"*SHIFTING CHANNELS*: THE IMPACT OF THE POST-PANDEMIC ON THE CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR; DIGITAL TRANSFORMATION EVIDENCE FROM UZBEKISTAN"

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Abstract. *This paper investigates how Consumer Buying Behavior have changed due to the post pandemic socio economic factors and how Covid-19th accelerated Digital Buying Behavior. In fact, there is no sphere that the pandemic has not impacted. One of the most impacted industries is consumer goods which is dramatically impacted through the changes in consumption patterns of people during the pandemic period. The trends followed by pandemics have already become the most outstanding research topics for investigating new studies. This research investigates the impacts of Covid-19 on consumer buying behavior, how the consumers purchasing habits have been influenced by the pandemic and analyses the trends in consumer behavior during the lockdown. The motivation for choosing this topic came from reading several existing research articles about a similar topic but mostly in western and European countries. I have found out that no studies have been conducted in Tashkent city. In order to gain the most reliable and accurate data, the researcher has conducted a primary data collection through Google survey questionnaire among the consumers of Tashkent to achieve the best results in collecting accurate data. The results of the survey will be presented in the form of statistical data using SPSS and Smart PLS.The finding of the research study shows that the Covid-19 Pandemic has significantly and positively impacted on Consumer Buying Behaviour.*

Key words*: Covid-19 pandemic impacts, digital buying behavior, consumer buying behavior, online channels, consumer habits, consumption patterns, Tashkent.*

Introduction

The world has witnessed several epidemic periods regarding different viruses for the last two decades. People's living standards, social relations and communication, economy, manufacturing, culture, government regulations and all the other fields have been affected by Covid-19 (ALESSA et al.,2021).

The Covid-19 pandemic has caused destruction worldwide, has been impacting all the parts of the world for two years. Significant competition has been shaped throughout all the sectors due to the pandemic (Frontiers,2021). Businesses are gradually tending to respond to the changing trends in markets and consumer behavior that was affected due to the pandemic. Individuals considerably altered their habits, lifestyles due to the strict lockdowns enforced by governments. Companies also changed their marketing strategies in response to covid-19th, moving from physical stores to online selling, creating or re-designing Company's websites, creating social media accounts to keep being up to date. Some businesses that could not circumnavigate went bankrupt. Therefore, many

businesses are now making their strategies to overcome and maintain the challenges in the crisis period (Frontiers,2021).

Consumer buying behavior experienced a dramatic change, and thus, businesses all over the world designing and implementing resistant policies and strategies to go back to typical working (Frontiers,2021). Many businesses increased digitalization in their operations, transferring to online selling and a significant decline in in-store trading. Those who did not use to buying online before the pandemic, started to alter their buying habits to one-click purchases. Businesses were adopting their payment system to more digital payment schemes as consumers were in need of a safer method of payment (Frontiers,2021).

Food and Beverages and other consumer product manufacturing companies are experiencing a dramatic decrease in food consumption and supply chains. Human consumption at home has risen while eating out has decreased. These changes in human needs and consumer behavior during crisis times may last longer (Deloitte,2021).

Uzbekistan has also witnessed numerous challenges in consumer goods which includes the food and beverages sector during the crisis period, such as food security, supply chain management, manufacturing operations, safety, re-creating and updating business models, digitalization of marketing strategies, and many other unexpected things disturb. Also, consumer buying behavior was considerably altered in Uzbekistan (Reuters,2021).

Some businesses in Uzbekistan, such as restaurants, shops, theatres, cinemas, or tour agents where customers visit have stopped their operations completely during quarantine period. Thus, the demand for goods and services declined due to lockdown and the inability to visit the stores physically. Restrictions have led to changes in consumers buying behaviour. Similarly, the lack of consumer goods has been causing the online businesses to face problems (Kun.uz,2021). As the crisis has impacted consumer buying behavior, businesses are trying to alter their marketing activities to adapt to the pandemic changes (Hoekstra and Leefang,2020). The application of marketing during and after the pandemic will continue to transfer its strategy during the period of the pandemic (Hoekstra and Leefang,2020). Therefore, this study helps to deeper understand the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on consumer behavior and by considering several factors.

Within the last decade, the globe had witnessed and suffered the outbreak of the myriads of various epidemics. To exemplify, Ebola, SARS, MERS, swine flu, dengue fever, and others (Balinska and Rizzo, 2009). And yet, the epidemics had entailed a huge variety of influence on two basic human conduct, which is consumer behavior as well as the behavior of mitigation. Furthermore, critical economic circumstances were recognized in the nations that had undergone a high ratio of unemployment, uncertainty, and recessions, as the post epidemic affects. Nevertheless, there is a “RANAS” model which has been utilized in the pandemic literature. To be more specific, the model was customized in the scope of having a better and systematic understanding of the health-related conduct of the individuals, such as risk, attitude, social norms, abilities, and self-regulation, as well. To add, the model was developed and practiced in order to understand the individual behavior pending pandemic. Social norms, response beliefs, perceived severity as well as having knowledge on health urges the persons to implement personal measures of prevention. Despite all the above-asserted measures, pandemic outbreaks are considered to be mighty influential in terms of consumer behavior. Based on the conducted analyzes, scholars had unearthed that during the pandemic there are several outputs, which showcase the appreciation of the sales, those are sales of food, medical masks, sanitizers, and some more goods that aid people to undergo the pandemic

(Goodwin et al., 2019). Nevertheless, in accordance with RANAS, the theory of protection-motivation (PMT) was also developed and used so as to understand the true motives of the activities executed by people pending the epidemic circumstances (Laato et al., 2020a). To add, with the use of the PMT the impact of the personal threat and coping appraisal on the conduct intentions were investigated, together with the roots that impact these estimations. Moreover, it is paramount to point out that the past investigations that were focused on measurements of preventing the health and consumer behavior of human beings had received considerably less credit. Yet, there were several restrictions concerning the use of the theoretical foundations of the analysis that made it arduous to provide the minute findings.

Literature Review

The theory of consumer behavior is the study of when and how consumers decide what to buy, contributing to the industries, markets, and businesses benefit from this behavior by forecasting in what way, and what time people purchase. This process helps to analyze and find out influential factors to make the decisions and emphasis the approaches and tactics to handle this behavior (FastPay Ltd, 2021). The covid-19 pandemic changed the consumer's buying behavior a lot. The way consumers communicate with brands and how they see themselves as a customer has become totally different now compared to the period before the pandemic (Gregory,2021). According to the research by Itzhak (2021), people have started to buy only the basic needs that are important for humans, just like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. Also, as people have had to become more isolated from each other due to social distancing, they have become even more dependent on technology to keep the connectivity (Itzhak,2021). Businesses that produce the basic consumer goods, particularly health and safety products, were succeeding during crisis periods. Luxury and entertainment industries like beauty or tourism were in trouble and had to wait a long time to get back to a normal routine (Itzhak,2021). In this pandemic period, most consumers tended to buy more locally produced products in the food and beverages sector (Jany et al.,2020).

According to the research by Janny et al. (2020), marketing has experienced considerable challenges: How to deliver the products to consumers? Delivery was reduced, and some retail chains closed their stores temporarily. Businesses that had their online channels were surviving well in comparison to those which run offline only. The research by Melis et al. 2016 illustrates that organizations that used online networks, operated better in terms of income. Jany et al. (2020) also stated in their research that businesses that did not have their online channels started to sell their goods and services via existing platforms. Like other countries, consumer goods sector, particularly food and beverages industry in Tashkent was no exception to move to digital transformation. Most of the food businesses started to sell via express.uz, Stolik.uz, Bringo.uz, lebazar.uz which were the most popular apps in Uzbekistan (Express24,2020. In this crisis period, online food delivery apps and services have become the main supply channels for the purchase and advertisement of food, beverages, and other consumer goods by offering many benefits to consumers during lockdown to purchase safely, touchless contact opportunity (IFIS,2020).

As the marketing and selling strategies changed due to social distancing, consumers have shifted to buying online through the use of digital platforms (Jany et al.,2020). The research results (Jany et al.,2020) also showed that customers who did not use to utilize online channels for online shopping have now become very familiar with it. According to the research by (Shengyu Gu et al. 2021), as people were spending most of their time at home due to lockdown, they have tended to

order online, and different delivery apps. The researchers have found these results using narrative analysis and through conducting interviews and surveys in their research.

Based on the investigation conducted by Jany et al (2020) it has become evident that the application of the online delivery channels works more effectively in terms of "share of wallet" and yet in the scope of income. These entities performed a better reaction to the pandemic because they were prepared for such circumstances of providing services and products via the internet, and hence, they are considered to be much more responsive to the changes in the customer trip. Moreover, high demand for the output of those enterprises demanded better and more creative solutions. For instance, a mighty prominent department store in the Netherlands turned approximately twenty stores into the centers of dispatching so as to deteriorate the long queues at the core center of delivery. In the other business of "" The Rituals" - chain of the cosmetic stores had chosen the likewise strategy and had performed the augmentation of the online sales by 300%. Delivery of the products purchased and ordered by the local consumers was also executed via the bicycle. Moreover, the other businesses started providing recommendations on the online sales services, using whatsapp, facetime, and so on. In addition to this, the concert and theater performances were streamed live.

On the other hand, businesses without any online sales channels started offering delivery of their products by utilizing existing web platforms. For instance, in the USA this tendency entailed the massive use of the Podia, self and send owl platforms. To add, educational seminars, lectures, and consulting services were executed via the use of these platforms, as well (Jany et al.,2020).

Hao et al. (2020) was aiming to research the impacts of online means on the shopping conduct of the customers, and they made it over that those sales channels need further improvements in terms of efficiency, in order to support pandemic policies (Cited in Valaskova,2021, p4). Based on the past research results, the following hypothesis is developed:

Hypothesis 1:

H_0: There is no impact of the online delivery channels on consumer buying behavior during the Covid-19th pandemic in Tashkent.

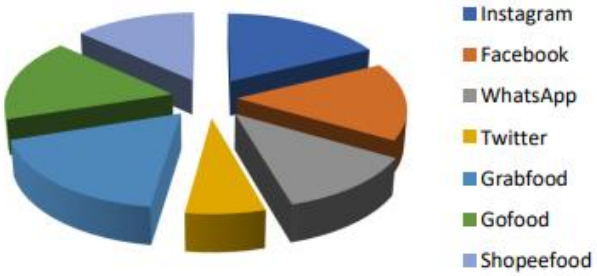
H_1: There is a positive impact of the online delivery channels on consumer buying behavior during the covid-19th pandemic in Tashkent.

Digital marketing also known as Online Marketing - is the application of the digital media, data and technology integrated with traditional marketing communications in order to attain marketing objectives (Dave Chaffey, 2022). As per the words by one of the marketing expertise said: "in the period of lockdown, the process of sales and manufacturing have had to alter a lot due to social distancing; thus, we have implemented digital marketing and selling ways to make it safe for our customers and even virtually done presentations regarding sales" (Steimer 2020, p. 53).

While most of the industries were experiencing a considerable decrease in sales, some drastic measures and strategies were needed to increase sales and promotion (Hidayah et al.,2021). And the solution for that was advertising and selling the products via digital platforms. Most of the business world, including Food and beverages sector, was significantly, and positively influenced by digitalization during the pandemic period. As a consequence of digital transformation, most of the sectors including consumer goods, Food and Beverages sector increased its sales and marketing (Hidayah et al.,2021). The results of the research by (Heriawan et al., 2021) shows that businesses

are getting more advantage through the use of digital platforms and a lot more clients (Cited in Hidayah et al.,2021, p123). Another research results (Al-hakim et al., 2021) concluded that digital promotional materials are saving cost of advertisement as they use the internet only (Cited in Hidayah et al.,2021, p123). Hidayah et al. (2021) conducted research about the role of digital marketing during the pandemic period. The research was done based on interviews and a literature study in 2021.

Figure 2. Propotion of social media exploited during Covid-19 pandemic



Source:https://www.researchgate.net/publication/356258590_EFFECTIVENESS_OF_DIGITAL_PLATFORMS_AS_FOOD_AND_BEVERAGE_MARKETING_MEDIA_DURING_THE_COVID-19_PANDEMIC

According to the research results of (Hidayah et al.,2021), 80% of the Food and beverages businesses used Instagram social media to advertise their products as more and more consumers are influenced through this platform, and this result is also confirmed by Mandira et al.(2020) that outlines that among other social media platforms, Instagram has become the most popular in terms of effective advertisement (Cited in Hidayah et al.,2021, p125).

The next most popular social media platform was Facebook, with 70%. According to a research conclusion by (Rosi et al., 2020), products of niche businesses in Food and beverages can be easily promoted via Facebook because this platform is used by many users (Cited in Hidayah et al.,2021, p126). The interview results in the research (Hidayah et al.,2021) demonstrated that food and beverages businesses that were using WhatsApp accounted for 55%, while only 30% of businesses in the same industry were using Twitter to post food and beverages ads on their accounts. And the research results show that Twitter is not that effective to market goods and services business. Also, there was a significant increase in the demand for digital applications like zoom conferencing, satellite broadband (Hidayah et al.,2021).

Digital Technology has become the most significant impact on consumer behavior during and after pandemic. Many people who were not familiar with new technology have learnt how to use digital technology and applications. Zoom, for example has become the most important application for people to see their family, friends, and also for meetings and appointments during working from home. As all universities, schools immediately swithched to online mode of study, they used zoom video services for teching online (Sheth, 2020). From youngest to oldest generation have learnt how to use zoom services. Many consumers started to use social media applications like facebook, Instagram, Whatsapp, LinkedIn and others to keep in touch with friends and up-t-date news. The number of daily registrations for these applications have reached its peak and thus, today

China or India are no longer major countries with the largest population, those social medias are (Sheth, 2020). This trend has changed the way businesses do advertising. Word of mouth has become the most effective advertising strategy via chattings in the social medias. Many consumers' buying decision is influenced by bloggers and influencers via social media. Influencers with billions of subscribers in have become the best marketers. Traditional marketing tools such as TV and radio advertisements, and posters in the streets are no longer effective marketing methods. The effect of digital technology on consumers' buying decision is significantly high. The digital technology and new innovations created due to the Covid-19 pandemic are slowly replacing the old habits of consumers (Sheth, 2020).

Based on the past research on the impact of digital marketing on consumer behavior, the following hypothesis is suggested:

Hypothesis 2:

H_0: There is no impact of the digital marketing and technology on consumer buying behavior during the Covid-19th pandemic in Tashkent.

H1: There is a positive impact of digital marketing and technology on consumer buying behavior during the pandemic in Tashkent.

Chkoniya and Figueiredo (2020) defined consumption patterns as the procedure by which people search, purchase and consume merchandise, and which suits consumer needs or desires. As discussed above, trends in consumers' buying behavior and consumption patterns depend on time and place. The number of working women has increased since the World War II which led to the shortage of flexible time for family and. As the whole week is spent at work, more and more people have tended to order meals online to deliver (Sheth, 2020). Similarly, during lockdown and due to social distancing regulations, people had no many options to choose a place for shopping (Sheth, 2020). This trend has lead to the shortage of location. People's usual activities have been carried out at home, for example, working, going to school/university and shopping. Distance-working, distance-studying and online shopping has resulted in people having more flexible time at home as they do not have scheduled plans. Thus, shortage of free space at home has become a new challenge in terms of privacy in consumption (Sheth, 2020).

The research conducted by Jagdish Sheth (2020) reveals the following impacts of the pandemic on consumer behavior and consumption patterns (Fig 3).



Figure 3. https://ars.els-cdn.com/content/image/1-s2.0-S0148296320303647-gr1.jpg

1. One of the effects of the covid-19 pandemic that changed the consumption pattern was *hoarding*. Consumers were storing the most vital products that are essential to consume daily, such as, water, toilet paper, hygine products, meat and bread. This was often resulting in temporary shortage of these products in stocks during lockdown period (Sheth, 2020). Hoarding in consumer behavior is common process to handle the uncertainty of future source of food. This is a practice when any country faces hyperinflation. Due to a temporary huge demand, the price usually increases for certain basic products. According to Sheth (2020), there has not been done enough studies about consumers' psychology of hoarding.

2. Due to the restrictions and limitations set by governments during lockdown, consumers have tended to *improvise* their habits to adobt the situations. At this time, consumers alter their old habits to the new ways of consumption. Traditional weddings in a huge restaurants with many people and other huge events have been replaced by Zoom application and a smaller family weddings. New government regulations and social norms have been executed as a solution to these shortages (Sheth, 2020). According to Sheth (2020), Improvisation will be a new future topic to research

3. Sheth (2020), states in his research that, normally consumers purchase on discretionary goods and services are delayed as they are not the basic needs but optional to buy in the period of crisis. These discretionary goods and services are mainly tickets for concerts or for travelling, cars, house, sprt events, and other entertainments. This leads to the postponement of today's demand to the future (Sheth, 2020). Similarly, *Pent-up demand* is also a result of a lack of access to certain goods or services to market for some period of time (Sheth, 2020).

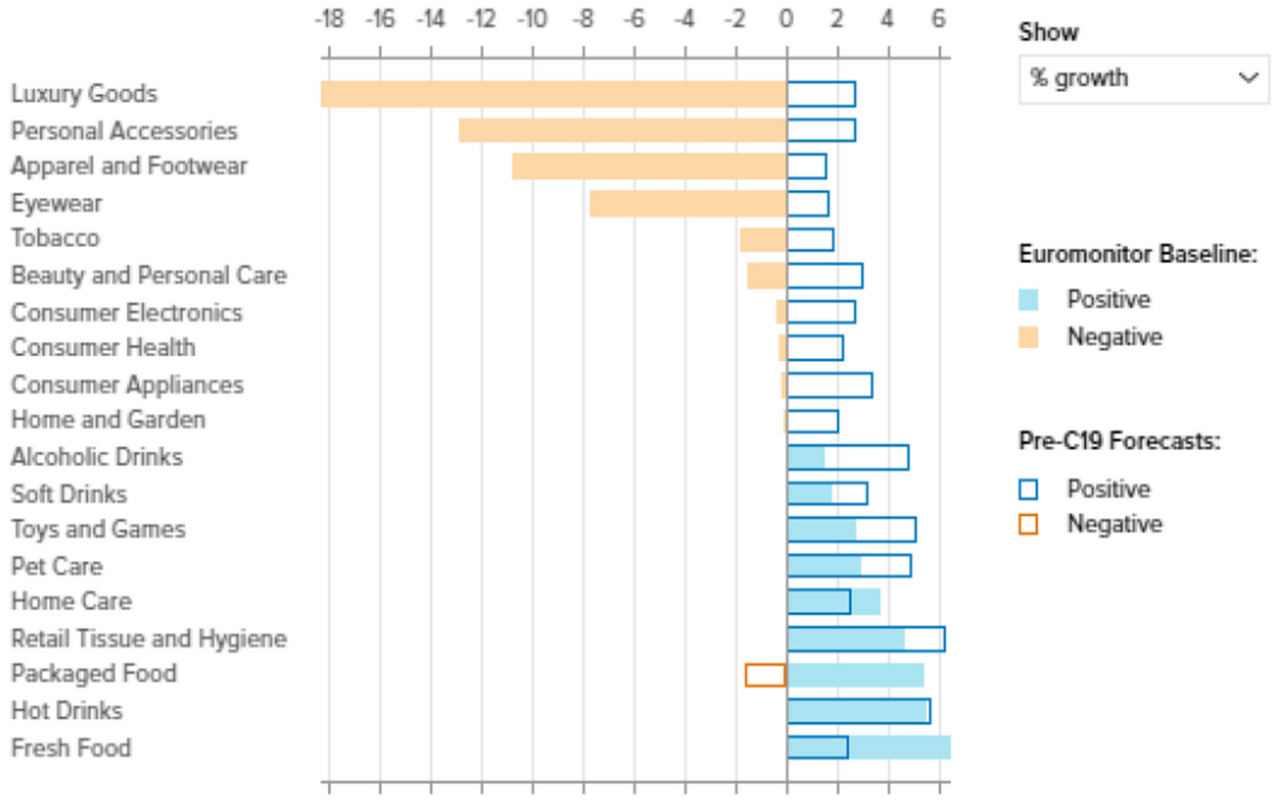
4. During the quarantine period, people in some countries that were completely in lockdown were not able to physically visit the groceries or other shopping stores, but *stores are coming home* (Sheth, 2020). In addition, education and work also come home for those who work or study. This has changed the approach and flow of buying, health, work, studying, and consumption patterns (Sheth, 2020). The new practice of in-home delivery from products to cinema services like Netflix

is resulting in the disappearance of old habits like physically visiting stores and entertainment centers. This trend is also improving the convenience of consumers' buying behavior (Sheth, 2020).

6. As consumers had to stay home with many activities that are disconnected from each other like working, studying, shopping, they feel like prisoners. As a result of the limited the many activities in a limited space with limited resources, consumers' work-life balance is being disrupted (Sheth, 2020).

According to the Valaskova (2021), it became immediately clear that covid-19 has brought myriads of influences to the daily lives of all humans, types and means of purchase. Furthermore, the needs of the consumers also changed utterly. for example, an unprecedented tendency of purchase of the foods and medicals, for the future weeks and months, was witnessed. And yet, there were changes in the shopping behavior and shopping patterns became different. Nowadays, consumers are willing to be a part of the long-waited queues in the stores, and mighty grateful for the chance to purchase. Nevertheless, modern consumers are no longer categorizing brands into favorites and unwanted and they feel free to buy up-date brands. Since the depreciation of the income rates as well as the reduction of the consumer activities entailed deterioration of the demands in the market. Yet, excess expenses were also reduced due to the quarantine regime practiced all over the globe that had affected the amount of the consumed products and services. Moreover, widespread infection influenced the cautiousness of humans in terms of economic and social conduct. Subsequently, it is taking much slow to get back to the sales and consumption ratio of the pre-crisis period. It was asserted by Sheth (2020) that new consumer behavior will also change by the growth of the new norms and technological advancements.

To further, the research by Shamin et al. (2021) examined the differences in the prevalence of the purchase ratio and the preferences of the bought brands of the products. To be more detailed, by the virtue of the analysis it was unearthed that compared to the period prior to the crisis, individuals reduced the regularity in the frequency of the purchase of groceries and are prone to shop quickly and efficiently. And it was found that people were buying more packaged foods and were not hesitating on the purchase of the new brands. A research study by Jany et al (2020) shows the following bar graph which illustrates how much consumers spent and reveals the changes in consumption patterns during the pandemic period.



(Figure 4) https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s43039-020-00016-3/figures/2

According to the research by Jany et al., (2020) Figure, 4 shows the way covid-19 affected the consumer markets, despite fresh food, packaged food, and home care appliances. Moreover, the other sources of data illustrate the growth of the demand for the means of infotainment, such as Netflix, which had received 16 million new subscriptions in the timescale between April and June. Despite this, various games and puzzles were obtaining more prominence, and yet the board game "Trekking" amounted for $100 000 of the revenues generated all over the world, in a week. Moreover, the products of hygiene and wellness, digital output, items for gardening, and do-it-yourself goods also performed the rise by 25%, streaming services and furniture increased by 8%, and customer electronic appliances augmented by 16%. Based on these, it can be seen that home was considered to be healthy bubbles for the utmost number of individuals all over the globe. Yet, it is also essential to point out that the utmost number of herein mentioned goods were purchased via online means of shopping. For instance, the rise of 60%-70% has been recognized in the Netherlands, in the sector of non-food products, in April 2020. In addition, in accordance with the GfK market investigations agency the online sales ratio executed in May 2019 was 50% lower compared to the sales indicator in May 2020.

Based on the past studies, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3:

H_0: There is no negative impact of the consumption patterns on consumer buying behavior during the Covid-19th pandemic in Tashkent.

H1: There is a negative impact of the consumption patterns on consumer buying behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic in Tashkent.

Consumer Habits is the study of consumers and the processes they use to choose, use (consume), and dispose of products and services, including consumers' emotional, mental, and behavioral responses. (Valentin Radu, 2022).

The temporary lockdown has led to the *discovery of new habits*. Many people with a lot of free time experimented with different activities like making interesting videos, creating vlogs on youtube, trying with many new recipes (Sheth, 2020). Some consumers learned how to shop online effectively and save extra expenses. Consumers have discovered their inner talents during the lockdown and even most of them used their abilities for commercial purposes like youtube blogs and earning money from them (Sheth, 2020). Consumer habits have changed a lot during and after pandemic. In this process, some consumer habits have been modified and some consumers have acquired new habits.

Modified Consumer habits

The research results of Sheth (2020) shows that some old consumer habits have already been modified, such as wearing masks, checking for the body temperature, keeping a distance of 2 meters from each other new regulations. Asian countries are more often following these modified habits, especially on public transport, in public places such as sports centers, beauty centers, grocery shops, and other public service agencies. Mostly it is expected that these modified habits regarding covid prevention will be kept even after the pandemic (Sheth, 2020).

According to the research results of Shamim et al (2021) in India, the findings showed that the majority of the respondents, in the amount of (64.2%) are accustomed to washing or sanitizing their hands after the shopping practices. Moreover, the utmost majority of those respondents, 76.4% are considered to be women. Yet, the study showcased that most of the participants of the survey were wearing medical masks on a regular basis. To add, it also became overt due to the analysis, that females are inclined to sanitize their hands, with the use of the hygiene products and to wear masks more usually than that of males.

New Consumer Habits**.**

New habits after the pandemic are highly likely to be part of our lives and there are some aspects that generate them (Sheth, 2020). Public policy which includes face control checks, checking body temperatures at the airports and other public places, regular testing for covid-19 is the first factor to create new habits among consumers. Sheth (2020) also found from his research study that it is expected that there will be more screening and checking procedures in the future just like most countries are doing now.

His research results also show that the next significant impact of new consumer habits is technology. Technology has considerably altered consumers' behavior and their habits since the invention of the telephone, internet, television, and today social media (Sheth, 2020). Digital technology has become the most vital part of our lives in every field. Today internet is even more important than television. The development of digital technology has even more accelerated during the pandemic period. These trends in the tech-world have generated new habits for consumers. For example, buying online, meeting online, learning online, and working online. Most people have switched to the online mode of everything during the pandemic, and it is expected that consumers will continue to purchase online even after the pandemic is over (Sheth, 2020).

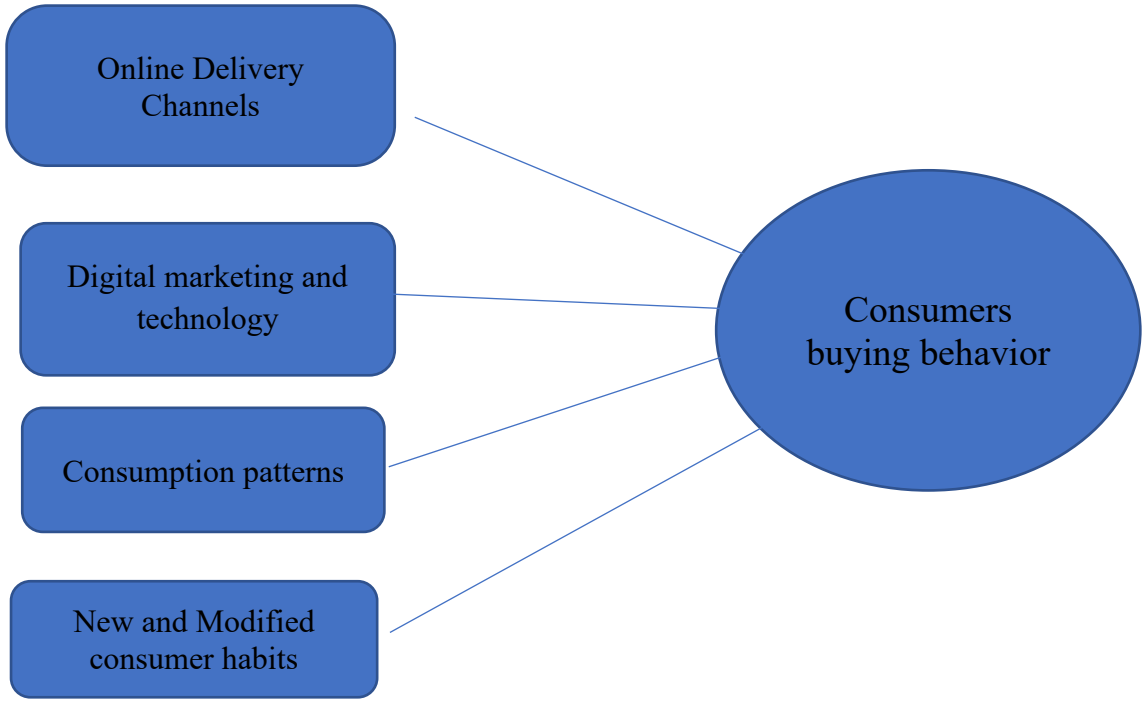
Therefore, based on the past research results, the following hypothesis is developed:

Hypothesis 4:

H_0: There is no impact of the new and modified consumer habits on consumer buying behavior during the Covid-19th pandemic in Tashkent.

H1: There is a positive impact of the new and modified consumer habits on consumer buying behavior during the covid-19 pandemic in Tashkent.

Theoretical Framework



Literature Gap

There have been some studies on pandemic impacts on consumer behavior and businesses worldwide. However, there is a lack of information, and not enough research studies have been done in the case of Tashkent. In order to fulfill this gap and obtain precise information and achieve clear results, an online google survey questionnaire has been conducted among the consumers of Tashkent. This research is aimed at examining the impacts of Covid-19 pandemic on Consumer buying behavior. Will consumers alter their consumption patterns temporarily only during the lockdown or will it be a permanent habit? Will they obtain new habits due to social distancing, restrictions in travelling, shopping and going for entertainment during the pandemic? Will consumers find the new habits useful and continue to keep them even once the global pandemic is over? Will they change their mind that in-home delivery is better than physically visiting the stores or entertainment places? This research will provide more precise answer to these questions by analyzing the results of the responses collected from the consumers of Uzbekistan.

Methodology

As the primary purpose of this research is to investigate the impacts of the Covid-19 pandemic on Consumer Buying Behavior in Tashkent, my data collection instrument is the Google survey questionnaire (Appendix 1) among the consumers of Tashkent. The survey questionnaire which was prepared using Google forms was distributed via telegram and email among the consumers of Tashkent, and around 257 respondents filled the survey questions. Also, the researcher will be using Excel, SPSS, and Smart PLS software programs for the descriptive statistics of the

results. After discussing the approaches, the researcher wanted to conduct the study based on the deductive approach. This is because the data will be collected through google Survey questionnaires. Also,because this research design will be collecting quantitative (by conducting survey questionnaire) study, the researcher will be using a mono method quantitative research method in which quantitative analysis will be provided based on the results of survey questionnaires conducted.

As the researcher has chosen a quantitative study that includes survey questionnaires, a descriptive research purpose will be used.Saunders et al. (2016) stated that research strategy is the method or a plan to answer the research question and objectives. There are several research strategies, such as experiment, survey, grounded theory action research, archival research and documentary research and narrative inquiry (Saunders, 2006). The survey strategy is mainly applied in descriptive and deductive research studies and is often used in business management research types. The survey strategy is conducted via questionnaires and, therefore easy to gain data and to describe (Saunders, 2006). Yang (2014) defines that a case study research strategy is based on an in-depth investigation into a topic. Using this strategy, a case of a certain business, person or organization will be analyzed/studied (Cited in Saunders et al., 2016, p 184). After examining the research strategies, the researcher has chosen survey strategy as the purpose of the researcher is to collect primary data.

Sampling

Saunders et al. (2016) stated that sampling is an essential part of any research study as it makes it easier to collect data from a particular group rather than a whole population. The population depending on my research topic will be the consumers of Uzbekistan.

Sample size

According to statistics, the number of inhabitants of Tashkent is now 2,545 000 (Macrotrends. net,2021). My assumption of the population who consumes food and beverages and is able to understand and fill the questionnaire is 1,272 000 because not everyone consumes products (including babies, people with an inability to eat all types of food and beverages or can purchase by themselves for different reasons).

In order to find the estimated sample size, the researcher used the online survey calculator for derivations with the 5% of marginal error, 95% confidence level. Because I am doing Google Survey online, which has a rather high response rate, I have used a 70% assumption for response rate.

Analyzes and Findings

This chapter of the research clarified and evaluated the findings of the data analyzed through the use of Smart PLS and SPSS software to show the responsiveness of the four independent variables. Also, this chapter covered the implications of the study based on the findings and results. Furthermore, the chapter explained the research limitations, future studies, and recommendations. In order to collect a precise data for a primary research, survey among the consumers of Tashkent was conducted through Google Forms and 257 responses were obtained that generates the results of variables. The data was analyzed using SPSS and Smart PLS software to achieve the reflective measurement model, structural model assessment, multicollinearity, and path coefficients tests. The results were interpreted based on the responses of 257 consumers, who gave their opinions about the Covid -19 pandemic impacts on their buying behavior.In addition, it is also essential to study the general demographical background of the survey participants, which in the current research were

119 males and 138 females within the research population. Moreover, 38.9 % of the respondents were aged between 15-and 25, while only 9.3% are aged 46 and above.

Furthermore, the survey results show that 38.5 % of the respondents were Undergraduate level, and similarly, 30.7% of the were postgraduate. Interestingly 3.5% of the participants were O Level.To begin with, describing the findings of the research constructs, the following tests were used: convergent validity, discriminant validity, reliability, and finally, the R 2 assessment. The findings show that all the constructs show values above 0.5, except for Online Delivery Channels and Digital Marketing and technology and confirming almost the validity of the data. Moreover, the independent variable of the research has composite reliability showing above 0.7 value: Online Delivery channels=0.740, New and Modified consumer Habits=0.742, Consumption patterns=0.746. Besides, according to the value of the predictive relevant R square which is 0,661 (above 0.25), the research model can meet the pre-requisite of both the reflective measurement model and structural model measurement. In addition to the above tests, there was a need to evaluate the level of the significance of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables of the research framework. According to the results of the Bootstrapping method conducted using Smart PLS software, all the independent variables, Online Delivery channels, New and Modified Consumer Habits, Consumption Patterns, Digital Marketing, and Technology have a significant impact on the Consumer Buying Behavior. Moreover, all the hypotheses were accepted based on their p-values which are more than 0.05, and therefore the Null hypotheses were rejected.

The result in Table 18 revealed that the consumption pattern is statistically significant and have an impact on the interaction between the Covid-19 and consumer behavior in Tashkent city. This study outcome is consistent with the findings of Vijayalakshmi and Milcah (2017) which is asserted that macro-level change in household consumption patterns is triggered by structural and physical movements in the nature like a Covid-19, which in turn influence the consumer buying behavior. Therefore, it is also noteworthy that digital marketing and technology has brought positive change in consumer purchasing behavior as it creates an opportunity for working families in big urbans to make a purchase and make a payment at any time anywhere. Another advantage of digitalization, it provides rewards to consumers in the form of coupons, gift vouchers, cash back, discount as Korzinka, TExnomart implemented these schemes, in turn, it encourages individuals to utilize and adopt digital transactions more.

Hypotheses 1:

The research's initial hypotheses were developed to investigate whether the online delivery channels have a significant impact on consumers' Buying Behavior in Tashkent during the pandemic period. The research findings revealed that online delivery channels were positive and significant for consumers' buying behavior with the t-value of 2,878 (note: greater than 1.96 is considered to be positive significant). Therefore, the Null hypotheses was rejected and hypotheses 1 was accepted. This can be proved through the findings from the online survey. According to the current research survey results, for almost 70% of the consumers of Tashkent, online delivery channels have become the safest means of delivery channels during the pandemic using different online platforms. The results also show that Express24.uz was the most popular online channel in Tashkent.

Our research results showed similar outcomes to the previous research papers. According to the research outcomes of Jany et al (2020), owing to the social distancing regulations, people have immediately moved to buy via online delivery channels and found it safe and comfortable. As a result, they became even more familiar with utilizing online channels. Hypotheses 2:

The second hypothesis of the research was developed to see if there is a positive impact between Digital Marketing and Technology and Consumer Buying Behavior. The findings of this study demonstrated that Digital Marketing and Technology have a significant and positive impact on Consumer Buying Behavior being the t-value of 3,250. Therefore, the Null hypothesis was rejected and hypothesis 1 was accepted. It is also clear from the survey results that 109 respondents out of 257 "strongly agreed" and 89 respondents "agreed" that Digitalization has been improved in Uzbekistan during the lockdown period. Also, 89 respondents among the consumers of Tashkent "Strongly agreed" while 97 of them "Agreed" that they found it useful when the businesses use digital promotional materials to save money. Moreover, almost 50% of the respondents chose Social Media Marketing as a means of promotion and advertisement that influenced their buying decision during the Covid-19 pandemic period, while only 17.8% of them chose TV and radio. Furthermore, the research results show that Instagram (89 respondents) and telegram were the most effective and influential apps on consumers buying decisions during the pandemic in Tashkent.

Similar results have been provided by Steimer (2020) in his research on the role of digital marketing during the pandemic period. According to the results when the businesses faced loss due to the social distancing, they have implemented the digital marketing to make a safe purchase for the consumers. Another research finding by Sheth (2020) reveals that digital technology has significantly influenced consumers' behavior during the pandemic. People who were not aware of using digital technology learned to utilize digital applications. In addition, the research findings of Hidayah et al., (2021) shows that 80% of the Food and Beverages businesses used Instagram social media to promote their products due to the fact that majority of consumers were influenced by utilizing Instagram.

Hypothesis 3:

Hypothesis 3 was developed to examine if there is a positive impact of the consumption patterns on consumer buying behavior during the Covid-19 pandemic in Tashkent. Based on the current study findings, there is a significant and negative impact of consumption patterns on consumer buying behavior with the t-value of 5,635 being greater than 1.96. The findings from the online survey show that the majority of the respondents almost (60%) "agreed" the pandemic has resulted in a decrease in their personal consumption. They started buying only the essential products such as water, bread, toilet paper, and sanitizations. Similar research findings by Sheth (2020) show that one of the main effects of the pandemic in consumption patterns is hoarding. People were hoarding only the most important products from store during the lockdown.

Also, according to the survey results of Jany et al., (2020), luxury goods, personal accessories, apparel and footwear, tobacco were the least important while fresh and packaged, retail tissue and hygiene, hot drinks were the most important in consumers' spendings and consumption.

Hypothesis 4:

The final hypothesis was developed to see if there is a positive impact of the new and modified consumer habits on Consumer Buying Behaviour. The findings of this research shows that there is a positive and significant impact of the new and modified habits on consumer buying behavior with the t-value of 3,577. The results of the survey also show that 67 respondents "strongly agreed" and 95 of them "agreed" the they experienced a positive experience of new habits such in-home delivery of everything during the pandemic.Also, more than 50% of the respondents "agreed" that they will not go back to their old habits. Moreover, 60% of the respondents "agreed" that the new and modified habits that people obtained during the lockdown had a positive impact on their

buying behavior. According to the similar research on new habits during the pandemic by Valaskova (2020), 67.5% of the survey respondents were positivistic about the new habits such as wearing masks, washing their hands regularly. Moreover, the research findings by Sheth et al (2020) reveal that some new habits such as meeting online, buying online will be a part our lives even after the pandemic is over.

Conclusion.

This research was conducted in order to investigate the impacts of the Covid-19 on Consumer Buying Behavior. This current study aimed to analyze if there is a positive or negative impact of the Independent Variables of the research online delivery channels, Digital Marketing and Technology, Consumption patterns, New and modified consumer habits on the Dependent variable of the study Consumer Buying Behavior. Thereby, after the results of the study, it can be concluded that all the independent variables have a significant and positive impact (only the consumption patterns have negative impact) on the dependent variable. Also, all the hypothesis of the research has been successfully tested and accepted.

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