



IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT

The article provides an overview of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on consumer goods sales and buying behaviour in India. It discusses the fluctuating number of cases in India, the lockdowns implemented by the government to control the spread of the virus and the impact of these measures on consumer goods sales. The article also identifies several changes in consumer behaviour that are likely to be permanent, such as an increase in online shopping, a focus on health and safety and a shift to local sourcing. Additionally, the article highlights the increase in e-commerce and contactless technology, as well as the prioritization of sustainability and wellness by consumers. Finally, the article notes the decrease in consumer sentiment and disposable income due to the pandemic.

COVID-19, also known as coronavirus disease 2019, is a highly contagious respiratory illness caused by the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus. The virus was first identified in Wuhan, China in December 2019, and has since spread globally, leading to a pandemic.

The first case of COVID-19 in India was reported on January 30, 2020, in the state of Kerala. The patient was a student who had recently returned from Wuhan, China, where the outbreak of the virus had originated. The number of cases in India has fluctuated over time, with several waves of infections. The first wave of infections began in early 2020 and peaked in September, with a daily average of around 97,000 cases. The second wave, which began in late February 2021, was more severe, with a daily average of over 400,000 cases in May. The third wave of infections began in early December 2021 and is still ongoing, with daily average cases crossing around 200,000. As of January 14, 2022, India has reported over 11.8 million confirmed cases of COVID-19, making it the third-highest country in the world in terms of total cases, behind only the United States and Brazil. The country has also reported over 157,000 deaths due to the virus.



During the COVID-19 pandemic, the Indian government has implemented several lockdowns and other measures to try to curb the spread of the virus. The first nationwide lockdown was imposed on March 24, 2020 and was initially scheduled to last for 21 days. The lockdown was later extended several times, with some relaxation in between and continued until May 31, 2020. In April 2021, the government announced a second nationwide lockdown, as the number of cases was rising rapidly. This lockdown was initially scheduled to last for 14 days, but was later extended until May 31, 2021. In December 2021, as the third wave of COVID-19 hit India, many states and union territories announced local lockdowns and night curfews to curb the spread of the virus.

The lockdowns implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic have had a significant impact on consumer goods sales in India. During the initial nationwide lockdown in 2020, consumer goods sales were severely impacted as people were not able to leave their homes to purchase goods. This led to a significant decrease in sales of non-essential items such as clothing and electronics. However, there was an increase in demand for essential items such as food and personal care products. During the second nationwide lockdown in 2021 and local lock downs imposed by states in December 2021, the trend was similar, with a decrease in sales of non-essential items and an increase in demand for essential items. Due to restrictions on physical movement, Online shopping and home delivery services saw a spike.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on consumer buying behaviour in India. Some of the changes in behaviour that are likely to be permanent include:

- **Increased online shopping:** The pandemic has accelerated the trend of online shopping in India, as people were unable to leave their homes to purchase goods. Online retailers have seen a significant increase in sales, and consumers are likely to continue to prioritize online shopping even after the pandemic subsides.
- **Health and Safety:** Consumers have become more conscious of health and safety during the pandemic, and are likely to continue to prioritize products that promote hygiene, cleaning, and sanitation. Products such as hand sanitizers, disinfectants, and face masks are expected to remain in demand even after the pandemic subsides.



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- More focus on value and convenience: Consumers have become more cautious about spending in the wake of economic uncertainty, and are likely to prioritize value and convenience when making purchase decisions. Brands and retailers that can demonstrate transparency, reliability, and trustworthiness are likely to be favoured by consumers.
 - Shift to local sourcing: The pandemic has led to a shift towards more locally sourced products, as consumers have become more aware of the importance of supporting local businesses. This trend is expected to continue even after the pandemic subsides.
 - Home office equipment and home entertainment: The pandemic has led to an increase in demand for home office equipment, home entertainment, and other products that support remote working and learning. This trend is likely to continue as more people continue to work from home even after the pandemic subsides.
 - Digital payment methods: With the pandemic, people have become more accustomed to using digital payment methods for their transactions, this shift is likely to continue even after the pandemic subsides as it provides greater convenience and security.
 - Prioritization of health and wellness: The pandemic has led to an increased awareness of the importance of health and wellness, and consumers are expected to prioritize products that promote physical and mental well-being, such as supplements, health foods, and fitness equipment.
 - Increase in E-commerce: The pandemic has led to an increase in e-commerce, especially for small and medium businesses. Consumers have become more comfortable buying products online and expect more options, competitive prices, and faster delivery times.
 - Increase in demand for sustainable products: The pandemic has led to an increased awareness of the impact of human activities on the environment, consumers are expected to prioritize products that are eco-friendly and sustainable, such as recycled or biodegradable products.
 - Increase in contactless technology: The pandemic has led to an increase in the use of contactless technology, such as mobile payments and self-checkout, as a way to reduce person-to-person contact. This trend is expected to continue even after the pandemic subsides, as it provides greater convenience and safety.
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Overall, the lockdowns have also led to a decrease in consumer sentiment and a reduction in disposable income, as many people have lost their jobs or had their incomes reduced. This has led to a more cautious approach to spending among consumers, with many people focusing on purchasing essential items rather than non-essential items. The lockdowns have had a negative impact on the sales of consumer goods in India, with many retailers and manufacturers facing significant revenue losses. However, essential goods and online sales have seen a boost.

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