2020 from 36.1 million in 2019. It was also reported that an average of 8 lacks new business are registered every year. These are figures in growth in registered figures but growth of business in unorganized sector is more.

### **Preference for Sustainable Products**

COVID 19 strike has not negatively affected human civilization but it has also taught few lessons like awareness about health and wellness, safety and hygiene etc. Similarly it has also spread awareness about environment and sustainability. People have started adopting environment friendly practices world over. Indian populations have also started giving preference to environmental friendly products and services. This resulted in growth of environment friendly products and services post COVID throughout globe in general and India in particular. Times of India reported that a survey conducted by Bain and Company stated that 60% of consumers in India are willing to pay even more for environment friendly sustainable products (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>). Globally also the demand of sustainable products grew by 5.6 percentage in 2020. This is an indication for marketers to start adopting green practices in their firms. Even if they feel that green practices are costing more to them then they can charge such extra price by marginally increasing maximum retail price. More importantly firms also need to have disclosure of their sustainability by printing green labels/icons on their products to attract the attention of Indian consumers. A survey conducted on more than 16000 consumers found that 15% of them did not have information about sustainability of product (<https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com>). Looking at public interest towards environment friendliness and preference to green products, many startups focusing on sustainability and environment have been established. Rise in number of such startups is a testimony to the fact. During pandemic times only many startups came up producing reusable masks, which slowly replaced use and throw masks to majority of population. Similarly many startups focusing on organic foods, reusable bags, biodegradable products and packaging have come up post pandemic. Even directly or indirectly government has also started promoting green practices. Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, National Solar Mission etc are some steps in this direction. Government even has been targeting tapping of renewable energy. By 2022 a target of generating 175GW renewable energy has been set. The subsidies are given for solar installations at homes. This has given sharp rise to use and installation of solar energy in country.

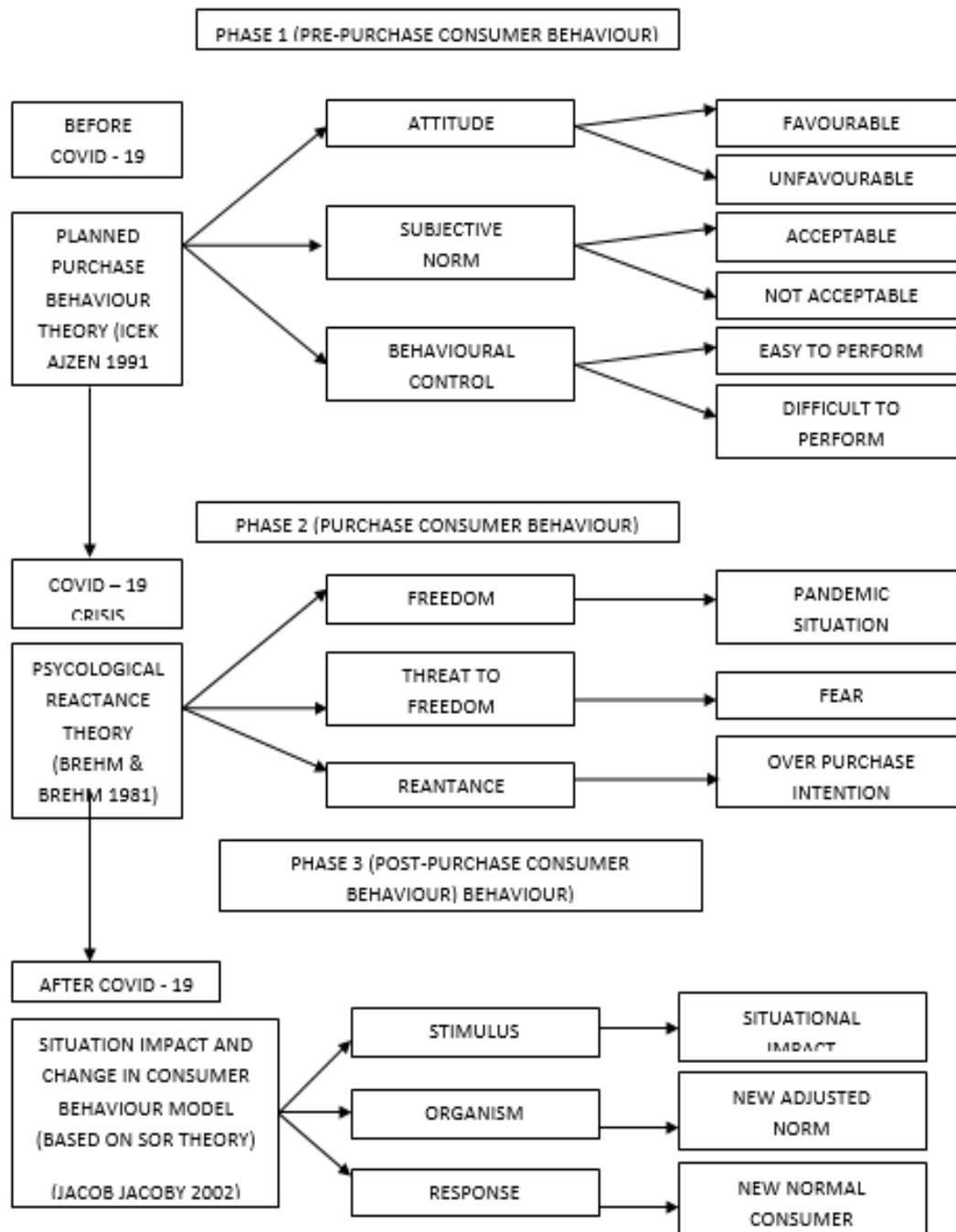
### **Managerial Implications**

The impact of COVID-19 on consumer behaviour can broadly be categorized in three categories managerial implications. First is adapting change, as consumers have learned to adapt, businesses must also learn to adapt and become more resilient during the pandemic. Unfortunately, companies are driven by formal processes and are often unable to adapt changes quickly. Organizations although have been attempting to adapt changes, as can be seen that many organizations which earlier did not had presence on online mode have now made their products online. However, changes pace need to faster. Thus, companies need to make their infrastructure, systems and processes more flexible to adapt changes quickly.

Another managerial implication is foreseeing and matching of supply and demand. Every retailer from supermarkets to hyper stores to drug stores had chronic shortages due to hoarding and a "run to the bank" mentality of distressed consumers. Supply chain, logistics and warehousing operations are critical functions that need to be coordinated with fluctuations in demand. In other words, unlike the current practice of stocking products on shelves with backup inventory in the back of the store, encourage online purchases and reverse the process by moving the merchandise from waiting on the shelf to the customer. It will be necessary. The customer first places the order and the supermarket warehouse collects the order and delivers it to the customer.

Third implication for management is that consumers will revert to their old habits unless the use of technology such as Zoom video services and online ordering bring significant changes to their lives. Marketers and researchers have observed three different patterns in consumer behaviour viz. Pre COVID, COVID and Post COVID. Satish et al (2021) has developed a model establishing linkage with earlier behavioural theories. In this model, he finds planned purchase behaviour theory appropriate in normal i.e. pre pandemic situation while 'psychological reactance theory' during COVID situation. In post COVID situation, he finds 'situation impact and change in consumer behaviour model (based on SOR model)' wherein stimulus, organism and response seems to be main drivers of consumer behaviour.





**Figure 3: Behavioural Theories and Consumer buying Behaviour**

Source: Satish et. al. (2021) Covid 19 is driving fear and greed in consumer behaviour and purchase pattern

**Epilogue**

Spread of COVID 19 has not only created temporary deviations to supply chains and consumption patterns but it has also influenced the behaviour of consumers at market place. The changes in consumer buying behaviour during pandemic times were well recorded by researchers

worldwide. The study found major changes highlighted in literature about buying behaviour during COVID in form of stock piling & panic buying, safety and hygiene priorities, Health and wellness priorities, change spending priorities, support for local businesses, preference for sustainable products, adoption of e-commerce and online business etc.

The study offers suggestions in view of this it although it is expected that habits of consumers will return to normal but it is also well known truth that some habits would be replaced with alternative habits which consumers have tasted during pandemic period. If such habits are convenient and results in cost effective, consumers would even not give second thought to earlier habit and adopted new habit will become new normal. Testimony to the fact is recent habit of consumers to watch OTT channels as against going to movie theaters. The movie producers and distributors have also realized this fact and have started producing on OTT channels. Similarly frequent visits to restaurants are well taken off by swiggy and zomato. Another popular and frequently quoted example of change of habit for corporate sector is work, learn and shop from home. This has become a new normal in post COVID era. Even after expiry of many months still corporate sector prefers employees to work from home as during pandemic they realized that it is win-win situation for both employees and employers. Similarly many top institutes have started their online courses and learning applications to bring in revolution in education industry. The growth of ecommerce business is clear indication about changing habit of consumers related with online shopping. The marketers are required to foresee probable changes in consumer habits and alter marketing strategy accordingly.

It is normally observed that when consumers current habit is abandoned, the past time hobby or need overtakes existing hobbies. It may be seen that post pandemic people are returning to their earlier habits or hobbies like cooking, hunting, gardening etc. The role of marketers in shaping such habits and bringing to original is dominant. They may deem to resemble consumers emerging needs and habits offers may be given like gardening equipments with products, cooking support items with eatables etc.

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