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Change in consumer buying behavior after pandemic among women

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Abstract
Our lives as we knew them had undergone a substantial disruption by the second quarter of 2020. Consumers' buying preferences have quickly changed as a result of the COVID-19 issue, with many choosing to either spend more money online or make their first purchase there. Therefore, an attempt was made to assess the impact of COVID-19 on consumer buying behavior among women. This study was used to find out the differences between the pre and post pandemic behavioral change towards the buying pattern. Therefore, an attempt was made to assess the impact of COVID-19 on consumer buying behavior among women. This study was used to find out the differences between the pre and post pandemic behavioral change towards the buying pattern. Questions regarding change in buying behavior with respect to 14 Items namely- grocery, perishable food items, immunity boosters, medicine, medical advice, clothing, foot wares, home furniture, sanitary items, cosmetics, stationery items, electronic devices, jewelry items and furnishing items were asked.

Keywords: Consumer buying behavior, Covid-19 Pandemic, online and offline buying, working women, homemakers

Introduction
If there's one thing we can count on in these times, it's that COVID-19 has dramatically altered our behavior. The COVID-19 pandemic, which spread around the world, posed a serious threat to both public health and the majority of economies (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020) [1]. The COVID-19 epidemic completely altered consumer behavior in addition to altering how we all live and work. Due to these significant changes in customer purchasing patterns, consumer services companies must adapt their business models. In 2020, both brands and consumers had to swiftly change daily routines and habits due to mandates lockdown, closing brick-and-mortar stores, and people being unexpectedly confined to their homes. Customers developed new behaviors as a result, driving long term-trends in social media and online retail. Online sales were increasing both in volume and value. In fact, it's predicted that the value of worldwide e-commerce sales will exceed $7 trillion in 2024. Numerous causes, including as the advent of mobile shopping, the expansion of social media, and the rising acceptance of subscription services, were driving this growth (Rajnerowicz, 2022) [2]. Consumer behavior was always shifting, and the recent changes significantly affected companies. The pandemic substantially changed consumer shopping habits, increased the demand for multitasking, and pushed the trend towards internet shopping. There were no signs that the quick transition from offline to internet commerce will slow down. Ecommerce helps the economy through enhancing consumer experiences, fostering innovation, and raising productivity. E-commerce also offers potential for environmental protection for both forward-thinking vendors and environmentally conscientious customers. The financial and environmental advantages of e-commerce were undoubtedly increased as it develops.

Objective: To study the impact of pandemic on online and offline buying behavior among women

Methodology
Sample and its selection
The sample size for the present study was 120 i.e., working women (60) and homemakers (60). List of public schools was collected from DEO office and ten schools were purposively selected for data collection. The age group of the selected sample was 30-50 years. Questions regarding change in buying behavior with respect to 14 items namely- grocery, perishable food items, immunity boosters, medicine, medical advice, clothing, foot wares, home furniture, sanitary items, cosmetics, stationery items, electronic devices, jewelry items and furnishing items were asked.

Statistical analysis

Frequency and percentage were used to analyze the data.

Results

Pre and post COVID-19 buying behavior

The findings and discussion about the pre and post COVID-19 buying behavior of respondents who were working women and homemakers regarding both online and offline buying are included in this section.

Pre Covid offline buying behaviour

The following table shows the number of respondents used offline purchasing before COVID-19 pandemic for the following Items

Table 1: Frequency percentage distribution of the respondents of pre COVID offline Buying Behavior (n=120)

S. No	Items	Working women (n=60)		Homemakers (n=60)		Total	
		F	%	f	%	F	%
1.	Grocery	60	100	60	100	120	100
2.	Perishable food Items	59	98.33	59	98.33	118	98.33
3.	Immunity boosters	60	100	58	96.66	118	98.33
4.	Medicine	52	86.66	53	88.33	105	87.5
5.	Medical advice	54	90	52	86.66	106	88.33
6.	Clothing	40	66.66	44	73.33	84	70
7.	Foot wares	53	88.33	49	81.66	102	85
8.	Home furniture	60	100	59	98.33	119	99.16
9.	Sanitary Items	51	85	54	90	105	87.5
10.	Cosmetics	44	73.33	45	75	89	74.16
11.	Stationery Items	56	93.33	56	93.33	112	93.33
12.	Electronic devices	41	68.33	42	70	83	69.16
13.	Jewellery Items	59	98.33	58	96.66	117	97.5
14.	Furnishing Items	56	93.33	59	98.33	115	95.83

Based on the data presented in Table 1, all working women made offline purchases of immunity boosters, groceries, and home furnishings, accounting for 100% of their purchases. The second most common purchases among working women were perishable food Items and jewellery, with a percentage of 98.33%. Stationery and furnishings followed closely behind with 93.33%, while medical advice was sought by 86.66% of working women. Footwear and medicines were purchased by 88.33% and 86.66% of working women, respectively. Sanitary Items were bought by 85% of working women, while cosmetics, electronic devices, and clothing were purchased by 73.33%, 68.33%, and 66% of them, respectively.

Similarly, among homemakers, groceries were the most common offline purchases, with 100% of them engaging in this category. Perishable goods followed closely behind at 98.33%, while furniture and furnishing Items for the home were purchased by 96.66% of homemakers. Jewellery and immunity boosters were bought by 93.33% of homemakers, followed by stationery at 93.33%. Sanitary Items and medications were purchased by 90% and 88.33% of homemakers, respectively. Seeking medical advice offline was reported by 86.66% of homemakers. Footwear, cosmetics, clothing, and electronic devices were also purchased, with percentages of 81.66%, 75%, 73.33%, and 70% among homemakers, respectively.

It can thus be said that various offline purchase preferences of both working women and homemakers, showcasing the commonalities and distinctions in their buying behaviors across different product categories. According to the survey, women are more interested in internet shopping than men. People over the age of 35 are less likely to make online purchases because they lack the necessary technological skills. (Sivanesan *et al*., 2017) [3].

Pre Covid online buying behavior

The following table shows the number of respondents used online purchasing before COVID-19 pandemic for the following Items

Table 2: Frequency percentage distribution of the respondents of pre COVID online buying behavior (n=120)

S. No	Product	Working women (n=60)		Homemakers (n=60)		Total (n=120)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Grocery	0	0	0	0	0	0
2.	Perishable food Items	1	1.66	1	1.66	2	1.66
3.	Immunity boosters	0	0	2	3.33	2	1.66
4.	Medicine	8	13.33	7	11.66	15	12.5
5.	Medical advice	6	10	8	13.33	14	11.66
6.	Clothing	20	33.33	16	26.66	36	30
7.	Foot wares	7	11.66	11	18.33	18	15
8.	Home furniture	0	0	1	1.66	1	0.83
9.	Sanitary Items	9	15	6	10	15	12.5
10.	Cosmetics	16	26.66	15	25	31	25.83
11.	Stationery Items	4	6.66	4	6.66	8	6.66
12.	Electronic devices	19	31.66	18	30	37	30.83
13.	Jewellery Items	1	1.66	2	3.33	3	2.50
14.	Furnishing Items	4	6.66	1	1.66	5	4.16

Working women showcased a pronounced inclination towards online shopping, with clothing emerging as the premier category, capturing 33.33% of their online purchases. Electronics followed suit, comprising 31.66% of their online expenditure, while cosmetics accounted for 26.66%. Notably, working women also sought the convenience of online platforms for acquiring sanitary Items (15%), medicine (13.33%), footwear (11.66%), and even medical advice (10%). Furnishings and stationery Items were also procured online, albeit to a lesser extent, representing 6.66% of their online purchases. On the other hand, perishable food, groceries, immunity boosters, home furniture, and jewellery Items constituted a minor share, each comprising less than 2% of the total online transactions.

In a parallel vein, homemakers exhibited distinct preferences in their online buying habits. Electronic devices emerged as the favored category, constituting 30% of their online purchases. Clothing closely followed at 26.66%, with cosmetics capturing 25% of their virtual shopping. Homemakers also showcased a penchant for acquiring footwear (18.33%), seeking medical advice (13.33%), and purchasing medicine (11.66%) through online platforms. Additionally, online purchases of sanitary Items (10%) and stationery Items (6.66%) were prevalent among homemakers. Meanwhile, jewellery and immunity boosters represented a modest proportion, with each category accounting for 3.33% of their online transactions. Groceries, perishable foods, home furniture, and furnishings held a marginal presence, each accounting for less than 2% of the overall online purchases.

In essence, the data underscores the distinctive online buying behaviors of both working women and homemakers, reflecting their specific preferences and priorities in pre-COVID times. Trustworthiness and convenience have been identified as the two most significant influencing factors for online purchasing. (Jadhav & Khanna, 2016) [4].

Post Covid offline buying behavior

The following table shows how many respondents used to do offline purchasing after COVID-19 pandemic of the following Items.

Table 3: Frequency percentage distribution of the respondents of post COVID offline buying behavior (n=120)

S. No	Product	Working women (n=60)		Homemakers (n=60)		Total (n=120)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Grocery	37	61.66	39	65	76	63.33
2.	Perishable food Items	45	75	49	81.66	94	78.33
3.	Immunity boosters	45	75	41	68.33	86	71.66
4.	Medicine	40	66.66	37	61.66	77	64.16
5.	Medical advice	46	76.66	47	78.33	93	77.50
6.	Clothing	19	31.66	18	30	37	30.83
7.	Foot wears	44	73.33	45	75	89	74.16
8.	Home furniture	47	78.33	48	80	95	79.16
9.	Sanitary Items	42	70	44	73.33	86	71.66
10.	Cosmetics	34	56.66	35	58.33	69	57.5
11.	Stationery Items	51	85	51	85	102	85
12.	Electronic devices	29	48.33	21	35	50	41.66
13.	Jewellery Items	53	88.33	56	93.33	109	90.83
14.	Furnishing Items	46	76.66	48	80	94	78.33

The analysis presented in Table 3 reveals intriguing insights into the post-COVID purchasing habits of working women and homemakers. Among working women, jewellery claimed the top spot as the most coveted offline item, with an overwhelming 88.33% of respondents indulging in its purchase. Following closely behind, stationery Items held their allure, capturing the attention of 85% of respondents. Notably, home furniture emerged as a significant category, with 78.33% of participants investing in tasteful additions to their living spaces. Furnishing Items and medical advice also garnered substantial interest, each being sought after by 76.66% of respondents. The vital need for sustenance and health was evident, as 75% of participants opted for perishable food Items and immunity boosters. Footwear (73.33%), sanitary Items (70%), medicine (66.66%), grocery (61.66%), cosmetics (56.66%), electronic devices (48.33%), and clothing (31.66%) represented varying degrees of offline purchasing priorities.

Similarly, homemakers showcased distinct offline buying preferences in the aftermath of the COVID pandemic. Jewellery remained a dominant choice, capturing the attention of a remarkable 93.33% of respondents. Stationery Items, maintaining their allure, were favored by 85% of participants. A significant emphasis on nourishment was observed, as 81.66% of homemakers opted for perishable food Items. Home furniture and furnishing Items were also highly sought after, with 80% of respondents investing in enhancing their living spaces. Seeking professional advice for medical concerns resonated with 78.33% of participants. Footwear (75%), sanitary Items (73.33%), immunity boosters (68.33%), grocery (65%), medicine (61.66%), and cosmetics (58.33%) reflected substantial offline purchasing preferences. In contrast, electronic devices (35%) and clothing (30%) recorded relatively lower levels of offline purchases.

Overall, the post-COVID period according to this study witnessed distinctive shifts in offline buying behavior among both working women and homemakers, with jewellery, stationery Items, and perishable food items emerging as popular choices among respondents.

Post Covid online buying behavior of women

The following table shows how many respondents used to do online purchasing after COVID-19 pandemic of the following Items.

Table 4: Frequency percentage distribution of the respondents of post COVID online buying behavior (n=120)

S. No	Product	Working women (n=60)		Homemakers (n=60)		Total (n=120)	
		F	%	F	%	F	%
1.	Grocery	23	38.33	21	35	44	36.66
2.	Perishable food Items	15	25	11	18.33	26	21.66
3.	Immunity boosters	15	25	19	31.66	34	28.33
4.	Medicine	20	33.33	23	38.33	43	35.83
5.	Medical advice	14	23.33	13	21.66	27	22.5
6.	Clothing	41	68.33	42	70.	83	69.16
7.	Foot wares	16	26.66	15	25	31	25.83
8.	Home furniture	13	21.66	12	20	25	20.83
9.	Sanitary Items	18	30.	16	26.66	34	28.33
10.	Cosmetics	26	43.33	25	41.66	51	42.5
11.	Stationery Items	9	15.	9	15	18	15
12.	Electronic devices	31	51.66	39	65.00	70	58.33
13.	Jewellery Items	7	11.66	4	6.66	11	9.16
14.	Furnishing Items	14	23.33	12	20	26	21.66

The findings from Table 4 highlight intriguing trends in online purchasing behavior within the working women and homemakers categories. For working women, clothing emerged as the most popular online purchase, commanding a significant share of 68.33%. This was closely followed by electronic devices, capturing the attention of almost half the respondents at 51.66%. Cosmetics also proved to be a popular online choice, accounting for 43.33% of purchases. Beginning on March 25, 2020, the Indian government will enforce a statewide curfew. Due to the lockout, clients were pushed to make hasty purchases. People in large cities are accustomed to ordering groceries and other essentials online. Among the top online grocery retailers are Amazon, Flipkart, Grofers, Big Basket, and others. Online shopping has been significantly impacted by the closure. Due to a lack of supplies, transportation, and manpower, online retailers were only able to offer a minimal amount of service, if any at all. The epidemic has a negative impact on customers' trust, loyalty, and satisfaction (Meshram, 2020) [5]. Additionally, grocery items (38.33%), medicine (33.33%), and sanitary Items (30%) were sought after by a substantial proportion of working women. Footwear (26.66%) and perishable food Items along with immunity boosters (25%) were also notable online purchases. Medical advice and furnishing Items each accounted for 23.33% of online transactions, while home furniture (21.66%), stationery Items (15%), and jewellery Items (11.66%) held varying degrees of online popularity.

In the realm of homemakers, clothing dominated online purchases with a substantial share of 70%. Electronic devices followed suit at 65%, showcasing the tech-savviness of this group. Cosmetics were also favored online, with 41.66% of respondents opting for virtual beauty shopping. Medicine (38.13%) and grocery items (35%) represented significant online buying preferences among homemakers. The importance of immunity boosters was evident, with 31.66% of respondents procuring them online. Furthermore, sanitary Items (26.66%), footwear (25%), and medical advice (21.66%) were notable online purchases. Home furniture and furnishing Items each accounted for 20% of online transactions, while perishable food Items, stationery Items, and jewellery Items all represented less than 20% of online purchases.

These results emphasize the online shopping preferences of both working women and homemakers. Clothing and electronic devices emerged as popular choices for online purchases in both categories, underscoring the convenience and accessibility offered by e-commerce platforms. Additionally, the prominence of cosmetics, grocery items, and healthcare-related Items further highlights the evolving consumer behavior in the digital age. According to the findings, five important factors—herd behaviour, social media exposure, anxiety sensitivity, cost, and product availability—are what drive panic buying among Malaysian consumers. (Gazali, 2020) [6].

- **Overall change in buying behavior of women (per and post pandemic)**

a). Change in offline buying behavior.

According to the depicted figure 1, substantial fluctuations have been observed across various product categories. Notably, electronics, groceries, and clothing experienced significant changes of 36.67%, 39.17%, and 27.5% respectively. These findings indicate a notable shift in consumer behavior towards online purchases in these sectors. Conversely, jewellery, shoes, and medical advice exhibited minimal changes, with fluctuations of 6.67%, 10.84%, and 10.83% respectively. These results highlight the relatively stable nature of consumer preferences for these specific product categories. The data thus demonstrates dynamic patterns in consumer buying habits, showcasing significant shifts towards online shopping for electronics, groceries, and clothing, while indicating minimal changes in the domains of jewellery, footwear, and medical advice.

b.) Change in online buying behavior

The above graph 2 illustrates the changes, which were 39.16%, 36.66%, 27.5%, 26.73%, and 20% in the categories of clothing, groceries, electronics, immunity boosters, and home furnishings, respectively. Jewellery saw the smallest changes, increasing by 6.66%, stationery experienced an 8.4% increase, and footwear showed a 10.83% increase. Situational factors have an impact on people's attitudes about and likelihood of making online purchases (Perea y Monsuwé *et al*., 2004) [7].

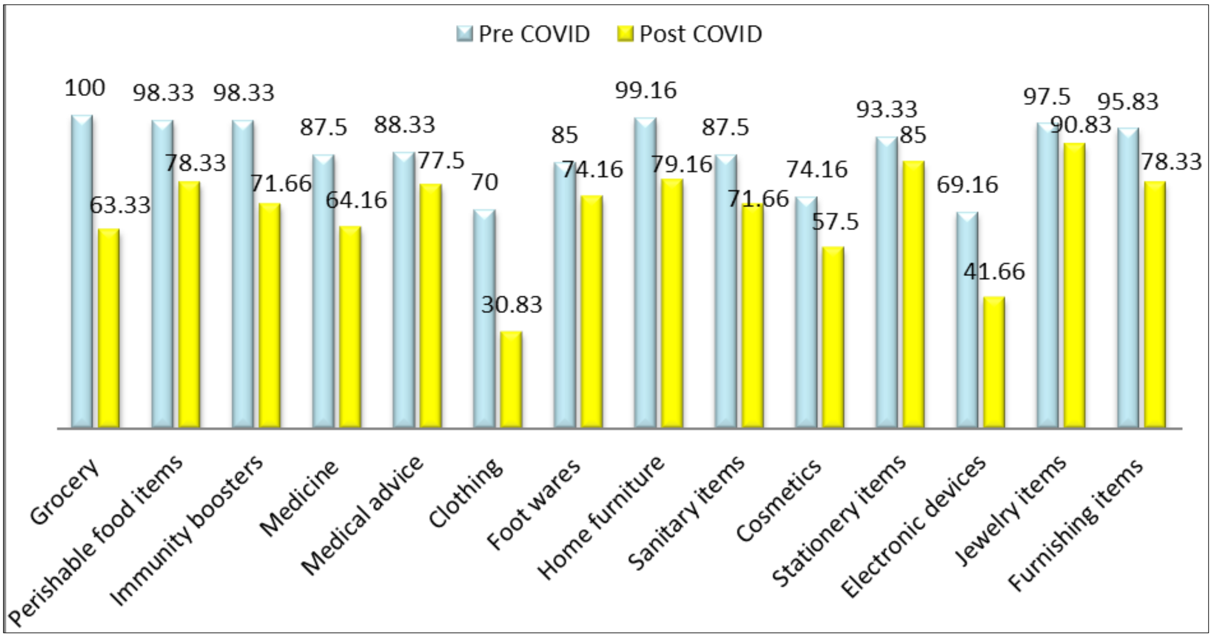

Fig 1: Change in pre and post offline buying behavior

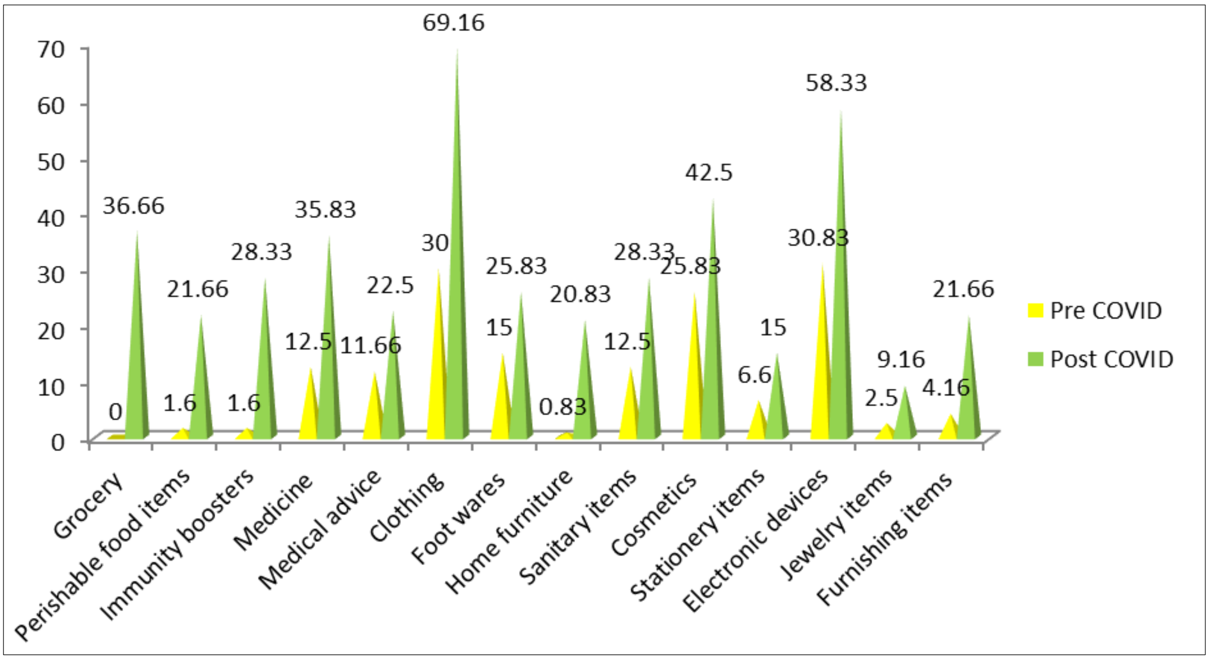

Fig 2: Change in pre and post online buying behavior

Conclusion

The study indicates that there were significant shifts in buying behavior among both working women and homemakers due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Jewelry, stationery products, and perishable food items emerged as popular offline purchases after the pandemic. Clothing, electronic devices, and cosmetics were favored in online purchases post-COVID-19. The findings highlight the specific preferences and priorities of working women and homemakers in their buying behavior. The study provides insights into the evolving consumer behavior in the context of the pandemic, which can be valuable for businesses and marketers.

Implications for the Community

- **Understanding Consumer Behavior:** The study provides valuable insights into the buying behavior of working women and homemakers. This understanding can help businesses and marketers tailor their products, services, and marketing strategies to better meet the needs and preferences of these consumer segments. By aligning their offerings with consumer preferences, businesses can enhance customer satisfaction and drive economic growth.
- **Gender Equality:** The study highlights the importance of gender equality in economic participation. Understanding the unique challenges and preferences of working women and homemakers can help identify areas where gender disparities exist. By addressing these disparities and creating equal opportunities for both genders, communities can foster a more inclusive and equitable society.
- **Support for Small Businesses:** The research indicates the potential for small businesses to tap into the buying preferences of working women and homemakers.

Communities can support local entrepreneurship and small-scale enterprises by providing training, access to capital, and marketing assistance. This can create opportunities for economic growth, job creation, and community development.

Recommendations for Future Studies

i) **Impact of Technology:** Examine how technology affects working women's and homemakers' purchasing decisions. Examine how various digital platforms are adopted and used, online shopping habits, and attitudes towards technological solutions.

ii) **Marketing Strategies:** Analyse the success of various marketing tactics aimed at working women and homemakers. Assess the effects of customer engagement programmes, loyalty programmes, promotional offers, and personalised marketing on consumers' purchasing decisions.

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