

Studying the Impact of COVID-19 Pandemic on Buying Behaviour of Indians Through Literature Survey

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly affected the thought process of all consumers all over the world. Many consumers are preferring online shopping and digital payments over traditional methods. To remain competitive, businesses had to adapt to these changes and cater to the demands of consumers. This study investigates the impact of the pandemic on consumers and how firms in India have adjusted to the changes. The authors adopted the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA) method to analyse the literature. The study was conducted using Google Scholar to find research works published from January 2020 to December 2022. The articles selected from PRISMA were analysed and peculiar observations have been reported. The consumers are shifting towards online shopping, but traditional methods of shopping have their own place. Therefore, the shift from online to offline is not permanent for all the consumers.

Keywords

Literature review, consumer behaviour, pandemic, online shopping, India

Introduction

The term ‘consumer’ refers to individuals who purchase goods and services for personal use or to fulfil the needs of their households and families in a group (Grundey, 2009). The notion of ‘consumer behaviour’ exists because of consumers’

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varied and dynamic requirements and anticipations, as each individual responds differently to sudden market shifts. Consumer behaviour refers to spending time, money and effort to consume goods and services. This includes what, why, when and where, apart from frequency and the usage of their purchase, from searching, selecting, paying, utilising, reviewing and discarding goods and services (Jisana, 2014; Kotler & Keller, 2017; Valaskova et al., 2015). The research into consumer behaviour becomes relevant as it helps us understand the factors that influence it, as it has significant implications for businesses, policymakers and society.

Understanding consumer behaviour helps businesses and organisations understand their target audience's wants, needs and preferences. It can provide insights into market trends and the impact of economic conditions on consumer spending. The findings can be used to improve marketing and sales strategies and develop products and services to meet consumer demands. The behaviour of consumers is influenced by many factors, including social, cultural, psychological and economic factors. Understanding these influences is essential for understanding individuals' and groups' behaviour and developing effective public policies (Sheth et al., 1991).

Consumption is routine, but it has a context. Knowing the background is essential, as four primary contexts influence or disrupt consumer behaviour (Sheth, 2020; Wood & Neal, 2009). The first is the *Social context* that undergoes changes due to life events such as weddings, parenthood and moving from one city to another and includes the workplace, neighbourhood, friends and neighbours (Loxton et al., 2020; Manyiwa, 2002).

Technology is the second context. New technologies disrupt established practices as they become relevant. The most incredible technological advancements in the contemporary age are smartphones, the internet and e-commerce. Online search and ordering have significantly changed how we shop and use products and services (Dennis et al., 2009; Gretzel et al., 2006). The *superego* (conscience and ego ideal) creates rules and regulations that impact consumption patterns. These rules and regulations form the third components that disrupt consumer behaviour are particularly relevant to public and shared capacities and discourage the use of unhealthy products such as alcohol and smoking. Public policies related to health, environment and economic livelihood can promote adopting products and services that positively impact society (Sheth et al., 1991). The fourth and least predictable context is infrequent *natural calamities* such as earthquakes, natural disasters, war and global pandemics like the COVID-19 pandemic that we have witnessed (Ichim, 2010; Perriman et al., 2010).

Consumer can do online and offline shopping (Grewal et al., 2010). Online shopping refers to purchasing products or services through the internet using a computer, phablet or smartphone. It offers convenient access to a comprehensive range of products and services, often with the ability to link prices and product features and access to customer reviews. Online shopping also offers the potential for 24/7 shopping and doorstep delivery (Kumar & Maan, 2014). On the other hand, offline shopping involves visiting physical stores or shops to purchase products or services. This consumption mode allows for hands-on examination of

products and the ability to interact physically with and try out the products before purchasing. Offline shopping also provides opportunities for face-to-face customer service and instant gratification through immediate possession of the product (Ewe & Ho, 2022). Both modes of consumption have advantages and disadvantages; personal preferences and availability can influence consumer behaviour and specific needs. Whether they shop physically (offline) or online, consumers have different senses of taste and requirements (Gao & Su, 2017). The consumer's choice to shop offline versus online can be prejudiced by several factors, comprising the product's feel and look, the need for instant gratification and delivery times (Smith & Rupp, 2003).

This study aims to investigate the immediate and enduring consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumers in India, utilising an analysis of current literature. Like many past disruptive disasters, the pandemic has adversely affected the Indian economy and human well-being (<https://www.imf.org/external/pubs/ft/ar/2020/eng/spotlight/COVID-19/>). Unlike terrorism and natural catastrophes, like previous disease epidemics, the current outbreak does not cause physical damage to infrastructure. Its longevity, which has lasted for over 3 years and is still ongoing, is evidence of its enduring nature. (<https://www.who.int/news/item/23-04-2021-COVID-19-continues-to-disrupt-essential-health-services-in-90-of-countries>). The COVID-19 pandemic, however, stands out for having a worldwide reach.

The COVID-19 pandemic navigated alterations in consumer behaviour and spending patterns. The noticeable changes were visible in the mode and frequency of shopping: the type of items purchased, the location of such purchases and the use of digital payments, particularly in developing nations like India (Verma & Naveen, 2021). Each factor significantly impacts production, consumption and the supply chain. Numerous researchers from industry and academia started to analyse and understand the change in consumers' buying behaviour. Therefore, the present business must understand the difference and act accordingly. Based on the same understanding, we try to summarise the peculiar finding from these studies through a literature review. Our literature review studies are conducted to fulfil the following research objectives:

1. How has the COVID-19 pandemic intensified consumer behaviour in India, and what measures can businesses take to accommodate these shifts?
2. To summarise the findings of the research work selected for the literature study.
3. To identify shortcomings in the current research;
4. To formulate a comprehensive agenda for future research.

The rest of the article will proceed as follows. The second section discusses some literature studies on changes in consumer behaviour resulting from COVID-19. The third section presents the methodology of screening the articles for the literature study and the fourth section analyses each screened journal to identify the contributions and gaps. Finally, in the fifth section, we conclude the research with key findings and a scope for future research.

Literature Review

This segment explores the literature reviews related to alterations in consumer behaviour brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic. This task of analysing the previous review studies helps to outline existing literature in the concerned area and helps to build a motive and need for the study. We used Google Scholar to search for pertinent publications by examining research studies on shifts in consumer behaviour driven by the COVID-19 pandemic. The search unearthed five published research papers on the changes in customer behaviour caused by COVID-19. The authors conducted an in-depth analysis of the research articles to assess progress in this area. The conclusions drawn from the five studies have been condensed in this section.

Nikbin et al. (2022) employed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis (PRISMA) methodology to analyse the articles. The authors searched keywords such as 'economic crisis', 'recession' and 'marketing' to find relevant articles. However, the authors restricted the scope of the study to 41 Scopus-indexed English language publications focusing on two crucial concerns:

1. In the face of the COVID-19-triggered recession, should businesses increase or decrease their marketing budgets?
2. What marketing mix strategies should businesses adopt to thrive worldwide after the pandemic?

According to the author's recommendation, firms should not cut down their marketing budgets in the face of COVID-19, and they can employ marketing mix techniques and strategies for the 4Ps, such as product, place, price and promotion. The authors explained the 4Ps in detail, as shown in Figure 1.

Perera et al. (2021) examined, arranged and analysed research citations on consumer hoarding behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic through existing 43 pre-existing literature from sources such as Google Scholar, JSTOR and Web of Science, focusing on three main themes:

1. Behaviour related to panic buying,
2. Emerging patterns in consumer behaviour and
3. Behaviour relating to purchasing goods online.

The researchers observed that consumers had gained trust in online shopping. The changes included concern for value-oriented goods and services, discontent with excessive consumerism and an emphasis on recycling and instilling traditional and uncomplicated values in their children. The researchers identified additional factors influencing consumer buying behaviour, including consumer emotions, involvement with social and mainstream media, Government intervention and knowledge distribution. The authors concluded that to understand panic buying tendencies, evolving consumer behaviours and patterns related to online purchasing, global e-commerce firms must adjust to technological changes and modify their business strategies.

Product	Place	Price	Promotion
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Avoid cutting R&D costs and, instead, emphasise it more. • Withdraw non-profitable products • Redesign product lines • Introduce new and also affordable products • Emphasise durability and functionality characteristics in new product development • Reduce the size of non-food products • Increase the size of food products • Improve services 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Find new profitable markets. • Eliminate costly channels and intermediates • Move to online channels • Leave markets that you are not strong in it and reallocate scarce resources to needs in which you are stronger in them 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Keep the same prices, but offer products with higher quality/offer superior value • Do not reduce the price by lowering quality. • Reduce the price by reducing the size. • Keep the original price and offer temporary price discounts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Offer price discount • Increase advertisement and promotion budget • Reduce the costs of traditional advertisement • Invest more in online marketing • Invest more in social media marketing • Offer coupons, bonuses, and free sample • Use of celebrities for product launch • Send direct emails to customers

Figure 1. Marketing Mix Strategies and Practices During COVID-19 and Recession.

Source: Nikbin et al. (2022).

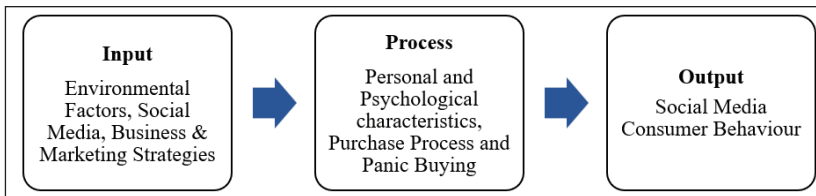


Figure 2. The Input–Output Process Model.

Veiga and Diogo (2022) utilised a bibliometric coupling method to examine 89 literature studies published on the Web of Science during the preliminary stages of the COVID-19 Pandemic in August 2020. They identified six significant constructs: consumer behaviour and corporate tactics, macro-environmental influences, panic purchasing, personal and psychological traits, buying process and social media. Figure 2 illustrates the conceptual model employed by the authors to analyse the current literature on consumer behaviour.

The authors worked on themes like segmenting the behaviours of Gen Z and Alpha, employment status, family size, shopping habits, lifestyle, clustering consumer surroundings, the orientation of brands towards gender, sexual orientation diversity, articulating tangible and measurable benefits for marketing, marketing strategies, usage rates of automated communication, conversion-to-sale ratio, identifying important stimuli such as price or quality, macro influencers, the emergence of the market place on social networks to understand consumer behaviour during the time of crisis.

Timotius and Octavius (2021) observed the dynamics of consumer behaviour before and during the pandemic, using the PRISMA method to evaluate seven literature studies that satisfied the cohort and cross-sectional analysis criteria based on factors such as age, gender, store types and environmental concerns. The authors collected the data from five databases: EBSCO, Google Scholar, PubMed, Science Direct and Web of Science. The authors noted that panic buying and hoarding occurred in various countries and that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted changing consumer behaviour, with age and gender having a different impact. Men viewed shopping as a utilitarian task; in contrast, women viewed it as a fun and relaxing activity and were likelier to follow health and safety practices while grocery shopping. The authors analysed multiple countries and concluded that the pandemic in India affected both customer and brand protection and technology usage. Customers who purchase from retail stores, either online or in-person, are more concerned about these difficulties.

The authors further suggest that retailers must adapt to changes by modifying their business model with technology providing adequate internet security for developing trust and integrating the offline and online stores. The research has limitations because it is impossible to generalise consumer behaviour in the retail category due to varied cultural and contextual elements. Cruz-Cardenas et al. (2021) studied consumer behaviour and post-purchase satisfaction using bibliometric analyses by employing the input process output model of consumer behaviour (Figure 2) from the 70 literature studies in Scopus databases published during 2021 and 2022. The authors included two search criteria to understand psychological characteristics: COVID-19 and consumer behaviour in China and the USA. They employed external influences (micro and macro environmental factors), marketing tactics, the consumer process (personal and psychological aspects), the decision-making process and the output (results). It was observed that the macroeconomic factors include the political, economic, social and legal environment framework. The microeconomic factors include family, friends, acquaintances, society, the media and companies engaging or communicating via technology. At the same time, the marketing strategies and influences include the 4Ps, that is, product, price, place and promotion. The purchasing behaviour constituted selecting products and points of purchase.

The five literature studies we discussed above did not specifically focus on changing consumer behaviour in India. Therefore, we analysed various studies focusing on the impact of COVID-19 on different regions of India to gain insights into how consumer behaviour has shifted. The following section outlines our methodology for conducting the literature review.

Methodology for Literature Review

This section outlines the methodology employed to understand how the COVID-19 pandemic has influenced the behaviour of Indian customers. The initial step involved gathering relevant literature and critically analysing each work. We began our search with Google Scholar in January 2023 and focused on works

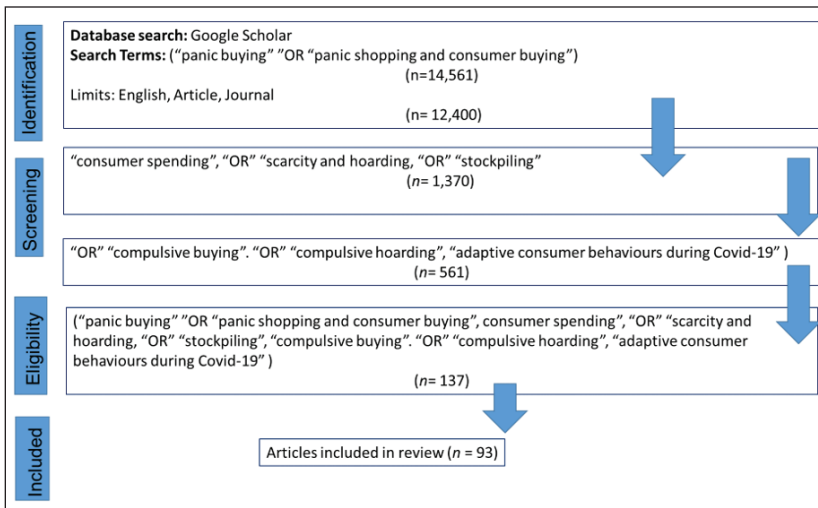


Figure 3. Research Methodology.

published between January 2020 and December 2022. Subsequently, we narrowed the literature by screening the obtained results for this period. Figure 3 illustrates the approach taken to select the articles for review.

During the initial screening, we utilised keywords such as 'panic buying' and 'panic shopping and consumer buying in COVID-19', resulting in around 12,400 outcomes. For the second screening, we expanded the search by adding a few more keywords, such as 'consumer spending', 'scarcity and hoarding' and 'stockpiling in COVID-19', which produced approximately 1,370 papers. In the third screening, we included additional keywords, such as 'compulsive buying', 'compulsive hoarding' and 'adaptive consumer behaviours during COVID-19' in the first two searches, resulting in approximately 561 results. In the fourth screening, we combined all the keywords from the first, second and third searches resulting in 137 results. The last keyword search was refined to focus on research papers from the Indian context, resulting in 93 works of literature.

All four screenings cumulatively led to 14,561 hits and were a mix of academic and non-academic publications. A considerable portion of these publications comprised industry reports, newspaper articles, blog posts and personal perspectives of the journalist from various parts of the globe, while blogs, newspaper articles, books and chapters were excluded. Conducting a search based on publishers yielded the following number of published works: Springer (10), MDPI (10), ResearchGate (7), Emerald (7), Elsevier (5), Sage (3), Wiley (3), Taylor & Francis (2), Dergipark (2), Frontiers (2), Science Direct (1) and Singapore Management University (2). Additionally, there was one publication each from Science Direct, Social Science Studies Peer Journal PPW, Academia, Amity University, Chalmers University, PBME, Rhinewest, SLJOL and University of Barcelona.

Based on their relevance to our research, we selected 13 studies out of 93 articles eliminating blogs, newspaper articles, books and chapters. The selection process involved considering the publishers and the number of citations received by each article. Table 1 lists the 13 research articles used as resources to understand consumer buying behaviour in India due to COVID-19.

Analysis of Research Articles

This segment comprehensively analyses the contributions of the 13 research articles in Table 1. The COVID-19 pandemic has compelled countries worldwide to implement mandatory measures, such as social distancing, to prevent the virus's spread. The pandemic also adversely affected India, with the Government imposing a stringent nationwide lockdown. Fear among consumers led to a shift in their behaviour, which has become the new norm since March 2020. In the subsequent sections, we will examine each of the articles individually to draw significant conclusions about the changes in consumer behaviour.

1. Patil et al. (2022) analysed the purchasing behaviour of consumers for essential supplies during the lockdown period. The authors analysed it in terms of frequency of in-store shopping, online shopping, the store visited, mode of payment, mode of travel, average trip distance and panic buying through an online survey of 730 households covering 20 states in India. The questionnaire addressed socio-economic characteristics and purchase activity before and during the lockdown.

The authors observed the effect of income on consumer buying patterns across cities. It was also observed that people made fewer trips and bought more goods than needed. During the pandemic, the neighbourhood Kirana shops performed well because consumers travelled less in vehicles or walked for lesser distances due to the lockdown. The authors identified in-store and online interruptions indicating supply chain issues during the pandemic. The study was limited in its scope as the data collection was limited to respondents who were proficient in reading and writing English and had internet access, despite being conducted across 20 states in India. Furthermore, due to some respondents leaving optional questions unanswered, there was variability in the data points across different components.

2. Anubha et al. (2022) used a convenience sample of 309 respondents during May and June 2021 to study the relationship between perceived risk, perceived scarcity and social influence, considering stockpiling as a mediating effect during the second stage of the COVID-19 pandemic. The researchers used the structural equation modelling (SEM) approach to test the research model. Only after the authors were confident that the respondents had piled up stocks and were ready to participate in the study

Table 1. List of Research Articles Selected for Review.

Sl. No.	Title	Year	Author/s	Journal	Publisher	Citations
1	Consumer responses towards essential purchases during COVID-19 pan-India lockdown	2022	Patil, G. R., Dhole, R., Bhavatharshan, B. K., Pawar, D. S., Sahu, P., & Mulani, A.	National Library of Medicine	Elsevier	4
2	Stockpiling during COVID-19: The solicitation of the stimulus–organism–response model	2022	Anubha, Narang, D., & Jain, M. K.	MDI	Sage	0
3	Impact of COVID-19 on changing consumer behaviour: Lessons from an emerging economy	2022	Das, D., Sarkar, A., & Debroy, A.	International Journal of Consumer Studies	Wiley	10
4	Impact of COVID-19 crisis on stocking and impulse buying behaviour of consumers	2021	Gupta, R., Nair, K., & Radhakrishnan, L.	International Journal of Social Economics	Emerald	27
5	COVID-19 impact on buying behaviour	2021	Verma, M., & Naveen, B. R.	Vikalpa—The Journal for Decision Makers	Sage	34
6	Impact of change in consumer behaviour and need prioritisation on retail industry in Rajasthan during the COVID-19 pandemic	2021	Goswami, S., & Chouhan, V.	Materials Today	Elsevier	28
7	A study of changing consumer behaviour of four metro cities in India	2021	Khan, M. R., Sikandar, M. A., Kazi, R., & Sikandar, A.	Materials Today	Elsevier	6
8	COVID-19 is driving fear and greed in consumer behaviour and purchase pattern	2021	Satish, K., Venkatesh, A., & Manivannan, A. S. R.	South Asian Journal of Marketing	Emerald	7
9	Impact of epidemics and pandemics on consumption pattern: evidence from COVID-19 pandemic in rural-urban India	2021	Kumar, R., & Abidin, M. S.	Asian Economics of School and Banking	Emerald	18
10	Scalability of e-commerce in the COVID-19 era	2021	Dinesh, S., & MuniRaju, Y.	International Journal of Research of Research	Granthaalayah	27
11	Consumer buying behaviour towards e-commerce during COVID-19	2020	Veeragandham, M., Patnaik, N., Tiruvaipati, R., & Guruprasad, M.	International Journal of Research in Engineering Science and Management	Rajalaxmi Education Trust	21
12	Impact Of COVID-19 pandemic on consumer behaviour	2020	Patil, B., & Patil, N.	Mukt Shabd Journal	UGC Care List	27
13	An empirical analysis into sentiments, media consumption habits, and consumer behaviour during the coronavirus (COVID-19) outbreak	2020	Chauhan, V., & Shah, M. H.	Purakala	UGC Care List	62

were they approached through online or offline modes based on their availability.

The authors observed that the consumers believed in storing an ample supply of essential products for future use, which eventually encouraged stockpiling and was positively correlated with the perceived risk of infection from COVID-19. The study also observed that consumers hoard due to perceived scarcity. The researchers also observed that consumers, with their prior experience of the first stage of the pandemic, combined with social pressure from friends, family and the media, encouraged others to stockpile because they could see the advantages of doing so. Future studies should include the benefits of stockpiling and perceived security, well-being and family safety. Also, stress, tension and guilt mediators were not considered, which should be researched.

3. Das et al. (2022) investigated how COVID-19 has impacted consumers' evolving lifestyles, including changes in affordability, heightened awareness of health and hygiene products and adaptation to new buying behaviours. The authors framed an open-ended questionnaire in three different Indian languages apart from English. It was administered to five respondents, one from Government, private, MSMEs and three entrepreneurs apart from seven daily wage earners. Rs. 100/- was offered to everyday wage earners as a motivation to participate in the study, and the responses were later transcribed in English.

After analysing responses from an open-ended questionnaire, the authors constructed a close-ended questionnaire, which was reviewed by professionals in academic and industry settings, both online and offline. The questionnaire consisted of three sections: the first part focused on the socio-demographic profile. The second section included questions about the factors influencing changes in the consumers' lifestyles and the third section contained questions about the consumers' adaptation. The questionnaire was distributed offline (in malls, popular restaurants and shops) and online (LinkedIn, WhatsApp and Facebook) between August and September 2020.

The study findings indicated that the impact of COVID-19 on affordability was more significant for consumers working in the unorganised sectors than those in the organised sector. The occupation type, employment status and family income significantly influenced consumer behaviour. Those who had lost jobs or had low family earning status showed higher health awareness. Lifestyle changes rather than affordability greatly impacted the demand for wellness and entertainment products. Consumers' understanding of health and hygiene products significantly influenced the need for such products, while affordability influenced the demand for reasonably priced alternatives for daily needs.

The study has limitations, as it was conducted during the lockdown, which would have made it very challenging to carry out the survey. Additionally, the authors could not reach out to all the varied groups, communities and cultures due to India's diversity and vast geographic size, which would have allowed them to gain more insights into consumer behaviour. Also, the study was restricted to entertainment,

health products and daily necessities. To further improve marketing strategies facing disruption, this study should be expanded to include a variety of goods.

4. Gupta et al. (2021) defined the concept using the theory of reasoned action to describe the construct of 'consumer fear due to COVID-19' and comprehend the effects it has on the stockpiling and impulse purchasing behaviour of 417 respondents. The authors selected the sample using the judgemental and convenience sampling technique, and they distributed the questionnaire to the sampled population through email and WhatsApp.

The first part of the questionnaire asked about the respondents' demographics. The second section covered the three study constructs: stocking behaviour, impulse buying behaviour and consumer fear linked to COVID. The model's conceptual validity and unidimensionality were assessed using the exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis. SEM investigated the impact of COVID-19 on customer stocking and impulsive buying. Twenty-four respondents participated in a pre-test of the questionnaire. It was observed that the COVID-19 pandemic significantly impacted consumer behaviour, as evidenced by stocking patterns and impulsive purchases.

Future research should consider additional variables like the moderating effects of demographic traits (age, gender, education and family income), psychographic characteristics (consumer purchase behaviour in crises affecting the stocking and impulse buying behaviour), and cultural differences. It should also consider converting physical transactions to digital ones due to pandemic-related restrictions.

5. Verma et al. (2021) used partial least squares SEM to determine if the COVID-19 lockdown has changed consumer purchasing behaviour and the factors influencing purchase choices post-lockdown. The sample group was established using simple random between 30 March and 18 April 2020 and was approached online with questionnaires via email and social media platforms such as Facebook and WhatsApp. The authors gathered responses from 367 respondents.

The survey was divided into five sections capturing the demographics, economic nationalism, planned and impulsive purchases, and ethnocentric purchasing patterns. Consumers were seen to practice economic nationalism by purchasing Indian brands in the cosmetic, fashion and electronic sectors due to COVID-19. The pandemic increased the willingness of consumers to buy made-in-India brands rather than their attitude towards foreign-origin products.

6. Goswami and Chouhan (2021) studied the effects of variations in consumer behaviour due to the COVID-19 pandemic by analysing the variation in purchase and consumption patterns of 1,700 respondents in Rajasthan. The first section of the questionnaire focused on consumers' buying preferences in essential and non-essential goods. The second included a questionnaire seeking the consumers' opinions about their needs and

wants, priorities, future consumption preferences and attitudinal remarks on a 5-point Likert scale. The third section included questions about the consumer's demographic information.

The study's background included the predictors (such as consumer awareness of COVID-19, attitudes and the type of product) and outcomes (consumer behaviour, priorities and methodology changes). The authors used SEM to understand the significant link between the predictors and outcomes. The results showed decisive effects on awareness of COVID-19, attitude and behaviour and the nature of goods when shopping. Additionally, it demonstrated the link between increased social distance and lower spending, especially in the retail sector.

7. Khan et al. (2021) conducted an online survey on 183 respondents residing in four Indian cities of Mumbai, Pune, Hyderabad and Delhi during 15–31 July 2020. Based on their age and income level, city-based consumers' changes in buying behaviour towards health or hygiene products during COVID-19 were observed.

Based on the 20 respondents' feedback, the authors refined the questionnaire, reducing the questions from 31 to 21. The revised questionnaire identified three variables: health and hygiene products, learning time spent using digital devices and income reduction during the pandemic. The data showed that COVID-19 affected the purchasing decisions of city-based consumers for personal care or hygiene items and the use of digital devices, with differences based on income level and age.

Notably, the research found that the high-income group was more concerned about their health during the pandemic and spent more money purchasing health and hygiene products. This aligns with increased sales volumes of these products reported by the Indian Medicines Pharmaceuticals Corporation Ltd firm post-pandemic. Additionally, the study states that individuals in the high-income category spent more time studying online or learning new skills using screens during the pandemic conditions.

8. Satish and Manivannan (2021) studied consumer behaviour and purchase habits before and after COVID-19 through an online survey of respondents aged 18–60. The survey resulted in 1,038 correct responses, which were used for further analysis. After analysis, they concluded that consumers need to understand the value of consumption minimalism as they hoard goods out of fear of shortage, leading to a deficit for others. Lockdowns caused by situational triggers influence consumer purchasing behaviour, online purchases, cashless transactions, spending more on necessities and altering social standards such as hygiene purchases.

The study has limitations as it only examined three variables, fear, greed and anxiety, which are common during pandemics but failed to draw any practical implications from consumer experiences during the lockdown.

9. Kumar and Abdin (2021) used an email survey to investigate how COVID-19 has affected consumer purchasing behaviour in rural and urban India. The study involved 175 respondents and aimed to identify successful marketing methods for future pandemics.

The consumption pattern in India was significantly affected by the pandemic. Consumers initially resorted to panic buying and limited their spending to necessities such as food and medications. Keeping healthy during a pandemic was their top priority. The authors also observed changes in consumption habits, a decrease in spending habits other than those related to job loss, a reduction in income and a decrease in our ability to spend. Urban consumers' consumption patterns changed more than rural consumers'.

10. Dinesh and Muniraju (2021) used both primary and secondary research to understand the changes in consumer behaviour due to COVID-19 based on 195 respondents. The researchers collected preliminary data from the state of Karnataka, and the secondary data included industry reports, news articles and various websites.

The study observed that the frequency of online purchases increased during the pandemic, likely due to concerns about purchasing from physical establishments and travel restrictions. The study noted that online shopping changed the pandemic, with customers gaining access to a more comprehensive range of goods and sellers being able to reach a broader geographic region with fewer resources. The research also suggests that online retailers in India must constantly innovate, invest in infrastructure and seek profitable partnerships with local retailers.

Smaller offline retailers will need to concentrate their energy and efforts on meeting the increasing consumer demand in the 'new normal' scenario to draw customers, and offline stores will need to become wiser with the advent of innovative technology. Online businesses must continually innovate to increase existing and first-time consumers' confidence, trust and involvement. Additionally, they must ensure that the consumers' data must be protected by implementing appropriate monitoring methods to increase the confidence and trust of existing and first-time customers. The study is limited to one state and can be extended to other states in India.

11. Veeragandham et al. (2020) attempted to understand consumer purchasing behaviour in the e-commerce sector. The authors wanted to ascertain if COVID-19 affected consumers' attitudes towards online shopping, the mode of payment and their willingness to continue online shopping after the pandemic. Both primary and secondary data analysis was used in the study. The primary data included 223 respondents from Andhra Pradesh and Telangana states, including students and working professionals. The secondary data covered newspapers, journals, reports, blogs, periodicals and conference papers.

The research showed that the traditional way of buying changed to online buying, and consumers aged 18–35 started using the facility more compared to people above

55 years. A total of 46% of individuals preferred e-commerce sites because of the convenience of online shopping, the ease with which one can browse various offers and online fulfilment. In comparison, 43% of individuals still preferred e-commerce and traditional buying. As the unified payment interface, net banking and credit cards increased, 43% of individuals preferred using debit cards, whereas 31% still preferred paying in cash. To understand consumer behaviour, the authors recommend studying social classes as a variable across all the Indian states.

12. Patil et al. (2020) aimed to explore the challenges posed by COVID-19 on lifestyle and subsequent changes in consumer purchasing behaviour through a study involving 33 responses. An explanatory research design was used for the analysis. Data were collected using a convenience sampling technique and secondary sources such as research papers, periodicals, newspapers and COVID-19-related websites during the three lockdown phases between 22 and 31 March 2020. The study also examined the preventative measures adopted by consumers while purchasing essential goods during the lockdown.

The study looked at factors such as the market condition, the demand and supply for commodities, transportation, the lockdown's legal implications and the pandemic's socio-economic effects. The authors observed that consumers were ignorant and not taking enough precautions until the government-imposed restrictions. Due to shortages of vital commodities and disruptions in the supply chain, even online retailers could not accept orders. Consumers bought substitute products and stocked up on products. The authors finally observed that financial and psychological factors were impacted due to COVID-19.

13. Chauhan and Shah (2020) evaluated consumers' sentiments, behaviour and spending patterns after the first month of COVID-19. The researchers also examined how media consumption patterns have changed across genders and ages and how people use social media to remain in touch and be informed.

The study focused on respondents living in Vadodara and Gandhinagar, located in Gujarat. The authors employed a convenience sampling method and obtained responses from 353 people. The questionnaire used in the study included questions on demographic information, consumer concerns and sentiments, media consumption habits and the purchasing behaviour of Indian consumers. The authors observed a paradigm shift in online and offline purchasing where hygiene products have become essentials, and other sectors like apparel have become discretionary. Significant changes in media consumption were observed as the need for social distancing, the demand for work from home, schools struggling to conduct classes and disrupting daily routines increased. With consumers confined to their home usage of mobile applications, social media such as WhatsApp, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram were used to connect with friends and families.

Consumer shopping behaviour changed during the pandemic, with individuals delaying the purchase of non-essential goods and services. Product shortages at

stores led consumers to compromise on preferred brands and engage in stock-up behaviours in anticipation of a potential lockdown extension. The study also observed a decrease in in-store and online purchases as consumers already had a stockpile of essential items and groceries due to panic. Furthermore, many people preferred buying online, likely due to an increased perceived risk of infection with in-store purchases.

Although consumers shifted towards social media sites and digital channels for purchasing products and services during the pandemic, this shift did not make up for the overall spending on essentials. However, the study observed a decrease in discretionary spending. It was observed that the change in consumption patterns and consumer behaviour was because of considerably diminished purchasing power in the hands of the consumer. The study was confined to two cities of Gujarat and hence cannot be generalised; future studies can be extended to include towns and cities in India.

Conclusions and Scope for Future Research

Based on the literature review, several conclusions can be drawn regarding the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on Indian consumer behaviour over the last 3 years. The study found that different stages of the pandemic resulted in varying consequences.

During the first wave of the pandemic, between March and November 2020, consumers resorted to panic buying necessary goods, including groceries, health, hygiene and medical products, and resorted to enhanced online shopping. The second wave of the pandemic, from March to May 2021, saw an increased loss of lives and a significant increase in demand for medical supplies, with a growing trend towards digital payments and reduced spending on non-essential items.

The third wave between October 2021 and March 2022 saw consumer spending more on PPE Kits and vaccination-related items. The period also saw a significant increase in contactless delivery, leading to the growth of e-commerce. Factors such as changes in income, employment status and shift in consumer attitudes and preferences could have influenced consumer buying behaviour in India.

- An increase in online shopping is a possible consequence of the pandemic on consumer behaviour in India. With physical distancing measures and many brick-and-mortar stores closed or operating at reduced capacity, consumers may have used e-commerce platforms to make their purchases. This shift towards online shopping may have been further encouraged by the availability of home delivery options and contactless payment methods.
- The COVID-19 pandemic could have affected consumer attitudes and preferences in India, leading to potential changes in their buying behaviour. For instance, there might have been a greater emphasis on health and wellness, resulting in increased demand for products and

services that promote these objectives. Likewise, there may have been a move towards more sustainable and ethical consumption as consumers become more conscious of their purchases' environmental and social implications.

- Businesses in India have had to adapt to these changes in consumer behaviour to remain competitive. It may have included offering more online and home delivery options, promoting their products' health and wellness benefits and demonstrating a commitment to sustainability and ethical practices.

The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have a notable effect on the purchasing habits of consumers in India. Consequently, businesses have had to adapt to meet their customers' evolving demands and inclinations. After reviewing the literature, the authors concluded that there is still plenty to learn about COVID-19. Although research has been done to study the effects during and after the pandemic, we have yet to fully comprehend its impact on India's public health and mental health as well as its political, economic, sociological, technological, legal and environmental aspects. We must remember that India is a vast and diverse nation and that regional variations in consumer behaviour during and after the pandemic may exist. The cross-cultural comparison of consumer behaviour across regions should be the main focus of future research.

Consumers of all ages adopted more sustainable consumer behaviours throughout the pandemic, raising awareness of sustainable consumption and production. Future studies could examine how Gen Z consumer attitudes towards sustainability have changed during the last 3 years and investigate the factors that affect sustainable behaviour based on emotions, government policies and technology adoption. What are the potential strategies for leveraging Gen Z users to promote sustainable consumption, and what factors influence their willingness to pay more for sustainable products?

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