



A Post- Covid-19 Comparative Study On The Changing Patterns Of Consumer Behavior In Shopping Mall

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Abstract

With the coming of the pandemic, everything has changed. It has changed the way people use to visit malls, make purchases, watch movies, eat at the eating lounge. The present study tries to find and observe impact of covid-19 on the behavior of consumers in the shopping malls and find ways to deal with the current situation. It tends to give a detailed description of the work done by the researcher in this field. The paper is a comparative study of how people visit shopping malls and make use of the facilities of the shopping malls before the pandemic and after the pandemic. It also studies how males and females are dealing with the situation, do they feel safe while using facilities provided in the shopping malls. The current study was carried out right after the lockdown, when the malls were permitted to reopen.

Keywords: Consumer behavior, Covid-19, Shopping, Malls, Pandemic, Lockdown.

Introduction

Shopping is an age-old concept. It fulfills the basic needs of the individuals. With the change in time, income and purchasing power of the individuals, people make purchases not just to fulfill their needs but also for some other factors. They tend to make purchases to deal with their emotions, spend time with family, friends and the closed ones, to deal with their loneliness and many other factors including psychological, social, emotional, and physical. With the change in time and the coming of new era of Liberalization, Privatization, Globalization in

1990's, there has been an increase in the concept of shopping malls. Globalization and westernization have been the most important cause that leads to these changes.

According to S.K. Misra and V.K. Puri, Globalization is “the integration of the economy of a country with the world economy” (Rao, 1991). It is the international flow of trade, information, technology, values, and culture. The same way it has brought the concept of shopping malls in India too. The traditional bazaars are dwindling and the new organized shopping malls are proliferating. ¹The first shopping mall in India was Spencer Plaza (Chennai, Tamil Nadu) in 1991 and after that mall started mushrooming. Modern retailing has changed the traditional retailing patterns in the country. Today, malls make a major role in the lifestyle of the people. A shopping mall is an organized and a largest form of retailing. The shopping malls provides a lot of alternate choices under one single roof. People tend to visit shopping malls not just to make purchases but also to show off. To show off among friends, family and social media. Veblen talks of conspicuous consumption, where people go just to show off, that they purchase expensive products and visit expensive places, works hard whole day long. But, with the coming of the pandemic, everything has changed. It has changed the way people use to visit malls, make purchases, watch movies, eat at the eating lounge.

²World Health Organization has declared Covid-19 as a pandemic on March 11, 2020. ³Government of India on March 24, 2020 announced a nationwide lockdown. Covid-19 has brought everything to a halt. The GDP, the economy everything has been affected very badly. With the lockdown, when everyone has been locked up into their homes, the shopping malls were also closed for some time.

Understanding Consumer Behavior?

Consumer behavior is the study of the process where a consumer tries to search, select and make use of and dispose of the used and even an unused product, service and ideas. It tries to understand the whole process of consumption that a consumer makes while making a purchase or not making one. What, When, Where and How a consumer makes purchases? What are the factors that affect him/her while making a purchase? These all when studied is called the study of consumer behavior.

Consequential Changes post Lockdown

With the time and an increase in the recovery cases, the government started easing the lockdown. The opening of the economy and the country gave relaxation to the shopping malls as well. The government put certain guidelines for the mall operators and also the visitors while visiting the malls. The paper studies the changes that could be seen or felt by the consumers post pandemic lockdown while visiting the malls, do they feel safe while

¹“The first shopping mall in India”. Available at: http://www.answers.com/Q/First_mall_in_India_on_September_13,2018.

²“WHO declared Covid-19 as a pandemic”. Available at: <https://www.euro.who.int/en/health-topics/health-emergencies/coronavirus-covid-19/news/news/2020/3/who-announces-covid-19-outbreak-a-pandemic>

³ “Government of India on March 24, 2020 announced a nationwide lockdown”. Available at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/COVID-19_pandemic_lockdown_in_India.

visiting? What are the precautionary measures they are taking while making a visit? Having seen changes in the patterns of consumer behavior post-lockdown, the study focuses on these changes.

According to the present study, it was found that majority of respondents have altered the way they used to shop. Prior to the introduction of COVID-19, they were less concerned about the transmission of any form of sickness or disease, but now they are cautious when visiting and making purchases. The research compares life during and after the lockdown to determine whether or not individuals feel safe enjoying the amenities offered at shopping malls. In order to understand how men and women behave in shopping malls when making purchases and using the amenities, the study also compares how each gender behaves in these two areas.

Research Methodology

For the present study, the consumers visiting the Elante mall of Chandigarh was studied. Data was collected from a total of fifty respondents. First-hand information was collected, twenty-five males and twenty-five females were covered from the mall in order to study the changing patterns of consumer behaviour post-pandemic. Convenience sampling and simple random sampling has been used for selecting the respondents. All the precautions were taken care of while conducting the study (maintaining social distancing, wearing of mask, etc.). Primary and secondary data both have been used. For primary data, structured interview schedule was developed for the selected mall. The study focuses on the changes that the respondents made. They were asked how they used the facilities before the lockdown and post lockdown. What changes they have adopted while visiting the malls and making purchases. Based on the responses the following study is conducted.

1. Trying Clothes in dressing rooms

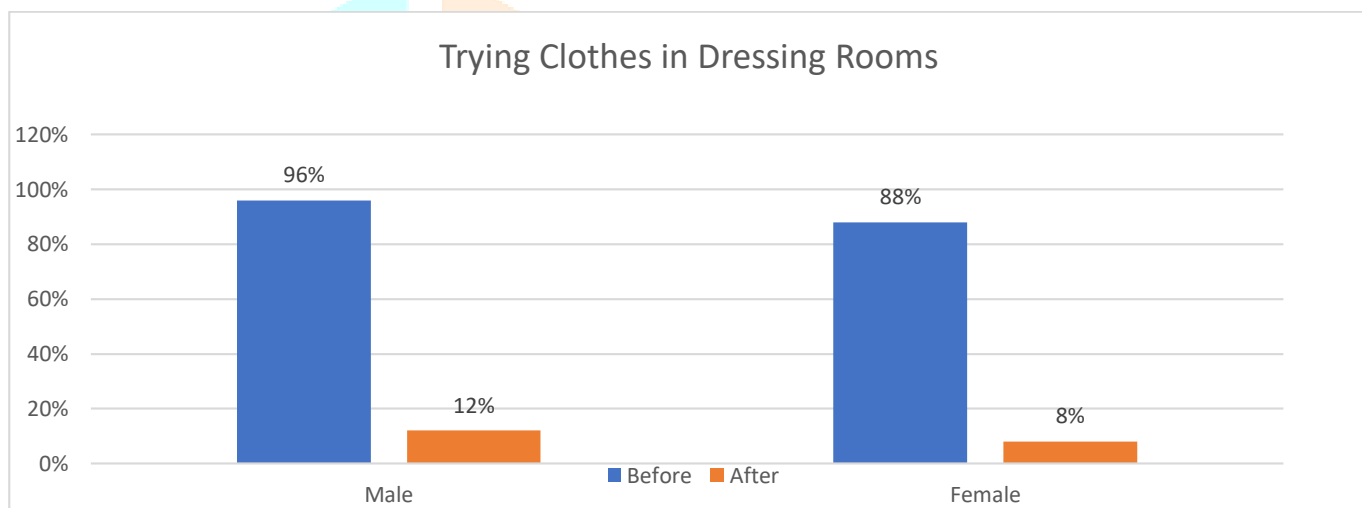
All the respondents who took part in the present study were asked whether they feel safe while using the dressing rooms of the shopping malls. Males and females were asked separately. They were asked about how much do they felt safe using the dressing room before the lockdown. And in that comparison how much do they feel safe after the lockdown using the mentioned facility in the shopping mall. Both cases were examined, and they were compared to one another.

Table 1

Table Showing views of Male and female respondents on “Trying Clothes in dressing rooms” in shopping malls. How much do they feel safe before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic?

| Do they feel safe while trying clothes in dressing rooms of the mall before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic | Before COVID-19 | After COVID-19 lockdown | Total |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Male | 24(96) | 3(12) | 25(100) |
| Female | 22(88) | 2(08) | 25(100) |

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

**Figure 1**

The above Figure 1 shows the distribution of the respondents based on the safety they felt and feel before the lockdown and after the lockdown. From the present study, it was found male respondents (96 per cent) felt safe while using the dressing rooms. And only 12 per cent of the male respondents feel safe and the rest felt unsafe using such facilities after the lockdown. On the other hand, 88 per cent of the female respondents felt safe using the dressing rooms before the pandemic and only 08 per cent of the female respondents feels safe (post-pandemic lockdown) in using the dressing rooms.

Reasons cited:

- The reason been cited by the respondents, those who do not feel safe before the pandemic believed that the dressing rooms could have cameras or maybe somehow their privacy could be breached.
- Those who feel safe after COVID-19 lockdown believes that the shopping malls are taking extra precautions to deal with the spread of the virus. All the government guidelines are been followed by the shopping malls and everything is been done systematically. But the majority who feels unsafe post-pandemic believes that even with the precautionary measures taken by both sides (shopping malls and the consumers) there is a threat of the spread of the disease. There are chances that the disease could spread.

2. Dealing with the Sales Executives

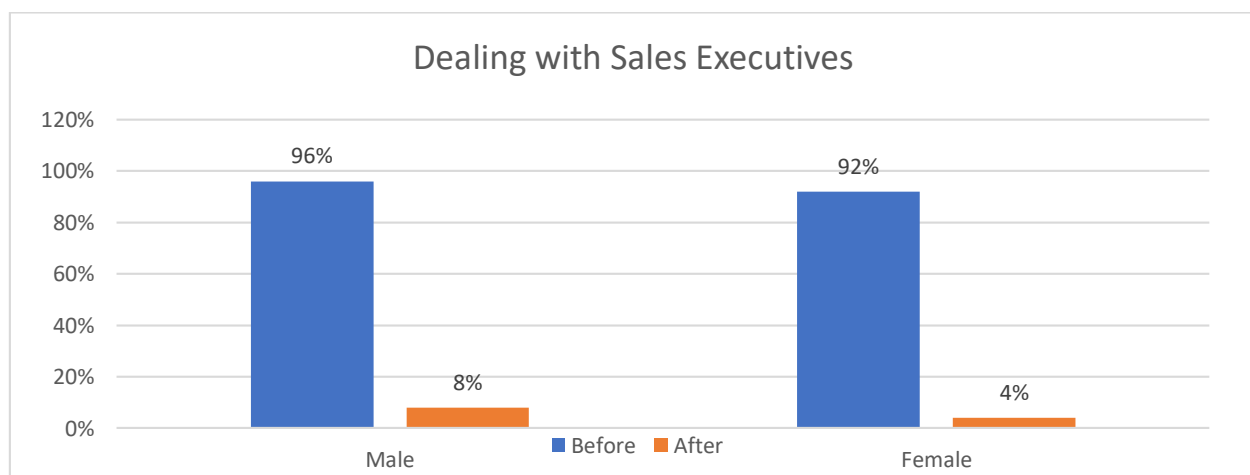
The table 2 shows the views of Male and female Consumers on “Dealing with the Sales Executives” in shopping malls. The respondents were asked how much they felt safe dealing with the sales executive before the pandemic and how much in comparison do they feel safe dealing with the sales executive after the COVID-19 lockdown?

Table 2

Table Showing views of Male and female Consumers on “Dealing with the Sales Executives” in shopping malls.

| Do they feel safe while Dealing with the Sales Executives before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic? | Before COVID-19 | After COVID-19 lockdown | Total |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Male | 24(96) | 2(08) | 25(100) |
| Female | 23(92) | 1(04) | 25(100) |

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

**Figure 2**

The above figure 2 maintains that all the male respondents (96 per cent) felt safe dealing with the sales executives while making purchases in the shopping malls before the pandemic. But, after the pandemic lockdown, only 08 per cent of the males felt safe dealing with the sales executives. On the other hand, before the pandemic female respondents (92 per cent) were found to be feeling safe dealing with the sales executives and after the COVID-19 lockdown restraints were open, merely 04 per cent of the respondents said they feel safe dealing with the sales executives.

Reasons cited:

- Both the respondents, males and females with 08 per cent and 04 per cent responses respectively who feel safe after COVID-19 lockdown while dealing with the sales executives in the shopping malls said that the sales executives maintain a proper social distance, that too with all the precautions (properly sanitizing and using face masks).
- Before the pandemic, those who felt unsafe said, they do not want the sales executives to entertain them as they want to look into the products by themselves.
- After the pandemic, the majority stated that *“we look into the products by ourselves. No matter how much you keep distance the infection could be spread, we are here to purchase basic daily products, without touching useless things, we keep on sanitizing ourselves and the products too”*.

3. Testing beauty products

All the respondents who took part in the present study were asked whether they feel safe “testing beauty products” in shopping malls. They were asked how much did they felt safe testing the beauty products in the shopping malls before the COVID-19 pandemic. And how much in comparison do they feel safe now, when the government has loosened the restrictions following the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown and allowed people to go to malls?

Table 3

Table Showing views of Male and female Consumers on “Testing beauty products” in shopping malls.

| Do they feel safe while testing the beauty products in the shopping mall before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic? | Before COVID-19 | After COVID-19 lockdown | Total |
|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|---------|
| Male | 18(72) | 01((04) | 25(100) |
| Female | 24(96) | 02(08) | 25(100) |

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

The above table 3 states, female respondents (96percent) and male respondents (72 per cent) felt safe testing beauty products before the pandemic. While Post-pandemic lockdown only 04 per cent of male respondents and 08 per cent of the female respondent felt safe testing the beauty products respectively.

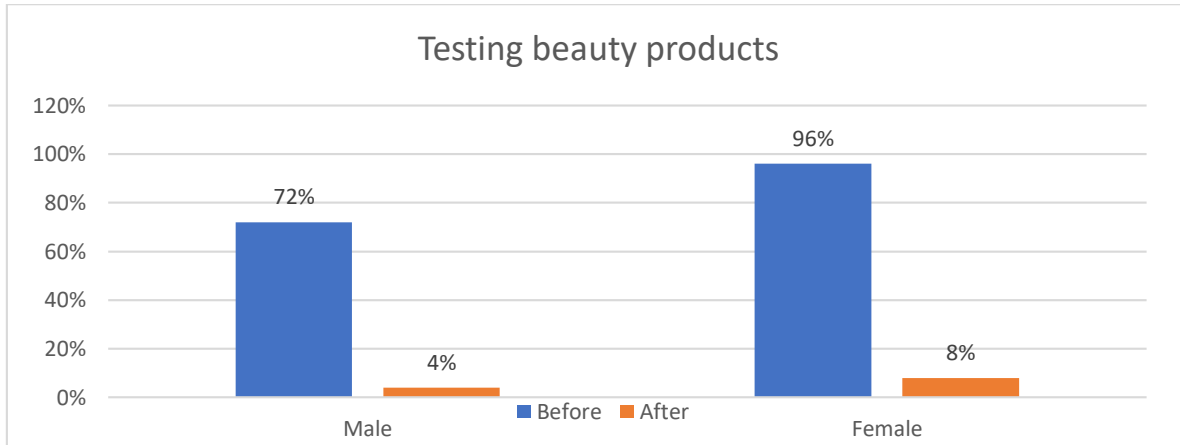


Figure 3

Reasons cited:

- Those who feel unsafe before the pandemic using the beauty products said that using the same products and brushes by different people may not be safe for the skin, it could cause allergies and infections. The majority of the males has never tried any product and feel it to be a wastage of time. But those who feel safe said the products and the brushes are washed and sanitized properly and are changed from time to time.
- Post pandemic lockdown those respondents who felt safe said “*the brushes are discarded after single use only and are highly sanitized.*”

4. Trying on Footwears

The table 4 shows the viewpoint of the male and female respondents on “Trying on Footwears” in shopping malls. The respondents were asked how much did they felt safe trying on footwears in the shopping malls before the COVID-19 pandemic. And how much in comparison to that they feel safe trying the footwears in the shopping malls after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown were eased.

Table 4

Table Showing views of Male and female Consumers on “Trying on Footwears” in shopping malls.

| Do they feel safe while Trying on Footwears | Before | After | Total |
|----------------------------------------------------------|----------|-------------------|---------|
| in shopping mall before and after the COVID-19 Pandemic? | COVID-19 | COVID-19 lockdown | |
| Male | 25(100) | 10(40) | 25(100) |
| Female | 24(96) | 07(28) | 25(100) |

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

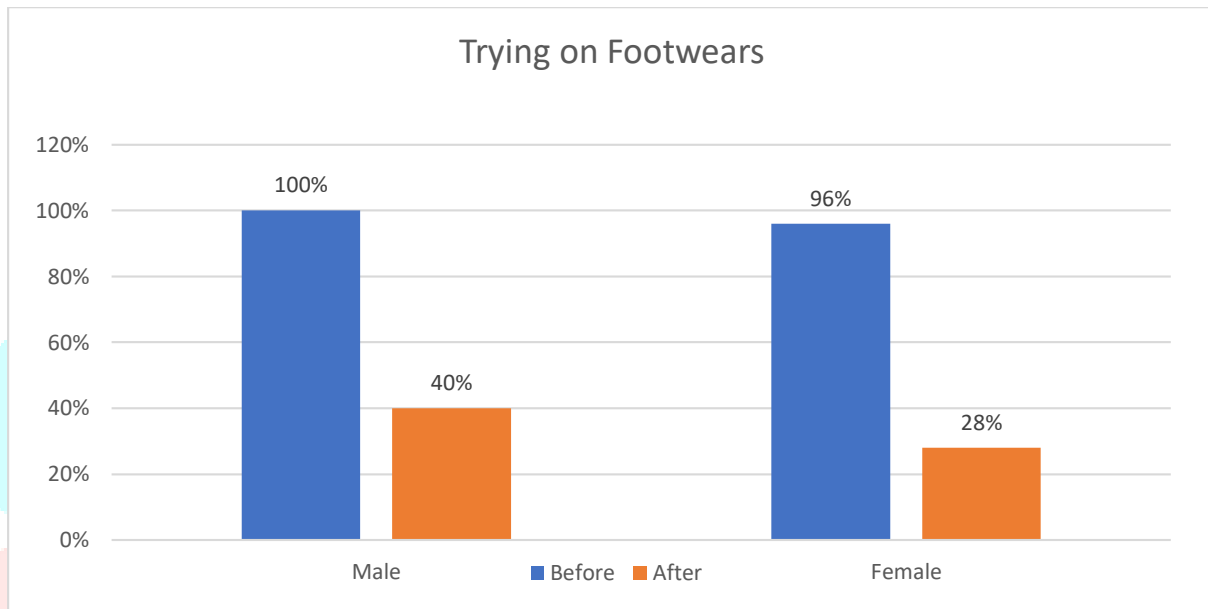


Figure 4

In figure 4, it was found that majority of the respondents i.e., males (100 per cent) and females (96 per cent) before the pandemic felt safe trying on the footwear in the shopping malls. On the other hand, post-pandemic lockdown male respondents and female respondents (40 per cent and 28 per cent respectively) felt safe.

Reasons cited: The reasons cited by the respondents for feeling safe or not while trying on the footwear in the shopping malls.

- Those who feel unsafe before pandemic believe that trying on the shoes and other footwears could cause certain infections as these footwears are tried by many.
- Post pandemic who feels unsafe believes that the spread of the disease could be on the rise as these have been tried by many.
- Those who feel safe believes that the malls use proper precautionary measures, they properly sanitize all the products that are displayed and keep on changing the displayed products, to deal with the spread of the disease.

- A male respondent said, *“I do not even touch the shoes while trying, so I think it’s a bit safer to try them. Before the pandemic, it was not the case to keep on changing the products or to even keep on sanitizing but now, they keep a regular check on the hygiene.”*

Summary and Conclusion

The present study has tried to explore the viewpoint of males and females regarding their way of making purchases in the shopping mall before and after the COVID-19. In the study, it was found People were coming only for purchasing the basic needs. And those who were feeling depressed in their homes after a long lockdown were seen coming out.

The first objective of the study was to perceive the views of Male and female Consumers on “Trying Clothes in dressing rooms” in shopping malls. They were asked about how much do they felt safe using the dressing room before the lockdown. And in that comparison how much do they feel safe after the lockdown using the mentioned facility in the shopping mall. It was found that most of the males were comfortable in trying on the dressing rooms both before and after the pandemic. Females have a slightly different point of view. Before the pandemic, they were more conscious about their privacy and after the pandemic, they were fearing the infection. So, it could be said that males were feeling much safer than the females in trying the dressing rooms both before and after the arrival of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The second objective of the study was to explore the views of Male and female Consumers on “Dealing with the Sales Executives” in shopping malls. The respondents were asked how much they felt safe dealing with the sales executive before the pandemic and how much in comparison do they feel safe dealing with the sales executive after the COVID-19 lockdown? It was found again that males were feeling safer than females in dealing with the sales executive. They were found more comfortable in taking help from these sales executives.

The other objective of the study was to compare the viewpoint of both males and females regarding “Testing beauty products” in shopping malls. It could be said that females were more comfortable in trying the beauty products. As females were more conscious of the above two findings, they were more comfortable in this. Citing the precautions taken by the malls they were confident in trying the products. While males were not sure if trying products are safe or not, the majority has never even thought of trying any beauty product.

The last objective of the study was to explore about views of Male and female Consumers on “Trying on Footwears” in shopping malls. How much did they felt safe trying on footwears in the shopping malls before the COVID-19 pandemic? And how much in comparison to that they feel safe trying the footwears in the shopping malls after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown It was found in the study that males were more confident in trying on the footwear (both before and after the pandemic and lockdown).

As the study was conducted to explore the changing patterns of consumer behavior of both males and females in the shopping mall before and after the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown. The study proves that those consumers who were feeling safe after the pandemic, males in comparison to the females, were more confident in coming out of their homes and making purchases from the malls. They were feeling safer than females in trying on the dressing rooms, dealing with the sales executives or even trying on the footwear. But after the pandemic majority of the males and females were not feeling safe coming out. Though the government has made certain guidelines and standard operating procedures to deal with the situation and the shopping malls are following the rules properly, but still, the majority of the consumers feel unsafe. The footfall in the shopping malls has seen a decline.

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Interview Schedule

Serial no: _____

Date: _____

Section I

1. Factual information:

1.1.Gender: Male Female Others

1.2.Age: 24-29 30-35 36-41 42-47 48-55 54-59 60-65

1.3. Are you a permanent resident of Tricity: Yes No

1.4. Address: _____

Section II

2. Visit to the mall:

2.1. Do you know about the Covid-19 pandemic? Yes no

2.2.How often did you use to make a visit to the mall before pandemic? Once in a week Twice a week Once a month Once in year

2.3.How often do you make a visit to the mall after lockdown? Once in a week Twice a week Once a month Once in year

2.4.Do you try clothes in the dressing rooms? Yes no

2.5.Do you think it was safe to try clothes in the dressing rooms of the malls before pandemic? Yes No Don't know

Reason? _____

2.6.Do you think it is safe to try clothes in the dressing rooms of the malls after lockdown? Yes No Don't know

Reason? _____

2.7. Do you think it was safe while dealing with the Sales Executives before pandemic?

Yes

No

Don't know

Reason _____

2.8. Do you think it is safe dealing with the Sales Executives after the lockdown?

Yes

No

Don't know

Reason _____
_____.

2.9. Do you think it was safe testing the beauty products in the malls before the pandemic?

Yes

No

Don't know

Reason _____
_____.

2.10. Do you think it is safe testing the beauty products in the malls after the lockdown?

Yes

No

Don't know

Reason _____
_____.

2.11. Do you think was safe trying the foot wears in the malls before the pandemic?

Yes

No

Don't know

Reason _____
_____.

2.12. Do you think it is safe trying the foot wears in the malls after the lockdown?

Yes

No

Don't know

Reason _____
_____.