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IMPACT OF LOCKDOWN ON INDIAN CONSUMERS' PSYCHOLOGICAL BEHAVIOUR AND ATTITUDE TOWARDS THE CONSUMPTION OF PACKAGED DAIRY PRODUCTS

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ABSTRACT

The Novel Corona virus disease is a human affliction caused by SARS-COV-2 and complete lockdown is an alternative to stop the spread of the virus.

The aim of this study is to determine the effects of Corona virus disease lockdown on Indian consumers' psychological behaviour and attitude towards the consumption of packaged dairy products in a view of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA).

The study used an online survey and in-depth interview of selective respondents. The survey collected information of consumers' behaviour, attitude towards a packed dairy product, their willingness and information needs, to analyse the pattern of buying the packaged dairy product before and during the COVID-19 lockdown and their psychological behaviour behind that. The research method was a phenomenological approach and data were analysed by using MS-Excel software.

1. Introduction

The world witnessed the outbreak of an epidemic caused by an infectious disease called the corona virus disease 2019, in Wuhan, China at the last of 2019. The virus which started in one particular region has now become a pandemic disease which has infected more than 195 countries, across the 6

continents. COVID-19 majorly spreads from human to human which could ultimately lead to death older person and people with low immunity or those who have serious medical background. Because there are no specific vaccines or medicaments for COVID-19, many countries like India have adopted lockdown strategy to stop the spread of the virus and to protect their people. The vulnerability and unpredictability of COVID-19 compromise the physical wellbeing as well as changed consumers' attitude towards shopping. Shopping relies on the nature of productive trend of purchasing packed food. Packaged food is sealed in a box, polybag, or other containers. Example of some packaged food is ready to cook food, a frozen item like peas and meat, Maggie, etc. The shopping patterns of people are changing, some of them have increased their shopping patterns of packed food because they believed packaged food is untouched and more hygienic as compared to the unpackaged food product and packaged food product can be stored for long times. So, to avoid going outside people are considering packaged food moreover unpackaged food. Recently The Economic Times wrote an Article on presenting a factual fig saying that demand for cheese, Noodles, frozen veg, and non-veg items, butter have shot up 50%-150% sequentially in the first 3 weeks of the lockdown in India [1].

The main food source of calcium, phosphorus, protein, and many other essential nutrients required for optimal skeletal development comes from dairy products, so we have chosen Dairy products for research work. In the market both Packed and unpacked dairy products are present as these products are easily available in the market and dairy products are very essential for diet.

Objective of the Study:

So far, no previous study had established the link between lockdown and purchasing pattern of the dairy products. The objective of the paper is to interpret the behavioral changes of consumer due to the impact caused by COVID 19 crisis. In other words, the paper elaborates the psychologically driven behavior which influences a consumer's decision making while purchasing a packed dairy product. What changes in consumers' psychological behavior encourage them to buy or to not buy the packed dairy product? The study will be beneficial for dairy industries and dairy farms.

2. Literature Review

2.1) previous studies:

Several studies have been conducted in the context of COVID-19 and its impact on consumers' psychological behaviour due to the COVID 19 outbreak. In the recent study by [2], shows the analysis of common people of Kashmir for deeper understanding of their psychological effects, tension, and mental-stress along with the economic downfall, causing intervention in the public activity of individuals during the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. One of the studies [3], determines the effect of COVID-19 lockdown on consumers of Tunisian, their attitudes, behaviours, and awareness towards wastage of food products. They have conducted an online survey during preliminary weeks of

the lockdown. A recent study [4], describes the psychological and behavioural response to this crisis in a group of the people of Karachi, Pakistan, in the month of March 2020. One of the studies [5], attempts to find the effects of COVID-19 on people's mental wellbeing, to act as an assistant of policymakers to create significant policies, and contribute to clinical experts and deliver services to affected people on time. In the recent research [6], the researchers tried to scrutinize the factors that impacted the internet shopping behaviour of consumers in Pakistan. A recent study by [7], examines the consumers' attitude towards food safety and habits of taking precaution. According to a research [8], the researchers introduced a structured literature assessment of outright studies on the consumers for purchasing the food in ozone friendly packaging published during 1994–2019. One of the studies [9], established a relationship between the shoppers' readiness to purchase (WTB) of an item to the value premium for eco-kind disposition and qualities of item. A study investigated the socio-cultural elements covered up with buying behaviour of moderately aged females from the perspective of symbolic consumption [10]. A recent study [11], endeavours to investigate the connection between the imaging abstracts and clinical classification of Corona virus. Another research discovers the importance of the packaging of product on consumer buying behaviour and what are factors require in the success of packaging [12]. A study examined the outcome of some investigation discern across the countries in the economic slowdown for highlighting the prominent changes in the new consumer purchasing pattern and to draw a result of them after the major economic slowdown [13]. In a recent study tried to understand consumers' behaviour towards packaged products and how packaging factors can influence the buying verdicts of consumers [14]. Another study finds out the role of epidemic plays over time by the rate of transition between three states, susceptible to disease, infected with the disease and recovered from the disease (SIR) [15]. The use of e-learning in advance education, a study found out the connection between subjective norm and buying intention of consumers [16]. A research attempts to identify the factors that influenced the customers to buy milk products, they also identified the consumer brand preferences and they analysed the purchase behaviour of customers in preferring their choice or availability of milk products [17].

2.2 Theory of Reasoned Action

Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) helped this research paper to understand the behavior and attitudes of the consumer. The Theory of Reasoned Action describes relationship between the attitude and the behavior of a consumer. It analyses a person's behavior based on his or her prior purchasing intentions and attitudes. The primary purpose of TRA is to understand the behavior of an individual or intention of an individual by examining the basic motivation required to perform an action. The theory states that behavior is characterized in terms of Action, Context and Time.

2.2.1 Motivation factor

Motivation is the internal need of a customer. The targeted customer needs to understand the need of the product. Motivation is a process that enables a

person to perceive the need of the product. Understanding the concept of motivating a consumer can be used as a powerful tool to enhance the growth of an organization.

2.2.2 Perception factor

The way a consumer perceives the need of the product or the way he or she looks around the world is also an important factor for influencing in his or her behavior.

2.2.3 Belief factor

Consumers attitude consists of a belief or a feeling towards any product. It is the ability to influence all the other factors. This belief can be positive or negative.

2.2.4 Attitude factor

One of the key determinants of behavioral intention is attitude. It refers to the way people feel towards a behavior. The attitudinal parameters which are taken into consideration are price, quality, and quantity.

These are the factors that influence the intention or buying decision of consumer

3. Research methodology:

The research paper aimed to determine how the COVID-19 lockdown has changed the psychological behaviour of consumers' buying patterns of packaged dairy product. Self-administered questionnaires were floated on Google form and semi-structured interviews were taken to different categories of consumers such as students, housewives, and working-class. The questionnaire consisted of 22 Psycho-Behavioural questions. 4 different factors of consumer behaviour were highlighted and analysed. The 4 behavioural factors are motivation, belief, perception, and attitude. They were well understood by Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). A phenomenological approach was taken to analyse the responses. After this small survey, responses were collected and then plotted in the form of figures to represent in the form of quantitative data.

4. Results and discussions:

The data was collected from 150 respondents. Out of the 150 respondents 60.7% were male and 39.3% were females. The respondents were categorized in three different categories: students (70.9%), working class (16.6%) and housewives (12.6%). The data was analysed and presented in figures as depicted below.

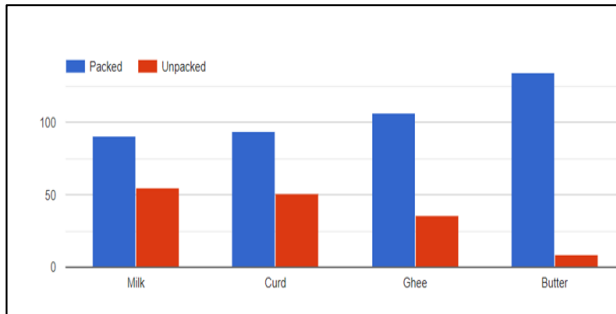


Figure 1: Pre-lockdown consumption of dairy products

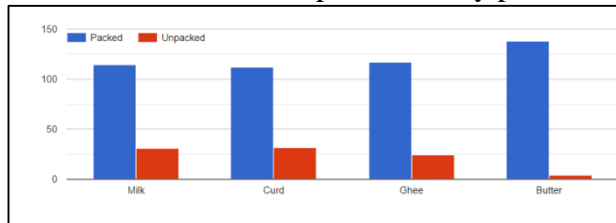


Figure 2: Post-lockdown consumption of dairy products

- Figure 1 and 2 represents the consumption of dairy products in the pre and post lockdown situation. The notable point here is the rise in the figures of the percentage that has occurred in the consumption.
- For example, in the pre-lockdown (fig1) situation the consumption of packaged milk was 165% of the unpackaged milk, and in the post lockdown situation (fig2) this figure has risen to 370%.
- This shows the drift of consumer's intentions towards quality with quick pace in the lockdown situation.

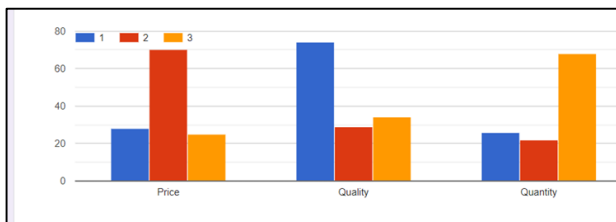


Figure 3: Attitudinal factors (Price, Quality, and Quantity these three are the parameters of attitudinal factors)

- In the above graph (fig3), it talks about the attitudes of the consumers and how it has been affected by the lockdown situations.
- Rank 1- most preferable, Rank 3- least preferable.
- Respondents were asked to rank the factors which they pay attention to before buying the dairy packaged product (post lockdown).
- Graph clearly shows that majority of respondents are more conscious of the product's quality rather than betting on the price.

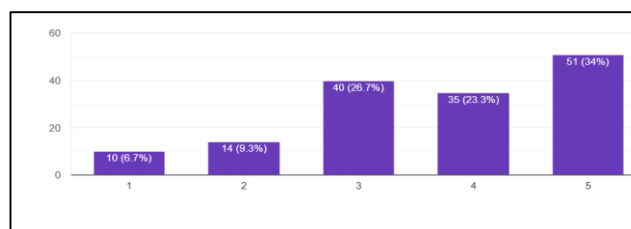


Figure 4: Attitudinal factors (effectiveness of Quality of the product)

- For better understanding, consumers were asked questions regarding the three parameters of attitude towards consumption of packaged dairy product.
- The above graph was scaled from 1 to 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree).
- 34% of the respondents **strongly agreed** that the packaged dairy product's quality was better than unpackaged dairy products.
- Further, 23% of them **agreed** as the quality of packaged dairy product is better than unpackaged product.

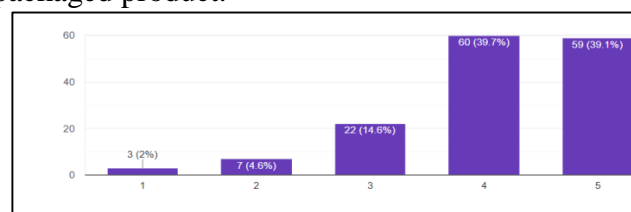


Figure 5: Based on motivational factors (fear)

- In the above bar graph (fig5), it represents the motivational factors for the consumers that were impacted by the lockdown. The questions have been structured in such a way so that we can have a proper insight of consumers behaviour, what motivates them to buy packaged dairy product.
- In the above graph, it talks about the fear and anxiety of a consumer that motivates them to buy packaged dairy product.
- On scale of 1 - 5 (strongly disagree to strongly agree).
- 39.1% of the respondents **strongly agreed** that they have a fear of getting infected if they buy unpackaged product.
- Further, 39.7% **agreed** with the same, that chances of getting infected by unpackaged dairy products were high.

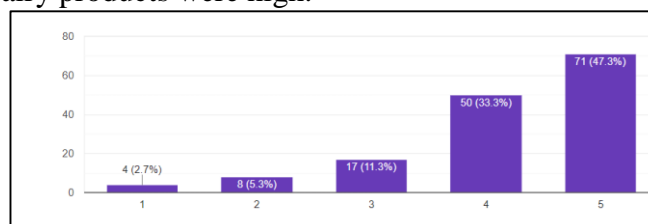


Figure 6: Belief factors

- In the above graph (fig 6), few questions have been asked on belief factor to understand consumer's behaviour
- 47.3% of respondents **strongly agreed** and believed that packaged dairy products were easy to sanitize

- 33.3% **agreed** for the same and hence they prefer packaged dairy product.

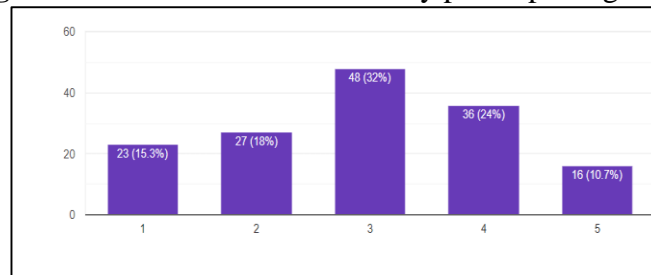


Figure 7: Belief factors

- In the above graph(fig7), it talks about that packaged dairy products taste better than unpackaged dairy products based on their belief's considerations.
- 10% believed that packaged products have better taste than unpackaged product
- The majority of the respondents do not believe that packaged dairy products are better in taste and 32% are neutral.

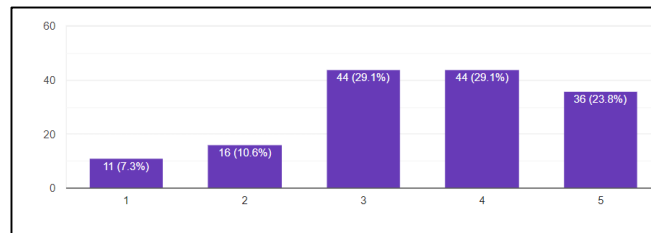


Figure 8: Perceptions factor.

- In the above graph (fig 8), Majority of the respondents had a perception that packaged product are safer than the unpackaged product
- 23.8% **strongly agreed** and 29.1% **agreed**. They had a perception that packaged products were safer than unpackaged products during the lockdown situation.

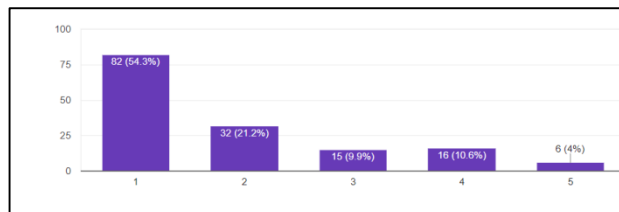


Figure 9: Perception factor (influence by other individuals)

- The graph (fig 9), it depicts about the perception of the consumer that any actor or actress influence them to buy dairy product.
- 54.3% said they **strongly disagreed** with the fact of buying packaged dairy products under the influence of any famous brand ambassador endorsing the product.

Below two charts show the buying intention of the consumer towards packaged dairy product.

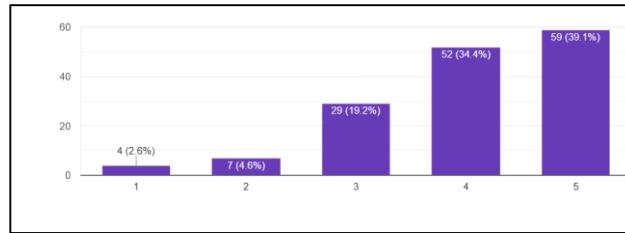


Figure 10: Consumer buying intention (willingness to buy packaged dairy product)

- In the above graph (fig 10), 39.1% of the people who responded to survey, were **strongly agreed** on continue buying of packaged dairy products even after covid-19 situation gets normal.
- 34.4% **agreed** that they will continue to buy packaged dairy products after the lockdown gets over and situations gets normal

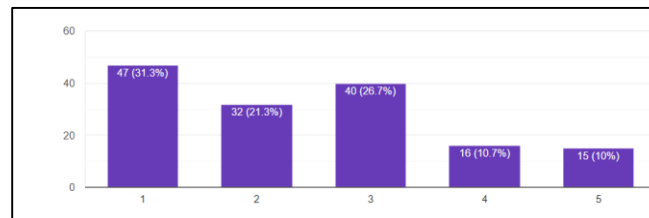


Figure 11: Consumer buying intention (willingness to buy unpackaged dairy product)

- In the above graph (fig 11), it shows the intention of the consumer that they switch back to unpackaged dairy product.
- 31.3 % of the respondents **strongly disagreed** and 21.3 % **disagreed**, they will not switch to unpackaged dairy product even after the situation gets normal.

5. Conclusion:

The COVID-19 pandemic has created an alarming concern, anxiety, and depression among the entire world's population. The mental wellbeing is badly hammered during this Corona virus lockdown which has affected the psychological behavior of the whole group of population including students, housewives, working professionals and civilians. Similarly, the pandemic has also affected the buying patterns of the consumers. Hence this study was undertaken with the objective of determining the impact of COVID-19 lockdown on Indian consumers' psychological behavior and attitude towards the consumption of the packaged dairy products.

The study has shown that consumers purchased 165% more of packaged dairy than the unpackaged dairy product before the lockdown, which got hiked to 370% post lockdown (refer fig 1 and 2). COVID-19 lockdown has impacted consumers' behavior and the results were analyzed and interpreted as follows.

5.1.1 Attitudinal factor:

Based on the Analysis of attitudinal factor questions (refer fig 3), we can conclude that consumers are more conscious towards quality rather than betting on the price. Vendors increase the price of the needful products and consumer

buys that product because health comes first and during the lockdown situation. It encourages consumers to look after their health.

5.1.2 Motivational factor:

Based on the analysis of motivational factor question (refer fig 5), we can conclude that lockdown has impacted negatively on consumer behavior, consumers were facing fear and anxiety due to this pandemic, when they went for shopping. As per the results, it can be inferred that fear of getting infected by the virus is more in the unpackaged dairy product; therefore, Consumers were more inclined towards packaged dairy product.

5.1.3 Belief factor:

Based on analysis of the questions related to belief factor (refer fig 6 and 7), we can conclude that consumers believe that sanitizing packaged dairy product is more feasible than sanitizing unpackaged dairy product. So, it can be inferred that consumers were more cautious about the effect of the Covid19-lockdown. Consumers were least bother about the taste of the dairy product; their main concern and belief was hygiene and sanitation.

5.1.4 Perception factor (perceived behavior):

Based on analysis of the questions related to perception factor, (refer fig 8 and 9) we can conclude that consumers were not influenced by the brand ambassador endorsing any products. This lockdown situation has impacted these factors and these factors have altered the mindset of the consumer towards buying any product. As a result, the consumer will stick to the packaged dairy product even after situations become normal (fig 9 and 10).

Consumers have shifted their mindset from price to quality and hygiene. The situation has caused awareness among consumers towards a healthier and cleaner environment. Due to which consumer have become aware and fear of the virus have made them more cautious towards the purity and sterility of the surroundings.

6. Implications:

This study can be implied that this pandemic has altered the psychological behavior and attitude of consumers towards packaged dairy products. People are more dedicated to their health and they want to shift their mindset towards a hygienic lifestyle. This study has also implied that consumers have become far more sensible when it comes to buying any product; they are putting quality and cleanliness over advertisement and pricing.

The results from this study many implications for the producers. The manufacturer should build trust and reliability towards its customers so that customers can be ensured of good quality products. When manufacturers develop and update their products, they should consider proper sanitation and hygiene at all intermediate levels of production. Mass production of Packaged Dairy Product would benefit both consumers and manufacturers.

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