

The new trends of consumer behavior in light of the digital marketing

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Abstract:

This research paper aims to study the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior in light of This Covid 19 pandemic, after it has become an effective means of communication between companies and Consumers .

The study has concluded that the Covid 19 pandemic has caused a radical change in the digital world of each of the companies, this by adapting them to a new way of doing business, Which directly affected consumer behavior. The study also concluded that new habits formed now will endure beyond this crisis, permanently changing what we value, how and where we shop, and how we live and work.

Key Words: Digital marketing, Consumer behavior, Consumption, Shopping habits, COVID-19.

JEL Classification: M11, D1, E21.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Online shopping has revolutionized the marketing strategies of many sellers in recent decades as consumers have grown accustomed to online purchasing and the door-step-delivery of products from anywhere in the world . With the eruption of COVID-19, this shift in buyer behavior has greatly accelerated, prompting businesses to reach even their most loyal brick-and-mortar consumers in the digital space. This massive challenge is unprecedented and has forced organizations to formulate novel solutions to adapt to the new normal.

On the other hand, The COVID-19 pandemic have affected consumer behavior worldwide, impacting local and global economies. Studies have shown that consumer behavior has changed in response to the pandemic. Thus, many companies have innovated to adapt to the new circumstances. Notably, technology has become more influential in the daily lives of consumers and businesses. And this is clearly shown through consumers' online-shopping rate increased alongside the rise in global COVID-19 cases. Which may indicate that there is a correlation.

From what precede w'll try to answering the following main question:

How does digital marketing affect consumer behavior in light of the COVID 19 pandemic?

In order to respond this problematic, we will divide this study to the following axes:

- ✓ Consumer behaviour.
- ✓ Digital marketing.
- ✓ Digital marketing and consumer behavior.
- ✓ The impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior in light of the COVID 19 pandemic.

2. Consumer behaviour

2.1 Definition of consumer behavior

In 1899, Thorstein Veblen talked about consumerism and consumption. In Initial stage he only talked about consumerism. After that, the first text book were written in 1960's .It consists of growth of consumerism and consumer Legislation. Consumer behaviour is an integral part of human behavior. We cannot separate from it. Consumer behavior is reflected from awareness about products post purchase evaluation. This evaluation indicate whether the consumer satisfaction or not satisfaction from purchase. consumer behavior is a complex, dynamic, multidimensional process and all marketing decisions are based on the assumptions about consumer behavior. consumer behavior includes

communicating, Purchasing, and consuming, intracting. Consumer behavior towards definitions we mention the most important ones:

- Walters defines consumer behaviour as " ...the process whereby individuals decide whether, what, when, where, how, and from whom to purchase goods and services". (Wayne, Deborah, & other)
- Mowen defined consumer behaviour as "...the study of the buying units and the exchange processes involved in acquiring, consuming, and disposing of goods, services, experiences, and ideas". This definition focuses on buying units in an attempt to include not only the individual but also groups that purchase products or services.
- Schiffman & Kanuk define consumer behaviour as "The behavior that consumers display in searching for, purchasing, using, evaluating, and disposing of products, services, and ideas.

Through the previous definitions it can be said that consumer behavior it represents the study of individuals and the activities that take place to satisfy their realized needs. That satisfaction comes from the processes used in selecting, securing, and using products or services when the benefits received from those processes meet or exceed consumers' expectations.

2.2 Importance of Consumer Behavior

Consumer behavior is extremely important, through we can: (Michael R, Canada)

- Understand buying behavior of consumer.
- Create and retain customers through online stores.
- Understand the factors influencing consumer buying behaviour.
- Understand consumer decision to dispose a product or services.
- Help marketers to sale of product and create focused marketing.

Consumer is the king, Consumers do not always act or react as the theory suggest. Consumers preferences are changing and become highly diversified. Consumers dislike identical product and prefer different products. segmenting the market to cater the special needs of consumers. Rapid introduction of new product with technological advancement. To sell the products that might not sell easily.

2.3 Principles of Consumer Behavior

The basic principles of consumer behavior are: (Khaled, 2010)

- **Consumer is sovereign Profit marketing:** The consumer behaviour is being studied for nearly half a century to take advantage in market-ing of products and services which are largely to earn profits but there are few areas discussed latter which are providing social services. The consumer behaviour is basically studied to optimize profits by taking full advantage of market situation after studying the consumer behaviour and this is the main purpose of the study. The segmentation of market, advertisement strategy,

sales promotion schemes, introduction of new products, variations in existing ones, producing different products for different regions, classes, price variation, quality variation all are done based on study of consumer behaviour. Whenever any new product or variation of existing one is introduced through innovation, research is conducted to find out consumer response to a new product.

- **Consumer is global Non Profit Marketing:** There are many economic activities which are undertaken for improving economic and social welfare but not for earning profits. However, in these areas also like telecommunication, health, public education, social welfare schemes also study of consumer behaviour plays very important role to improve the quality of service and help in modifications of policies.

- **Consumers are difficult Strategic marketing:** The main purpose of study of consumer behaviour is to know the behaviour of consumer and apply it for strategic marketing. The marketer has to decide for a particular product whether same strategy will suit for the entire market or different strategies will have to be used for different markets. In a country of the size and distance those companies have succeeded who have adopted the strategy according to the type of market. For example, in India when detergent (washing powder) was introduced it had no market in rural India and most of urban households consumers were accustomed to use washing bar and they were not owning washing machines to use washing powder.

2.4 Dimensions in Consumer behavior

Consumer behavior has four basic dimensions, which are:

- **Psychology:** It is deals with the study of mind and behavior . It helps in understanding individuals and groups by establishing general principles and researching specific cases. Psychology play a vital role in understanding how consumers behave while making a purchase.

- **Social psychology:** It is a combination of sociology and psychology .It explain how on individual operates a group. Group dynamic play an important role in purchase decision, opinion of peers, reference groups, the families , opinion leader. Influence individual in their behavior.

- **Sociology:** It is the study of groups when individuals form groups their action are some times relating different from the action of those individual.

- **Cultural Anthropology:** It is the study of human being in society. It explore the development of central belief, value and customs.

3. Digital marketing

3.1 Definition of Digital Marketing

Digital marketing has developed strongly since the 1990s and 2000s it has changed the way brands and businesses utilize technology and digital communication tools for their marketing. Digital marketing campaigns are becoming more widespread as well as efficient, as digital platforms are increasingly incorporated into marketing plans and consumers' everyday life, and as people use digital devices instead of going to physical shops. Hence digital marketing can be defined as:

- Digital marketing is an umbrella term for the marketing of products or services using digital technologies, mainly on the Internet, but also including mobile phones, display advertising, and any other digital medium.
- Digital marketing is in fact a modern marketing communication tool to use different electronic devices and technologies to carry marketing messages to consumers more effectively and efficiently. Businesses leverage digital channels such as Google search, social media, email, and their websites to connect with their current and prospective customers. (Ahmad)
- Digital marketing as the use of digital technology to create integrated, targeted and measurable communication that helps to acquire and retain customers in building deeper relationships with them.

Through previous definitions it can be said that Digital marketing is the use of technologies to help marketing activities in order to improve customer knowledge by matching their needs.

3.2 Various elements of digital marketing

There are various elements by which digital marketing is formed. All forms operate through electronic devices. The most important elements of digital marketing are given below: (Afrina, Sadia, & Kaniz)

- **Online advertising:** Online advertising is a very important part of digital marketing. It is also called internet advertising through which company can deliver the message about the products or services. Internet-based advertising provides the content and ads that best matches to consumer interests. Publishers put about their products or services on their websites so that consumers or users get free information. Advertisers should place more effective and relevant ads online. Through online advertising, company well controls its budget and it has full control on time.
- **Email Marketing:** When message about the products or services is sent through email to the existing or potential consumer, it is defined as email marketing. Direct digital marketing is used to send ads, to build brand and customer loyalty, to build customer trust and to make brand awareness. Company can promote its products and services by

using this element of digital marketing easily. It is relatively low cost comparing to advertising or other forms of media exposure. Company can bring complete attention of the customer by creating attractive mix of graphics, text and links on the products and services.

- **Social Media:** Today, social media marketing is one of the most important digital marketing channels. It is a computer-based tool that allows people to create, exchange ideas, information and pictures about the company's product or services. According to Nielsen, internet users continue to spend more time with social media sites than any other type. Social media marketing networks include Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and Google+. Through Facebook, company can promote events concerning product and services, run promotions that comply with the Facebook guidelines and explore new opportunities. Through Twitter, company can increase the awareness and visibility of their brand. It is the best tool for the promotion of company's products and services. In LinkedIn, professionals write their profile and share information with others. Company can develop their profile in LinkedIn so that the professionals can view and can get more information about the company's product and services. Google+ is also social media network that is more effective than other social media like Facebook, Twitter. It is not only simple social media network but also it is an authorship tool that links web-content directly with its owner.

- **Text Messaging:** It is a way to send information about the products and services from cellular and smart phone devices. By using phone devices, company can send information in the form of text (SMS), pictures, video or audio (MMS). Marketing through cellphone SMS (Short Message Service) became increasingly popular in the early 2000s in Europe and some parts of Asia. One can send order confirmations, shipping alerts using text message. Using SMS for campaigns get faster and more substantial results. Under this technique, companies can send marketing messages to their customers in real-time, any time and can be confident that the message will be seen. Company can create a questionnaire and obtain valuable customer feedback essential to develop their products or services in future.

3.3 Advantages digital marketing brings to customers

With rapid technological developments, digital marketing has changed customers buying behavior. It has brought various advantages to the consumers as given below: (Fawad Khan, The Importance of digital marketing: An Exploratory study To find the perception and effectiveness of digital marketing and effectiveness of digital marketing amongst the marketing professional in Pakistan,, 2013)

- **Stay updated with products or services,** Digital marketing technologies allow the consumers to stay with the company information updated. Nowadays a lot of consumer

can access internet any place anytime and companies are continuously updating information about their products or services.

-Clear information about the products or services Through digital marketing, consumers get clear information about the products or services. There is a little chance of misinterpretation of the information taken from sales person in a retail store. However, Internet provides comprehensive product information which customers can rely on and make purchase decision.

- Easy comparison with others, Since many companies are trying to promote their products or services using digital marketing, it is becoming the greatest advantage for the customer in terms that customers can make comparison among products or services by different suppliers in cost and time friendly way. Customers don't need to visit a number of different retail outlets in order to gain knowledge about the products or services.

- 24/7 Shopping, Since internet is available all day long, there is no time restriction for when customer wants to buy a product online.

- Share content of the products or services, Digital marketing gives viewers a chance to share the content of the product or services to others. Using digital media, one can easily transfer and get information about the characteristics of the product or services to others.

- Apparent Pricing, Company shows the prices of products or services through digital marketing channel and this makes prices very clear and transparent for the customers. Company may regularly changes the prices or gives special offers on their products or services and customers are always in advantages by getting informed instantly by just looking at any one mean of digital marketing.

- Enables instant purchase, With traditional marketing, customers first watch the advertisement and then find relevant physical store to purchase the products or services. However, with digital marketing, customers can purchase the products or services instantly.

4. Digital marketing and consumer behavior

Online shopping has become one of the daily activities of individuals, and a major factor that influences their consumption habits, both in a positive and negative way. (وآخرون & العبد , 2020)

Digitisation has definitely gone on to push marketers across the globe to transform the marketing game. Not just that, the shift in marketing technologies has even evolved consumer behaviour and their decision making abilities. In this context The digital marketing use several ways in order to alter consumer behaviour, among them: (agency, 2020)

- Digital marketing and brand Awareness:

Can be defined as level of consumer consciousness of company's product or service. In brand awareness there are few key of consideration which are human behavior, advertising management, brand management and strategy development. Which make consumer ability to proceed with purchase the product or service of the company.

When competition in an industry is high, brand awareness can be one of a business's greatest assets, here we can see the effect of the digital marketing on brand awareness.

Brand awareness has a neutral effect on consumers. An advertisement's first job is to let people know that your product or service is available to them. People who view advertisements find out about your products similarly to how they find out about current events in the news. At this stage, consumers go from not knowing that your business exists to gaining awareness of your brand in the case of a future purchase.

- Ability to research and experiment:

Modern-day consumers have become exceptionally good researchers when it comes to making a purchasing decision. They are gaining more insight and awareness as technology empowers them with a critical approach to making decisions online.

They are being exposed to a magnitude of content as brands try to market their products on the Internet. This has helped facilitate the purchasing process for consumers, wherein they are now able to research and compare products online before making a final decision on what to buy.

The amount of information available on the Internet has even allowed them to experiment with different brands and come to a conclusion. While they have allowed brands to influence their purchasing decisions, the same technology as empowered them to a huge extent.

Digital marketing has helped customers make the most of the transparent relationship brands are willing to have with them, in addition to providing them with better understanding of certain services and products.

- Inconsistent customer loyalty:

However, digital marketing has also made it very difficult for consumers to stay loyal to a particular brand. Before the digital marketing revolution, consumers were always partial to a brand of their choice. They often preferred to stick to familiar products and brands.

This was due to the fact that they were not exposed to a large range of products and services like they are today. Nowadays, customers are looking forward to products that provide them with better value for the same amount of money.

When it comes to customer loyalty, we can say that digital marketing did not change consumer behaviour. It only highlighted it. This has made brands compete more fiercely, which only helped customers get better services at lower costs.

- Impulsive buying behaviour:

Digital marketing has successfully augmented the impulse buying phenomena. An impulse buying decision is essentially made directly before making the actual purchase. In other words, impulsive buying is a spontaneous decision that is made in a spur of the moment, when generally, customers usually pre-plan their purchases and pre-choose the products that they wish to buy.

This common phenomena is used by digital marketers to positively steer consumer behaviour. Through advertising online, brands highlight attractive deals, discounts, and offers that customers are happy to explore.

Brands use social media platforms and third party websites to consistently promote their featured deals, which in turn affects consumer behaviour.

5. The impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior in light of the COVID 19 pandemic

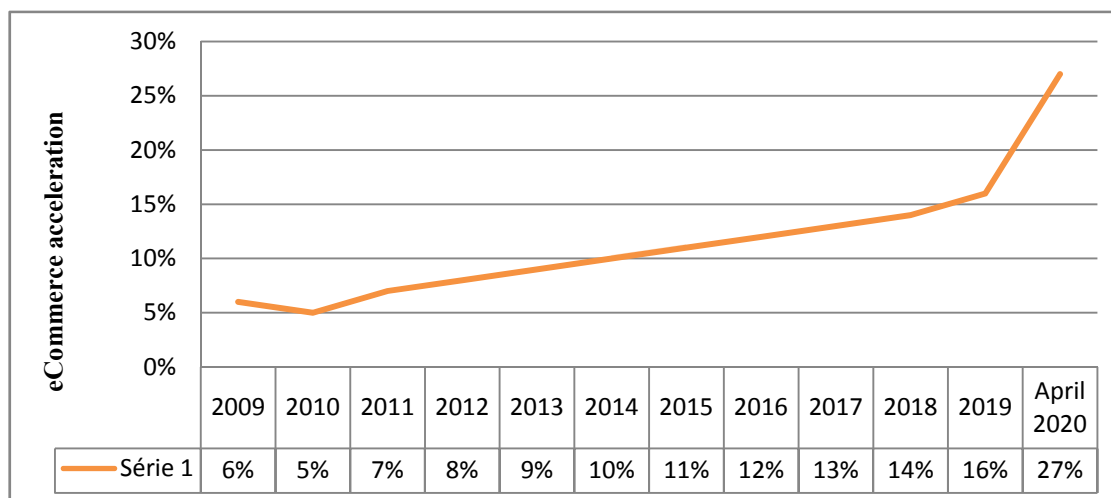
5.1 The impact of Covid 19 pandemic on the online shopping and corporation's marketing policies

Restrictive lockdown rules and social-distancing practices have severely disrupted consumer behavior worldwide. As a result, various types of businesses have been forced to find new ways to reach homebound consumers and to re-penetrate their markets. As consumers embrace new digital technologies in their sequestered lifestyles, their daily routines and habits are transforming the space of online shopping. (Bayad) The investigation of established drivers of online purchase behavior is of great relevance during the COVID-19 pandemic, as companies must anticipate consumer behavior during this global crisis to maintain a competitive edge. (Julia & Others, 2020)

Digital Sales Are Becoming More Active than ever, as non-essential companies are shutting doors to stop the spread of Covid-19. This mean that both retailers and consumers had to turn to digital reality overnight. In this context digital revenues in Q1 2020 are 18 percent higher than in Q1 2019. (Khaled & Ismail, 2020)

The following table show that e-commerce has kown a huge acceleration during the pandemic outbreak, as a result of the massive using digital marketing from companies and online shopping from consumers.

Fig.1. Us E commerce penetration as % of retail sales during 2009 to 2020



Source : Accenture COVID-19 Consumer Pulse Research. How is COVID-19 changing the retail consumer?, August 2020, P: 19

E commerce has known a huge acceleration in world wide after the outbreak of Corona virus, it has seen 10 years of growth in a matter of months , especially in the developed countries, when people can shopping ,buying and paying on line withe their digital cards. From the previous figure we can see that e commerce in US has grown by 10 % during one decade from 2009 to 2019, while it has grown in the same proportion (11%) during only 09 months, From 2019 to April 2020, when it was representing just 16% in 2019 and made a breakthrough by 2020 to reach the proportion of 27%.

5.2 The new trends of consumer's shopping behavior in light of the COVID 19 pandemic

The outbreak has pushed consumers out of their normal routines. Consumers are adapting new habits and behaviors that many anticipate will continue in the long term. Consumer priorities have become centered on the most basic needs, sending demand for hygiene, cleaning and staples products soaring, while non-essential categories slump. The factors that influence brand decisions are also changing as a "buy local" trend accelerates. Digital commerce has also seen a boost as new consumers migrate online for grocery shopping – a rise that is likely to be sustained post-outbreak.

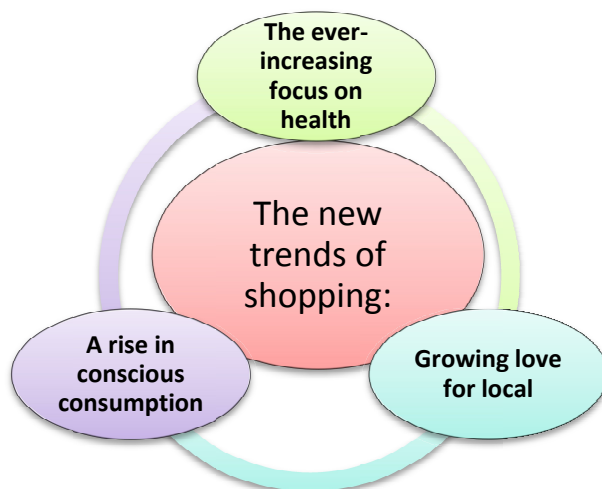
In times like these, our need for the basic necessities of life takes precedence. It comes as no surprise that personal health is the top priority, followed by the health of friends and family. Food and medical security, financial security and personal safety were other leading priorities.

The virus has accelerated three long-term trends: (COVID-19: How consumer behavior will be changed, 2020)

- The ever-increasing focus on health.
- A rise in conscious consumption.

- Growing love for local.

Fig.2. The new trends of consumer behavior in shopping



Source: Prepared by researchers by relying on: COVID-19: How consumer behavior will be changed, Op. Cit

- **The ever-increasing focus on health :**

Brands should heed this change and make it a priority to support healthy lifestyles for consumers, shoppers and employees. Having a “health strategy” will be a strategic differentiator for the foreseeable future.

- **A rise in conscious consumption :**

Consumers are more mindful of what they’re buying. They are striving to limit food waste, shop more cost consciously and buy more sustainable options. Brands will need to make this a key part of their offer .

- **Growing love for local :**

The desire to shop local is reflected in both the products consumer buy and the way they shop. Brands will need to explore ways to connect locally , be it through highlighting local provenance, customizing for local needs or engaging in locally relevant ways.

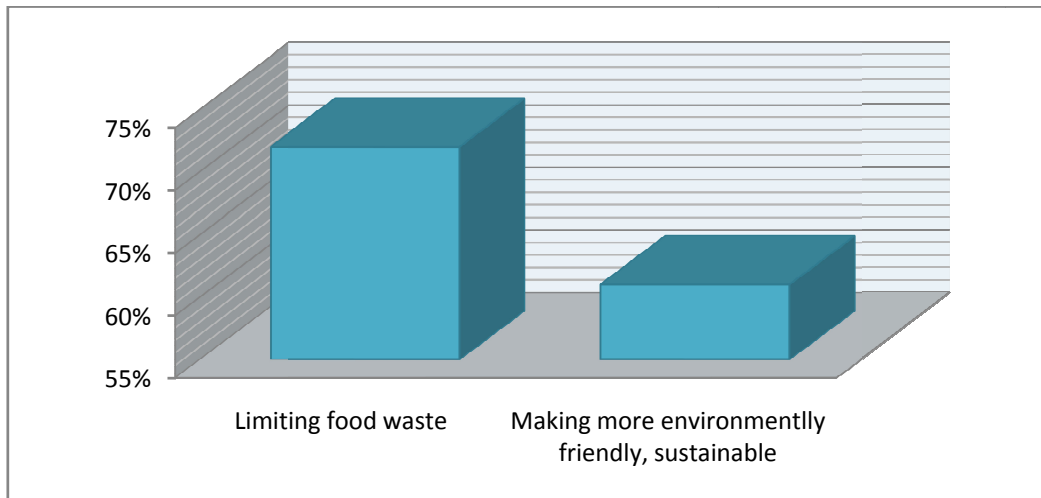
5.3 The impact of digital marketing on consumer's shopping behavior in light of Covid 19 pandemic

What consumers are buying and how they are shopping has changed dramatically as a result of digital marketing and the pandemic, and these new habits are continuing to play out, long after the easing of lockdowns, especially after the dramatic rise in the adoption of ecommerce.

In many cases, consumers have used this life pause to reflect on their own consumption. They are striving to shop locally (whether that is to support neighbourhood stores, national products, or as a quest for authentic and artisan products), limit food waste,

shop more sustainably, and consider costs. (Accenture COVID-19 Consumer Pulse Research, How is COVID-19 changing the retail consumer?, 2020)

Fig.3. Changing shopping habits in the UK during the pandemic

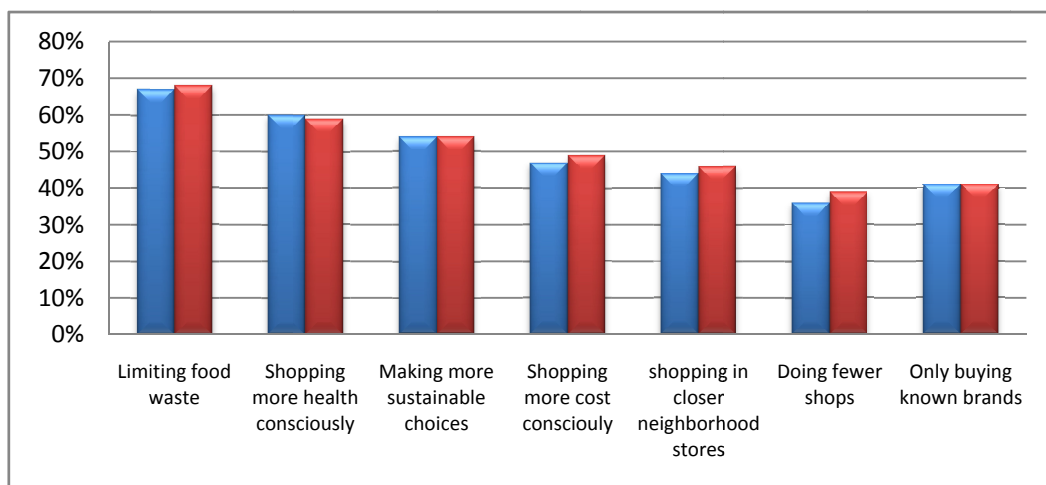


Source : Accenture COVID-19 Consumer Pulse Research, How is COVID-19 changing the retail consumer?, August 2020, P: 19

We can see from the precede figure that the consumer has become more thoughtful and wiser about what his consumption ,This is evident by taking care of his personal budget escepecially in crise's time. in addition to that it can be seen also that consumers are becoming more aware of sustainable development and the impacts of their consumption on nature.

Consumers expect their shopping habits to change permanently, Limiting food waste and shopping more health conscious are the top two priorities for consumers. like we can see in the next figure:

Fig.4. Consumers expect their shopping habits to change



Source: Accenture COVID-19 Consumer Research, conducted March 19–25 and April 2–6

It seems clear from the previous figure that consumers have changed their behaviors and habits about shopping and consumptions, Since it can be seen that the consumer had adopted a new concepts permanently about:

- ✓ Limiting food waste.
- ✓ Shopping more health consciously.
- ✓ Making more sustainable choices.
- ✓ shopping in closer neighborhood stores.
- ✓ Doing fewer shops.
- ✓ Only buying known brands.

5.4 COVID-19 Pandemic and its affects on eating habits

The effects of the Corona pandemic were not limited to world economic or big cooperation in the world, or to marketing strategies, or to consume's shopping behavior... but also included the habits inside houses, like eating habits, relationships between famely members....

research has shown that approximately 90% of a representative sample of 2000 adults surveyed in the United Kingdom have changed their cooking and eating habits since the imposition of the national lockdown on 16 March 2020. These changes included spending more time cooking with family or neighbours (47%); enjoying cooking at home (44%); and “sharing” virtual meals over Zoom, Skype, Facetime, etc. (40%). Moreover, the people interviewed planned to continue with their new shopping and cooking habits after lockdown. These new-found eating habits include improved meal planning using up cupboard staples, freezing food/meals, and making greater use of leftovers .

This research also confirmed that Shortages and difficulties in locating staple food items compelled many to experiment with new recipes (22%). (Valeria & others, 2020) Finally, it is worth noting there are signs that these new behaviours will continue when the restrictions have been substantially lifted, albeit to a lesser extent.

Table 1. Shopping and cooking habits in UK during and after the COVID-19 lockdown (%)

Habits	Currently Doing	Planning to Continue
Shopping less frequently	44	25
Planning meals more carefully	35	30
Consuming food left in the cupboard for a long time	33	25
Using the freezer more	30	20

Buying foods with a longer shelf life	24	17
Eating more leftovers	23	19
Cooking new dishes	22	17
Freezing new dishes	18	13
Shopping online more	16	10
Batch cooking	16	12
Growing food for the first time	5	4
Composting for the first time	4	3

Source: Valeria Borsellino and others, COVID-19 Drives Consumer Behaviour and Agro-Food Markets towards Healthier and More Sustainable Patterns, Sustainability, Issue12, 12 October 2020, P: 06

The precede table show that approximately 16% to 44% of the representative sample of 2000 adults surveyed in the United Kingdom have changed their cooking and eating habits since the imposition of the national lock down Especially with regard to Shopping less frequently, Planning meals more carefully, Using the freezer more Consuming food left in the cupboard for a long time. And approximately 12% to 25% of the representative sample intend to continue with the new habits even after the crisis.

6. Conclusion

Throughout this research we have analyzed some ways digital marketing has changed how customers look at brands in light of corona pendimic. The study has concluded that COVID-19 has already caused widespread damage to the global economy, and people have changed their daily activities and economic habits, forcing companies to adapt and reassess their strategies. During the Corona pandemic, we’ve observed that the influence has particularly been on the consumer’s behavior, especially towards the marketing mix elements (product, price, advertising, and distribution). This can be clarified through the following:

- The pandemic reflection on the consumer’s behaviour general trend: the consumer’s awareness has been increased, and his consuming habit has been changed. His interests have also shifted towards the necessary products, the places, and the way of presenting them. Furthermore, his preference towards a good, and its alternates, has been changed to become more rationale.
- Responding at the level of the consumer’s behaviour: here, we intend the consumer’s trend towards the marketing mix elements:
- The trend towards the product: after the crisis subsidence, the consumer’s behaviour is to focus on buying the necessary goods rather than the unnecessary ones. If it doesn’t become a permanent behaviour, it will at least be continuous for a long time. He also

tends to the bulk purchase, with huge quantities, and storing the necessary healthy food goods. He has also acquired the habit of the high expenditure on cleaning, sanitizing tools, and the personal care; he spends, more than his usual budget, on these products.

- The trend towards the price: the consumer has acquired the preference of achieving the best fulfilment with the lowest price. Despite the fact that the price is important in determining demand and the required quantity, this influence remains limited, since he pays more for the sake of getting the important goods with the required safe quality. So, the fact that the expensive goods are the best is engraved in mind. Thus, the consumer pays more for buying necessary goods with better quality.

- The trend towards advertisement: the consumer becomes wiser in terms of identifying products and their characteristics. He also becomes less attracted towards advertisement free gifts. He thinks deeply before buying an unnecessary good. The buying behaviour relies on the necessary products making a special importance for the consumer, especially when predicting the financial resources shortage. When watching the commercial advertisement, the consumer thinks deeply, and he will be more objective and cautious when responding.

- The trend towards the marketing place: the Covid-19 crisis has created a more aware consumer about the electronic marketing. He also becomes bolder and more trusting buying through the internet. So, he will always look for new markets and products. Thus, the electronic marketing will become the consumer's way of living, even after the crisis subsidence. Therefore, the grocery becomes less important. In the traditional buying, the consumer spends more on shopping and delivery services, so he prefers the nearby stores. Thus, preferring the farther places is linked to the extent of feeling risk comparing to the profit and prices difference.

Finally, the consumer has learnt several lessons during this pandemic affecting his way of living and thinking. However, the most important issue is that the Corona pandemic has created new consumers with various needs and trends. So, the consumer has been more aware of having various options, which has put companies in facing new challenges, whether at the level of the product characteristics, or the way of its presenting.

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