



PANIC SHOPPING IN COVID 19 PANDEMIC: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF EASTERN AND WESTERN CULTURE

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Abstract

The study aimed to investigate the immediate effect of the COVID-19 pandemic on shopping of various essential and luxury goods among residents of various eastern and western countries. For the realization of main objective an online survey was distributed through various social media platforms between and April and May 2020. A set of questions was responded by participants which was related to their recent shopping behavior. A total of 114 participants (79 males and 35 females) out of 136 participants responded to all the questions of survey. The mean age of the participants was 35.9 years (males) and 41.1 years (females). The participants from different geographical area showed different patterns of needs and shopping behavior in COVID-19 pandemic which was found to be associated with safety motivation, fear, stress and uncertainty. Though the COVID-19 is still active and ongoing in world, the findings should be verified on larger sample.

Index Terms: Shopping, Behavior, Panic, COVID 19, Culture.

1. INTRODUCTION

One of the oldest slogan in Indian culture and socialization process is 'Roti, Kapda aur Makaan'. It indicate the basic human needs so far that even in current scenario it is as relevant as it used to be at a time. After looking back in past it'll be more clear how it continues for unending generations. The most essential need of humans as well as of many organism 'Roti' or food is as old as hominine. However the appetitive behavior, which is a drive to acquire food and consummatory behavior, which is ingestion of food, both are biological behavior (Craig, 1918). But this biological behavior is associated with various psychological and social factors. When we talk about human nature and behavior, two behavior 'food foraging and food hoarding' are the primary purpose of this study. The concept of foraging and hoarding poses a mischievous challenge to the understanding of human past and human behavior in the psychological perspective. The roots to these behavior can be seen in human Stone Age during 9000 to 2000 BC, there are evidences of storage pits which used to be called as clamps and these were used to store root vegetables for human as well as for animals. There were traditions to roast the dry fruits in order to make them last longer. Grains were stored, whilst cereals and peas were dried to make them hardy for the storage purpose.

In the Bronze Age (1000 BC) there are more evidences of grain silos and drying kilns which were used to dry legumes to plan the whole year eatables. A procedure of preservation by cooling was used in Egypt. In this of cooling effect produced by evaporation from the surface of clay pots were used to preserve food for the short term. The very first use of ice was reported in China near 1100 BC.

In Celtic period from 200 to 100 BC large containers for storage purpose of various foods, with a huge capacity were used. The Celts also bought olive oil from the Romans, which, along with honey and salt, was the preservative of the age. Sauces and liquids were poured into amphorae and pipes and then sealed to preserve them.

Apart from the western world, India including other eastern countries have always been facing natural calamities and these has been a part of the life of people living in these countries. In order to survive and fight with such kind of problems, food preservation and storage has always been a part of these people. The beginning of agriculture 6000 BC in Mehrgarh (Balochistan) resulted in starting the storage of grain. India is known as a country of spices. Using various spices in order to store food for long term period has been a culture in this country. Indian knew how to pickle in vinegar, fruit jam, papad, Murabba and dry fruit too. Storage of wheat and rice for whole year is a part and parcel of every Indian family.

COVID-19; recent infectious disease which is highly contagious in nature and affects lungs outbreaked in world. The pandemic affected world in a number of ways including biological, economic, social and psychological. A novel phenomenon was observed in various countries during the lockdown period, which is important to study from a psychological perspective. With the news of outbreak of COVID-19 in the world, hundred thousands of people across the world bought food and other essentials items out of fear and panic. This phenomenon of panic shopping came into light and got noticed when a nurse in USA went to Walmart to buy food after a duty of 48 hours and found all the shelves empty and posted video about this incident. The media also covered a number of stories about people cleaning shelves and overfilling their carts. This phenomenon of hoarding can be traced back to the roots of evolution and survival. Rats, ants kangaroo and squirrels can be seen hoarding food just like human beings to make sure their survival. This similarity between animal and human behaviors indicates a deep motive to save the resources and food for the time when it may not available. Finding logics would not be apt for this behavior rather it can be said that these behaviors are largely motivated by the drive to feel safety and certainty across in human beings and organism regardless of their geographical areas. So the present study was designed to examine the panic shopping behavior in COVID 19 pandemic.

2. Objectives

To study the effect of COVID 19 pandemic on shopping behavior

To study the effect of COVID 19 pandemic on shopping of essential goods.

To study the effect of COVID 19 pandemic on shopping of luxury goods.

To study the effect of COVID 19 pandemic on panic shopping differences between eastern and western countries.

3. Hypothesis

There will be relation between COVID 19 pandemic and shopping behavior.

There will be relation between COVID 19 pandemic on shopping of essential goods.

There will be relation between COVID 19 pandemic on shopping of luxury goods.

There will be difference between eastern and western countries in terms of shopping in COVID 19 pandemic.

4.1 Method

The data was collected through survey method with the utilization of Google Forms. The questionnaire contained, an agreement of informed consent, which had an acknowledgement regarding the participant's willing participation in the study, their agreement on sharing their details as well as a note of confidentiality. This was followed by a section for the participant to provide their demographical details, followed by two separate sections, each one contained questions to be responded on five point likert type scale, utilized in the study. No monetary rewards were given for completing the survey. This research study followed standard ethical protocol.

4.2 Sample

A total number of 136 individuals participated in the study but the sample consisted 114 participants (79 males and 35 females), who responded to all the question in survey. The mean age of the participants was 35.9 years (males) and 41.1 years (females). Sample was collected on the basis of snowball sampling method from India, Pakistan, Afghanistan, Nepal, Bhutan, Bangladesh Sweden, Norway, Ireland, Spain, France, Italy, Austria, Germany, and Czech Republic. Which were divided in eastern and western countries keeping in the mind their cultural values adopted largely in those countries.

4.3 Material

For data collection, questionnaire with five points likert scale was designed which was consisting 12 items written in the light of present research objectives. These items were distributed in three themes according to the nature of items i.e. Frequency of Shopping, Nature of Shopping and Motivation behind Shopping.

4.4 Analysis of the Data

After getting responses from the participants, the data was organized, arranged and tabulated. After this data was analyzed by descriptive statistics as (i) the nature of data was ordinal, (ii) nature of variables were independent. To test the hypotheses statistical analysis was performed using SPSS 20.

5. Results

A total of 114 participants completed the survey in which 79 were males and 35 were females. The mean age of participants was 35.9 years and 41.1 for males and females respectively. First of all, the descriptive statistics are discussed which is followed by the responses of designed themes about panic shopping.

Table 5.1 Geographical and gender wise distribution of participants

Countries	Male	Female	Total	Percentage
India	15	8	23	20.17
Bhutan	3	2	5	4.38
Nepal	9	5	14	12.28
Pakistan	5	1	6	5.26
Afghanistan	10	0	10	8.77
Bangladesh	8	3	11	9.7
E Total	50	19	69	60.56
Sweden	2	2	4	3.5
Norway	8	2	10	8.77
Ireland	6	5	11	9.64
Spain	2	0	2	1.75
France	1	2	3	2.63
Italy	0	1	1	0.87
Austria	0	1	1	0.87
Germany	6	2	8	7.01
C. Republic	4	1	5	4.38
W Total	29	16	45	39.42
Total	79	35	114	100

Survey 2020

Table 5.1 showed that 79(69%) of sample respondents were male, while 35 (31%) were female students. This indicated that study was predominantly populated by male participants compared to their female counterpart. 69 participants (60%) were from eastern countries and 45 participants (40%) were from the western countries.

I. Frequency of Shopping

The first section is about the items which were designed in the light of research objectives, and related to the number of good which were bought recently in COVID 19 Pandemic. This section cover both kind of shopping i.e. offline and online. The data of participants regarding different theme was analyzed. According to the nature of data, it was decided to apply non parametric statistical method. Mann Whitney U test was calculated as its assumptions meet best to the nature of the research data.

Table 5.2 Mean and Sum of ranks of participants on frequency of shopping

Ranks				
	Location	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Frequency	Eastern	69	46.33	3196.50
	Western	45	74.63	3358.50
	Total	114		

A Mann-Whitney U test (Table 5.3) shows that there is a significant difference ($U = 781.500$, $p = 0.00$) between the frequency and number of shopping done by eastern and western participants in COVID 19 pandemic. Table 5.5 shows the difference in mean rank between.

Table 5.3 U, W and Z scores of participants on frequency of shopping

Test Statistics^a	
Mann-Whitney U	781.500
Wilcoxon W	3196.500
Z	-4.525
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.000

eastern and western participants in terms of number of shopping, frequency of shopping, online and offline shopping done by them in current pandemic. And results shows there is significant differences among both groups. Western participants done significantly more shopping in comparison of eastern participants.

II. Nature of Shopping

In the second section of the result, theme of items/questions relates to the nature of shopping done by the participants is considered. It includes the essential shopping and luxury shopping done by the participants. Essential shopping includes the items relates to grocery such as grains and bread, tinned & dried products, condiments, dairy and eggs, oil & fat, medicine etc.

Table 5.4 Mean and Sum of ranks of participants on frequency of shopping

Ranks				
	Location	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Nature	Eastern	69	53.38	3683.00
	Western	45	63.82	2872.00
	Total	114		

On the other hand luxury shopping includes the items such as electronic, mobiles, vehicles, furniture, spa or parlor etc. Table number 5.4 shows the mean rank and sum of ranks of western and eastern participants on the type of shopping done by both groups. A Mann-Whitney U test (Table 5.5) shows that there is no significant difference ($U = 1268$) between the type of shopping done by eastern and western participants in COVID 19 pandemic. Result indicate that nature of shopping was same regardless of cultural and geographical differences among the participants.

Table 5.5 U, W and Z scores of participants on frequency of shopping

Test Statistics ^a	
Mann-Whitney U	1268.000
Wilcoxon W	3683.000
Z	-1.684

I. Motivation Behind Shopping

The third section of result is about the third theme of items which were relates to the motive regarding their shopping in COVID 19 pandemic. The items were designed to gain the information regarding the associated fear of not getting things later if needed and underlying motivation behind shopping and hoarding in COVID 19 pandemic.

Table 5.6 Mean and Sum of ranks of participants on frequency of shopping

Ranks				
Location		N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Motivation	Eastern	69	55.89	3856.50
	Western	45	59.97	2698.50
	Total	114		

The Mann-Whitney U test (Table 5.7) shows that there is no significant difference ($U = 1441.500$) between eastern and western participants in terms of underlying motivation behind the shopping and hoarding in COVID 19 pandemic.

Table 5.7 U, W and Z scores of participants on frequency of shopping

Test Statistics ^a	
Mann-Whitney U	1441.500
Wilcoxon W	3856.500
Z	-.661
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	.509

Discussions

To our knowledge, the present study was among one of the first studies to investigate the immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the shopping behavior among various countries. However the pandemic is not over yet and there is a further spread of the pandemic to many other countries, it is possible that the COVID-19 pandemic will cause excessive panic shopping and hoarding.

In the present study 76% western and 59% eastern participants reported that they felt anxious and apprehensive due to the COVID 19 pandemic, but not helpless due to the pandemic. The participants reported that in order to remove the uncertainty regarding the availability of food and other essential items they did shopping every time they got opportunity regardless of their need at that time. Additionally, majority (89%) of participants strongly agreed to the statement of buying grocery and medicine more than their need and keeping stock for future. The very first theme of data revealed that eastern participants confirmed of having large stock of basic grocery at their homes which is a part of culture. Wheat

and rice are stored for the use of entire year from generations in these countries. On other hand western participants strongly disagreed on these statements and provided information having stock maximum for a month. Additionally, it was also reported that westerns are having packed food stocks while eastern are having another type of stock at their home to make fresh meal. The cultural differences in eastern and western countries in terms of food habits led to the different shopping patterns in COVID 19 pandemic. The second theme of items revealed the information that both the groups viz. eastern and western were almost same on the type of shopping in terms of essential or luxury good. The data revealed that physiological needs are the primary goal to fulfill across human race, so no significant differences were found in terms of nature of shopping done by both group as both were oriented to fulfill their primary needs. The third theme of items which was related to the underlying motivation and associated fear behind shopping reveals that regardless of geographical area all the participants were engaged in shopping to ensure the stability in future. The pandemic obviously affected almost every system in world so food and medicine were the primary needs with which each individuals are connected. The participants strongly agreed to the statement that they done shopping to avoid any crisis in near future and ensuring stability in terms of basic needs for themselves and their family. Majority of participants agreed to the fear that they might not get essential items in near future as there was uncertainty due to COVID 19 pandemic.

Conclusion

The phenomenon of panic shopping was observed due to COVID-19 pandemic, it revealed new dimension of shopping behavior, before this pandemic researches showed that shopping behavior was associated only with need, enjoyment, feeling of emptiness, worthlessness and engagement in materialism (Tyagi and Shyam 2019). But this pandemic has given light to new variables associated with shopping behavior.

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Conflict of interest

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