CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR DURING NOVEL CORONAVIRUS

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ABSTRACT

The era of marketing made consumer the king and in order to aim for survival, growth, profits businesses are directed to make their king satisfied and happy. All this can be achieved by carefully evaluating the buying behaviour of consumers so as to acquire and maintain customers. Consumer's behaviour depends on the external stimuli of the environment whether it be any innovative change, cultural, social, political, international event as well as on its personal belief and social system in which they live. The drastic and tragic event of Covid 19 has deeply impacted the very behaviour of buying and purchasing. The study is an attempt to understand the very nature at the time of crisis.

Key words: *Consumer Behaviour, Buying Behaviour, Coronavirus, Covid19*

Introduction

The buzz all around the world is of Covid-19. The hot topic being rumoured to be from China has halted the life, growth of countries around the globe. An intangible flu with just minor symptoms of cold and cough has taken the lives of many. Seems to be like much of the biological Warfare initiated by the Dragon country to acquire control over rest of the world. The terrorism is prevailing till now when almost two years have passed, nothing seems to have changed with mask, sanitizers be the new normal of human life.

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In the family of viruses, the spread of coronavirus has proved to be fatal and life threatening. Things and situations are becoming much better than before but it will never be the same for some families who lost their only earning members or young kids. The drastic change being brought in the environment devastated the whole market structure with continuing lockdowns being imposed by the government. Everybody was caught inside their homes with strict vigilance of police force, only being the grocery, vegetables and medicines available in the market. The time as if stopped. National highways experienced peace and rest with no vehicle moving on them. As the lockdown was removed country faced huge repercussions in the form of second wave where the number of patients and deaths increased and the country according to WHO report might experience the third wave. Work from home was the new normal for corporates, schools, colleges, education system suffered a huge setback as students have developed the new normal of online classes, online examinations to the extent that CBSE and regional boards cancelling the board examinations and gave a formula/criterion to evaluate the performance of students. Competitive exams of the country IIT JEE, NEET various state examinations school lecturer, judicial and administrative services are all hanging down waiting for the situation to settle down.

Travel, tourism, restaurant industry suffered huge losses as the weddings were allowed with only 11 or 21 guests. All kind of travel including foreign, domestic via air, road route was prohibited. Country's per capita income, National Income, GDP all have alarming results. Oxygen supplies were falling short to save the lives of the citizens of the country and many even died due to shortage. The era of vaccination where the companies came out with the vaccines (the only way to put the life back onto track) including Pfizer, Moderna, Sputnik V, Covidshield of AstraZeneca, Covaxin of Bharat Biotech.
Together united we are fighting, doctors, policemen all giving their full services to save the countrymen. The one essential lesson that the pandemic gave was of brotherhood mankind and not rushing towards the materialistic items.

Consumer Behaviour

Reaction of individuals while buying a particular good/service. It is the whole branch of study which aims to study the psychology of the consumer based on the buying decision making. In the words of Webster "Buyer behaviour is all psychological, social and physical behaviour of potential customers as they become aware of, evaluate, purchase, consume and tell other people about product and services". It is never static or fixed in

nature and depends upon various factors based on which the company provide promotions, offers, products. The interdisciplinary study covering the areas of psychology, anthropology, economics covers both the buyer and end user of the product. The branch helps in organisations in segmentation of the market it aims at reducing the chances of product failure, helps in adapting to the environmental change, availing the marketing opportunities, helps in increasing consumer protection.

Buying process stages:

Stage 1: Need Recognition
Stage 2: Product Awareness
Stage 3: Development of Interest
Stage 4: Evaluation of alternatives
Stage 5: Purchase decision
Stage 6: Post purchase behaviour

Factors which determine consumer behaviour

Psychological	Personal	Social	Cultural
1. Sensation	1. Family	1. Family	1. Sub culture
2. Needs	2. Demographic	2. Ref. groups	2. Social classes
3. Perception	3. Income	3. Opinion Leaders	
4. Beliefs	4. Lifestyle	4. Beliefs	
5. Attitudes	5. Education	5. Attitudes	
6. Learning	6. Occupation	6. Learning	
7. Motives	7. Motives		
8. Personality	8. Personality		
9. Self concept	9. Self concept		

Cognitive Dissonance

The post purchase dilemma that a consumer experiences regarding the choice that he has made the various available alternatives The state of anxiety in the mind of the consumer in choosing a particular brand. Dissonance gets higher and causes a situation of dilemma when teh prices of the product is high, the product is new/ innovative (consumer

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has never seen and is not aware of), various choices, knowledge of consumer is nil, when the decision plays an important role.

Models:

1. Howard Sheth Model

Developed by John Howard and Jagdish Sheth popularly known as machine model considers buying a rational exercise according to which behaviour is systematic. It considers Input variables (Brand Info, Social Environment, perception and learning), external (culture, financial status). The buying decision of a consumer a based on these 3 variables which leads to usually repetitive purchase by a consumer. If the choices are satisfactory enough then this is called 'Psychology of Simplification' and when the product appears to be boring for the consumer, he searches for a new brand this is 'Psychology of Complication'.

2. Nicosia Model

It is a system model according to which the behaviour of a consumer depends on the external stimuli. It focusses on the relation between firm and customers. Buyers experience conflict while choosing a brand. It is also known as 'Conflict Model'.

3. Learning Model

Based Ivan Pavlov's theory of learning stats that a firm can change the behaviour of a consumer by manipulating the stimuli and drive through proper use of sales promotion techniques. Originally being conducted on a dog pavlov noticed that if food is given at a fixed time after ringing a bell he tends to learn the aspect and if after ringing the bell the food is not given at that time the dog starts salvating and shows sign of hunger.

4. Psychoanalytical Model

Based on the study of Freud, the model states that consumers have deep rooted motives which drive him to a particular behaviour. It is necessary to study those drives of unconscious mind (hidden motives).

5. Economic Model

The model states that a buying decision is made judiciously on rational basis concerning efficiency, quality, durability, safety, performance price, after sale services of the product.

6 Sociological Model

According to this a purchase decision is guided by the social group to which a consumer belong which includes their family, friends, relatives, social class.

Research Methodology

Scope of the Study

The study is conducted to study the impact of the pandemic that has stuck in the world causing an atmosphere of fear and threat on the buying behaviour of consumers. All over the globe where the only aim of governments was crying out loudly to make people understand the value of masks, sanitizers, social distancing. The concept of socializing, meetings, parties, big fat weddings, get-togethers, movies, travel, festival and celebrations all took a U-turn and India being a nation where all the purchases are made for the events, occasions and celebrations. The market suffered a huge setback with no demand for luxury, fashion goods and only daily purchases of groceries.

Limitations of the study

1. The study was conducted on a small group of population.
2. It was based on the consumers of a particular city (Jaipur).
3. It was conducted on the people of a particular state (Rajasthan)
4. It was conducted in a short span of time.
5. Results are based on the information provided by the respondents. There may be chances of discrepancy, false information.

Hypothesis

H0: Covid-19 has changed the purchase and consumption pattern of consumers.

H1: Covid-19 has not changed the purchase and consumption pattern of consumers.

Research Design

The study is exploratory in nature, aimed to study the impact of virus on purchase behaviour of consumers.

Sample

The data was collected from 50 respondents covering both male and female of age group between 20-40 years of age.
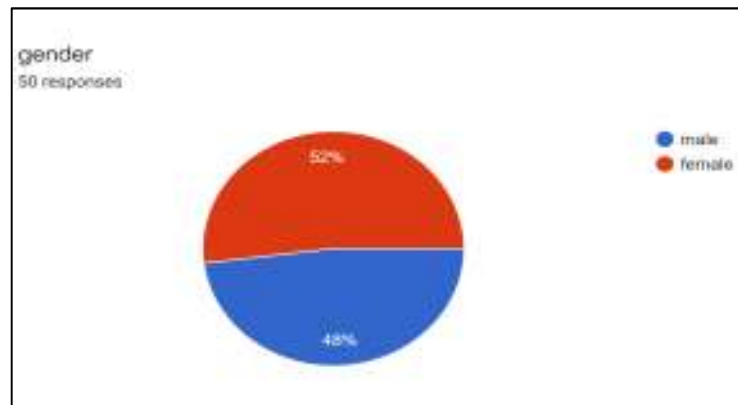
Sources of data collection

Data was collected primarily from the respondents and secondary means of books, newspapers was also used.

Research tool

Data is collected by means of a questionnaire framed on Google Forms which was forwarded to respondents and their responses were recorded.
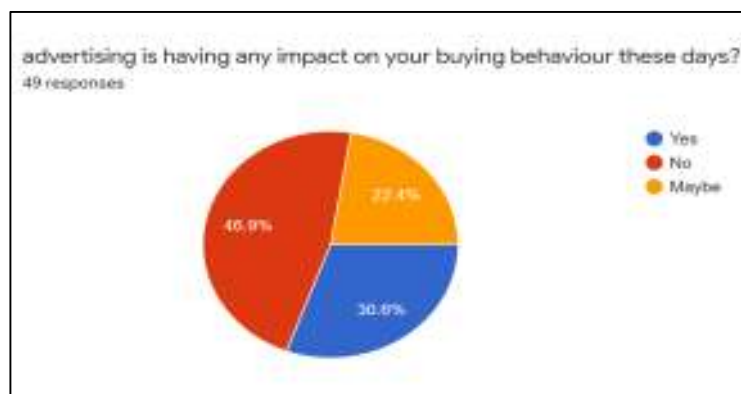
## Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1

Interpretation: The table above shows the classification of sample which is bifurcated into 52% of male responses and 48% of female responses.

Table 2

Interpretation: The table above shows that during the time of pandemic 46.9% respondents were impacted by advertising which makes majority, 22.4% were not impacted and remaining were not sure.
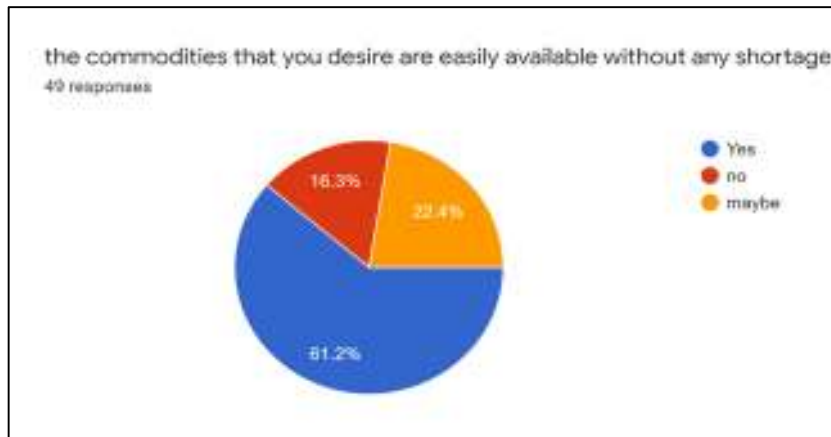
Table 3
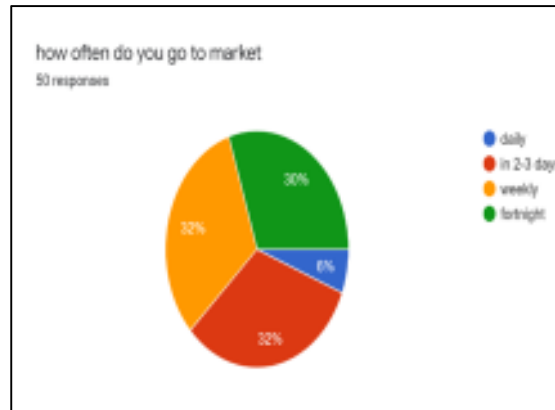
Interpretation: The table above shows that only 6% people went to the market on daily basis, 32% in 3 days, 32% in a week and remaining 30% fortnightly which means they stepped out mostly after 7-week days.

Table 4

Interpretation: The table above shows that maximum respondents i.e.94% people were within the reach of market and only 6% had difficulty in access.

Table 5

the commodities that you desire are easily available without any shortage
49 responses

Yes
no
maybe

16.3%
22.4%
61.2%

Interpretation: The table above shows that good were easily available to majority of 61.2% of the sample, 16.3% faced problems and 22.4% were not sure.

Table 6

are you satisfied with what is available in the market
49 responses

yes
no

30.6%
69.4%

Interpretation: The table above shows that a majority of 69.4% of sample were satisfied with what was available in the market and 30.6% were not.

Table 7
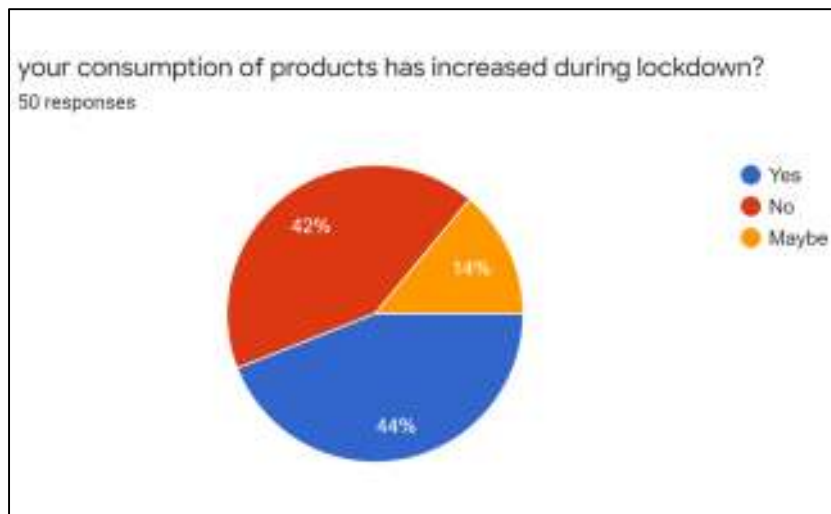
Interpretation: The table above shows that 44% of respondents increased their consumption, 42% did not and 14% were not sure which reflect an overall increase in the consumption.
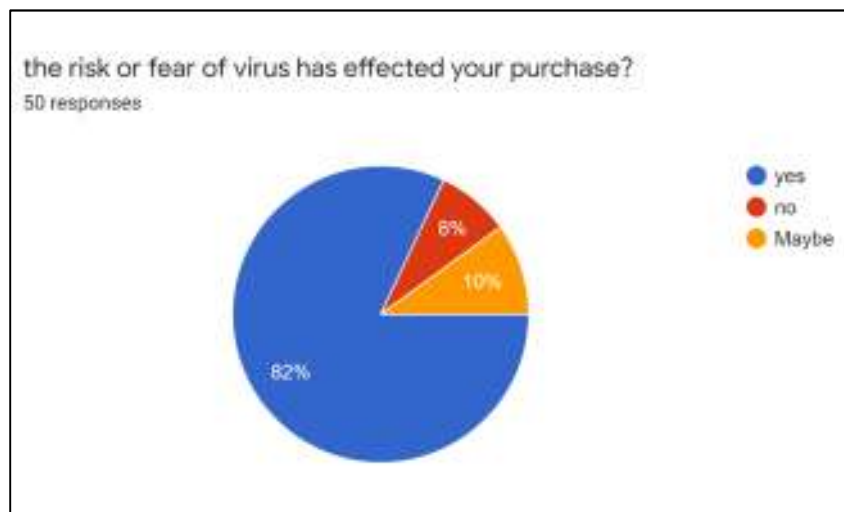
Table 8
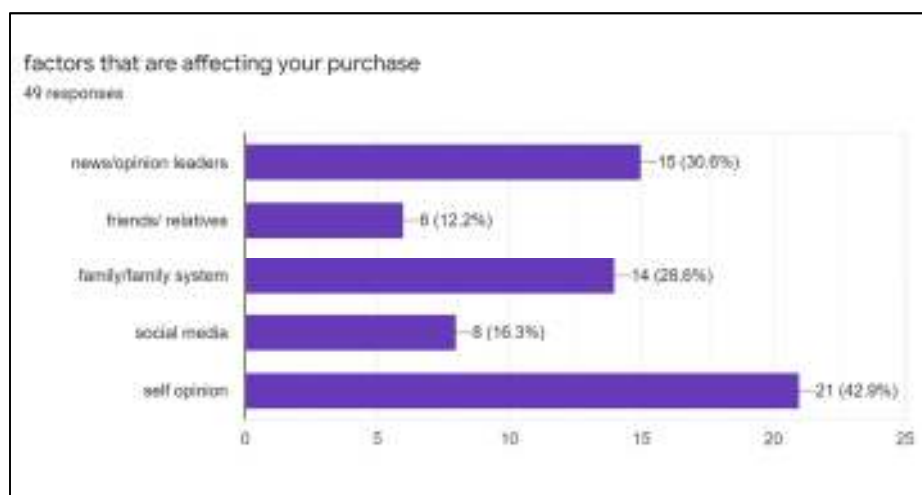
Interpretation: The table shows that people were mainly effected by their own self opinion which makes 42.9% of sample, then by news 30.6%, family system 28.6%, social media 16.3% and least by friends which is 12.2%
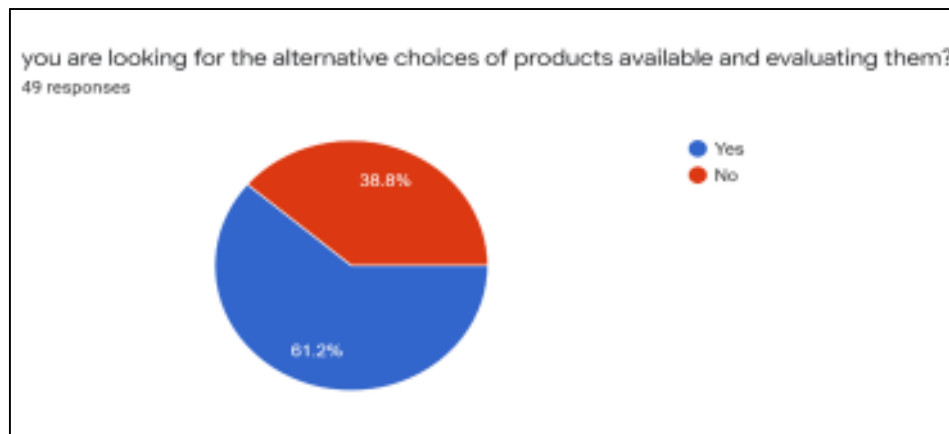
Table 9
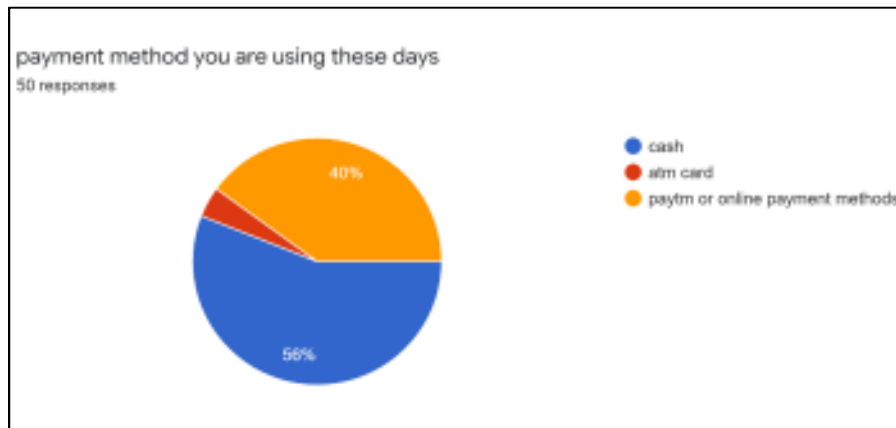
Interpretation: The table above shows that maximum respondents that is 56% were using cash as the payment method and remaining 44% were inclined towards card or online payment methods.
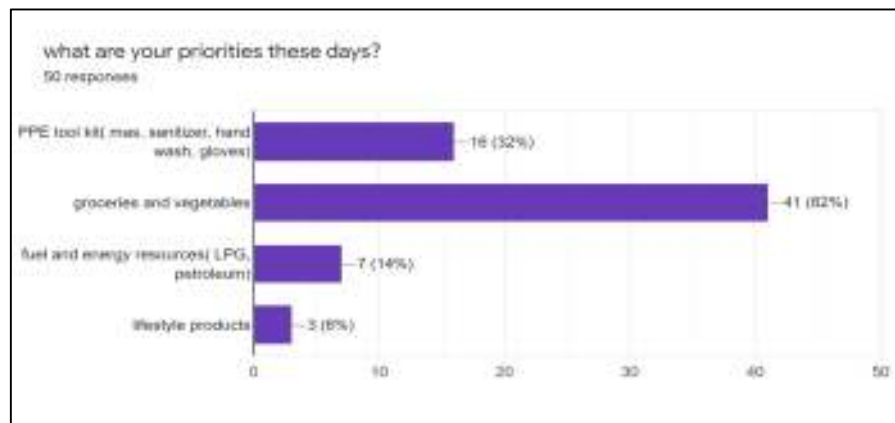
Table 10

Interpretation: The table above shows that 82% respondent's purchase behaviour were affected by the risk of the virus and remaining 18% did not base the purchasing decisions on the fear of virus.

Table 11

Interpretation: The table above shows that majority that is 61.2% respondents were looking for substitute products and the remaining 38.8% respondents were not.

Table 12

Interpretation: The table above shows that people were more inclined towards buying groceries and vegetables these days which was 82% and were spending very less on lifestyle goods, apparels comprising of only 6%.

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Table 13

Interpretation: The table shows that 62% of respondents were purchasing regularly from the same stores and 38% did not practise that which implied maximum people followed one mechanical process of buying the article from a fixed store.
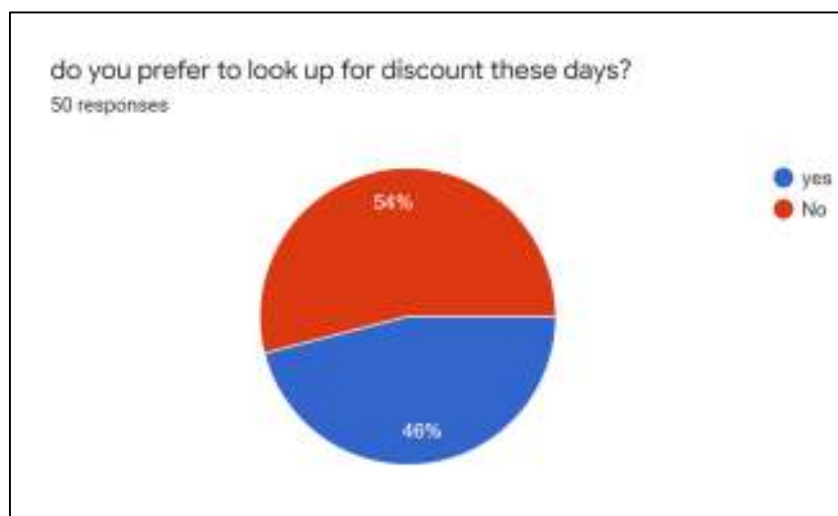
Table 14

Interpretation: The table above shows that 59.2% of respondents were getting the full financial value of the product and remaining were not satisfied with the product utility, and its cost.
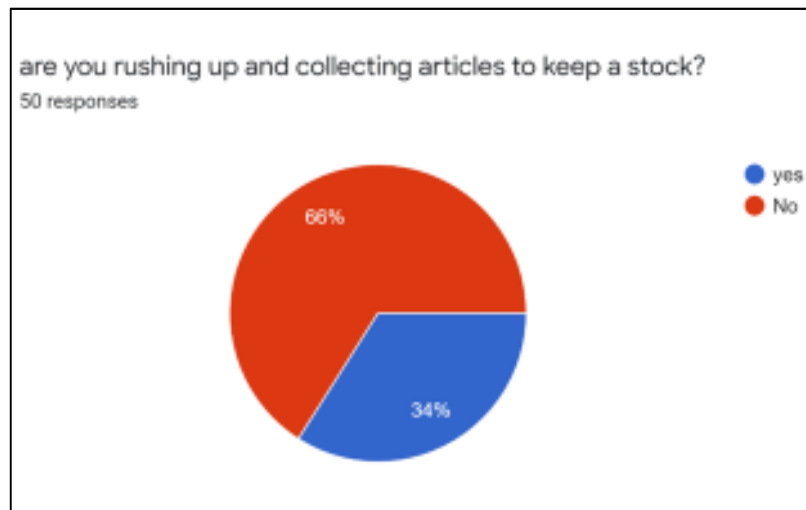
Table 15
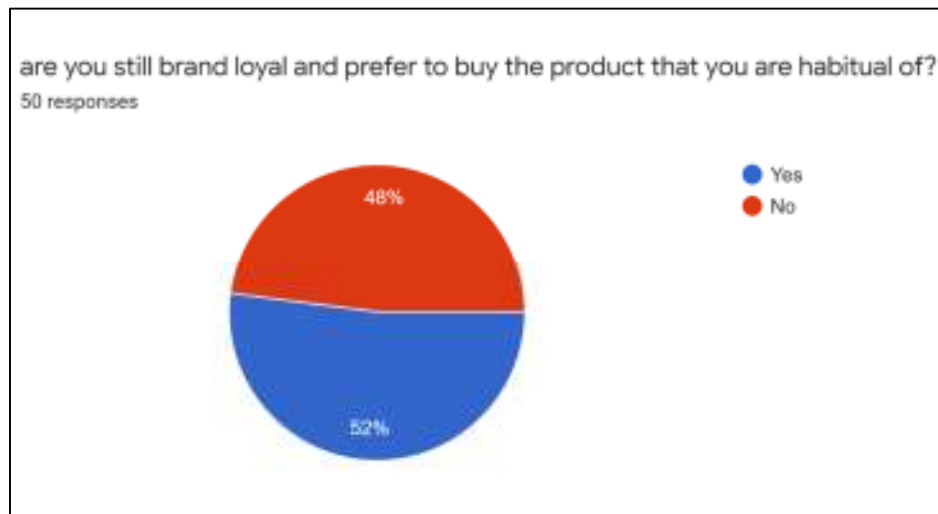
Interpretation: The table above shows that maximum people still preferred buying their favourite brand whereas only 48% switched to other goods.
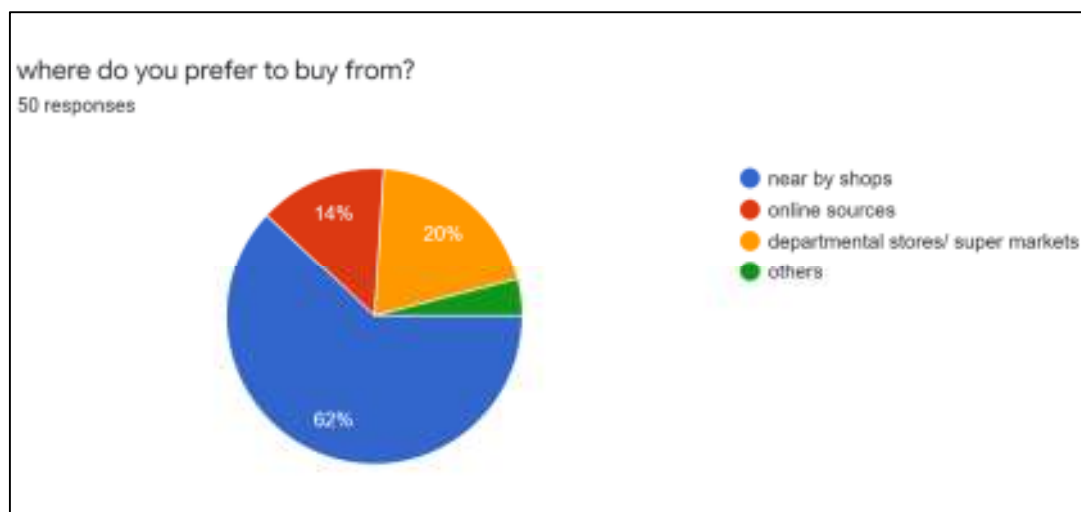
Table 16

Interpretation: The table above shows that maximum respondents were not looking for discount these days and were ready to buy at the available price which made 54%.
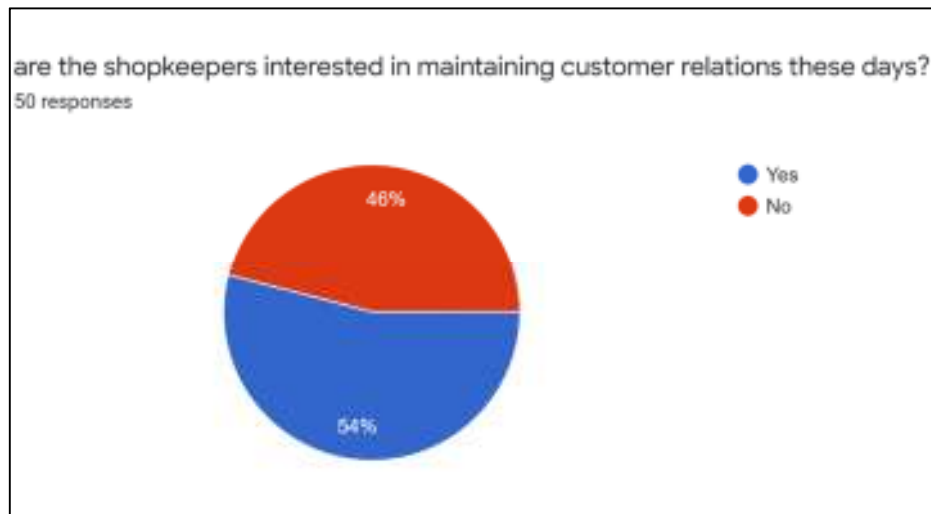
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Table 17

Interpretation: The table above showed that maximum people were not rushing to buy articles i.e. 66% of them only 34% rushed to stock.
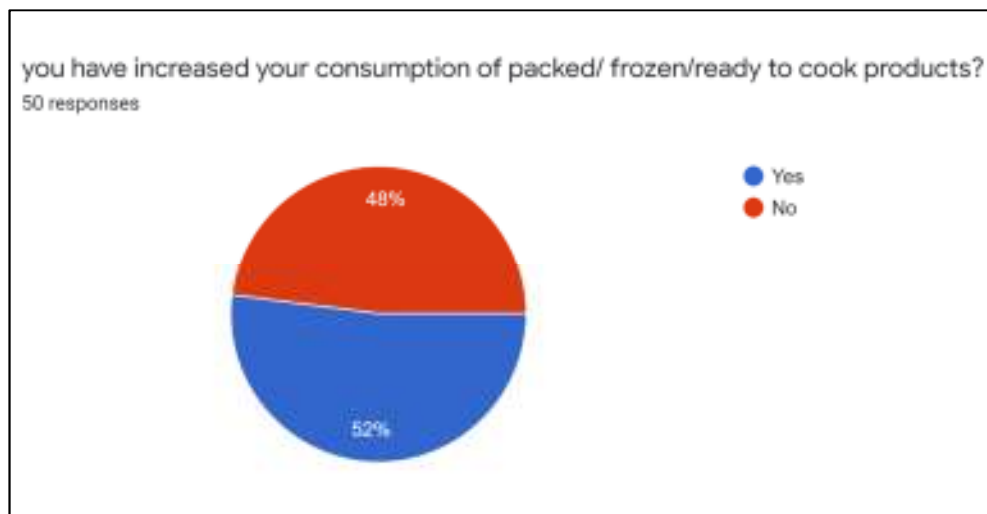
Table 18

Interpretation: The table above shows that 62% respondents purchased from the nearby shops, 20% from departmental stores and 14% from online sources.

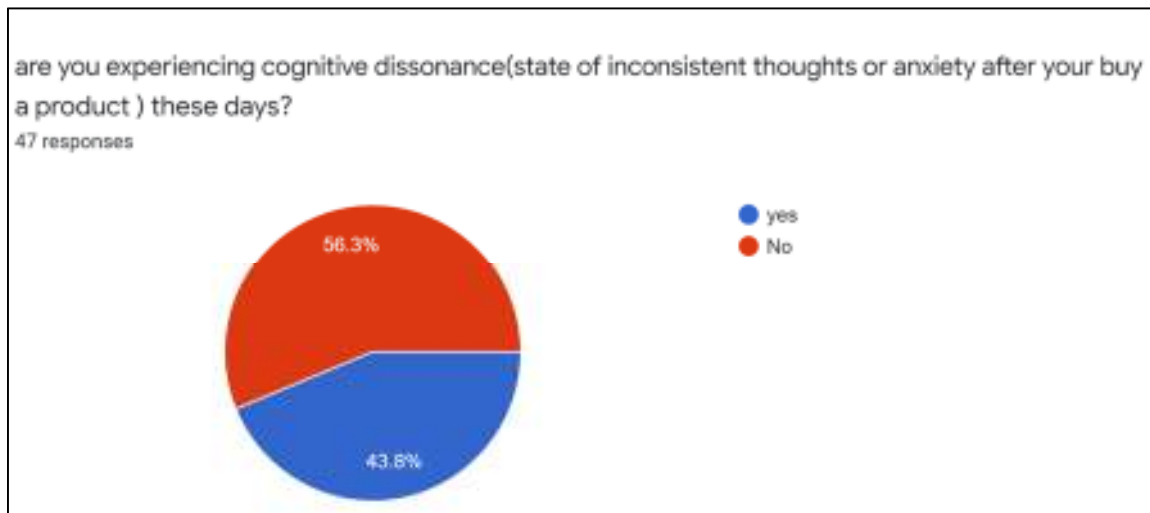*Table 19*

Interpretation: The table above shows that 54% of shopkeepers still aimed at maintain good customer relations.
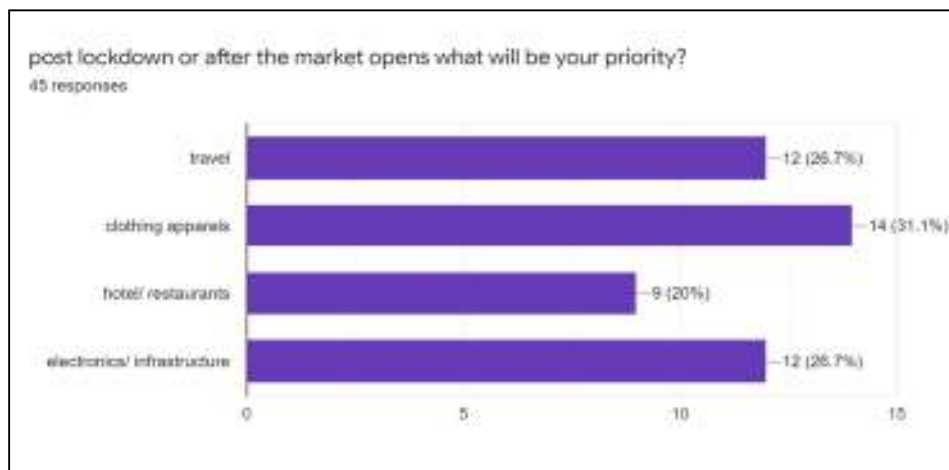
Table 20

Interpretation: The table above showed that 52% people preferred buying packed food items whereas 48% did not.

Table 21

are you experiencing cognitive dissonance(state of inconsistent thoughts or anxiety after your buy a product) these days?

47 responses

● yes
● No

56.3%

43.8%

Interpretation: The table above shows that maximum people i.e. 56.3% did not experience any dissonance after buying the item.

Table 22

post lockdown or after the market opens what will be your priority?

45 responses

travel — 12 (26.7%)

clothing apparels — 14 (31.1%)

hotel/ restaurants — 9 (20%)

electronical/ infrastructure — 12 (26.7%)

Interpretation: The table above shows that after the situation gets back to normal 26.7% people would like to spend on travel and infrastructure for their home, 20% on restaurant and maximum would like to buy clothing which is 31.1%.

Conclusion

The study conducted did not show drifting opinion of consumers. They all had a planned and set pattern of buying the goods as they mainly went weekly out to buy more of only vegetables and household essentials. Strict guidelines of government and educated and informed consumer bought very sensitively in proper quantities without any hush and rush and not creating any situation of scarcity in the market. The hypothesis of my research has been duly accepted thereby rejecting the null hypothesis. The saddened era of pandemic has badly and deeply impacted the lives of general mass in its due period of almost three years but people fought courageously and sensibly. Hoping the day comes soon when we will be able to breathe and smile without masks.

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