

## Consumers in 2021: An Indian Perspective

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**Abstract:** Covid-19 has made the life very miserable for the past one year and still we are not relieved from the clutches of this pandemic disease. All the sectors whether manufacturing or service sector, profit oriented organisations or non-profit organisations, business or education all are affected very badly that; recovery may take some extended time period even some years may take. Lock down has fully shattered all the business and stage by stage unlocking has made business and consumers to come back to their normal life. But even though customers and business is slowly regaining normality, it will be a new normality. The pandemic situation has changed the perceptions, way of life, habits, culture, way of doing business etc.; which shaped new consumer behaviour and new insights to the business world.

**Key words:** Consumer behaviour during Covid-19- Consumer behaviour under new normality-Marketing strategies needed to cope up with the new normalities- Industry Expectations.

### Consumer Behaviour during Covid-19

**1. Complete Digitalisation:** Even though India has been promoting Digitalisation of Financial transactions, Government departments, wide spread of education through digitalised mode etc. even before the outbreak of Covid-19, it had got slow growth. But Covid-19; irrespective of youth or old, education field or business field; every person is prompted to go for digital transactions.

**2. More leisure time:** The Liberalisation, Globalisation and privatisation has made the competition so fierce that; persons had to run round the clock. But Covid-19 and the lock down give enough leisure time to the consumers to spend more time on entertainment, cooking, agriculture, play with children etc.

**3. Choosier:** The leisure time made the consumers to become choosier. They got enough time to collect maximum information about the different products or services or about the organisations to compare. So consumers became choosier.

**4. Habit of Thrift:** As the lock down created un-employment or reduced salary/wages; consumers began the habit of thrift. They began to prioritise in purchasing the products or services. They spend more on necessities than luxuries.

**5. Panic Purchasing:** During lockdown Consumers made panic purchasing of products or services in the fear of scarcity.

**6. Health Consciousness:** Good immunity was a basic necessity to avoid corona infection. So more people became more Health consciousness so that they gone for exercises and immunity increasing food habits, return to natural products etc

**7. Reduced Medical Expenditure:** During Covid- 19 period, people went hospitals or visited doctors only for acute problems. People began to avoid visiting hospitals for silly reasons which helped them to reduce medical expenses.

**8. Less travel:** During Covid-19 most of the tourist places were fully or partially locked. So people remained in the houses. Even most of the organisations began to provide work from home facilities.

**9. No direct relationship:** As most of the consumers remained in the houses, customers had to depend more on chatbots, websites or social medias or online platforms than visiting the shops or branches or offices

All this paved a way to reshape or change the consumer behaviour, which organisations has to concentrate in 2021. Even though customers are coming back to their normal life, it will be a new normality. If the organisations fail to understand or predict and device the strategies based on the new normality, organisations cannot survive.

### Consumer Purchasing Behaviour in 2021

**1. Incremental Purchasing:** 2021 will saw an incremental purchasing behaviour from the part of customers. Customers are still not came out of financial shock posed by pandemic disease. Soorganisations has to expect only incremental purchasing rather than a sudden aggressive purchasing.

- 2. Demand for convenience and luxury goods:** Due to pandemic situation, majority of the customers postponed their purchase of non-essential goods and luxury goods. So in 2021, there may be a hype in the non-essential and luxury goods market.
- 3. More celebrations:** Festivals, celebrations like birthday, marriage, house warming etc. has once again begun. So 2021 will witness more shopping habit from Customers
- 4. More Natural/Environment friendly products:** The pandemic situation has once again made customers to re-think and go for more natural products. There arose more usage of eco-friendly or environment friendly or Natural products
- 5. More Travel:** People were locked for quite long time in their own houses. People will show more tendency to travel more in order to enjoy the freedom.

### **Marketing Strategies to be adopted**

- 1. Create more direct relationship:** customers have developed the habit of using digital ways to purchase products or avail services. To have a better customer relationship, a personal touch or direct contact with customers are necessary. So in order to regain good customer relationship, organisations has to go for maximum avenues where direct relationship with customers can be possible or at least organisations has to manage the communication that customers don't feel that they are not chatting with machines.
- 2. Customer retention is more important:** As the Medias are cluttered with digital communications to reach digital customers; organizations has to heavily invest on creating and retain loyal customers. For that more customisation and personalisation will be needed.
- 3. Build Trust:** Developing trust in the minds of customers is very important to make the customer loyal and to retain them. After acute pandemic situation, customers now only begin to shop freely (not in the fullest capacity), now organizations has to adopt strategies that customers will feel that organisations are with the customers to overcome the situation.
- 4. Fast, responsive and authentic communication:** Customers are in the digital world, not only everything is on the fingertip, but also in fast and more responsive. Customers expect more responsiveness to their query at the same time authentic also.
- 5. More Customisation/Personalisation:** Now customers have collected more data about the products and organisations. so that they will be more choosy and demanding. So organisations have to concentrate more on customised products or provide personalised services.
- 6. Concentrate more on social media/Micro influencers:** As the majority of customers are now availing digital platforms, organisations should give more importance to social media and micro influencers to reach customers.
- 7. Data Analytics/ insights:** Customers made the habit of using digital devices for their purchasing. So an organisation has now more and more data about the customers from various digital platforms. Organisations has to make insights about the consumer behaviour in order to target them.
- 8. Reduce Budget Anxieties:** Due to reduced wages and un-employment, customers will be in an anxiety about how to accommodate their shopping in budget. So organisations have to give maximum reduction in price or discounts or free coupons, credit facilities etc.

**Industry Expectations:** Expectations are about the future. They lead the organisations with enthusiasm, energy and optimism.

- 1. Health care Industry:** The increased consciousness of the customers about the importance of good physical health will create more demand for fitness and health care products/services. The Demand for Drugs and medicines, Health care facility providers like Hospitals, Medical Equipment Manufacturers, Laboratories and clinics etc. will make advantage of it.
- 2. Medical Insurance:** Frequent visit of hospitals and high medical expenses in the recent years has pushed up the sales of Medical Insurance. Recently some of the Insurance companies included Covid-19 also in the Medical Insurance Coverage, which may further increase the demand for Medical Insurance.
- 3. Counselling Centres:** Staying in the house for long time made the people so frustrated that, so many people may have felt depression. As per the health organisations, there may arise need of more number of counselling centres and counsellors to reduce the impact of post covid-19 syndrome.
- 4. Tourism:** As the part of rejuvenating tourism industry most of the tourist places has opened. So even though foreign tourists may not come, number of home country tourists may increase.

5. **Fitness Products:** Covid-19 made the people rethink about the fitness to escape from the diseases. In 2021, there may be more demand for the product or services to improve the body fitness while sitting in the home itself.
6. **Auto mobile industry:** India will be the third largest auto market in the world by 2021. The focus is shifting to Electric Vehicles from the convention fuel based vehicles.
7. **Banking Sector and related services:** Banking services in Rural Area expected to increase. The increase in disposable income will increase the need of Banking and related services.
8. **Consumer Durables:** Consumer Durable Industries has shown an increase in Index in 2021. Consumer electronics is supposed to have more demand in 2021.
9. **FMCG sector:** Packaged food market in India is expected to be doubled.
10. **E-Commerce:** During the Covid-19 one of the Industry which exploited maximum opportunity is E-Commerce Industry. In 2021 also it will show an incremental growth. Online grocery, e-pharmacy and social commerce will show an upward trend in 2021.
11. **Manufacturing Industry:** India's middle class consumption will become second largest in the world.

**Conclusion:** Covid-19, has destroyed the economy of all most all countries economy irrespective of developed or developing or under developed country. To re- gain the strength of the economy, the trade and commerce has to be revamped. 2021 is expected to be the year of regain because of the Vaccination against Covid-19. People and customers are expected to visit the market places and showrooms, human resources are expected to come to offices and establishments which will help to start the new normal life. The demand from the customer is the only panacea for the regaining of the strength of trade and commerce. Customers are facing a new normality because of Covid -19. Understanding and predicting of the new normality of consumer, is very essential for the survival and revamping the lost strength of the trade and commerce in 2021 to reach the new heights of Indian Economy.

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