

# IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR AND CLOTHING PRACTICES

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## Abstract

*The present study, entitled "Impact of COVID-19 on Consumer Buying Behaviour and Clothing Practices," was carried out with the aim to study the clothing practices of female consumers of different age groups, factors affecting consumer buying behaviour, challenges faced by consumers of different age groups, and factors affecting the decision-making of different age groups before and during COVID-19. To conduct the study, a survey method was adopted for the collection of data. A questionnaire was prepared, and the data was collected through Google Forms from female consumers of Karnal and Chandigarh belonging to different age groups. The collected data was statistically analyzed. The study revealed that most of the respondents from all age groups purchased clothing monthly and used cash mode of payment before COVID-19, and most of the respondents purchased clothing when the need arose and used UPI mode of payment during COVID-19. There were differences in the clothing practices and buying behaviours of different age groups before and during COVID-19.*

**Keywords:** Consumer behaviour, clothing practices, buying behaviour, COVID-19

## Introduction

Clothing is one of the basic needs of every human being. With the development of civilization, humans made fabric out of fibers, draped it around the body, and later stitched clothes came into being. Clothes help in satisfying human needs and generally they accept clothing that provides comfort and conformity. Clothes play an important role in the development of an individual's personality. According to Dickens (1999), "Clothing serves in the main a social purpose just as food serves in the main a health purpose". Everyone, thus, is a customer of the textile industry as clothing with food and shelter from the necessities of life. As a basis for studying the effects of clothing upon the individual, knowledge of the normal practices regarding clothing is needed, such as the number of garments of various types in an average wardrobe for a given group, when and where different types of clothing were worn, and when and why garments were discarded. Furthermore, the knowledge of various ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, locations, and individual values and interests. With this information, it can be determined, how individuals vary from the norm and how different factors affect that norm. (Ryon;1965).

The term consumer behavior is defined as, “the behavior that consumer display in searching for purchasing, using, evaluating and disposing of products and services that they expect will satisfy their needs”. Consumer behavior focuses on how individuals make decisions to spend their available resources (time, money, effort) on consumption-related items. This includes what, why, when, where, and how often they buy it, use it, and evaluate it after the purchase and the impact of such evaluation on the future, and how they dispose of it. (Wisdom)

The COVID-19 pandemic has fundamentally changed the world as it was known. People are living differently, buying differently and in many ways, thinking differently. Supply chains have been tested. Retailers are closing doors. Consumers across the globe are looking at products and brands through a new lens. The virus is reshaping the consumer goods industry in real time, rapidly accelerating long-term underlying trends in the space of mere weeks. (Accenture; 2020). Consumers are deeply concerned about the impact of COVID-19, both from a health and economic perspective. People are responding in a variety of ways and have differing attitudes, behaviors and purchasing habits. People across the globe are afraid as they strive to adapt to a new normal. Fear is running high as individuals contemplate what this crisis means for them, but more significantly, what it means for their families and friends, and society at large.

Seth (2020) in his article entitled “Impact of COVID-19 on consumer behavior” stated that during this pandemic consumer are learning new habits. With lockdown and social distancing, working, schooling, and shopping all have shifted at home. In this article, author summarizes eight immediate effects of COVID-19 pandemic on consumer behavior, that is hoarding, improvisation, pent up demand, embracing digital marketing, stores come, blurring of work life boundaries, reunions of family and friends and discovery of talent. New habits are also formed about what to buy, and how much to buy, and where to buy? Technology is major contextual force in developing new habits as well as giving up old habits.

Arora and Charm (2020), researched a global view of how consumer behavior was changing amid covid-19. In their research, they were tracking consumer sentiments across 45 countries. Covid-19 has been affected in five key ways, some of which will have a lasting impact. Many consumers globally are continuing to see their incomes fall and optimism in an economic recovery. Most categories have seen more than 10 percent growth in their online customer base during the pandemic—and many consumers say they plan to continue shopping online even when brick-and-mortar stores reopen. Across countries, survey respondents said that they buy more from companies that have healthy and hygienic packaging and care for their employees. In most countries, more than 70 percent of consumers don't yet feel comfortable resuming their “normal” out-of-home activities.

Gregson (2004) conducted a study on “clothing in wardrobe”, which emphasizes the wardrobe's location within the consumption practices of wearisome, sorting, and the displacement of clothing. Its emphasis was on the circulation of clothing matter and the transience of clothing consumption, not—as recent accounts have stressed—the accumulation, collection, and wearing of clothing. The paper concludes by reflecting on the significance of the

absence of maternity wear from women's wardrobes and by suggesting that wardrobes need to be thought of not just as containers of memory, but as temporary holding places in the lives of clothes, and between wearing storage, and displacement.

The study of consumer buying behaviour is most important for marketers, as they can understand the expectations of the consumers. It helps to understand the various factors that lead a consumer to buy a product during this pandemic. It is important to assess the kind of products liked by consumers so that they can release them to the market. Marketers can understand the likes and dislikes of consumers and design their marketing efforts based on the findings. Thus, there is an urgent need to study the clothing practices and the buying behaviour of consumers before and during COVID-19. Consumer behaviour is a complex area. We need to study the consumers to identify their needs and their behaviors. The current study aims to discover the factors that influence female consumers' purchasing decisions for clothing. The present study, entitled "Impact of COVID-19 on Clothing Practises and Consumer Buying Behaviour,r" was planned with the following aims and objectives:

The study of consumer buying behavior is most important for marketers as they can understand the expectation of the consumers. It helps to understand the various factors which make a consumer buy a product during this pandemic. It is important to assess the kind of products liked by consumers so that they can release it to the market. Marketers can understand the likes and dislikes of consumers and design their marketing efforts based on the findings. Thus, there is an urgent need to study the clothing practices and the buying behavior of consumers before and during COVID-19. Consumer behavior is a complex area. We need to study the consumers to identify their needs and their behavior. The present study has been planned to find out decision-making determinants for the purchase of clothing by female consumers. The present study entitled "Impact of COVID-19 on clothing practices and consumer buying behavior" was planned with the following aims and objectives.

### **Aims and Objectives**

- To study the clothing practices of female consumers of different age groups before and during COVID-19
- To study the factors affecting consumers' buying behavior for clothing before and during COVID-19.
- To identify the challenges faced by the consumers of different age groups for purchase of clothing during COVID-19
- To study the factors affecting decision making of consumers while purchasing clothes before and during COVID-19.
- To compare the clothing practices and buying behavior of females of Karnal and Chandigarh.

## Methodology

Keeping the objectives of the study in mind a research design is proposed and a systematic procedure has been evolved to carry out the present study.

The study has been conducted in the Karnal and Chandigarh city purposively selected with the following justification. Karnal is connected through the Delhi-Ambala railway line and Sher Shah Suri Marg (G.T.Road) to all important places in the country. It is 123 km from Delhi and 130 km from Chandigarh. The Karnal district is surrounded by Kurukshetra District on its northwest, Jind and Kaithal District on its West, Panipat District on its south, and Uttar Pradesh on the east.

Chandigarh is bordered by the state of Punjab to the north, the west, and the south, and by the state of Haryana to the east. It is considered to be a part of the Chandigarh Capital Region or Greater Chandigarh, which includes Chandigarh, the city of Panchkula (in Haryana), and the cities of Kharar, Kurali, Mohali, Zirakpur (in Punjab).

The population of the study comprises all the women consumers residing in different parts of Karnal and Chandigarh city. For the present study, a structured questionnaire was prepared for collecting the data. The questionnaire was consisting of various questions as per the objectives. A Google form was prepared for data collection which consists of the questionnaire. 300 respondents were selected for the collection of data i.e., 150 respondents from Karnal and Chandigarh. These respondents comprise three different age groups i.e., 18-25 years, 25-35years, 35-45years. So, there are 50 respondents from each age group and each city.

But collected data shows that from Chandigarh, there were 54 respondents from the 18-25years age group, 44 respondents from the 25-35years age group, and 52 respondents from the 35-45years age group. Whereas, from Karnal, there were 37 respondents from the 18-25years age group, 58 respondents from the 25-35years age group, and 55 respondents from the 35-45years age group due to COVID-19. This could not be controlled because the mode of data collection was online.

The data collected had been transferred to a master chart showing various items/variables in columns and subjects in rows. The data collected was coded and prepared for analysis. Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software was used. Data were analyzed and interpreted using tools like tabulation, percentage, chi-square test, graphic representation, and Z-proportion.



## Results and discussion

The major findings of the present study are

- 43.7% of the respondents were graduates, 25.3% of the respondents were Postgraduates, 14% of the respondents were intermediate, and only 8.7% and 8.3% of the respondents were professionally qualified and Ph.D. respectively.
- 39.6% of the respondents from the 18-25years age group used to spend below Rs. 5000, 40.2% of the respondent from the 25-45years age group used to spend more than Rs.10,000 before COVID-19, whereas 44.9% of the females belonging to 35-45 years age group were spending between Rs. 5000-10000 before COVID-19. A significant association of present status was observed for money spend by different age groups ( $p=0.020^*$ ).

| Amount of Money spend on clothing annually during COVID-19 | Age   |        |       |        |       |        |       |        | Chi-square | Df | p-value |
|--|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|------------|----|---------|
|  | 18-25 |        | 25-35 |        | 35-45 |        | Total |        |            |    |         |
|  | F     | %      | F     | %      | F     | %      | F     | %      |            |    |         |
| Below Rs. 5000   | 37    | 40.7%  | 39    | 38.2%  | 64    | 59.8%  | 140   | 46.7%  | 25.511     | 6  | .0001** |
| Rs. 5000-10000   | 36    | 39.6%  | 52    | 51.0%  | 38    | 35.5%  | 126   | 42.0%  |            |    |         |
| Above Rs. 10000  | 18    | 19.8%  | 9     | 8.8%   | 3     | 2.8%   | 30    | 10.0%  |            |    |         |
| Any Other  | 0     | 0.0%   | 0     | 0.0%   | 0     | 0.0%   | 0     | 0.0%   |            |    |         |
| Total  | 91    | 100.0% | 102   | 100.0% | 107   | 100.0% | 300   | 100.0% |            |    |         |

- 59.8% of the respondents belonging to 35-45year and 40.7% of the respondents from the 18-25years age group used to spend below Rs. 5000 during COVID-19, whereas 51% of the respondents belonging to the 25-35 years age group were spending between Rs. 5000-10,000 during COVID-19 and only 10% of the respondents spend above Rs.10,000 during COVID-19. A highly Significant association of present status was observed concerning money spent during COVID-19 ( $p=0.0001^{**}$ ).

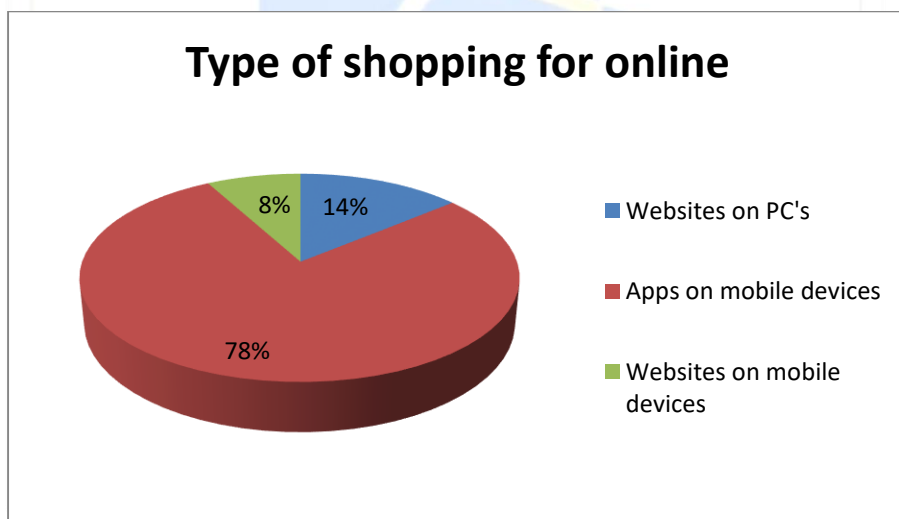
- Most of the respondents (49.5%) from the 18-25years age group, 44.9% of respondents from the 35-45years age group, and 43.1% of respondents from the 25-35years age group were monthly purchasing their clothing before COVID-19 and only 9.7% of the respondents from all age groups were purchasing annually. A highly significant association of present status was observed concerning the frequency of buying clothes before COVID-19 ( $p=0.0001^{**}$ ).

- 29.9% of the respondents belonging to 35-45years and 29.4% of respondents from the 25-35years age group purchased clothing in half-year during COVID-19, whereas 34.1% of the respondent belonging to the 18-25 years age group was purchasing their clothing when the need arises during COVID-19 and only 10 % of the respondents from all age groups purchasing clothing annually. A significant association of present status was observed concerning the frequency of buying clothes during COVID-19( $p=0.043^*$ ).

- Maximum of the respondents (37.4%) to 18-25years get their designs from magazines, the internet, and television, and 36.3% of the respondents, 25-35years get their designs from influence whereas 36.4% of the respondents belonging to 35-45 years age group get their designs for stitching by tailor’s choice. A highly Significant association of present status was observed for sources of designs for clothes ( $p=0.0001^{**}$ ).

- 64.8% of the respondents from 18-25years and 41.2% of the respondents from 25-45years of age groups of customers feel affected by materials of clothing, whereas 32.7% of the female belonging to the 35-45 years age group felt affected sometimes by clothing materials. A highly significant association of present status was observed for materials of clothing ( $p=0.0001^{**}$ ).

- Majority of the respondents (34.3%) from 35-45 years and 31.9% of the respondents from 18-25years age groups wore realistic prints of clothing, whereas 32% of the females belonging to the 25-35 years age group wore geometrical prints in clothing. A highly Significant association of present status was observed for selection of prints ( $p=0.0001^{**}$ )



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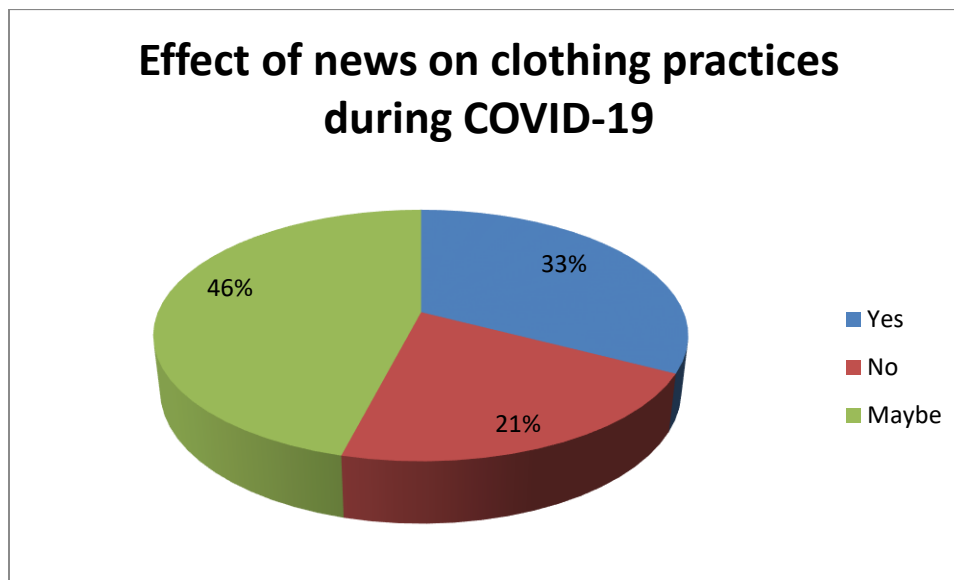
- 82.2% of the respondents from 35-45 years, 83.5% of the respondents from 18-25years and 68.6% of the respondent from the 25-35years age group shop online from apps on mobile devices. A significant association of present status was observed concerning the type of shopping online ( $p=0.018$ ).

| Effected online shopping during COVID-19 | Age   |        |       |        |       |        |       |        | Chi-square | Df | p-value |
|--|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|------------|----|---------|
|  | 18-25 |        | 25-35 |        | 35-45 |        | Total |        |            |    |         |
|  | F     | %      | F     | %      | F     | %      | F     | %      |            |    |         |
| No effect                                | 22    | 24.2%  | 24    | 23.5%  | 18    | 16.8%  | 64    | 21.3%  | 16.970     | 6  | .009**  |
| Decreased online shopping                | 14    | 15.4%  | 31    | 30.4%  | 42    | 39.3%  | 87    | 29.0%  |            |    |         |
| Shopped online for first time            | 18    | 19.8%  | 17    | 16.7%  | 10    | 9.3%   | 45    | 15.0%  |            |    |         |
| Increased online shopping                | 37    | 40.7%  | 30    | 29.4%  | 37    | 34.6%  | 104   | 34.7%  |            |    |         |
| Total                                    | 91    | 100.0% | 102   | 100.0% | 107   | 100.0% | 300   | 100.0% |            |    |         |

- 40.7% of the respondents belonging to 18-25years and 29.4% belonging to the 25-45years age groups increase online shopping during COVID-19, whereas 39.3% of the respondent from the 35-45 years age group shopped for the first time during COVID-19. A highly Significant association of present status was observed for effected online shopping (p=0.009\*\*)

| Mode of payment of clothing during COVID-19 | Age   |        |       |        |       |        |       |        | Chi-square | Df | p-value |
|---|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|-------|--------|------------|----|---------|
|   | 18-25 |        | 25-35 |        | 35-45 |        | Total |        |            |    |         |
|   | F     | %      | F     | %      | F     | %      | F     | %      |            |    |         |
| Cash  | 18    | 19.8%  | 26    | 25.5%  | 13    | 12.1%  | 57    | 19.0%  | 12.374     | 6  | .054*   |
| UPI id                                      | 39    | 42.9%  | 37    | 36.3%  | 57    | 53.3%  | 133   | 44.3%  |            |    |         |
| Debit/credit card                           | 24    | 26.4%  | 21    | 20.6%  | 18    | 16.8%  | 63    | 21.0%  |            |    |         |
| Net banking                                 | 10    | 11.0%  | 18    | 17.6%  | 19    | 17.8%  | 47    | 15.7%  |            |    |         |
| Total                                       | 91    | 100.0% | 102   | 100.0% | 107   | 100.0% | 300   | 100.0% |            |    |         |

- 42.9% of the respondent from 18-25 years, 36.3% of the respondent from 25-35years, and 53.3% of the respondent belonging to the 35-45 years age groups used UPI mode of payment for clothing during COVID-19. A significant association of present status was observed for mode of payment (p=0.054).



- The majority of the respondents (44.1%) belonging to 25-35years and 56.1% of the respondents from the 35-45years age group may be affected by news on clothing practices during COVID-19, whereas 37.4% of the respondents belonging to the 18-25 years age group were affected by news on clothing practices during COVID-19. A significant association of present status was observed for the effect of the news on clothing practices during COVID-19 ( $p=0.033^*$ )
- During Z-proportion, an in-depth comparison of purchasing clothing before covid-19 and during covid-19, the ratio is highly significant in half-yearly, monthly, when the need arises, and on occasion ( $p= .0001^{**}$ ).
- During Z-proportion, an in-depth comparison of money spend on clothing before covid-19 and during covid-19, the ratio is highly significant in below Rs.5000 and above Rs. 10, 000 ( $p= .0001^{**}$ ).
- During Z-proportion, an in-depth comparison of stores/places for shopping before covid-19 and during covid-19, the ratio is highly significant in retail shops, branded showrooms, street markets, departmental stores and online ( $p= .0001^{**}$ ).

## Conclusion

Clothing is important because it reflects an individual's culture, personality, and preferences. People often form the first impression based on what a person wears. There is a significant impact of COVID-19 on buying behavior and clothing practices of consumers. It can be concluded that there were significant differences in the buying behavior as well as in clothing practices of consumers before and during COVID-19 regarding the amount of money spent on clothing, frequency, mode, and place of purchase. These differences were more prominent among female consumers of different age groups.



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