



THE NEW CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR PARADIGM: IMPACT OF COVID-19

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Abstract

This article looks at the characteristics of the new consumer during the COVID-19 crisis and in the subsequent lockdown period especially when the whole human race stood for more than a quarter of a year in a 'fight against a pandemic'. Besides, the article attempts to highlight the spending behavior of the new consumer. And the last segment deals with the paradigm shift in consumer behaviour. Findings have underlined that COVID-19 pandemic has formed a 'new normal' in the society and rejuvenated a behavioural understanding of purchasing among the new consumers, thereby signifying a conscious shift towards mindful consumption. In fact, the new normal has arrived with so many modifications especially in the shopping habits of consumer, but the segments that have been hit hard by the COVID-19 pandemic need to adjust to the new-fangled challenges and must offer improved customer experiences to win back the consumer's faith, thereby adopting a path towards recovery.

Keywords: Covid-19, Consumer Behaviour, Pandemic, Shopping Malls, Tricity

INTRODUCTION

The occurrence of Covid-19 has changed the whole world of the consumers. This virulent disease has transformed the way we work, shop, and communicate with each other. After the declaration of Covid-19 as a pandemic by the World Health Organization, a new concept, that is, 'work-from-home' prevailed in the whole country. In addition, the guidelines issued by the government of India from time to time have also forced the people to stick to their basic needs only. In such conditions, preference of people to step out of their homes relied upon the purchase of essentials only. Moreover, the risks of getting sick in the crowded places have also changed the patterns of the consumer behavior. Therefore, there is a subsequent decrease in footfall in the shopping malls due to careful consumer opinions. At this moment when shopping malls across the country being open to customers, consumers are responding in diverse ways. In this variability of behavior of consumers from panic-buying of essentials as well as hygiene products

to the usual buying, it becomes essential to explore the changes that have occurred in the patterns of consumer behavior especially within the Post-COVID-19 time.

Before going further, it is very important to evaluate the factors on which consumer behavior depends. The three main factors that influence the consumer behavior are the following:

- a. **Income:** We all know that the tendency of people to purchase different kind of products and services generally depends upon their income only. As the Covid-19 pandemic has put an adverse impact on the income of people in India, consequently many effects have been observed in different sectors, thereby putting the people in stress along with economic recession. Different issues of job or work loss have been perceived in different parts of India. Large numbers of people have lost their jobs due to this deadly disease whereas many people are working on half salaries to earn their living in this tough period. On the other hand, this economic loss has brought many significant changes in the life of people. Among the changes, one is the elimination of non-essential goods and to focus only on the essentials or necessity products. Majority of respondents revealed this fact of sticking to essentials only in the present study.
- b. **Preference:** Preference is another noteworthy factor that influences the behavior of consumers in contemporary times. It is mostly observed that everything depends upon the preference of the customer ultimately like the type of goods and services they want to purchase regardless of their income as well as savings. The reality is that Covid-19 pandemic has brought the life of people to a halt. It has also reduced the passion of people to gather in public places for entertainment and celebrations, so people have changed their preference, thereby considering the new emerging trends of social distancing in mind with a view to protect themselves and their families from this infectious disease. Many respondents in the study revealed that their preferences have been changed a lot in the time of post-COVID-19. They also declared that the change in preferences from large number of products to small (needful) number of products have occurred due to the decline in social interactions.
- c. **Savings:** Another factor that influences the consumer behavior the most is savings. The fact is that people having more savings are more likely to spend more on non-essential goods. Those people who fall in this category prefer to raise their standard of living by purchasing such goods and services that increases their worth and status within the society. It is largely seen that many people are reliant on their past savings even after being out of work due to the pandemic COVID-19 lockdown.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Alaimo states that the general customer behaviour and the overall consumption of people were altered all through the Covid-19 pandemic. Besides, large number of people have started to make use of the online channels for the attainment of their needs (Alaimo, 2020). On the other hand, the virus has led the overall condition to transform the attitude of people and their way of behaving due to the introduction of new legislations, which demonstrated a considerable change in the people's faith, way of assimilation and social understanding (Hassan & Soliman, 2021).

Bhatti et al. (2020) in their study outlines that Covid-19 has changed the business activities of the whole world. More than 50 percent of consumers have been avoiding crowded places and offline shopping due to the fear of receiving the virus. Neger and Uddin (2020) in their work revealed that factors such as convenient mode of payment, less time consuming along with other organizational factors influence the behavior of online purchasing among the consumers.

OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

In this scenario when the COVID-19 pandemic has deeply changed the whole world where individuals are living in a different way, buying in many ways, and in fact thinking differently, it becomes crucial to look at the changing patterns of consumer behavior especially when the products and brands are observed through a different new lens by the customers.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Around ninety respondents were studied from the three selected malls namely Elante mall, VR Punjab and NH22 in Tricity. Though the government has lifted the restrictions, but the risk of getting the infection from public places has totally changed the state of mind of the people. And this trend was perceived through the unfilled stores and floors of each shopping mall. From each mall, first-hand information was collected from thirty respondents. Fifteen males and fifteen females were covered from each mall to explore the changing patterns of consumer behaviour considering post covid-19 impact. Social distancing norms were followed while data collection. Many respondents were found interested in revealing the impact of COVID-19 outbreak on their behavior and lifestyle. Around five informants from each mall were selected as case studies. Convenience sampling method has been used for selecting the sample.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

1. The New Consumer in the Tricity: More Economical and More Conscious

COVID-19 is a transmittable respiratory and vascular ailment which is caused by severe respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2). Though this disease was first acknowledged in Wuhan, China, but this disease has made a huge impact in India. We have witnessed changes in the new consumer as people have become more economical and conscious than before. An effort has been made to find out as how many people have changed their behavior after the pandemic. And if their behavior has been changed, how many of them falls in the category of 'economical' consumer and how many of them falls in the category of 'conscious' consumer or in both categories. Table 1 reflects the changes that have taken place in the behavior of the consumers after the COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 1 Distribution of Respondents according to the Changes that have Occurred in their Consumer Behavior after COVID-19 Pandemic

Changes Occurred in the New Consumer	Elante	VR Punjab	NH 22	Total
I Have Become More Economical	9 (30)	8 (26.66)	6 (20)	23 (25.55)
I Have Become More Conscious	10 (33.33)	7 (23.33)	13 (43.33)	30 (33.33)
Become Both: Economical as well as Conscious	7 (23.33)	12 (40)	7 (23.33)	26 (28.88)
No Change in the Behavior	4(13.33)	3 (10)	4 (13.33)	11 (12.22)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

In the study, around 33.33 percent respondents confessed that they have become more conscious in the Post- COVID world. Consciousness was reflected in terms of awareness regarding good health, immunity, and sanitization process. Another 28.88 percent admitted that they have become both economical as well as conscious than before whereas 25.55 percent respondents revealed that they have just become economical and begun to think carefully before making any kind of purchase. Only 12.22 percent respondents revealed no change in their behavior. The data suggest that health, safety measures and finances have been continuously impacting the attitudes and behavior of consumers.

One male informant aged forty-two said in Elante Mall, *“I believe that COVID-19 has a substantial impact on the consumer behavior. As a result of this disease only, all of us are more and more involved into purchase of cleanliness and decontamination goods, so that we could save ourselves and our families in this corona-infected world.”* Another woman informant aged thirty-two years in Elante said, *“This pandemic has taught me to spend money only on the essentials like nutritious food and supplements. I have just purchased an air fryer from @ HOME because I am*

looking forward to eat non-oily foods and snacks.” Another twenty-five years old handsome man said in VR Punjab, “In the lifestyle store, the salesmen were revealing the fact that the home cleaning products have witnessed a large boost in its sales after the pandemic since people are more worried about their wellbeing and are taking more and more precautionary steps in order to battle with COVID-19.” The idea is quite clear from such narratives that people have become more conscious about their health and safety in the Post- COVID world and they are interested in spending more and more on essentials rather than non-essentials. It can also be said that the trend of spending money freely on non-essential goods and services has been changed to essential products and services. In this way, this pandemic has changed the mentality of people, thereby making them learn to live within their own limited means. This is the reason why consumers have learnt to value a less wasteful lifestyle now. The facts and figures suggest that the malls in the Post Covid-19 world are surrounded with the presence of new consumers who are more economical, more conscious, and are giving significance to healthy lifestyle.

2. The Spending Behavior of the New Consumer in the Malls of Tricity

In the present study, a lot of curiosity was found among the consumers to get out of the house and go to the mall. Many respondents revealed the idea that lockdown and quarantine time period made them feel bored, struck and unproductive as well. On the other hand, some respondents connect the prolonged isolation with stress and depression. It was also found in the observations that customers do not want to spend a lot of time inside the shopping malls in the Post-COVID-19 time. It is the fear of the contracting the virus that is so highly prevalent in the minds of the consumers that they all have been doing so quickly and popping inside the stores to buy just the essential items. The consumers’ preference to buy the essentials again depends upon those goods that have minimum human contact plus interaction. All these changes have of course affected the buying behavior of the consumers, so an effort has been made to know the spending behavior of the new consumers visiting the shopping malls.

Table 2.1 Showing Average Time Spent for Shopping (in Hours) in the Shopping Malls in Post-COVID time

Average Time Spent for Shopping (in Hours)	Elante	VR Punjab	NH 22	Total
Not more than one hour	10 (33.33)	7 (23.33)	19 (63.33)	36 (40)
2-3 hours	11(36.66)	9 (30)	5 (16.66)	25 (27.77)

4-5 hours	4 (13.33)	7 (23.33)	4 (13.33)	15 (16.66)
6-7 hours	3 (10)	4 (13.33)	2 (6.66)	9 (10)
Above 8 hours	2 (6.66)	3 (10)	-	5 (5.55)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

In the study, approximately 40 percent respondents were found spending not more than one hour in the shopping malls of Tricity. Another 27.77 percent were found spending two to three hours as an average time in the shopping malls after the lockdown period followed by 16.66 percent who believed in spending four to five hours only. About 10 percent were found favoring six to seven hours as an average time that they prefer to spend in the shopping malls. On the other hand, only 5.55 percent were such in the whole sample that spent above eight hours in the mall. The idea is clear that majority of respondents believe in spending a smaller number of hours in the shopping mall. Moreover, the present study found that the pandemic has led large number of consumers to concentrate just upon groceries and household essentials, while cutting back spending their time and money on clothing or apparel as they do not need them immediately. This is the reason that the consumers have started spending less time in the malls as they use to spend before the pandemic. One respondent in Elante said, *“It is very difficult to maintain a two metre distance in-store between the people. So, I think that the best way is to spend the less time in the mall. This is what many other people have been doing in the mall. I must say.... this pandemic has changed the trends and patterns of shopping along with the preference of people who used to spend a large amount of time in their favorite store before this disease.”* Another respondent aged twenty-six argue, *“Keeping the fear of covid-19 in mind, I am looking forward to leave the mall soon within another ten to fifteen minutes.”*

Very few respondents (5.55 percent) in the study were found actively enjoying their shopping experience in the shopping malls of Tricity. Out of these respondents, few informants were found satisfied with the arrangements made in the malls for their safety such as temperature scan upon store/centre entry, CCTV/tech to manage the crowd, provision of cashless stores, and an average wait time of ten to fifteen minutes for the store entry to ensure more safety for the customers. When the respondents were interviewed in VR Punjab after the lockdown period, they were asked about the average time spent by them for shopping (in Hours) in the shopping mall. One informant aged twenty-nine years argues *“I have seen the staff of this mall taking care of high contact areas such as the washrooms, which are being disinfected by them frequently. In spite of all the measures taken by the management of this mall, we would prefer to leave the mall as soon as possible because this virus is transmissible.”* Respondents interviewed in VR Punjab Mall (Mohali) talked about the social distancing protocols followed by them within the mall. Few respondents

discussed the facility of contactless cash register that has been made to endorse smart payments for the customers. Observing the various types of precautions which are taken by different stores to control the situation of COVID-19, many respondents in the present study highlighted that the hourly sanitization of surfaces in the shopping malls, usage of the Aarogya Setu app and facility of gloves as well as masks for everyone entering the store within the VR Punjab ensures the mind of the consumers about their safety status. One respondent aged thirty-four well said in this context, *“At this crucial moment, social distancing is the key, and it is strictly implemented in this mall. This plus point of VR Punjab that focus on the safety of the consumers and its employees is that driving factor that helps everyone to shop without any fear along with comfort and assurance.”*

Two specific categories of customers were found in VR Punjab, Mohali. First category belongs to those who window shop and the second category belongs to those who are serious buyers. When interviewed the consumers of first category, they expressed their enthusiasm towards spending their time in amble around, to check out the products available on different offers or discounts and to devote maximum hours at the food court in the company of their love ones. The second category of consumers articulated their main purpose that made them visit VR Punjab. Their main purpose varies from watching a movie to shop and grab an opportunity to have something of their choice at their favorite cafe, hotel, or restaurant. In the mall VR Punjab, majority of respondents were such who were having a list of things-to-do in their mind, and they preferred in leaving the mall in the shortest possible time.

Table 2.2 Showing Frequency of Visit of the Respondents in the Shopping Malls in Post-COVID time

Frequency of Visit	Elante	VR Punjab	NH 22	Total
Daily	-	1 (3.33)	-	1 (1.11)
Weekdays	8 (26.66)	7 (23.33)	5 (16.66)	20 (22.22)
Weekends	3 (10)	4 (13.33)	4 (13.33)	11 (12.22)
Fortnightly	2 (6.66)	3 (10)	2 (6.66)	7 (7.77)
Monthly	17 (56.66)	15 (16)	19 (63.33)	51 (56.66)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

It was found that majority of respondents (56.66 percent) prefer visiting the shopping malls on monthly basis. Approximately 22.22 percent respondents were found preferring weekdays due to fewer number of people in the weekdays within the shopping mall followed by 12.22 percent respondents favoring visits on weekends. Only 1.11 percent were found having preference for daily visit in the shopping malls. One respondent shopping in Elante mall argue, “Look around what the pandemic has done to the most famous and unparalleled shopping hub of Chandigarh. Since the opening of the Elante Mall, I have seen it always in overcrowded form because it is one of the biggest malls in India at the time of its inauguration. But the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the preferability of the consumers.” Another respondent aged thirty-nine moving in Elante mall said, “I heard from one of my best friends about the offers going on during Post- COVID-19 time. I have just come to grab some of the things that I was postponing quite a long time before the lockdown period in India. I have also heard from someone that another lockdown will soon be implemented by the government in future. This contradiction forced me to visit the mall; otherwise I would never take such a risk to visit the mall during this peak time.”

Table 2.3 Showing Number of Stores / Shops Visited by the Respondents in Shopping Malls in Post-COVID time

Number of Stores / Shops Visited in Mall	Elante	VR Punjab	NH 22	Total
1-2 Stores	9 (30)	8 (26.66)	17 (56.66)	34 (37.77)
3-4 Stores	11 (36.66)	13 (43.33)	10 (33.33)	34 (37.77)
5-6 Stores	6 (20)	4 (13.33)	3 (10)	13 (14.44)
7-8 Stores	2 (6.66)	3 (10)	-	5 (5.55)
Above 8 Stores	2 (6.66)	2 (6.66)	-	4 (4.44)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

The choice of visiting the stores of majority of respondents goes from 1-2 stores to 2-3 stores. Around 37.77 percent respondents were found in both the categories, that is, those interested in making their visit to 1-2 stores and those who preferred making their visit mainly to 3-4 stores. The main idea reflected by the informants behind their visit to

few stores came out to be the fulfillment of essential needs of the consumers, thereby changing the monotony in lifestyle that COVID-19 has brought to a large extent. About 14.44 percent of informants were found visiting 5-6 stores followed by 5.55 percent respondents who gave their preference to 7-8 stores. Only 4.44 respondents were found checking and shopping different products in more than eight stores. One respondent who was shopping in Biba Store at VR Punjab mall argue, *“I have come from a distant place. The designs and colors that ‘Biba’ offers are one of my favorite. I have made this special visit to VR Punjab mall in order to meet my daily requirement related to clothing. We are not going to visit any other store except ‘Biba’ store because COVID-19 does not allow us to take any risk beyond our needs.”* Such an account shows that individuals making visit to VR Punjab mall particularly from far-flung areas are not at all prepared to check out distinct products, which are available at the other stores except their favorite ones. In this high time, the main obligation is to fulfill the essential needs among the consumers and to save oneself from the trap of virus and ongoing infection within the society.

Table 2.4 Showing Distribution of Respondents who have Avoided Crowded Places to Escape the Risk of COVID-19 Infection

Number of Respondents Who Avoided Crowded Places to escape the Risk of Infection	Elante	VR Punjab	NH 22	Total
Yes	23 (76.66)	19 (63.33)	16 (53.33)	58 (64.44)
No	1 (3.33)	3 (10)	4 (13.33)	8 (8.88)
To Some Extent	6 (20)	8 (26.66)	10 (33.33)	24 (26.66)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

Two main changes were found in consumer behavior in the study. First is the lack of enthusiasm to intermingle in crowded places in the shopping malls and second is the higher propensity among consumers for digital adoption. In the study, 64.66 percent respondents were found avoiding the crowded places in the shopping malls to avoid the risk of infection. On the other hand, 26.66 percent respondents were found avoiding crowded places to some extent in the shopping malls of Tricity. Only 8.88 percent respondents were found having no such issues in the shopping malls. One respondent in VR Punjab argue, *“People are doing most of their purchases online at this moment.”* Another respondent in the same mall said, *“I have heard so many stories from my friends who are avoiding crowded places*

in malls of Tricity to alleviate the possibility of contracting the virus. I know nobody likes to shop online, but we all are helpless. I hope this pandemic may end soon from the root so that we will go back to normal modes of shopping.”

It was found out that that the shopping malls in Tricity are witnessing two categories of consumers in the post lockdown period. The first category consists of those consumers who want to get back to their usual life desperately and the second category consists of those who are careful consumers. One respondent aged thirty-six in Elante argue, “I do not know about others. But the pandemic has made my life hell. I feel suffocation in the mask. The sanitizers have ruined the health of my skin. But people like me who are desperate to get back to their normal life are rushing more and more towards stores and malls to make life happening again in this post lockdown period. On the other hand, there are many people who are visiting the mall with a concept of covidalization in mind and focusing upon the essentials only”. Another respondent said in Elante, “I saw many people preferring those goods that have minimum human contact as well as interaction. The idea is clear that there is fear in the mind of consumers while shopping in the stores. They are just avoiding crowded places to get away the risk of infection. I just noticed a family doing shopping in hurry and then heading home.”

Table 2.5 Showing Behavioral Intentions of Consumers as Shopping Mall Reopens in Tricity

Behavioral Intentions of Respondents in Post-COVID World	Elante	VR Punjab	NH 22	Total
Prefer to go to a Restaurant in the Mall	7 (23.33)	14 (46.66)	4 (13.33)	25 (27.77)
Prefer to Watch a Movie in a Mall	4 (13.33)	7 (23.33)	9 (30)	20 (22.22)
Prefer to go to a Bar in the Mall	3 (10)	-	5 (16.66)	8 (8.88)
Prefer to Visit Different Stores to Check Out the New Variety of Products	12 (40)	-	12 (40)	24 (26.66)
Resume Personal Grooming Services available in the Mall	4 (13.33)	9 (30)	-	13 (14.44)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

In terms of behavioral intentions of consumers as shopping mall reopens in Tricity, eating out in a restaurant ranked highest (that is, 27.77 percent), followed by preference to visit different stores and preference to watch a movie (26.66 percent and 22.22 percent, respectively), followed by the preference to resume personal grooming services available in the mall (that is, 14.44 percent). People were found less eager to go to the bar in the mall (scored only 8.88 percent). One respondent in NH 22 mall argues, *“Inox: NH22 mall is one of the best cinema halls of Tricity. The main advantage of this mall is that tickets are available at cheap prices. I always book the ticket online which is again an advantage in this ongoing pandemic. Why I prefer this cinema hall than the other cinema halls because very less number of people visit this place. Though the chances of getting infection from the public are very little here which makes it the best place to visit and watch a movie.”* One young girl aged twenty-seven said, *“I heard from one of my friends that there are provisions of pre-sanitized and packaged cutlery in restaurants to diminish any point of contact that could be a safety hazard for the consumers. Though in some restaurants, proper provisions are not available and only few people are taking risk by availing their services. But the truth is that people are looking forward to celebrate their special days again in malls because of the variety that they offer.”* Many consumers talked about the new features that are available on different apps which allow them to dine at their favorite restaurant by using online menus. By the help of these apps, they simple place their orders and make online payments. In this way, they visit their favorite restaurant without any fear in their mind. One thing is clear that the COVID-19 pandemic has changed the habits and preference of the consumers to a great extent.

3. A Paradigm Shift in Consumer Behavior

As consumers in the Tricity were found trying to fine-tune to the next normal, a substantial variance in consumer behavior was found within the society. In this situation when a tiny virus, which is almost invisible to the naked eye, has impacted the whole human race in a way which was virtually unknown to generations, it becomes the responsibility of a social researcher to peep down into the related aspects. In addition, it is when the consumers in the Tricity are at immensely diverse stages of resuming out-of-home activities, it becomes quite essential to figure out the impact of COVID-19 upon the consumer behavior.

Table 3.1 Showing the Impact of COVID-19 upon the Consumer Behavior

Impact of Covid-19 upon Consumer Behavior	Elante	VR Punjab	NH 22	Total
Eating Out Less in the Mall	8 (26.66)	9 (30)	14 (46.66)	31 (34.44)

Postponing the Purchases or Services in the Mall	7 (23.33)	5 (16.66)	11 (36.66)	23 (25.55)
Feeling Product Shortages at Various Stores	5 (16.66)	2 (6.66)	3 (10)	10 (11.11)
Buying Such Type of Products, I Wouldn't Otherwise Purchase Before	6 (20)	7 (23.33)	-	13 (14.44)
Doing Shopping in a Store I Wouldn't Otherwise Shop Before	2 (6.66)	4 (13.33)	2 (6.66)	8 (8.88)
Stocking up on Such Products, I Wouldn't Otherwise Stock-up	2 (6.66)	3 (10)	-	5 (5.55)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

When analyzed the impact of COVID-19 on the consumer behavior, it was found that eating out less in the mall ranked highest (that is, 34.44 percent), followed by delaying the purchases or services in the mall (25.55 percent). Approximately 14.44 percent respondents revealed that they are buying products that they wouldn't buy otherwise in normal conditions. The list of preferred products by the consumers includes cotton masks with embroidery and sequence work, sanitizers, health supplements, immunity boosting drink recipes etc. One respondent in this context said, *"COVID-19 has changed our way of living. Wearing a mask outside the home has become a new normal. With this change and necessity, many hand-sewn masks with embroidery are available in the stores. I have seen so many young girls buying high quality 100% cotton fabric masks in lifestyle section. I think cotton masks are more*

comfortable than the N95 masks. Moreover, they make you look good.” Another respondent who was caught searching energy drinks said, *“Energy drinks have just come to the notice of the consumers due to the impact of COVID-19 on the humanity. I realized the benefits of energy drinks through one of my friends. He told me that they not only boost the energy level in the body but also helps in increasing the level of concentration. I want to improve my immunity for the sake of my overall health. So, I am looking forward to buy the energy drinks that I would never buy otherwise in my whole life.”*

In the present study it was found out that energy drinks such as Ptrotinex, AS-IT-IS Nutrition, PediaSure and MuscleBlaze are getting more popular among the consumers. On the other hand, many respondents were found making purchase of wheat-grass powders as well. The idea behind the purchase of such products is quite clear that consumers want to ensure that their body gets the right amount of nutrition and energy all the way through various health and energy drinks. The impact of COVID-19 pandemic has made them think about their health rather than ethnic fashion and technology. This is the reason why consumers have been found purchasing health related products in various stores after the lifting of the lockdown.

Around 11.11 percent respondents revealed their experience related to the shortage of products at various stores followed by such respondents who are shopping in a store that they wouldn't otherwise visit for shopping (8.88percent). Consumers were found less eager to stock up the products that they wouldn't otherwise stock up before (5.55 percent). One respondent said in this context, *“When the lockdown was announced in the country, I also did a lot of panic buying like other people in my locality. There were rumours all around that the government was going to close everything in strict sense. When I came to know through the social media platforms that all the retail shops as well as wholesale markets are going to shut down completely to prevent the people from the novel coronavirus infection, then I rushed to various places to stock up my grocery and other essentials. It was really a tough time for all of us. But I think all of us need to stock up the groceries, non-perishable vegetables, and other essentials in the same way as we did before. Even I am advising all of my relatives to buy in large quantities as stockpiling ensures more safety.”* The facts and figures revealed that consumers in the Tricity are adopting the new ways to stay safe and healthy during the ongoing coronavirus disease. Few respondents spoke about the ways they are adjusting their habits of shopping due to COVID-19 concerns. Out of such respondents, those who favored the idea of stockpiling the essential items revealed their most preferred purchases that they usually stock up and it includes cleaning supplies, food items, medicine and health care items, and toiletries.

Categories in Demand

The COVID-19 pandemic has changed the whole life of the consumers, thereby changing their needs and preferences. In this scenario, when people are experiencing economic recession and less partying on the other hand, it becomes quite essential to find out the categories which are in demand among the consumers. An effort has been made to study the categories in demand in the present study in the wake of ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

Table 3.2 Showing Categories in Demand during the Post COVID-19 Impact

Categories in Demand	Elante	VR Punjab	NH 22	Total
Ethnic Fashion	4 (13.33)	3 (10)	3 (10)	10 (11.11)
Electronics	9 (30)	11 (36.66)	8 (26.66)	28 (31.11)
Entertainment	4 (13.33)	3 (10)	2 (6.66)	9 (10)
Food and Beverages	6 (20)	7 (23.33)	6 (20)	19 (21.11)
Health, Fitness and Sports	7 (23.33)	6 (20)	11 (36.66)	24 (26.66)
Total	30 (100)	30 (100)	30 (100)	90 (100)

Figures in parentheses column wise percentages

In response to categories in demand, majority of respondents revealed their preference of purchase towards electronic goods (31.11 percent) followed by health, fitness, and sports (26.66 percent). Because of COVID-19, customers were found making mind to invest more in such type of products and services that promise to provide them more ease at home. One male respondent aged forty-two in VR Punjab mall said in this context, *“There is a rising demand of smartphones in the market due to the growing culture of work-from-home and study-from-home.”* Another respondent argues that, *“Before this deadly disease, my whole family used to spend their cash either on ethnic fashion or entertainment-related activities. But this pandemic has really changed our preferences being consumers. In the new normal, we are all looking forward to spending our large amount of money on health and fitness- related goods and services rather than fashion and entertainment.”*

Approximately 21.11 percent respondents spoke of the purchase of food and beverages followed by ethnic fashion and entertainment (11.11 percent and 10 percent respectively). One respondent in VR Punjab mall said in this context that, *“Today I am here in VR Punjab with my elder sister who has come specially to buy food and beverages. We are looking forward to buy instant food and snacks items because they help us in satisfying our cravings back at home particularly when the family does not allow us to eat outside because of the risk of virus involved.”* The recorded narratives show that the categories in demand are electronics, health, fitness, and sports along with food and beverages. While interviewing the respondents, it was found that consumers are buying products which can be easily

cooked at home within few minutes such as frozen snacks, macaroni, pasta, noodles, poha etc. In addition to this, the sales of frozen non-veg were also found high among the buyers. It was found that the necessity of consumers has basically changed from having foods at hotel or restaurant to snacking and munching items back at home in a safe and secure environment. Though majority of people are not willing to eat and shop outside, there footfall of big shopping malls is down, but the sales of grocery stores have picked up substantially in the malls of Tricity. Nevertheless, buyers are not storing goods like before, but they have yearnings for snacks, appetizers, and other delicious things as they are still staying home for longer hours. The idea is clear that the preference of home snacking and processed food have become a kind of trend among the people to a large extent. And this is the reason why sales of baked items, French fries, and other ready-to-cook meals are much higher. After analyzing the facts and figures, it is believed that the food, cinema (multiplexes) and entertainment (fun-republic) will resume quite late in the malls of Tricity due to the ongoing pandemic of coronavirus. Certain categories such as apparels and ethnic fashion are also going down because people are socializing less, so the sale of branded fashion is quite low in the malls.

The New Normal

In the present study, consumers were found to be taking precautions while making purchase decisions in the face of ongoing pandemic. The over-arching message is quite clear that consumers in the Tricity want to get back to normal, which is promising. However, they need strong assurance from the side of retailers as well as leisure providers along the way. Many respondents were interviewed in order to collect their views regarding the 'new normal'. One respondent said, *"We all are aware that life has been resumed in so many developed countries after this outbreak of coronavirus. Although people are shopping in the Tricity with the intention of adapting to the new normal, but again wearing a mask has become a mandatory habit of people in order to save oneself and others from this infectious disease. I must say that the consumers' expectations have been going through the shift to adopt 'a new normal'."*

It was also found that the shopping malls have been making their hard efforts with a hope to attract more and more customers during the festive season. One respondent said in this context, *"People have also become conscious and are adopting the changes like maintaining social distancing while interacting with others whether it is a salesman, a friend, or a relative. Moreover, the process of thermal screening and frequent sanitization of common touch points have also been assuring safety to the customers to a great extent."* It was found that the barcode scanning all the way through mobile devices, contactless and e-payment methods, distribution of bills and receipts on the WhatsApp, and the provision of online feedback system are some of those provisions which are providing assurance to the consumers in their new world.

CONCLUSION

The reflections of new safety measures were perceived in all the shopping malls of Tricity. It was found that the pandemic has led large number of consumers to concentrate just upon groceries and household essentials, while cutting back spending their time and money on clothing or apparel as they do not need them immediately. Consciousness was reflected in terms of cognizance regarding good health, immunity, and sanitization process.

Findings reveal that safety measures such as wearing a mask, maintaining social distance and thermal scanning of the consumers have become a new normal in all the malls.

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