

Decoding Consumers Sentiments During COVID-19

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Communication is not only acting as marketing lever today, in fact FREE is becoming a in thing.

By Sheenu Jain

Who is going to do dishwashing Raj? Why should only I do? Said, Kavita. There is no support to carry out the household chore during this time. This is the story of millions of Indian households today.

There are VP's, and CEO's posting on social media boasting themselves doing Jhadu, Poncha, Bartan (Cleaning, Sweeping, Dishwashing). Does it mean we will see rise in use of Vacuum Cleaners and Dishwashers the E-maids for us? Don't know. but one ting is for sure, Indian males are sharing the load, and for the first time ever this has become the talk of tele conversations, status messages, and online meeting discussions.

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Consumers went on a buying spurge and became paranoid during the novel coronavirus outbreak and they just did not stocked staples, sanitizer, but also medicines and that too at least three-time of their immediate need. E.g. if monthly consumption of flour of a family is 10 kg, they have stocked 30 kg., but ultimately it shot up the demands for consumer goods or took them away from the shelves. This buying behaviour clearly states their urge for pantry preparations assuming the time ahead.

Planned purchase has taken a back seat which includes vacations, white goods, automobiles, apparel, home decor, luxury goods, real estate for sure. While these high-ticket items deferred, insurance, and investment schemes may be less impacted.

Hygiene has taken new avatar in India. It is here to stay. According to Kantar report hand sanitizer, hand washes, and toilet cleaners have seen surge in demand and interestingly almost 91% Indian households washing hands more often now. In fact, portfolio of hygiene categories is extended to hand wash bar soaps, floor cleaners, liquid dishwash, antiseptic liquids, and bathroom cleaners. Many of these products are newly entering into our baskets. This also can not be denied that there is emergence of preventive mindset by consumers, which unfortunately led to price hikes, and rising demand.

There is a race between screen time, and eyes, and the result is Screen time won. There was a time I was worried about time we spend on-screen, and talking about digital detox for me, my husband, my kids, but it seems digital detox is dead. Today this screen is my only connection, and it brings happy hours for me. Probably I have also accessed every educational app for my daughter today, and in India today a 4-year-old kid is also virtually connected to its teachers and learning is taking place. My behaviour is mostly changed from off-screen to on-screen, when, and how I didn't even realize it. EdTech to zoom calls are no weirder for me/us and we are happily guzzling it and on top of it, this all could be possible wearing smart casual which probably I am repeating and becoming bore for the washing machine.

This pandemic is epic in a sense that we are again going back to our roots. On one side we are spoilt for choices. According to KPMG study by 2023, India will have over 500 million online video subscribers. Today we have access to almost 30+ OTT (Over the top) streaming platforms which streams directly to user via the internet. On the other side when our favourite regular TV soaps are not getting shot, Ramayana is again enjoying highest TRP today.

Bhakt and Bhagwan (Worshippers, and God) both probably got locked down for the first time ever, and God has adopted technology to reach out to its devotees using online channel. Vegetable vendors have again started coming to our colonies, and we are again buying our veggie's and fruits from them.

Certainly, this pandemic and its impact on consumer psyche is far more different from expected. Are we celebrating freedom and learning to enjoy solitude? Have we learnt to leave with less or we will keep consuming the way we used to do? This pandemic has brought trust deficit, will it also have the impact on trusting brands? It has for sure altered the business models to enable product consumption during this time of epidemic.

Communication is not only acting as marketing lever today, in fact FREE is becoming a in thing. Everyone is offering free things till lockdown period or extended period till pandemic time. Change is the new constant, and we are learning to adjust, and our spirit is up for a fight. Many of us are experimenting and trying new things more swiftly from online education, payment, ordering, meeting, to online entertainment.

Overwhelming consumer reaction is causing panic, but there is significant hope as well. Together brands and consumers can reflect on the reality and find the good. It is time to share the burden and do the new good. The reassurance is the new need of Indian consumers. How they felt during this pandemic time, they will remember once the storm is passed.

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