

# Online Shopping Behaviors during Covid-19 Pandemic and Expected Future Trends

Lual Daniel kur, Niu Xiongying, Chol Gabriel Majer, Thomas Gatluak Reat & Majak Michael Chol

## Abstract

This research aims to expound on how e-commerce has been affected during the age of Covid-19. Little is known regarding how the outbreak of covid-19 has impacted consumers' online shopping behavior; hence the need for research upholding theoretical and practical considerations. The study also uncovers the underlying implications of e-commerce even after the pandemic. Moreover, the use of the internet is reflected in correlation to the current crisis and its impact on e-commerce. Through the use of different data sets, the frequency and the rate of adoption of online shopping are monitored very well. This study's principal results suggest that online shopping behavior change depends on some factors such as connectivity through the internet, age, gender, education, and income. Perhaps, shopping online has changed drastically since the outbreak of Covid-19 in the year 2020 and that may persist beyond unforeseen future. The research is based on how Covid-19 has turned around consumers' shopping behaviors and moved the market, shopping priorities, and consumer needs amidst the Covid-19 pandemic. Through secondary sources that were found reliable and valid in answering the three research questions, the study comes up with enough research findings. This study, therefore, unfolds not only the effects Covid-19 has on online shopping behavior but also predicts the future of e-commerce after the pandemic.



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## 1. Introduction

On December 31, 2019, 27 abnormal cases (with an anonymous cause) of pneumonia were first confirmed and identified in Wuhan City of Hubei province in China, with patients' clinical indicators of dyspnea, dry cough, fever, and bilateral lung infiltrate on imaging (Sohrabi et al., 2020). On January 7, 2020, the Chinese Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CCDC) recognized the causative agent of abnormal cases and accordingly, on February 11, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) named this new type of coronavirus COVID-19 (WHO Director, 2020). On January 30, 2020, the WHO declared the Chinese epidemic of COVID-19 to be a public health crisis of worldwide concern, posing an extreme risk to nations with vulnerable human physical condition systems. The crisis team of WHO has acknowledged that the increase of COVID-19 can be limited by early isolation, quick detection, treatment, and the execution of dynamic coordination to trace contacts (WHO, Situation Report – 12, 2020). As of July 10, 2020, around 12.1m COVID-19 cases, including around 5,51,046 deaths, have been confirmed in different territories and countries of the world (WHO, Situation Report – 172, 2020).

The outbreak of Covid-19 is has been ranked as one of the defining events of the year 2020. The pandemic has highly affected operations of various systems due to the complexities involved in mitigating the crisis. Most countries' economies have declined, and hence the global economy has also been highly affected. The pandemic is expected to bring with it some long-lasting effects that may be felt for almost a decade. Moreover, following its complexity, the disease has come along with multiple impacts on the market today. Most countries are currently working round the clock to come up with possible ways of reducing its long-term effects by curbing the spread of the virus and reducing the deaths related to the disease in society. People have been questioned to observe their safety by reducing movements, and social meetings since the virus can be contracted through increased personal conduct. During this challenging situation, business firms have shifted their operations to help the states fight the virus. Due to prevailing circumstances, the market has now been preoccupied with technology, which is needed during this age of Covid-19 (Galanakis, 2020).

The amount of people who may be deemed safe to gather in a confined place has now been reduced from thousands to tens and hundreds. Business believed to attract many people for social gatherings such as bars, and restaurants have had their operations limited and monitored in countries where the pandemic have taken roots. In the meantime, office workers, even in large organizations, have been encouraged to work at home, despite the existing challenges that they can face by working remotely. Perhaps, following the rapid changes in situations, technology concerning online marketing has been left as the possible way of resolving people's needs during this crisis. People now understand the reality of an interconnected world and how challenging it is to temper with that connection. The uncertainty that currently exists is based on different people's approaches based on the prevailing situation. First, people have changed their shopping habits due to restrictions to remain isolated in homes, and multiple changes are expected to be made to reduce the virus's impacts in the long run (Phan, et al, 2020). Secondly, there has been increased awareness relating to shopping online as compared to physical stores. Nevertheless, the prevailing pandemic fear has seen different businesses shift to selling first moving goods due to demand changes. Thirdly, firms selling online have remained focused on achieving and winning numerous customers by assuring customers of the benefits of buying from their online stores which include discounts on bulk buying (Phan et al., 2020).

The research is somehow particular to answer the question of the effects of Covid-19 on e-commerce. However, apart from the above main question, the research will also contribute to the validation of some facts that revolve around online shopping behavior during and after Covid-19. The research is focused on answering the following three questions;

(i) What influence does the Covid-19 pandemic have on consumer online buying behaviors amidst Covid-19? (ii) What variables directly influence online shopping attitude during the Covid-19 pandemic? and (iii) what will be the future of online shopping after the pandemic?

To provide a basis for dealing and coping with Covid-19 by offering strategies adopted by different countries to satisfy consumer needs while reducing their vulnerability to the virus.

To expose all possible impacts of Covid-19 on online marketing by observing by focusing on updated data from different countries in the world. Expose changes in online consumer shopping patterns with respect to age, gender, education, and income. The objectives of our study are (i) To give insights on the prevailing trends in online marketing while emphasizing consumer behavior changes evident after the outbreak of Covid-19 in the year 2020 and (ii) Predict the future of online shopping by focusing on technological changes that are expected after the pandemic.

## **2.0. Literature Review**

According to Wang, et al. (2020): a study based on China's firms, Covid-19 is just like other disasters that affect the global economy negatively, forcing businesses to come up with marketing strategies that will allow them to survive or exist beyond the unforeseeable future. As people are showing great concern about their safety and health, business enterprises, on the other hand, are also making positive changes to cope with the situation and maintain their customers who feel secure when isolated at homes. The best marketing strategy during the face of Covid-19 that can allow a business to operate with its employees working remotely and with movements restricted is adopting new technology that will lead to online shopping and sales. However, this strategy will not see all customers purchase goods online; hence there is an expectation of reduced sales and for these reasons, most multinational firms may be faced with bankruptcy in the long run. Wang research based on marketing during Covid-19 claims that due to home quarantine and isolation, the consumer's purchasing power and activities have primarily reduced, and this is due to change in consumer's consumption attitudes, which have tended to be somehow conservative since the outbreak of Covid-19 (Wang, et al, 2020). In one way or another, a crisis can be treated as a danger and, at the same time, an opportunity for others. During this pandemic, some business firms have generated more profits than others due to marketing strategies disparities. For instance, organizations that have invested in modern technology in the bid of selling their products and services through online platforms have benefited more than those who have relied on normal marketing that needs face to face. During this era, firms have received pressure in catering for expenses related to renting arrears, wages, taxes, and increased prices of raw materials and challenges regarding suppliers' provisions. Besides, the only option left for business organizations to transform the existing crisis to become an avenue for making changes but not a danger for investment. The economy is in a crisis as well, but if the business makes the wrong decision to remain dormant during the pandemic, the economy may even worsen even though consumer demand has weakened during the pandemic and the purchasing behavior changes due to isolation reprimands business to go for e-commerce that can match the new policies such as quarantine during the pandemic. This move to adopt e-commerce makes it convenient for consumers to acquire and obtain access to goods or services they need without necessarily traveling and coming across many people during the Covid-19 crisis (Wang et al, 2020).

Due to the need to maintain safety during the current crisis, marketing innovation strategies that are best to invent and rely on should be focused on e-commerce. Prior research suggests that adopting the above strategy of e-commerce is one way of reviving during the pandemic since this is one of the forms of creating a competitive advantage through innovations. Moreover, survival during the current crisis needs one to invent new strategies that can suit the problem and retain the existing customers in the long run. In one way or another, developing marketing strategies during a crisis can be based on choosing a problematic search that anticipates motivation for innovation or opts for a level of collaborative innovations. Perhaps, a collaborative innovation distinguishes whether a specific firm's marketing innovation strategy is based in collaboration with other firms or on the firm itself (Phan, et al, 2020). Firms with resources and capabilities to innovate can do it without collaboration. Nevertheless, a firm currently affected by the Covid-19 can choose to invest based on its capabilities and resources (Wang, et al, 2020). Suppose a business has fewer resources to innovate new strategies and ideas of existing during the pandemic, it is advisable to co-innovate with other firms by combining resources and sharing competencies for best results.

According to Bhatti, et al (2020), trends in E-commerce during Covid-19 have come with advantages and disadvantages. During this current situation, everything in business is getting adjusted to suit the prevailing conditions in the crisis state. The right technology is now being celebrated as the model that can cultivate thriving for big business since online marketing is one of the possible ways of selling products and services during the crisis. The use of the internet is expected to become the order of the day and a shift from the traditional ways of doing business. Today's market industry is moving faster, and operating through the set basic principles in the face of Covid-19 is very challenging, but e-commerce is the possible way of running a business to enhance people's safety and health and help eradicate the virus. E-commerce seeks to advocate for creating an internet shopping environment, which seeks to limit physical shopping from stores by using virtual tools for completing all transactions online. Potential shoppers or customers should be informed and may need to seek legitimacy of any store before making an order or paying for any of their services. Some people do not trust online shopping due to the possibility of loss during online shopping transactions. There exist disparities in a culture that may also affect consumers' internet shopping behaviors (Bhatti, et al, 2020). One such distinction relates to the concept of uncertainty avoidance whereby people from cultures that have reduced tolerance for uncertainty may not seek to inquire of rules and regulations that govern institutions selling online; hence may purchase without hesitation. Some individuals believe shopping in physical stores is less risky than shopping through online platforms, and this has a lot to do with culture or what people have been used to in the long run. Perhaps, the adoption of online marketing during Covid-19 has found some individuals unaware, and due to their perception concerning e-commerce, it has not been easy to shift to the new methods (Meyer, 2020).

Shopping online is more of a representation of a total change in lifestyle and habits, which may not find people in higher uncertainty avoidance culture s well because they are more likely to avoid anything by buying goods online. Shopping online lacks what people in high uncertainty cultures call institutional assurance and their desire to purchase is based on the existence of such an assurance. Perhaps, e-commerce has become one of the significant global responses in line with the issue of Covid-19. As people continue to struggle during these new living conditions, their buying or purchasing behavior has been adapting to suit their current needs. The concept of panic buying has slowed in some countries, with consumers opting to purchase their products online. Most customers are now spending their valuable time thinking about ways to maintain their safety and health, with a significant percentage taking preferring to have

exercises in their confined isolations. The above changes in behaviors have led to some product categories experience some surge in terms of demand (Bhatti, et al, 2020). The current trends have seen drastic shifts in the way customers used to live and use various products they need and want on regular occasions. These consumer behavior changes have kept business firms in mesmerized situations; different businesses' managements have come with strategies that seek to change the overall supply chain to suit the prevailing consumer behavior. Staying ahead of the game for business in today's global market involves focusing on implementing technology that favors most customers during the current situation. E-commerce may not favor small-scaled firms since they tend to operate with limited stock leaving large enterprises to consider this technology the best move to survive during the pandemic. In one way or another, we can generalize and say e-commerce in today's world has more positive impacts than negative ones. Multiple stores have closed during Covid-19 due to relevant authorities' restrictions through lockdowns and isolation issues (Bhatti, et al, 2020). The adoption of e-commerce has helped people during this critical situation. Perhaps, businesses and economies of states affected by the pandemic have remained depressed, and its people have been left relying on e-commerce, which provides alternatives ways for people to meet their needs during the pandemic.

## **2.1 Hypotheses development**

According to Pantelimon et al. (2020), mobile device usage has been widening the range of activities that relate to business. The latter asserts that Covid-19 has influenced e-commerce activity in many ways worldwide. Buying and selling of products during the face of Covid-19 have found a world that has been used to using of technological devices such as computers and mobile phones to perfect business transactions without having necessary to meet or travel. The existence of online platforms with the linkage of operations that connect businesses to customers allows the business to operate over a wide geographical area or even globally. During the pre-Covid-19 era, large-sized firms have opted to use e-commerce to create a competitive advantage over other firms by allowing their customers to access all products they may need through their phones via internet connections. Economies have been shifted by technology change over the recent past, and most firms have received an awakening to have unique skills in solving the needs of customers regardless of their location. Perhaps, consumer behavior has been changed towards e-commerce in the context of Covid-19 due to restrictions that include wearing face masks, washing hands more regularly, staying at home, applying social distancing, avoiding public gatherings, and increased cashless transactions. As a result of Covid-19 restrictions, consumer spending on physical stores worldwide has reduced by a significant percentage (Pantelimon, et al, 2020). By focusing five most affected countries by variation in purchasing frequency due to Covid-19, that is India, China, Vietnam, United States, and the United Kingdom; it is learned that India has been experiencing the highest e-commerce purchase frequency change due to the pandemic followed by China, Vietnam, United States and then the UK. Furthermore, most industries have suffered changes due to Covid-19; with the decline in the global economy, some sectors have increasingly gained the value of e-commerce. Isolation control measures and other recommendations have impacted customers spending on physical stores, and thus, people have actively switched from buying from these physical stores to opt for e-commerce. For instance, more than 50% of people in China, India, and Vietnam have shown that they no longer purchase more frequently online than before. In developed countries stated above, buying online has been part of them even before the outbreak of Covid-19 (Galanakis, 2020). A generally high percentage of people have shown almost no change in purchase behavior or frequency, which is attributed to a high level of online marketing even before the outbreak of Covid-19. Perhaps, it is now evident that Covid-19 has caused e-commerce to have the greatest market share, especially in the countries that have invested in

modern technology. Besides, during the Covid-19 pandemic, different products have attracted different sales rates through online platforms, with food and beverage products recording an increased demand, while jewelry and luxury products have recorded a decline in demand. Perhaps, e-commerce customers' behavior has positively changed from April and May, and it is expected that these shifts may last in some countries even after the pandemic ceases to exist (Pantelimon, et al, 2020). In one way or the other, e-commerce will continue to grow and expand, and it is expected that the longer the pandemic will stay with us, the higher the number of people will change their perception and purchase from physical stores to online shopping platforms.

Well, this research has based the effects of Covid-19 on e-commerce, a case study of how consumer behaviors have changed following the outbreak of Covid-19, and the increased use of e-commerce as part of business strategy to help cope with the prevailing situation. Perhaps, the concept of E-commerce in developed countries has taken root than in less developed countries, and therefore developed countries have the upper hand in dealing with the pandemic since they are used to using technology to acquire products that meet their daily needs. In the face of Covid-19, customers' behavior has changed to cope with restrictions relating to isolation, quarantine, and reduced movements in the name of avoiding contracting Covid-19. People have even opted to work from home, with large firms opting to make fair use of technology in conducting business activities during this age of crisis. The overall research hypothesis suggests that if the current Covid-19 continues to exist, then the preference for online shopping will increase; hence e-commerce will develop even in underdeveloped countries that have not invested a lot in modern technology. Customers' purchasing behavior will shift depending on the cost of items and products from online shops. Physical stores will continue being abandoned by customers and may start recording low sales than online platforms (Meyer, 2020). Suppose the current situation prevails for the long term, different businesses will shift their marketing to online to meet the needs of customers who will prefer online shopping to physical buying since the latter increases one's risk of contracting Covid-19. Customers' behavior is deemed to change to suit online shopping, especially for products that can be acquired without having the necessity to travel. Continued use of e-commerce will prepare people for any other crisis in the future, as learned from countries like China, where technology has helped them thrive during this age of Covid-19. E-commerce has existed in developed countries for some time now and the outbreak of Covid-19 has have found business enterprises prepared to serve their clients without meeting physically. Underdeveloped countries are learning from the other countries that have invested in long term technology (Meyer, 2020). Consumers' purchasing behavior in countries like China and the UK has almost remained the same during the face of Covid-19 and before. The reason behind that is that the customers in such places are used to e-commerce, and businesses there advocate for that kind of selling of their products because it has been customers' needs.

Since the outbreak of Covid-19, individuals have decided to spend most of their holidays domestically and not abroad due to the need to reduce travel. Individuals' focus on online purchasing of products for products such as food and beverages has increased; however, the purchasing behavior has seen most customers reduce their expenditures on some goods as compared to others. The age of Covid-19 is deemed the biggest crisis that has found various systems unprepared, ranging from the healthcare profession to the business platform for different countries across the world. Perhaps, the spread of e-commerce technology and the internet has been allowing individuals to connect still and meet their daily needs (Bhatti et al., 2020). On the other hand, business enterprises are able to interact with their customers through the use of technology, which limits the need for a physical meeting. Ecommerce allows

brands and business people to sell their products to their respective customers regardless of their geographical locations. Based on the above discussions we raised the following hypotheses

(i) There are different variables that have been influencing consumer buying behaviors during the Covid-19 pandemic, (ii) COVID -19 has a direct impact on consumer online shopping behaviors, and (iii) The frequency of online shopping will be maintained even after the pandemic.

## 2.1. Research Methodology

In conducting research, we relied on several findings from secondary sources that relate to the above research question regarding the effects of Covid-19 on e-commerce. Secondary sources that we found reliable during this research included reports and researches carried by bodies such as the United Nations, journals, and government documents. The following table summarizes the secondary sources that were significant for the study.

**Table-1:** secondary sources of our study

Source	Main subject or content
1. Ltd, R. (2020). <i>Impact of COVID 19 on the E-commerce Market - Research and Markets</i> . Researchandmarkets.com. Retrieved 4 December 2020, from <a href="https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5013567/impact-of-covid-19-on-the-e-commerce-market">https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5013567/impact-of-covid-19-on-the-e-commerce-market</a>	Commerce and supply chain disruption by Covid-19 pandemic in the year 2020.
2. Pham, V. K., Do Thi, T. H., & Ha Le, T. H. (2020). A study on the COVID-19 awareness affecting the consumer perceived benefits of online shopping in Vietnam. <i>Cogent Business and Management</i> , 7(1). <a href="https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1846882">https://doi.org/10.1080/23311975.2020.1846882</a>	Covid-19 awareness and how it affects perceived benefits of online shopping.
3. Report by Netcomm Suisse Observatory and UNCTAD: Covid-19 and E-commerce Findings from a Survey of Online Consumers in 9 Countries ( <a href="https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstictinf2020d1_en.pdf">https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstictinf2020d1_en.pdf</a> ).	Online consumers behavior changes obtained from nine countries across the globe
4. Chang, H. H., & Meyerhoefer, C. D. (2021). COVID-19 and the Demand for Online Food Shopping Services: Empirical Evidence from Taiwan. <i>American Journal of Agricultural Economics</i> , 103(2), 448-465. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1111/ajae.12170">https://doi.org/10.1111/ajae.12170</a>	Changes in demand for online shopping services for perishable products such as food and beverages as compared to others
5. Hao, N., Wang, H. H., & Zhou, Q. (2020). The impact of online grocery shopping on stockpile behavior in Covid-19. <i>China Agricultural Economic Review</i> , 12(3), 459-470. <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/CAER-04-2020-0064">https://doi.org/10.1108/CAER-04-2020-0064</a>	How stockpile behavior have been impacted by online grocery shopping amidst Covid-19
6. PANTELIMON, F.-V., GEORGESCU, T. M., & POSEDARU, B.-S. (2020). The Impact of Mobile e-Commerce on GDP: A Comparative Analysis between Romania and Germany and how Covid-19 Influences the e-Commerce Activity Worldwide. <i>Informatica Economica</i> , 24(2/2020), 27-41. <a href="https://doi.org/10.24818/issn14531305/24.2.2020.03">https://doi.org/10.24818/issn14531305/24.2.2020.03</a>	How trends in E-commerce have impacted GDP and how global E-commerce activity have been influenced by Covid-19
7. Islam, T., Pitafi, A. H., Arya, V., Wang, Y., Akhtar, N., Mubarik, S., & Xiaobei, L. (2021). Panic buying in the COVID-19 pandemic: A multi-country examination. <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> , 59, 102357.	How consumers pandemic fear have contributed to shift to online shopping and panic buying.
8. Tran, L. T. T. (2020). Managing the effectiveness of e-commerce platforms in a pandemic. <i>Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services</i> , 58, 102287.	Ways of managing effectiveness of online shopping platforms during pandemic and how different variables such as age, income, gender and education influences online shopping during Covid-19.

The procedure of selecting the above sources involved extensive reading and analysis of the sources' content in relation to the three research questions in this research. From the above sources, only five of them could answer the given research questions providing evidence from qualitative data. The first question concerning the influence Covid-19 has on consumer buying behavior is answered by the above table's first five sources. The first and third sources are more of data set which answers all the three questions stated in chapter one. Perhaps, the last

source provides more detailed data by analyzing how education, income, age, and gender influence online shopping during the pandemic. However, the future of online shopping after the pandemic is well explained by source number three upon considering the prevailing changes during the face of Covid-19. The above eight sources have been selected from 20 sources listed on the reference page since they relate directly to this study's set of research questions.

The first source consists of reports and full reflection of the global e-commerce industry since the outbreak of Covid-19 obtained from research and markets website which updates data daily (Link; <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5013567/impact-of-covid-19-on-the-e-commerce-market>). The data set covers the period from March 2020 and focuses on different products and organizations featured directly in e-commerce.<sup>1</sup>This website exposes some fundamental impacts of Covid-19 on the e-commerce market, featuring companies such as Amazon and eBay. The overall report summary is based on a worldwide overview of e-commerce during the age of Covid-19 with consideration of significant factors such as strong and steady growth of technology and internet users and increased awareness of online buying and launching of products.

The global e-commerce industry report is based on some product segments such as electronics, personal care, and beauty products, among others whose supply and consumption is considered to have been affected by the outbreak of Covid-19. Different data sets from amazon show that the current crisis has let down most giant e-commerce providers due to economic slowdowns. Perhaps, overall previous studies by Netcomm Suisse Observatory and UNCTAD provides updated data for consumer changed behavior in terms of online purchasing of products during the age of Covid-19. The frequency of online buying has been determined by the value change in some products' consumption compared to others. The following link contains data set for the full survey of consumer online buying behavior since the outbreak of Covid-19 as witnessed from various countries mentioned therein ([https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstictinf2020d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstictinf2020d1_en.pdf)). In some countries, the number of online shoppers has increased due to the outbreak of Covid-19. Perhaps, the frequency of buying online differs in some countries due to existing differences.<sup>2</sup> For instance, in Brazil, the frequency of buying online has increased higher in 2020 than in previous years. Following the increase of online shopping, a growing literature body relies on immense data possibilities to examine the nature and patterns of online shopping and consumer behavior changes in the long run. The comparison in consumer online purchasing behavior changes as studied from different regions of varied size in terms of the overall population and various economic advancements reveals close changes in online shopping behavior in terms of frequency. This helps generate data that can be relied upon to predict the future effects of Covid-19 on consumer behavior in terms of online purchasing. According to the study carried out by Netcomm Suisse Observatory and UNCTAD in October 2020 based on Covid-19 and E-commerce, nine countries were surveyed, and the change in consumer behaviors towards shopping online was monitored based on demand and supply for basic products.

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<sup>1</sup>Research and markets (2020); impact of Covid-19 on e-commerce. Retrieved from <https://www.researchandmarkets.com/reports/5013567/impact-of-covid-19-on-the-e-commerce-market>

<sup>2</sup>Unctad.org (2020, October 08). COVID-19 has changed online shopping forever, survey shows. Retrieved from; [https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstictinf2020d1\\_en.pdf](https://unctad.org/system/files/official-document/dtlstictinf2020d1_en.pdf).



A recent study by Chang and Meyerhoefer (2021) uses various databases to figure out the effectiveness of e-commerce platforms during Covid-19. In the light of the pandemic, businesses are able to identify through their respective management the reasons behind product ratings and consumers' choices based on pandemic fear and perceived economic benefits. Online purchase considerations are made based on underlying factors such as income, age, education and gender. The literature of e-commerce has documented that increased internet use allows businesses to sell their products directly to prospective customers through online platforms.<sup>3</sup> Perhaps, buying online does not allow the consumers to examine the products they are purchasing physically hence product uncertainty. Moreover, economic benefits conventionally pertain to consumers' perceptions of e-commerce platforms offering promotions and price discounts (Chang and Meyerhoefer, 2021). Some economic benefits associated with e-commerce trigger consumer intentions to participate in sustainable consumption and generate positive emotional responses that dictate online purchasing instinct during uncertain situations.

Demand for online food and other shopping services as per large-sized agro-food firms and e-commerce platforms have been affected by Covid-19. Failure to impose restriction and stay at home orders by national authorities in the age of Covid-19 has made online buying very responsive to coverage of the pandemic in line with growth in protective products' sales. Covid-19 awareness affecting the consumer perceived benefits of online shopping is a total reflection of the current situation. According to the recent study of Pham et al. (2020), the Covid-19 outbreak has turned out to be an opportunity for a substantial increase in online shopping. Most online buyers react to their changed purchasing behaviors during Covid-19 in terms of perceived benefits. Furthermore, Covid-19 acts as a moderator variable in the relationship between consumer online shopping activity and benefits perception. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, shopping from physical shops has become riskier based on people's awareness of the pandemic; this entirely depends on the provision of information concerning the disease.

Moreover, Thi Phan et al. (2020) described that social commerce influences online impulsive buying behavior. Due to the availability of social commerce sites and lockdown situations, buyers prefer online shopping. It is people's awareness about the disease that has been gradually occurring that shifts the tendency of consumers to prefer online shopping and forego physical stores (Pham, et al, 2020). The research investigates how Covid-19 differently plays a connecting role in each perceived benefit based on consumers' online shopping behavior. Some formulated hypotheses focused on establishing the validity of the correlation of consumer awareness of Covid-19 and their perception of online shopping benefits and activity. The hypotheses found liable include; awareness of utility, easy to use awareness, awareness of marketing policy, and awareness of price and cost, and society's affection (Pham, et al, 2020). The existing data compares the decrease in consumer spending in physical stores to the increase in consumer purchasing from online shops. It is deemed that if businesses continue to fulfill their customers' needs through online platforms effectively, consumers will become more willing to continue to interact with such firms. One of these research hypotheses states that; online customers Covid-19 fear positively moderates the relationship between economic benefits and sustainable consumption. This means that economic benefits may influence sustainable consumption highly when the fear for Covid-19 is significant.

Furthermore, variables such as age, education, gender, and education level influence online shopping in varied ways, especially during Covid-19. The perceived effectiveness of online

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<sup>3</sup>Chang, H. H.& Meyerhoefer, C. (2020). <https://www.nber.org/papers/w27427> DOI 10.3386/w27427

shopping platforms has seen age as a factor in determining online shopping volume during the pandemic. The young populations aged between 15 and 25 are often shopping online than any other age group globally (Meyer, 2020). The aging populations above sixty years, on the other hand, are seen to have the least involvement with online shopping due to their health complications as compared to any other population group. Therefore, the aspect of age is one of the factors that have been influencing the purchasing behavior of consumers during the period of Covid-19. The young preferably use the internet most of the time than the elderly, who are also highly encouraged to remain isolated due to their vulnerability to Covid-19 (Chang and Meyerhoefer, 2021). The aged rely more on the young population to perform some of the activities for them through the internet; hence the higher percentage of young people making online purchases than the aged (Chang and Meyerhoefer, 2021). Social class or income level is another factor variable that directly influences online shopping behavior even before the pandemic outbreak. People with a high level of income or from the upper social class would prefer to shop online as opposed to leading a low-class lifestyle. The upper-class group also has improved internet connectivity and necessary devices that can help them shop from online shops like Amazon and Alibaba.com (Tran & Lobey, 2020). Besides, gender also defines what product to order from online platforms; women have different preferences than men.

The level of education is another variable that dictates the change in consumer online shopping behavior, as evidenced after the outbreak of Covid-19 in 2020. Educated individuals are more aware of online shopping than less educated ones. Besides, those with a tertiary level of education have been showing more positive behavior change in terms of online purchasing since the outbreak of Covid-19 than those with a non-tertiary level of education. But all of them have shown a positive degree of shopping online during this period of a pandemic than before (Tran & Lobey, 2020).

The use of secondary sources to conduct this research on the basis of how Covid-19 has affected e-commerce provides data that can be relied upon but cannot be used for diversified comparison for regions not captured in the research study. Some of the data obtained during the age of Covid-19 involved using a qualitative online survey, whereby respondents' responses credibility may be a limitation all due to existing restrictions implemented by relevant authorities in different countries to curb the spread of the virus. Due to existing regulations, collecting data on the ground has been made more difficult; hence, most research is based on online surveys requiring extensive research. Perhaps due to the increased cost and risk of face-to-face interviews, the credibility of comprehensive data may not be ascertained; hence some value used in some data sets may be based on estimations.

## **2.2. Research Results and Discussion**

The use of the internet has increased for the people in isolation areas since they are very idle most of the time. Consumers' purchasing behavior in already developed countries like China, Russia, the USA, and Germany has been studied thoroughly in the above secondary sources by different researchers, all giving similar results. Moreover, a report by unctad.org (2020) showed that more than fifty percent of people were agreed that they are spending more time online for entertainment, getting health-related information, shopping, and reading newspaper since the covid-19 pandemic (figure-1)

**COVID-19 HAS LED MORE PEOPLE TO GO DIGITAL IN MULTIPLE WAYS**

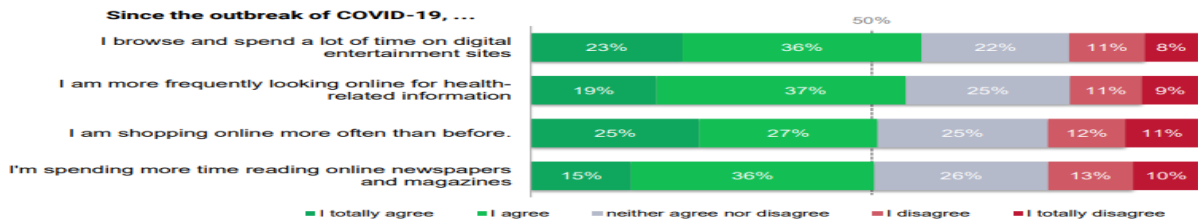


Figure1.0: People are spending a lot of time online during Covid-19 (unctad.org, 2020)

Increased use of internet activities has driven people to consider purchasing products online. Perhaps, the purchasing behavior has changed by a certain percentage during the given period of study, and the use of e-commerce is expected to increase in the future (Hao, et al, 2020). The e-commerce sector has attracted a number of consumers who seek to purchase products they would preferably use while in quarantine situations. Following the need for healthcare products, consumers' online purchasing behavior from the various developed and developing countries has shown the product to have the highest percentage of active users of all time. During Covid-19, food, beverages, and personal care products have the most active users, despite the reduced expenditure during the pandemic. Consumers in developed countries have been indicating a decline in the use and purchasing of consumer products relating to luxury, electronics, and travels with increased buying of protective wears (Addo, et al, 2020). The use of the internet has increased in the face of Covid-19 than in the recent past, primarily through the consideration of well-established platforms. Consumers from the countries affected by the increased use of e-commerce may continue showing apparent anticipation to shop online even after the Covid-19 crisis is managed thoroughly. Perhaps, in terms of future purchasing trends, customers in developing countries such as Brazil express the strongest preference for preferring to buy more from online platforms as compared to purchasing from physical stores (Chang & Meyerhoefer, 2020). Perhaps, those from developed states like China and the United States have an indication of a balanced approach between physical purchase and online shopping (Hao, et al, 2020).

The results obtained from this research can be used for comparison with other states in America since there are fewer disparities in the overall outcome. Perhaps, in terms of gender, females were more actively involved in online shopping during this period of Covid-19 than males. On average, a more significant percentage of females from all the developed countries are often making online purchases compared to the percentage of male counterparts in the same regions (Phan, et al, 2020). The shift to e-commerce during the age of Covid-19 has been more pronounced than ever due to many reasons that are well known. The statistics show that the younger populations below the age of forty-five years are gradually accelerating their online purchasing more than ever during this period of Covid-19 (Hao, et al, 2020).

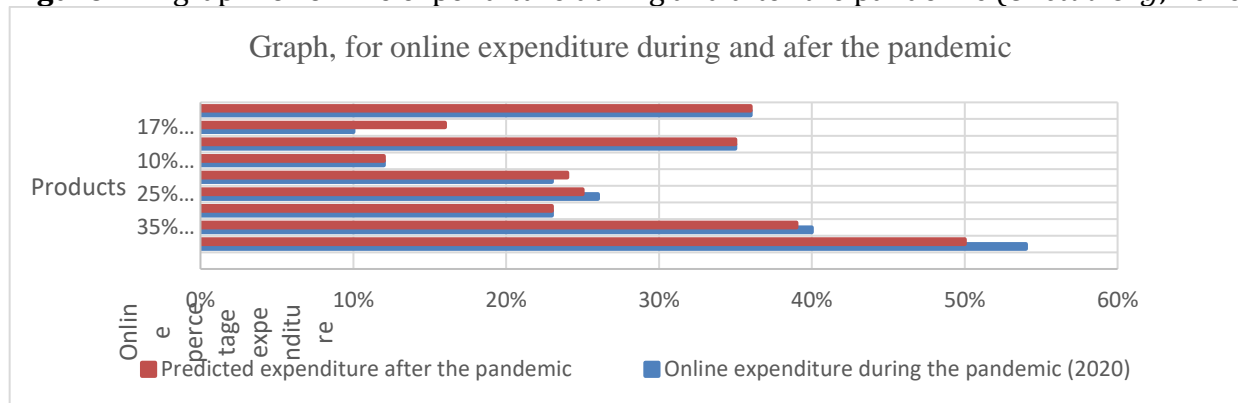
Moreover, the following products were more focused during the study to explain the change in consumer behavior during Covid-19 and even the predicted growth in the near future. Products ranging from personal care, food, fashion, electronics, healthcare products, home furniture, online courses, media and books, tourism, and travels, as well as household products, were emphasized during the research. The numbers of online purchasers have increased for some products during Covid-19 than others with a high expectation that active purchasers cannot fail to purchase a single product each month (Bhatti et al., 2020). The average spending online for most products has dropped during the pandemic more for travel and related products and less for food and beverages. Perhaps the overall shift of people to online shopping has increased

by a significant percentage. The table below shows the average expenditure in percentage for some products compared to others during this crisis and the predicted value after the problem, according to the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development report, a reflection of the consumer online shopping behavior change during Covid-19 in developing countries like Brazil (Unctad.Org, 2020).

**Table 2.0:** Online expenditure before, during and after the Covid-19 pandemic (Unctad.Org, 2020)

Products	Online Expenditure (2019) before the pandemic	Online Expenditure During The Pandemic (2020)	Predicted Expenditure in future ( 2021)
Food and beverages	28%	54%	50%
Cosmetics and personal care products	35%	40%	39%
Fashion and accessories	22%	23%	23%
Electronics goods	25%	26%	25%
Education and e-learning courses	13%	23%	24%
Media and books	10%	12%	12%
Healthcare products	15%	35%	35%
Hotel bookings and travels , flights	17%	10%	16%
Household and home furniture products	33%	36%	36%

**Figure 2:** A graph for online expenditure during and after the pandemic (Unctad.Org, 2020)



The following outcomes were found relating to the study;

- i.Consumer online behaviors as a result of Covid-19 measures affected E-commerce since most buyers shifted to buying mostly perishable goods, abandoning durable ones.
- ii.Due to Covid-19 measures, it increased consumer purchase of goods via E-commerce, as people were constrained in their residential; thus, they preferred shopping online to physical stores.
- iii.Covid-19 outbreak in 2020, led to a change in consumers’ consumption and preferences habits for various goods. Most shoppers have preferred purchasing food and beverages than other products offered through E-commerce.
- iv.Internet usage prevailed as most consumers shifted their behavior to online shops due to the exposure of cheap, affordable, and reliable products obtained via E-commerce.
- v.Noticeable increased buying of some goods like protective and health care products to avoid contracting covid-19. The sale of the above products was ranked high than other goods.

From this study it is evident that Covid-19 has impacted on e-commerce directly. Since I used secondary sources to conduct this research the outcome of the study is directly based on what is being witnessed in the ground. Perhaps, the outcomes of this research are not too specific and not that broad but are diversified since they induce comparison of the influence of Covid-19 not for one country but globally. Consumer online shopping behavior has been affected by Covid-19 in many ways (Hao et al, 2020). In countries that have invested in modern technology

like Germany, China, the USA, Italy, and Canada, e-commerce has existed even before the outbreak of COVID-19. However, people have used e-commerce less often before the outbreak of Covid-19 as compared to how they are using it today. Government restrictions to control and curb the virus's spreading have been one of the factors that have forced people to adopt e-commerce while at home (Bhatti et al., 2020). Perhaps, organizations have also encouraged their employees to work at home during this pandemic era to minimize the vulnerability related to the pandemic. Remaining in isolation is one of the control measures that citizens are encouraged to consider to reduce the risk of contracting the deadly virus. During this age of Covid-19, customers have shifted their demand to online goods compared to physical stores since buying online discourages physical conduct and reduce the virus's vulnerability (Dannenber, et al, 2020). The elderly populations during this crisis are to stay isolated, and they can only consider online purchasing for their products in the long run.

Moreover, the consumers' online buying behavior has been subject to change with respect to demand for some items than others (de Paulo Farias & dos Santos Gomes, 2020). More importantly, consumers have been considering buying more food products than other products to maintain their daily upkeep while in isolation. Personal care and healthcare products are also more valued than luxury goods for the people in quarantine areas during the pandemic (Loxton et al, 2020). Nevertheless, consumers in the countries associated with a high level of e-commerce have shown an increased volume online purchasing as compared to ordinary purchasing from physical shops. The need to consider online purchasing has been encouraged by extensive use of the internet in typical scenarios, which exposes them to affordable products that can be delivered to their doorstep without having to necessarily to go for them (Bhatti et al., 2020). In addition, payment for such products is completed through cashless transactions; hence buying online is considered safer than other means. Since the outbreak of Covid-19, people have been living with the fear of contracting the disease; bearing in mind the disease has claimed people's lives elsewhere. The above fear is now the driving force that has insinuated people in most counties across the globe to prefer online purchasing to physical store buying (Hao et al, 2020).

Furthermore, it is expected that people in developed nations will continue to use e-commerce at an equal or close rate as they are currently using during this pandemic (*Unctad.Org*, 2020). The continual use of social commerce will be driven by already cultivated behavior during Covid-19, which will build more trust in online shops compared to the physical stores. Customers who will get used to buying online will be hard to shift or change their mindset after Covid-19 is mitigated. Perhaps, the outbreak of Covid-19 has helped to show the need for technology and how investing in more advanced technology prepares a country or state for future advanced crisis (Frost & Strauss, 2016). The use of the internet during the isolation period has spearheaded online shopping preference due to the exposure to the products and services that meet one's need, which can be availed in the area of isolation (Guo et al, 2020). Education, age, and gender are primary considerations that can influence change in consumer online purchasing behavior during this age of Covid-19. Perhaps, the driving force to changed behavior is the effects associated with the virus; for instance, buying more often through physical stores increases one's risk of getting exposed to the deadly virus. The virus can later spread to family members without the victim's knowledge; hence it is wise and advisable to avoid physical conduct by ordering the products through online platforms during the pandemic. As a matter of fact, the people in highly populated states such as China are at greater risk of contracting the disease due to increased vulnerability, but due to improved e-commerce, consumers in such regions are more favored to have the products they may need for their well-being available at their doorsteps (Pham et al, 2020).

The use of modern technology during the face of Covid-19 is a possible control measure that has helped people survive the disease and a mechanism of educating people on the need for e-commerce even after the pandemic (Baig et al, 2020). The reliance on e-commerce in regions like the United States, China, Italy, and Germany, among other nations, has increased during the pandemic following the effects caused by the virus, which includes loss of lives.

## **5.0. Conclusion**

In summary, the outbreak of Covid-19 has impacted e-commerce in many ways. In developed countries like the United States, Japan, China, and Germany, the pandemic's face has allowed consumers therein to shift directly to online shopping and marketing. Most business enterprises have decided to formulate strategies that will enable the business to thrive in the Coronavirus pandemic age when customers are encouraged to avoid physical conduct by remaining in isolation. The change in behavior for consumers shopping online has been influenced by some products' preference to others. For instance, food and beverages and personal care products are given priority over electronics and luxury goods.

Additionally, age, gender, level of education, and income constitute the core variables found to influence consumer online buying. In terms of age, people aged between 15-35 years are actively involving in online buying, unlike those past 60 years of age. More women consider online buying as compared to men simply due to differences in preferences. On the other hand, high-income families prefer online buying compared to low-income families (Unctad.Org, 2020). Moreover, the overall study makes an extensive and essential contribution to the existing literature as it identifies some of the prevalent impacts of Covid-19 on consumer online buying behavior. Perhaps, using some of the sources listed in the methodology section for comparison in other nations outside some area of origin may not provide a real reflection of the effects of Covid-19 on e-commerce. From this research, it is evident that the future of online shopping will be after the pandemic will be determined by the impact the Covid-19 on online shopping behavior, which means that since people have shifted to online buying since the outbreak of Covid-19 in the year 2020, the frequency of buying online will be maintained at same or close rates even after the pandemic. This finding is based on the advantages of online shopping compared to buying from physical stores. Buyers who have become used to buying online will find it difficult to shift again to other modes after Covid-19; hence the future of e-commerce is bright. On the other hand, after Covid-19, companies from various countries would prefer to invest in modern technology to prepare for any other similar crisis in the future.

## **5.1. Theoretical Implications**

Altogether, this research's theoretical implication to the literature on the effects of Covid-19 based on online shopping behavior and the future of online buying after the pandemic can be predicted after further research. This research contributes to a better understanding of the need to empower and invest in E-commerce since the latter can enhance the quality of services in various industries. Besides, the combination of this study and any other study based on online marketing trends before and after the pandemic can provide viable information to ascertain long-term investment in the market. Based on the research findings, further research can be based on how the future of online marketing can be improved through technology, what trends can be introduced in the market industry to have more people shift to e-commerce even when there is no impending pandemic like Covid-19 (Frost & Strauss, 2016). Current study has also imperative offerings in the theoretical field of digital consumer behavior; online consumers are able to know their shopping behaviors during pandemic situation.

## 5.2. Practical Implications

Other than the hypothetical commitments, this investigation additionally has necessary commonsense ramifications fundamental for market players and developing business sectors globally. Nevertheless, the study brought back the 'failed to remember' hypothesis of the influence of Covid-19 basically and connected this hypothesis to change in consumers' online shopping behavior. Online merchants and serious market players can investigate and rediscover this hypothesis to expand deals. In light of the discoveries in this work and past examinations, it is proven that increased use of the internet can make firms put their assets in creating and cultivating social presence to beat the insufficiency related to conventional online shopping and marketing (Guo, et al, 2020). Ultimately, the above discoveries uphold the cases that social company made through technology before the outbreak of Covid-19 is vital for developing and achieving electronic related trade. Furthermore, it is only upon the improvement of social conditions to satisfy consumers in isolation areas and homes that online shopping and marketing will flourish during the face of Covid-19 and even beyond the unforeseen future.

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