



# A Study on Consumer's Buying Behavior after COVID 19 Lockdown

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## Abstract

India is currently battling a global COVID 19 pandemic with a nationwide lockdown in place. The situation has made the country anxious, and it 'needs reassurance and stability'. With economic activity coming to a complete standstill, companies across sectors are grappling with the uncertainty of changes in consumer behaviour post the lockdown and how it'll impact the course of business. As the rate of unemployment is on a constant rise, it's sure that buyers will have less cash to spend. A McKinsey and Company report of purchasers revealed that 67% would reduce spending, as over 52% feel their jobs are uncertain, whereas 85% were worried about security. Therefore this study was conducted to understand consumer behaviour in post COVID19 Lockdown. It further reveals that consumer priorities have become more focussed on the basic necessities, spiking up the demand for hygiene, cleaning, and staple items, whereas non-essential categories experience a plunge. It is suggested that marketers must focus on the 4Ss: **Safety** of employees and customers, **Securing** supply of employees, **Sourcing** the right inventory and **Securing** the trust of the shopper. The first 90 days post-lockdown are about winning over the trust of the millennial and Gen-Z. The biggest challenge is value retention. So businesses must look at cost-cutting but not at the risk of losing value.

**Keywords:** Post-COVID 19 Lockdown, Consumer behaviour, Spending Pattern, Future Expectations

## Introduction:

The dizzying speed with which COVID-19 pandemic swiped the world has not only affected the health and general wellbeing of the global humanity but also taken the world economy frighteningly to the downhill journey. Since every walk of economic as well as social life has been so severely impacted globally by this unexpected catastrophe as our Prime Minister correctly said, there will be a pre-corona and a post corona stage just like the world wars. It is time that you prepare your business for the post log down face so that once operations resume, you can drive the

best results. According to research the Indian consumer's requirements and choice for online shopping are expected to increase from 46% in the current scenario to 64% over the next 6 to 9 months. Since the dynamics of e-Commerce are changing by the day, you need to alter your business strategy to tackle the changes and adapt to the changing regime.

After the lockdown, the key focus area for your e-Commerce business is going to be fulfilment. Having appropriate logistics and fulfilment strategies will be beneficial to reach out to people faster. The D2C market is going to grow exponentially in the coming days. Therefore, marketers need an intact supply chain and fulfilment model so that they can deliver quickly to tier 2 and tier 3 cities as the demands from there are going to increase.

Lockdown due to Covid-19 has certainly been challenging for individuals and businesses across the world. What appeared as flu in the first instance has exploded to become one of the worst pandemics in the world. It has drastically affected economies, lives and livelihood of people across the globe. Amidst these challenges, there have also been various learning which have changed customers approach to, and perception about, various aspects of work and life. According to Market research firm Euro monitor International, in the longer run, the COVID-19 recovery is likely to result in a more permanent shift in consumers' attitudes and shopping behaviour, especially in urban areas, with increased usage of home and personal hygiene products and an accelerated shift to digital purchases,"

Similarly, the lockdown to combat Covid-19 has altered consumers' purchase decisions — higher spends on health and hygiene products, adapting to limited product availability, and preferring home deliveries over store visits. There could be a decisive shift in consumer behaviour post lockdown.

## **Significance of Study**

Prior to the Covid-19 epidemic, traditional enterprise retailers were focused on driving growth and acquiring market share with physical stores as their epicentre. Covid -19 has done something which no amount of advertising by brands could do: it has made consumers change their 'preferences'. 'Preferences' have never been easy to change; they are stubborn and often impervious to marketing communication pleas. But a pandemic changed the game faster than what brands could have ever imagined. Almost overnight, hardwired mall shoppers and reluctant fence sitters were pushed into the deep end of the online commerce pool. And in a matter of days there is a high level of dexterity and comfort in online shopping across the board.

Therefore, it is important for consumer goods companies to anticipate study and respond to changing consumer behaviour. During lockdown, the only way for consumers connect is through social media – the importance of getting a lifecycle view of the customer has become even more important today. Further, companies need to understand various moments of consumption and which ones will remain relevant in the post COVID lockdown world. Therefore, this study is an attempt to give a pathway to marketers to adopt their messages (moving away from messages that link consumption to occasions or gatherings), smaller pack sizes, new launches to appeal to the new customer reality.

## Review of Literature:

Very few surveys have been conducted by different Marketing Research Agencies on Post lock down of COVID 19. Researcher aims to find out changed mind-set and behaviour of consumer after COVID 19 Lockdown. According to a survey by NRF, there are some of the key consumer behaviour changes. They found that 9 in 10 consumers have changed their traditional shopping habits. Also more than 50% of consumers have ordered products online that they would normally purchase at the store. Nearly 6 in 10 consumers say they are worried about going to the store due to fear of being infected

While some of these changes are no doubt temporary, others will be permanent. As the community moves beyond the survival mode, the digital-adoption momentum is likely to carry forward and become permanent. This inflection point will be primarily shaped by two major shifts in customer behaviour - the reluctance to mingle in crowded public places and higher propensity for digital adoption.

**According to Rajat Wahi, partner, Deloitte India ‘Out-of-home consumption will be slow’**, As restrictions are eased on both offline and online retail, we are likely to follow what’s happening in markets like China and Germany, where life is slowly coming back to normal: focus on health and hygiene products is likely to sustain for the short to medium term; retaliatory or ‘revenge’ shopping across non-essential and premium categories that consumers have been starved of, focus on contactless deliveries and in-store pick-up; and social distancing in stores with fewer customers and footfall per store in the short term. This will likely put more pressure on retailers’ productivity and margins.

The role of offline stores may change to focus on experience and collection, as people choose to ‘buy online, pick up in store’. There could be an increase of online purchases across categories, including essentials and food products. The return to out-of-home consumption and restaurant dining is expected to be slow, with take-away and home delivery becoming a larger part of the restaurant business. As consumers look to stock up and reduce visits to outlets in the short term, we will see larger pack size consumption in urban areas. In rural areas, consumption will veer towards sachets and smaller sizes to conserve cash.

**According to Dheeraj Sinha, MD & CSO, Leo Burnett South Asia, ‘Rise in products that make us independent’**, while this event will have an indelible impact on consumer behaviour, it is not that we would suddenly put a stop to leisure or indulgences and become a frugal society. However, there are a few clear indicators of what will influence our behaviour in the time to come. There will be heightened awareness on hygiene, and we would expect and be willing to pay for sanitation efforts in malls, cinema halls, airlines, shared transport, and so on.

A lot of us are realising the advantages of being independent — being able to stir up a meal, ride our own vehicle, and do our own laundry. As the shared economy services innovate to be compliant with the new world, there will be a rise in products and services that make us more independent. Personal transport, whether new or second hand, washing machines and dishwashers, and even cooking tutorials should be in demand. There is a rise in everything that gives us comfort — nostalgic content (Ramayan and Friends), comfort food recipes and games such as Ludo (albeit, online). Chances are that the souls frayed by the events of 2020 will continue to seek comfort.

**According to Saurabh Ubweja, founder, BOD Consulting ‘New consumer will be frugal, more conscious’** Consumers have shifted from splurging on non-essential goods and services to preserving essentials and making

them last longer. They are also reflecting on their consumption a lot more than earlier. The survivalist mentality will give way to the growth mind-set in a few months. However, it is likely that even post the rebound, the per capita consumption will show muted growth in the next three to five years as people learn to live within their means and start valuing a less wasteful lifestyle.

Travel, commercial real estate and hospitality sectors, which have been set back by five-10 years in terms of industry size, will restart from a new base. The need for business travel and use of office spaces will see a dramatic decline as companies become comfortable and more productive operating from home at a much lower cost.

Personal and home care products focussed on hygiene and safety will create a larger market for them. Digital solutions that limit people movement reduce cost and yet increase productivity, such as video conferencing, telemedicine and Edtech, will become the norm. Post Covid-19, we are looking at the new consumer who is healthier, caring, frugal, more conscious, less mobile, and yet more productive.

**According to Dr. Jones Mathew**, professor, Great Lakes Institute of Management, Gurgaon stated .**Hygiene as a Customer Attractor:** Consumer views about retail space cleanliness and employee and co-shopper hygiene is likely to play on retail shoppers' minds for some time to come. We might feel socially awkward about suspecting everyone around us of being potential Corona carriers. And yet for our own survival, we might be forced to replace the handshake or a shoulder pat with an aloof smile. Stepping into a mall lift will be a mental challenge for many. Mall managers would have to ensure that such fears do not persist for long by constantly making health and hygiene assurances. Consumer behaviour must be engineered to tilt toward the old familiar as soon as possible.

**According to a survey - “The consumer and COVID-19: Global consumer sentiment research in the consumer products and retail industry”- done by Capgemini Research Institute**, online shopping will get a boost in India even after the lockdown is lifted.

"With consumers becoming more concerned about health and wellness, they will expect safer in-store and last-mile practices from consumer products and retail (CPR) organizations in a post-pandemic scenario," the survey mentioned adding that organizations that embody a sense of purpose and strong sustainability credentials will see greater consumer engagement.

The report highlighted that Indian consumers' appetite for online shopping will increase from 46% in the current scenario to 64% over next 6-9 months. Over the next few quarters, Indian consumers would decrease their shopping at physical retail stores and over 46% of Indians will shop at physical retail stores compared to 59% of Indian consumers who shopped at physical retail stores before the pandemic, it said.

Retailers that will offer delivery assurance, as well as the assurance of compensation for future cancellations in next 6-9 months, will attract 72% of the consumers. Also, 74% of the Indian consumers will prefer to purchase from retailers offering delivery at flexible timing in next 6-9 months, the survey found. Safety, cleanliness and health will be the key criteria for consumers; 89% of Indian consumers will prefer to shop from retailers that give priority to these points. "75% of Indian consumers will purchase with retailers adopting safety practices in stores and 78% of Indian consumers will prefer to increase usage of digital payments going ahead,"

Above data reveals that there will be change in consumers buying behaviour post lockdown of COVID 19. This study emphasis to find out the change in buying behaviour after lockdown gets over by asking basic questions about spending pattern during COVID 19 lockdown, problems faced while buying commodities during lockdown,

Expected spending pattern after lockdown, Expectations of consumers after lockdown

## Research Methodology

Present study is based on Empirical Research. Present research work is set to study following objectives.

1. To study the consumer buying behavior after COVID 19 Lockdown.
2. To compare the spending pattern before and after COVID 19 lockdown
3. To understand the expectations of consumers after Lockdown.
4. To suggest possible measures to marketers to reach consumers after COVID 19 lockdown

Researcher has distributed questionnaire to the respondents through Google forms. Google form includes information relating to spending pattern during COVID 19 lockdown, problems faced while buying commodities during lockdown, Expected spending pattern after lockdown, Expectations of consumers after lockdown and demographic profile of sample respondents.

The scope of the research was the Maharashtra. Convenient sampling technique was used to draw sample from population. Total sample Size was 208. Samples were collected from different areas of Maharashtra. The data is collected during the Lockdown 4 i.e. from 18/05/2020 to 20/05/2020

Collected data are classified using electronic spread sheet; various statistical tools like Frequency, Percentages, Rank, and correlation are used to analyze the data.

## Data analysis and discussions

**Table 1**

### Demographic profile of respondents

Sr. No.	Profile of Respondents		Frequency	Percentage
1	Gender	Male	170	82
		Female	38	18
2	Age	Less than 30	69	33
		31-45	93	45
		46-60	40	19
		More than 60	6	3
		Agriculture	3	1
3	Occupation	Govt. Service	28	14
		Private Service	119	57
		Business	19	9
		Other	39	19

(Source: Primary Data)

Above table shows demographic profile of respondents. In this study 82% are men and 18% are women. Regarding their age, it has been observed that 45% of respondents are between 31-45 years of age. And only 3% samples are more than 60 years of age. From the above, it becomes apparent that the main consumers in buying are of middle age, a fact that can be explained considering that these people are more active, work and they are

buying

In terms of occupation of respondents, 57% of the respondents are occupied with private service and only 1% respondents are engaged in agricultural activities

**Table 2**

**Role of decision making in buying goods**

Sr. No	Particulars	Frequency	Percentages
1	I am the primary decision maker for the purchase.	105	50%
2	I provide inputs, but decisions are made by others	23	11%
3	I share the responsibility for making this purchase	72	35%
4	I am not involved in the decisions at all	8	4%

(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** Above table shows the distribution of the role of decision making in buying goods. From the above information it is revealed that most of the i.e. 50% respondents are primary decision makers while buying goods. And only 4% respondents are not involved in the decision making of buying goods.

**Table 3**

**Opinion on effect of COVID 19 on Spending Pattern of Respondents:**

Sr. No	Particulars	Frequency	Percentages
1	Yes	164	79
2	No	28	13
3	Don't Know	16	8

(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** From the above table it is found that there is change in spending pattern of 79% respondents due to COVID 19. While only 8% respondents don't know whether their spending pattern changed or not during this pandemic situation.

**Table 4**

**Effect of COVID 19 on Spending Pattern of different categories of goods**

Sr. No	Particulars	Weighted Average	Rank
1	Groceries and Vegetables	76.33	1

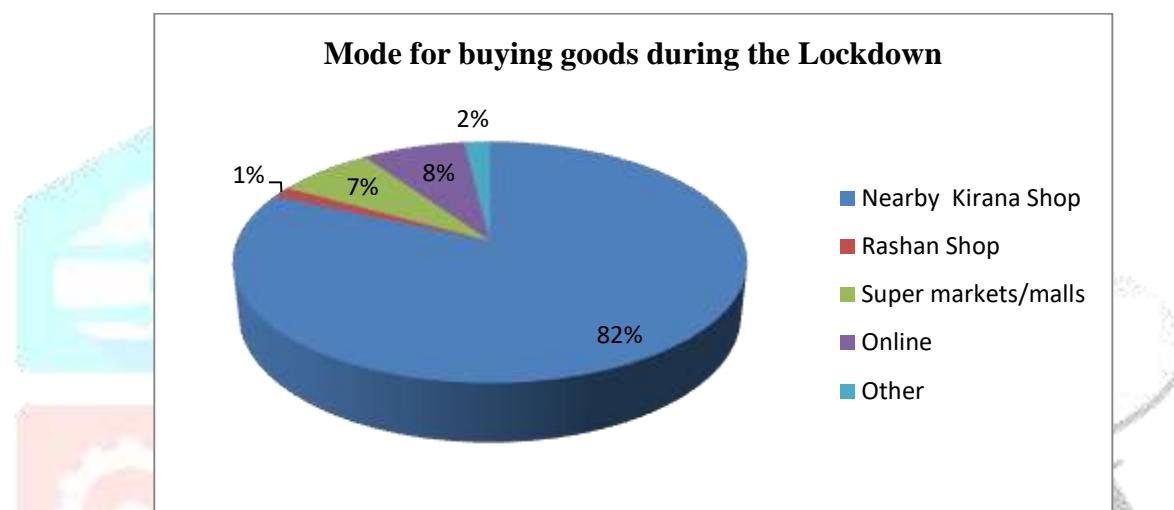
2	Clothing and Footwear	70.00	3
3	Electronics and Home Appliances	69.33	4
4	Entertainment	71.33	2
5	Other	62.17	5

(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** This pandemic situation of COVID 19 highly affected the spending pattern on different categories. During the lockdown period, most of the respondents spend more on Groceries and Vegetables. As compared to this, spending is particularly less on Entertainment, Clothing & Footwear and Electronics & Home Appliances.

### Graph 1

#### Mode for buying goods or commodities during the Lockdown



(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** From the above pie chart, it can be concluded that maximum of respondents i.e. 82% respondents prefer nearby Kirana shop for buying goods during the lockdown. While only 1% respondents prefer to buy goods from Rashan shop.

### Table 5

#### Problem faced by respondents while buying goods during lockdown

Sr. No	Particulars	Weighted average	Rank
1	Non Availability of Goods	69.83	2
2	High Prices	74.33	1
3	Too much Clutter	61.83	3

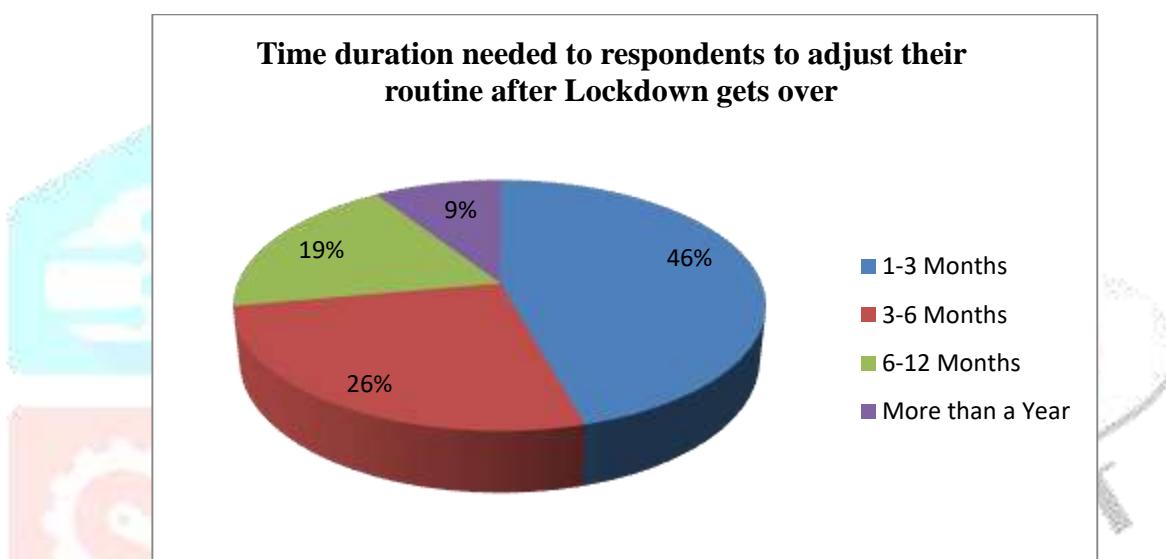
4	Possibility of Forgery	53.83	6
5	No Guarantee	58.00	4
6	Other	54.83	5

(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** Various problems are faced during this lockdown period. High prices, Non availability of goods and too much clutter are the major problems faced by respondents. Very few respondents faced the problems of No Guarantee and Possibility of Forgery. They got last ranks

## Graph 2

### Time duration needed to respondents to adjust their routine after Lockdown gets over

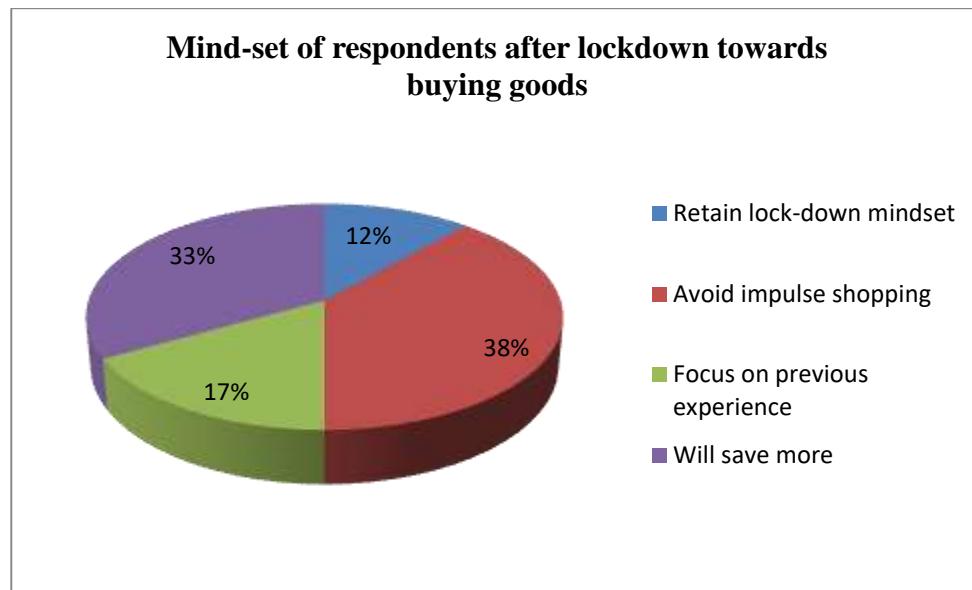


(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** Above pie chart reveals that 46% of respondents need 1 to 3 months to adjust their routine after lockdown. And only 9% of respondents feel that they will need more than a year to get the normal life after lockdown

## Graph 3

### Mind-set of respondents after lockdown towards buying goods



(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** Above pie chart shows Mind-set of respondents after lockdown towards buying goods. 38% of respondents opined that they will avoid impulse shopping in post lockdown period. Only 17% of respondents will prefer buy goods according to their previous experience.

**Table 6**

**Expected spending Pattern on different categories of goods during post COVID-19 lockdown**

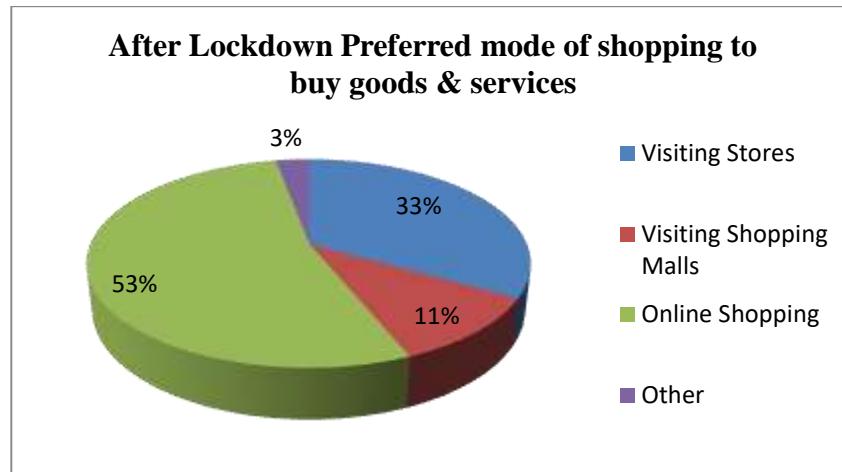
Sr. No	Particulars	Weighted average	Rank
1	Groceries and Vegetables	79.33	1
2	Clothing and Footwear	55.33	3
3	Electronics and Home Appliances	58.33	2
4	Entertainment	48.33	4
5	Other	43.83	5

(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** Spending pattern of everyone will be definitely changed after lockdown gets over. From this survey we get to know that, most of the respondents prefer to spend on the daily needs i.e. groceries and vegetables. Mind-set of the people will be definitely changed while spending money on the electronic items, clothing & footwear and entertainment.

**Graph 4**

**After Lockdown Preferred mode of shopping to buy goods and services**



(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** Every consumer prefers different medium for buying goods. 53% of respondents would like to prefer online shopping for their purchase of goods. 33% of respondents would like to visit nearest stores for their buying goods.

**Table 7**

**Preferred mode for doing payments after lockdown**

Sr. No	Particulars	Percentages	Rank
1	Cash	20	2
2	Debit card/ Credit Card	16	4
3	Paytm/ PhonePe/Google Pay	43	1
4	Mobile/ Net Banking	18	3
5	Through agents	2	5
6	Any other	1	6

(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** From the above table, it can be concluded that people are moving towards digitalisation. Paytm/ PhonePe/Google Pay are more preferred mode for doing payments. Agents are least preferred mode for doing payments

**Table 8**

**Change in behaviour of respondents in post lockdown period**

Sr. No	Particulars	Weighted average	Rank
1	The way I shop	81	4
2	The way I access Healthcare	82	3
3	The way I Socialize	86.83	2
4	Things to stay entertained	78.5	5
5	The way I Save money	89	1

(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** Above table shows change in behaviour due COVID 19 Pandemic. Maximum no of respondents opine that there will be more change in the saving pattern and also the way they socialize. There won't be more change in the way they got entertained.

**Table 9**

#### Expectations of respondents after lockdown period

Sr. No	Particulars	Weighted average	Rank
1	Home delivery of Food	71.50	4
2	Home delivery of Grocery and vegetables	81.33	3
3	Social/ Cultural Gatherings should be banned for 3-6 Months	90.67	2
4	More hygiene and safety while using products	99.00	1

(Source: Primary Data)

**Interpretation:** From the above table it is found that Health and Hygiene got more importance due to COVID 19 Pandemic. Customers expect more hygiene and safety while they are buying or using the products. Also they expect that government should ban Social/ Cultural Gatherings for next 3-6 Months. Therefore, It can be concluded that Social distancing, Hygiene and safety would be more essential things from customer point of view.

#### Hypotheses Testing

**Following hypothesis has been set.**

H0-There is no change in spending pattern during lockdown and Post Lockdown period.

H1- There is no change in spending pattern during lockdown and Post Lockdown period.

To understand the relationship between spending pattern of consumers during lockdown and post lockdown period, above hypothesis has been set. It is tested with the help of Correlation Coefficient.

**Table 10**

Sr. No	Categories of Goods	Correlation Coefficient

1	Groceries and Vegetables	0.328
2	Clothing and Footwear	-0.085
3	Electronics and Home Appliances	0
4	Entertainment	0.036
5	Other	0.020

(Source: Primary Data)

Above table reveals that there is low correlation between buying Groceries and Vegetables. But there is negative relationship between purchasing decisions of clothing and Footwear. There is no relationship between buying of Electronics and home appliances during lockdown and post lockdown period. There is very slight correlation between entertainment and other purchase during lockdown and post lockdown period. It means that consumers will buy only daily necessary commodities between lockdown as well as post lockdown period. There won't be more difference in buying pattern of other commodities except Groceries and Vegetables during and post lockdown period.

Therefore, a Null hypothesis ( $H_0$ ) is accepted. It means there is no more change in spending pattern during lockdown and Post Lockdown period.

### Findings:

1. 50% respondents are primary decision makers while buying goods.
2. Due to COVID 19, 79% of respondents opined that there is change in their spending pattern.
3. This pandemic situation of COVID 19 highly affected the spending pattern on different categories. During the lockdown period, most of the respondents spend more on Groceries and Vegetables. They are very less interested to buy Electronics , Automobiles and Cosmetics
4. For buying goods, 82% respondents prefer nearby Kirana shop during the lockdown. Also while buying goods, ,majority of respondents face the problems of High prices, Non availability of goods and Too much clutter
5. The COVID 19 Pandemic situation has made the consumers anxious, and it 'needs reassurance and stability. Around 46% of respondents need 1 to 3 months to adjust their routine after lockdown.
6. It also observes that, "some aspects of consumer behaviour and marketing response will have changed permanently. 38% of respondents opined that they will avoid impulse shopping and they will save more in post lockdown period.
7. It is found that the definition of essential and non-essential has also changed drastically in a short span of time. Maximum no of respondents would like to spend money on the daily needs i.e. groceries and vegetables than other categories of goods
8. With the actual physical movement being hampered, a major part of the business has shifted to e-commerce. A spike in the number of orders placed with such online stores' points to the fact 83% on of respondents would like to prefer online shopping i.e. e-commerce to fulfil their essential needs.

9. Paytm/ PhonePe/Google Pay are more preferred mode for doing payments. It is also observed that mobile increasingly becomes the instrument of cashless/digital payment in the short and the long run it will build a growing ecosystem of useful services.
10. As the country is waging a war against the much-feared covid-19 by being locked down, spending habits of households have undergone a substantial revamp. With little opportunity to spend, except on basics, many are finding out what actually entails necessities and what are purely discretionary expenditures in the guise of essential ones.
11. It is found that Health and Hygiene got more importance due to COVID 19 Pandemic. Customers expect more hygiene and safety while they are buying or using the products.

### Suggestions:

1. Businesses must focus on the 4Ss: Safety of employees and customers, securing supply of employees, sourcing the right inventory and securing the trust of the shopper.
2. Retailers with an online presence must capitalize on the recovery trends by introducing innovative ways of fulfilling orders - be it establishing an Online-to-Offline (O2O) platform or building sophisticated digital logistics and payment reconciliation capabilities to be in the lead in this race to recovery.
3. Value retention is the biggest challenge for marketers so businesses must look at cost-cutting but not at the risk of losing value. They should focus on winning the consumer confidence and bringing them back. So, marketers must look at cost-cutting but not at the risk of losing value. So, main focus should be on winning the consumer confidence and bringing them back.
4. To improve online visibility at a reduced cost, brands should also capitalize on their existing customer data to drive traffic to their own online website. This involves using robust retail CRM and marketing automation systems to take control of existing customer data.
5. Hygiene products becoming part of lifestyle for the affluent Indians. In India, hygiene as a part of regular lifestyle is largely dependent on the economic status of individuals. Post COVID-19 or even as customers move on from lockdown, It might be seen that regular “lifestyle hygiene” being adopted by a large proportion of the affluent (as well as aspiring ones, esp. “showing arrived”) Indians. But it will take longer to see a mass change in attitude towards making hygiene a “lifestyle” necessity.
6. Marketers will need to improvise and capitalize on online personalization efforts to differentiate themselves from their competitors and online aggregators. Personalized engagement will play an important role especially in selling essential category items (groceries, medicines and personal care/wellness items) as consumers seek increased communication and trust about the quality of these products.

### Way Forward

At a time when the world has come to a halt, with almost everybody trying to stay at home to prevent the spread of Coronavirus, our consumption behavior is undergoing a shift as well. This change, as is currently necessitated by a global pandemic, will continue shaping the economy even after we understand how to effectively manage it.

This era of social distancing will act as the inflection point for certain consumer habits, and subsequently, be the driving force for business organizations to innovate their operation models as per the altered preferences of consumers. A shift in consumer behaviour will make it inevitable for business organizations to modify their operation models and add to their technological advancement, if they wish to survive in the post-pandemic economy.

Research has resulted that there would be a drastic changes in the attitude, behaviour and preferences of consumers and businesses will remodel their products and services accordingly. Consumers will be more concerned about their health and expect greater hygiene from service providers.

The crisis has made companies realise the importance of granular data in making business decisions. As India moves towards a controlled opening of the lockdown, this study will be useful to marketers to adapt strategies based on micro market level demand and sales data, utilise data to create central dashboards for business decisions. At the same time, marketers will need to be agile in the way they respond to changing market dynamics.

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