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International Journal of Engineering Technology Research & Management

## THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOR TOWARDS E-COMMERCE IN TURKEY

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### Abstract

In 2019, Corona Virus appeared the first time in China, and after many months it appeared in the whole world. The Corona Virus has set barriers to all kinds of social life, because of precautionary measures followed by countries and governments worldwide where the virus emerged. As a result, this created a widespread of studies about the virus on social media platforms. Moreover, because of Corona Virus, e-commerce became commonplace. It became a well-known habit in many countries affected by the virus and that's all because of limited circumstances due to COVID 19 pandemic. In addition, the fear appeal of Corona Virus had an impact on humans into tending to buy online where purchasing the sanitary products became a priority and ranked first place and affected customers' shopping trends in Turkey during the pandemic. Thus, the aim of this article is to shed light on the role of Corona Virus on consumer behavior towards e-commerce.

**Keywords:** Corona Virus, Fear Appeal, E-Commerce, Consumer Behaviour, Online Shopping, Turkey, New Normal.

### ÖZET

Koronavirüs 2019'da Çin'de ilk kez ortaya çıktı ve aylar sonra tüm dünyada görüldü. Koronavirüs Tüm ülkeler ve hükümetleri virüsün yayılımını önlemek üzere her türde sosyal hayata sınır koydu. Sonuç olarak bu, sosyal medya platformlarında virüsle ilgili çalışmaların yaygınlaşmasına neden oldu. Bunun ötesinde koronavirüs nedeniyle e-ticaret ortak alan haline geldi. Bu virüsün etkilediği bir çok ülkede COVID-19 kısıtlamaları nedeniyle alışkanlık haline geldi. Virüsten etkilenen birçok ülkede iyi bilinen bir alışkanlık haline geldi ve bunların hepsi COVID 19 salgını nedeniyle sınırlı koşullar nedeniyle. Buna ek olarak, Corona Virüs'ün korku çekiciliği, sıhhi ürünleri satın almanın öncelikli hale geldiği ve ilk sırada yer aldığı ve salgın sırasında Müşterilerin Türkiye'deki alışveriş trendlerini etkilediği çevrimiçi satın alma eğiliminde insanlar üzerinde etkili oldu. Bu nedenle, bu makalenin amacı Corona Virüsünün e-ticarete yönelik tüketici davranışı üzerindeki rolüne ışık tutmaktır.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Corona Virüs, Korku İtirazı, E-Ticaret, Tüketici Davranışı, Online Alışveriş, Türkiye, Yeni Normal.

### Introduction

Since December 2019, the worldwide network has been coping with COVID-19, unfolding nations across the world (WHO,2020). This international disaster has had effects on both, the financial and social levels. It has ravaged the world's economies and healthcare structures and instilled widespread fear, panic, and uncertainty in humans of all nations (Naeem, 2021).

To unfold the pandemic, the mobility of humans and items have decreased in most nations, as governments have been compelled to use a complete or partial lockdown, leading to disruptions in the regular functioning of markets, monetary and social facilities (Hesham, et al., 2021:1). Furthermore, the volatility in oil expenses that was noticed in the beginning of the COVID-19 disaster have negatively impacted the oil-primarily, which in turn affected the economies of numerous nations across the world. In addition to the drops of their gross home product (GDP), numerous nations, like Azerbaijan, have confronted downturns of their oil and fueling sectors, which therefore induced similarly downturns in the wider economy (Hesham, et al., 2021:1). Furthermore, in Azerbaijan, oil charge traits have brought about better inflation and reduced intake of products and offerings. Several questions have arisen, leading to the need of an evaluation of buying behaviors in the course of the primary wave of the COVID-19 pandemic. The dating among authority's measures to fight the pandemic and their facet effects, together with triggering panic buying, are now being tested (Prentice, et al., 2020).

Consumers' sentiments have impacted their preference of purchases and buying channels, which led to the new adjustments with the aid of using COVID-19 and the associated interventions of public government. The disaster has opened the eye on the types of purchasers: (i) purchasers who continue to be pessimistic and maintain stockpile important items, with the likelihood to prefer online buying, and (ii) purchasers who're highly positive and maintain to buy nonessential items and offerings through numerous channels. In a current take a look at analyzing the notions of self-regulatory idea and private well-being, a dating turned into set up among COVID-19 as a disruptive perceived risk and stockpiling behavior (United Nations, 2020: 9). Moreover, Corona Virus played a crucial role in altering the economic situations all around the world the thing that impacted the customer's behavior, shifting from normal shopping routines and trends to online shopping. Add to that, Turkey's e-commerce volume increased by 66% year-on-year throughout 2020, as the coronavirus pandemic kept consumers at home, fueling a surge in online shopping.

### **1. Impact of COVID-19 on Global and Turkish Economy**

Due to the Corona Virus pandemic, the international economics has probably shrunk 1% in 2020. Furthermore, the United Nation has warned that if this grows more, then it's going to have an impact on the economic system (Uygun, 2020:25).

Additionally, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (ESA) elaborated that the Corona Virus pandemic has affected the global trade and the international delivery chain. To some, the dwelling fashion has modified, and it has affected business, retail area, tourism, education, industries etc. Millions of humans are dropping their jobs and going through problems. In the destiny, 0 percent boom price will fall in each area. (Dwivedi, 2020).

In the second quarter, it was noticed that the economy of Turkey contracted by 9.9% due to the halt as a result of lockdown and this was perceived as the worst couple of years that have passed on the country and were considered the worst ever, but later the economy started to recover and stood still. The number of companies engaged in e-commerce operations in Turkey surged by 275% to 256,861 and this was an indicator of the dynamic development of the sector in the country. BeratAlbayrak, presenter of Turkey's new medium-term program, declared that GDP growth would be slow in the fourth quarter in comparison to the third quarter, but would increase to 5.8% in 2021. Nevertheless, he was cautious and warned the economy may decrease by 1.5% shrink this year and this will be considered as the worst-case scenario, but will accelerate by 3.7% growth the following year (Kucukgocmen and spicer. 2020).

G-7 nations and china international boom price might fall 1.2% in 2020. And with inside the awful situation the worldwide output might be 0.9% in the region of developing 2.5%). Actually, it's going to have an effect on the economic system because of reasons, one the humans are constrained to head everywhere, and secondly Economic motion isn't always going for walks nicely and the primary financial will are available in crisis (WHO, 2020).

Moreover, it's expected that COVID-19 pandemic will affect the following sectors:

#### **A- Decrease in Imports**

Several surveys stated that if this lockdown is prolonged it's going to now no longer have an effect on growing nations financial will even fall in evolved nations exchange and funding channels (Uygun, 2020:26).

Due to long time lockdown, evolved nation's import and export will even have an effect on. Those growing nations depending on export of products and offerings and tourism, will depend on imports and this is what Turkey is facing. (Uygun, 2020:26).

#### **B- Tourism in the world and turkey**

In the reaction of pandemic, it was clear that each one of global journeys has been limited with the aid of using government. While almost all people were suffering from the pandemic and the ensuing socioeconomic impacts, many huge efforts were exerted for change and development. Moving unexpectedly alongside the journey connections and delivery corridors (United Nations, 2020: 8).

That make up the essential arteries of the worldwide economy, to unfold the virus which has batted from the underlying interconnectedness – and frailties – of globalization. Coming in opposition to a backdrop of already fragile financial conditions, the pandemic has created disruptions on a remarkable scale and exposed the vulnerability of many already deprived families and sectors; Since the pandemic may last long, it has become apparent that to recover, we can't avoid global approaches to trade and development during the outbreak. A report of UNCTAD targets the true meaning of "better recovery" and explains what is must constitute of. This

report identifies some areas in which the pandemic is rising trends that are piling up and increasing due to the global financial crisis in investment, trade and technological change. We believe that recovery from the pandemic is an important tool we can use to reform global production networks and rearrange multilateral cooperation and reshape them to have better results to achieve workable goals of development. (kituyi, 2020)

Although small businesses and sellers in Turkey were hardly affected by the outbreak, eyes are on the country's tourism industry. According to Firuz Bağlıkaya, developing vaccines in European countries is a hopeful sign for the tourism industry. Tourists from these countries may be more inclined to travel, since the tourism industry relies on foreign traffic and this is very important and encouraging. Furthermore, establishments in Turkey ensures safety standards due to the Safe Tourism Certification Program and as a result, more tourists will visit the country and tour its famous sites. Turkey may be back on its feet for the 2021 tourism four seasons with increased vaccine rollouts and continued safety protocols and measures (Borgen project, 2021).

## **2. E-commerce during Corona Virus outbreak**

Electronic Commerce is the buying or selling of items or services via on line, and the transfer of money to complete the sales. It's also known as internet commerce (Zande, 2020).

Online purchasing has revolutionized the advertising system, as purchasers have grown familiar with online buying (Bucko, et al. 2018:10). With the eruption of COVID-19, this shift in customer conduct has significantly accelerated, prompting organizations to offer products and services to their customers in offices or stores that the business owns or rents inside the virtual space. Thus, people are formulating new answers to follow the new normal (Carnevale and Hatch, 2020:190).

Restrictive lockdown regulations and social-distancing practices have critically affected purchasers' conduct worldwide (Sheth, 2020:280). As a result, diverse varieties of organizations were pressured to discover new methods to attain home bound purchasers and to re-penetrate the markets. (Bucko et al. 2018: 10), explained that if purchasers include virtual technology in their lifestyles, their every day workouts and behavior, it would fill the gap in online purchasing globally. It was found that the 5 fundamental elements that impact the purchasers' attitudes and behaviors are: "Psychological, Social, Cultural, Personal, and Economic factors" (Sheth, 2020:280).

Moreover, China (Home of covid-19) had emerged as the most important e-trade marketplace in the global and tested how China's family intake boom changed into fashioned through e-trade elements (Wang, 2020: 2917). The Chinese located an affiliation among intake boom and e-trade development, and they advised that e-trade sports specially contributed to the discount of intake inequalities. Moreover, they located that the intake of long lasting and in-fashion items exhibited more boom, in comparison with that of neighborhood services (Bayad, 2020:268),

Moreover, E-commerce, experienced a sharp rise in the first two months of the outbreak and the pandemic accelerated the transformation of e-commerce in Turkey (Nielsen Turkey CEO DidemŞekerelErdoğan). In general, e-commerce in Turkey was already rising even before COVID-19 and has performed a strong growth in the country in recent years. Online retail sales recorded 43 percent of value growth in 2019, compared to the previous year. Retailers in Turkey were already on a digital transformation journey. They were investing more in e-commerce. With the pandemic, they suddenly started having conference calls, working from home. COVID-19 became a catalyst to more use online from all perspectives. (Yinanç, 2020: 02)

## **3. Impulse Buying**

Impulsive buying is the tendency of a customer to buy goods and services without previous planning. It is when a customer takes a buying decision at the moment's spur, and such an action is usually triggered by emotions and feelings (The economic times, 2021)

It is important to mention that impulse purchasing is an important phenomenon for researchers in consumer behavior and retailing (Piron, 1991. 509).

Emotions on the time of purchasing (Youn and Faber, 2000:180) play a very important role and as a result a customer is attracted to the product. It was seen that many factors attract a customer to buy like signs, forms, style, price of an item Individuals especially those who are looking for a variety of products to buy. (Sharma et al., 2010:277).

Due to COVID-19 pandemic, online purchases have become the new normal (Wang and Chapa, 2021: 2). During the pandemic, impulse shopping was represented in panic buying, for the reason of ensuring stockpiling of products, mainly including food, drugs, cleansing products, sanitizers and hygiene products (Islam et al.,

2020). A survey conducted in the early days of the pandemic, it was noticed that the stockpiling behavior of Danish and British consumers changed a lot such that 4 out of 10 shoppers decreased the amount of purchase due to the pandemic while the others witnessed an accelerating buying mode and were buying impulsively. (Dammeyer, 2020:3)

The preliminary instances of panic shopping affected many countries like United States, Ukraine, China and Turkey. The countries were badly affected with inside the early degree of the pandemic and additionally with inside the United Kingdom (Bennett, 2020). In Turkey people were rushing to the stores stockpiling their goods as pictures of empty shelves and long lines formed at supermarket cashiers have been circulating on social media. People were also struggling to buy the Turkish cologne (kolonya) which contains 80 percent alcohol, which is believed to serve as an effective sanitizer, while prices of some disinfectant materials have skyrocketed (Sabah, 2021). Customers, who had previously been pretty picky about the brands, now do not care about what they are buying. The situation is all about fear of the virus just gathering stuff and piling them up, emptying the shelves and buying products that they don't need too (Yinanç, 2020).

Looking at the pandemic, where "touchless" purchases is becoming highly applicable, due to the new social distancing norms, and the risk of getting infected and impulse shopping shall be studied further with new dimensions added that it's expected that consumers behavior might not have excessive disposable income or perhaps very careful in the use of disposable income (Verma and Naveen, 2021:30).

Turkish consumers indicated that they will continue to buy online during and after the pandemic (United Nations Turkey, 2020: 43).

#### **4. Impacts of COVID-19 on Consumer Behavior**

"Consumer behavior refers to the selection, purchase and consumption of goods and services for the satisfaction of their wants" (Gajjar, 2013: 10). All consumer behaviors strongly depend on location and time. There are many factors that make a behavior differ than the other such as: cultures, geographies, etc. Moreover, the pandemic is making this dimension of consumer behavior more complex. For example, consumers are migrating into virtual worlds at an extraordinary rate and are exposed to newer impacts because of the restriction physical movement. (Puttaiah, 2020).

Add to that, because of being exposed to new environments, behavior and habit changes are also directly linked to it. Based on research, it can be concluded that a person needs between 18 and 254 days to form a new habit so on average it takes about 66 days. Moreover, people adopt habits that do not significantly change existing routines in a quicker way. Today, in response to the multiple waves of this pandemic, consumers are settling into new patterns of behavior and this is considered a fertile ground to form a new habit (Lally et al., 2009: 2).

Impact on purchasing conduct ramped up along the pandemic itself in early March 2020. Despite fluctuations with the pandemic and ongoing lockdown - reopening cycles, the general stage of patron effect has remained high, dipping underneath 80% most effective twice, with inside the months of September and October (numerator, 2021)

While shop closures in March and April led a few customers to store at new stores or preserve off on non-critical purchases or services, a lot of that effect reduced as areas reopened and altered to new working norms. One conduct that has now no longer declined and has in reality multiplied during the pandemic is customers' chance to update in-shop purchasing journeys with on-line orders (Kelly and Kohli, 2020: 40).

#### **5. Online Shopping in Turkey**

Being a crossroad among East and West, Turkey is placed among the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Sea. It has principal traits of a Mediterranean subculture. Turkish customers' demographic traits are extensively distinctive from the ones of western customers' in phrases of age and cultural aspects (Turan, 2012:78).

Turkey has elevated its relationship with many countries among Asia and Europe and served as a bridge among Eastern and Western ideals, cultures and societies (Ahuja, et al. 2003:150).

Moreover, Turkey's financial system has been vastly growing in the manner of European Union agreement and structural transformations, after its 2001 monetary crisis with 8.710 USD Gross Domestic Product, according to the World Bank (Turan, 2012:78).

According to Association of E-Commerce Operators (ETID), the expenses of online shopping increased by 85% in Turkey last year as the coronavirus pandemic changed shopping habits of people. As a result, the volume of E-commerce is expected to reach \$34 million in 2020 and score a growth in 2020 with the pandemic's effect as the Turkish e-commerce sector is projected to hit \$54 million this year. Moreover, supermarkets attracted the biggest number of customers and was ranked as the most

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avored last year as lockdown measures lead consumers to shop online, citing Trade Ministry data and online grocery shopping which surged five-folds during the COVID-19 outbreak. Adding that, the age scale spread to 17-70 while it used to be mostly 45 and below (Şahin, 2021).

As of 2008, there had been around 25 million Internet users in Turkey. During the covid-19 crisis many online communication platforms were widely used. For instance, zoom, MS teams and house party that grew most. WhatsApp was used about 75% then other application used in Turkish consumers. Consumers in emerging economies saw greatest shifts to online shopping. The Turkish consumers answers and says are all about shopping online where many admitted shopping more often than before and based on statistics, the majority agree with the new trend. (UNCTAD, 2020).

### Conclusion

With the increased popularity of the internet, the restrictions resulting from COVID-19, as well as the easiness of payments and shipping, online shopping has become more appealing (Bayad, 2020: 267). Moreover, with the willingness of personal adoption being a crucial criterion for the prosperity of a current technology, understanding the factors behind the acceptance or rejection attitude towards utilizing the specific technology becomes essential.

The Corona pandemic is believed to have affected client conduct international, impacting neighborhood and international economies. Studies have proven that client conduct has modified in reaction to the pandemic. Thus, many businesses are (have) innovating (innovated) to evolve to the brand-new circumstances. Notably, generation has end up extra influential with inside the day lives of customers and businesses.

Studies display that Corona Virus has negatively impacted international economies, disrupting each deliver chains and income channels. Consumption tendencies throughout the outbreak has become to extra lengthy-lasting merchandise. The pandemic had orientated customers' preference in the direction of merchandise and standards making certain higher health. Consumers so one can lessen infection risks, averted neighborhood markets, making supermarkets the primary preference of families for his or her supplies. The effects from this look at comes out to be primarily based totally on mental attitudes throughout disasters.

Moreover, the fallout from this look at made it feasible to evaluate the short-time period outcomes of the Corona Virus pandemic at the consuming conduct of the Turkish population. One of the issues that stays and is an item of studies in its very own proper is the feasible effect that this pandemic will purpose with inside the medium or lengthy time period.

The Internet has a full-size effect on each component of existence, consisting of purchasing conduct. Shopping at the Internet, because of its being a synthesis of advertising and marketing practices and generation control standards, has led to gaining significance for entrepreneurs and academics. Furthermore, internet gets rid of geographical barriers and guarantees customers have extra statistics with a great deal much less time and cost. Furthermore, it affords each company and customers with services and products in step with their non-public desires, needs, and needs and offers them the possibility of transport inside a great deal much less time and decrease cost. In this context, it's far vital for the businesses to recognize the conduct of customers making purchases on the Internet and increase suitable techniques accordingly (Hsieh, 2011:1271)

Theories explaining conventional client behaviors are insufficient to explain online client behaviors. It is vital to perform theoretical and empirical research shifting forward. It has been discovered that there are numerous elements which have an impact on online client behaviors; (Keisidou, 2011:35)

However, a study version has now no longer been advanced to cowl all capacity elements. Studies carried out have centered on diverse elements. For example, Cougars carried out a look at of statistics systems (Technology Acceptance Model), advertising and marketing (client conduct), and mental elements. Pavlov investigated the connection among of client recognition with self-assurance in e-trade, perceived risk, usability, and usefulness. Also, Pavlov and Benson (2006) have attempted to explain the edition of customers to digital trade via way of means of increasing the principle of deliberate conduct.

These researches ought to be performed via way of means of distinct components and ought to be made when it comes to different sciences, such as, psychology. In the Alien article, Extended Technology Acceptance Model (ETAM), one of the socio-mental theories, offer researchers and practitioners with vital statistics as to explaining the fundamentals of client conduct associated with on line purchasing and furnishes a theoretical heritage so that it will be vital for empirical research to be performed (Eroğlu, 2014: 38).

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Due to the rapid digitalization caused by the Covid-19 epidemic and the reflection of this change on consumer behavior, traditional shopping methods have been replaced by fast and practical E-Commerce in Turkey. The rapid developments in the E-Commerce sector, which steers the global economy, have brought along many problems related to logistics, unfair prices and distance sales contracts. The awareness of the addressees of this sector, which consumers are rapidly adapting to and expected to eliminate traditional shopping in the future, inform them about the rights they have in the relevant legislation, and companies operating in the E-Commerce sector carry out logistics, delivery and other operation processes with legal processes, providing medium and long-term consumer satisfaction maturity will contribute to creating customer satisfaction and loyalty. The increase in the

investments made by many companies in E-Commerce, and the replacement of physical stores by E-Commerce by spreading the digitalization plans spread over the next few years in a shorter period which will keep online shopping a trend in Turkey where customers will continue to buy online even after the outbreak (e-commerce, 2020).

The experience of living through COVID-19 is changing the world in which we live and our behavior too. Changes that provide positive experiences are likely to last longer, particularly those driven by convenience and well-being, such as digital adoption, value-based purchasing and increased health awareness. This provides an opportunity for insurers to offer innovative, modular, granular, value-based and integrated products to meet customer needs. It is vital that insurers understand consumers' preferences to stay relevant and adapt accordingly. In the end, it's expected that after the COVID-19 pandemic, the consumers' behavior in Turkey will inevitably shift from market shopping to online shopping and spread the "New Normal" all around the country for both a better life style and shopping style.

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