

A STUDY OF CHANGES IN CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR AS A CONSEQUENCE OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC WITH REFERENCE TO MEERUT DISTRICT, UTTAR PRADESH

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Abstract

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a particularly devastating effect on a number of countries, including the United States, France, the United Kingdom, Spain, Italy, China, India, Brazil, Russia, and Turkey. These countries have been hardest hit by the pandemic's effects. The way that consumers buy goods and services has significantly changed as a result of the current circumstances. Customers are trying to improve their routines and take control of the situation since they are worried about the impending second wave. Consequently, less people are visiting physical stores, which has led companies to start offering home delivery services. Even if customers might eventually return to their old buying habits, these routines have been adjusted to follow new guidelines. New consumer behaviors brought out by technological breakthroughs have further changed the environment. It is critical to recognize that the ongoing epidemic has resulted in unanticipated events that call for resilience and adaptation. This study examines how psychological and personal variables affect Indian consumers' purchasing decisions, particularly in the Meerut District.

Keywords: *Consumer, Consumer Behaviour, Covid 19, Pandemic*

Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted many facets of society, including the way that people shop. The global pandemic that began in late 2019 and quickly spread around the world has upended societal conventions, disrupted businesses, and transformed how people live their lives. The purchasing habits of consumers are one important sector that has seen a considerable transition.

The process people go through when making purchases is referred to as consumer purchasing behavior. It involves a number of variables, including psychological incentives, societal influences, economic circumstances, and personal preferences. This process has seen new dynamics brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, which have had a major impact on consumer behavior in the marketplace.

The goal of the study is to comprehend how the COVID-19 epidemic has affected consumer purchasing behavior, with a particular emphasis on Meerut District in India. The state of Uttar Pradesh's Meerut District is a thriving, economically significant area with a varied customer base. This is a particularly relevant and interesting area to study how the epidemic has affected consumer behavior.

The study's context is the awareness of the COVID-19 pandemic's unprecedented nature and its effects on consumer behavior. Lockdowns, travel restrictions, and health concerns are just a few of the major disruptions and uncertainties brought about by the pandemic that have an immediate impact on consumer purchasing habits. Therefore, it is imperative to investigate and comprehend the particular alterations in consumer behavior that have taken place in reaction to the epidemic.

The purpose of the study is to investigate the different factors that affected the purchasing decisions made by consumers in Meerut District both during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. It aims to determine how much the epidemic has affected consumer preferences, motivations, and decision-making processes. Furthermore, given the growing prevalence of contactless payments and online buying, the study seeks to understand how technological developments and digital platforms influence customer behavior.

The study recognizes the distinct features of the consumer market in Meerut District and its regional subtleties by concentrating on this particular area. By considering the unique environment and dynamics of Meerut District, this localized method enables a more thorough assessment of the COVID-19 pandemic's effects on consumer purchasing behavior.

To sum up, the study's background emphasizes how the COVID-19 epidemic has had a substantial impact on consumer purchasing behavior and how important it is to comprehend the particular changes that have taken place in Meerut District. The study intends to add to the body of knowledge on consumer behavior by analyzing the factors that have influenced consumer behavior both during and after the pandemic. It also aims to offer useful insights for businesses and policymakers to manage the post-pandemic market climate.

Review of Literature

Evidence suggests that, although employment fell for both men and women in the early stages of the pandemic, the fall was greater for men than for women (Deshpande 2020, Desai, Deshmukh et al. 2021). The pandemic had a particularly severe impact on India's urban poor, particularly the urban informal workers (Afridi, Dhillon et al. 2020, Dhingra and Machin 2020, Kesar, Abraham et al. 2020, Basole, Abraham et al. 2021, Choudhuri, Pramanik et al. 2022). Research has also revealed evidence of a decline in food spending (Gupta, Malani et al., 2021). This has led to an increase in food insecurity (Drèze and Somanchi 2021, Mishra, Madan et al. 2021, Kumar and Sonkar 2022). These difficulties frequently persist long after the initial lockdown, lasting until October through December 2020 (Drèze and Somanchi 2021). (Gupta, Seth et al., 2022) also

discover a decline in the consumption of non-staple foods in May 2020, with women being disproportionately impacted by a diet lacking in variety. These foods include meats, eggs, vegetables, and fruits. Indian households are not the only ones experiencing hardship due to mobility restrictions imposed by lockdowns; numerous studies have shown that economic distress has increased in a number of other countries as well, leading to a decline in food expenditure and a higher risk of hunger (Hirvonen, De Brauw et al. 2021, Mahmud and Riley 2021), (Amare, Abay et al. 2021), (Josephson, Kilic et al. 2021), (Egger, Miguel et al. 2021), (Kim, Koh et al. 2022). However, several others have noted the absence of one to one correspondence between income and consumption decline. Despite large fall in income in rural Liberia and Malawi, (Aggarwal, Jeong et al. 2020) find no evidence of food insecurity.

Research Objectives

1. To study the concept of Covid 19.
2. To examin the behaviour of consumer during covid 19.
3. To study the components of consumer behaviour that is changed in covid 19.

Research Methodology

The study makes use of both primary and secondary data. One hundred respondents completed a standardized Google Form questionnaire, which served as the basis for collecting the primary data. Books, reports, journals, magazines, newspapers, websites, and other published sources are used to gather secondary data. The study's intended audience is the Meerut District. Percentages, graphical displays, and other methods have been used to analyze the data gathered for the study.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Gender wise Distribution of respondents

	Frequency	Percentage
Male	56	56
Female	44	44
Total	100	100

Table 1 demonstrates the gender-wise distribution of 100 respondents. It can be observed that the sample comprises around 56 percent of male respondents and 44 percent of female respondents.

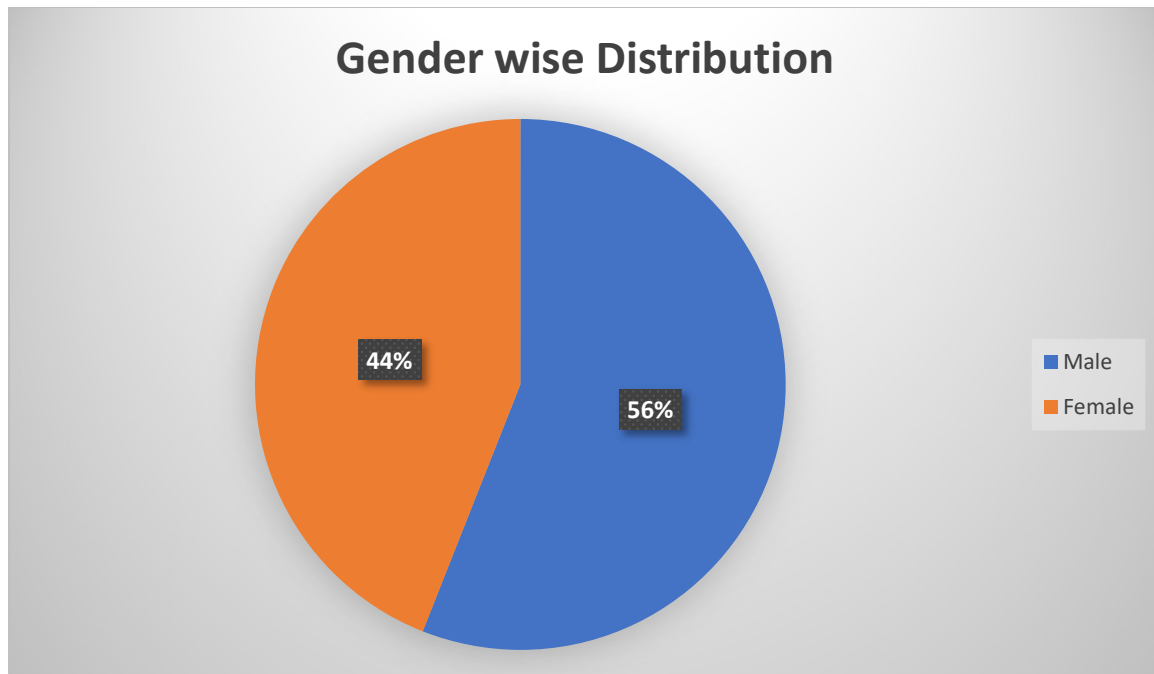


Table 2: Age wise Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage
Below 18	08	08
18-30	30	30
31-40	35	35
41-50	15	15
Above 51	12	12
Total	100	100

Thirty five percent of the sample unit in the study are respondents aged 31 to 40 years, thirty percent are respondents aged 18 to 30, and fifteen percent are respondents aged between 41 and 50 in the study region.

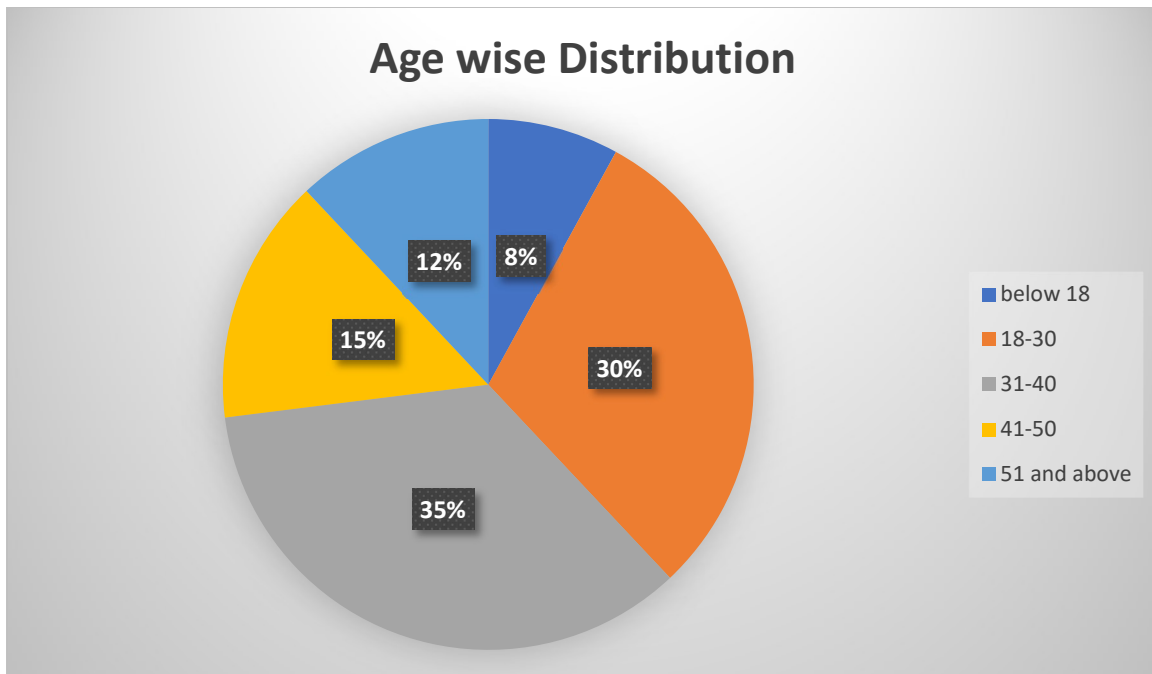


Table 3: Region wise Distribution

Residing Region	Frequency	Percentage
Rural	38	38
Urban	62	62
Total	100	100

Table 3 demonstrates the region-wise distribution of 100 respondents. It can be observed that the sample comprises around 38 percent of rural respondents and 62 percent of urban respondents.

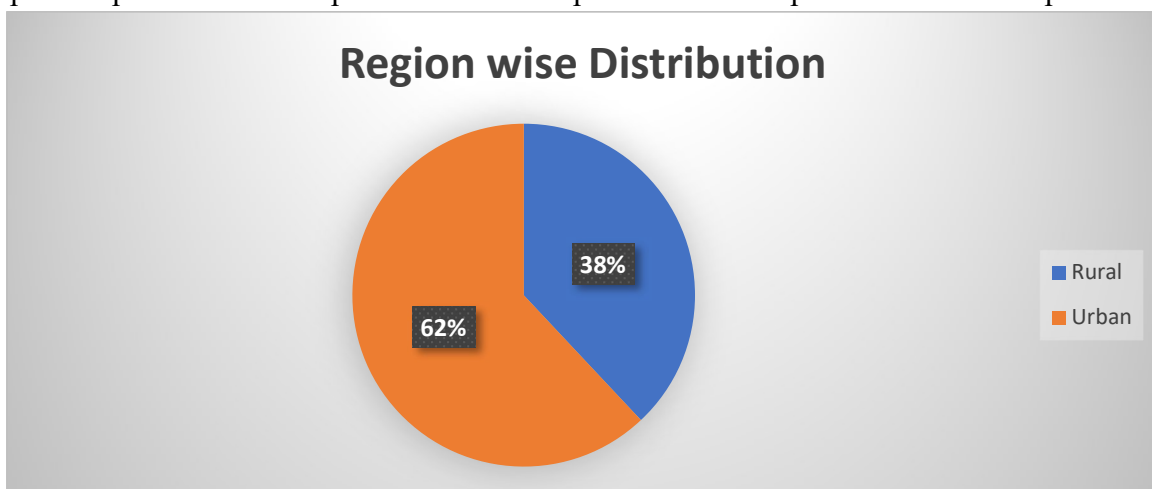


Table 4: Educational Status wise Distribution

Age	Frequency	Percentage
No Formal Education	06	06

School Level	18	18
Diploma	08	08
Graduate	35	35
Post graduate and above	33	33
Total	100	100

Based on the data, it can be deduced that 35% of the respondents have completed graduation, 33% have finished their post graduate degree, 18% have completed school level education, and 8% have completed up to diploma. Thus, graduates make up the bulk of the respondents.

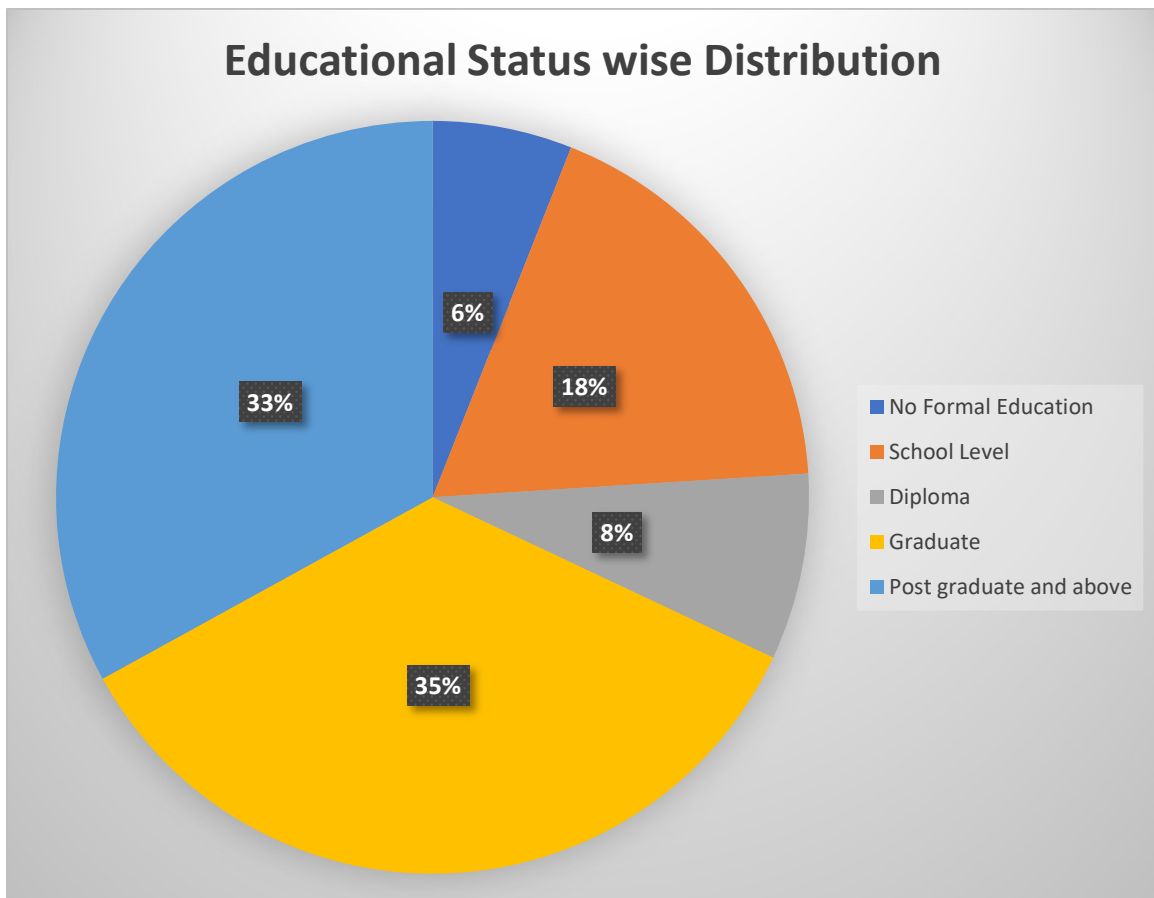


Table 5: Income (per month) Status wise Distribution

Income	Frequency	Percentage
>10000	12	12
10001-20000	14	14
20001-30000	40	40

30001-40000	23	23
41000 and above	11	11
Total	100	100

Of the 100 respondents, forty percent come from the 20,001–30,000 income range, twenty-three percent from the 30,001–40,000 income range, and fourteen percent from 10001-20000 group.

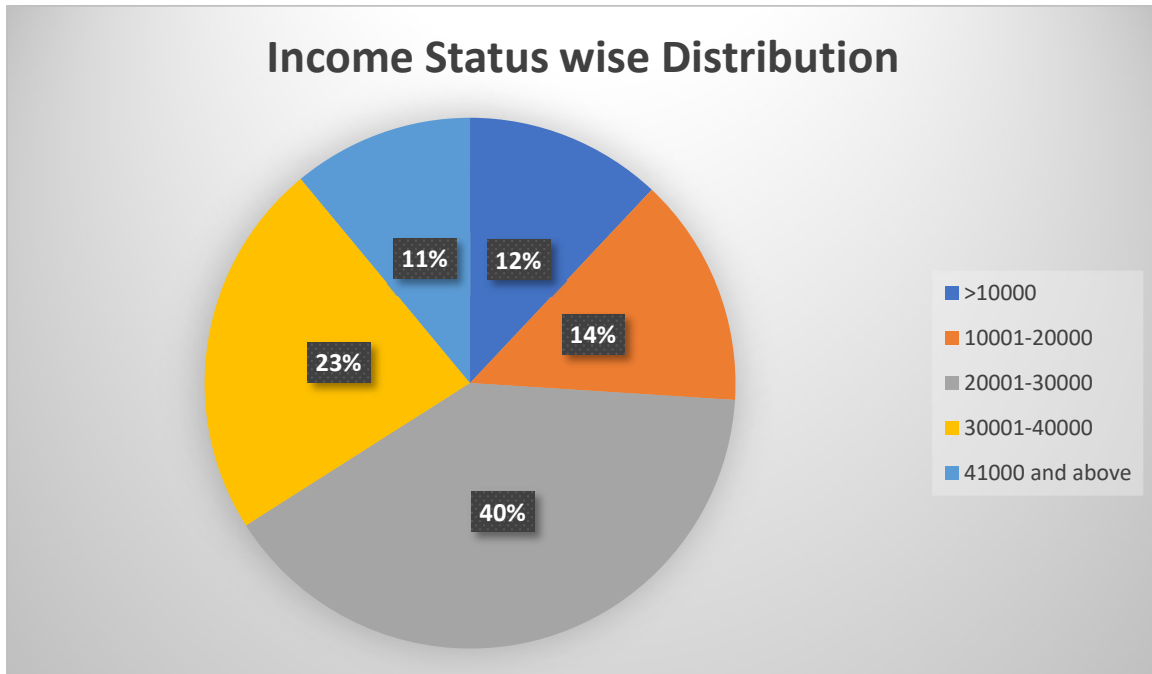


Table 6: Changes Regarding digital payment methods during COVID-19

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Decreased	10	10
Decreased	10	10
No Change	06	06
Increased	38	38
Strongly Increased	36	36
Total	100	100

Table 6 illustrates how the Covid-19 outbreak significantly affected people's purchasing decisions when it came to digital payment options including mobile wallets, UPI, and QR codes. Seventy-four percent of respondents said they have increased their expenditure using digital payment methods. In particular, 36% of participants observed a noteworthy rise, whilst 38% reported a marginal increase. Just 20% of respondents said they had reduced their spending, either little (10%) or considerably (10%).

Changes Regarding digital payments methods during COVID-19

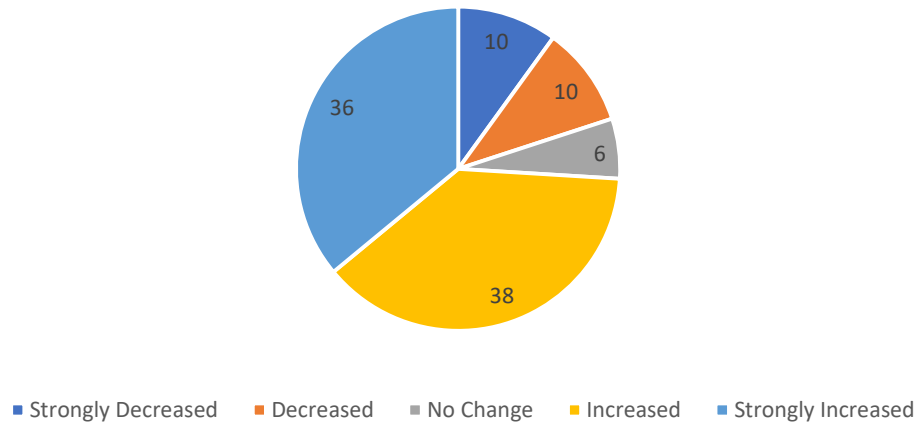
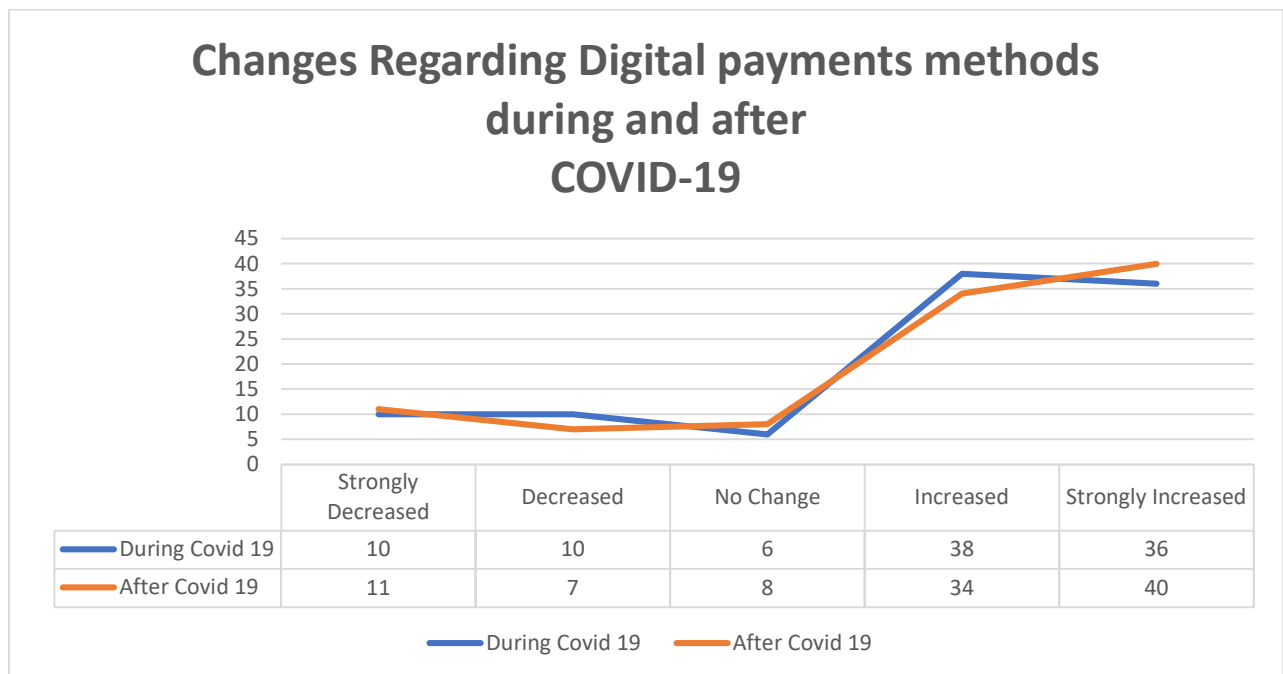
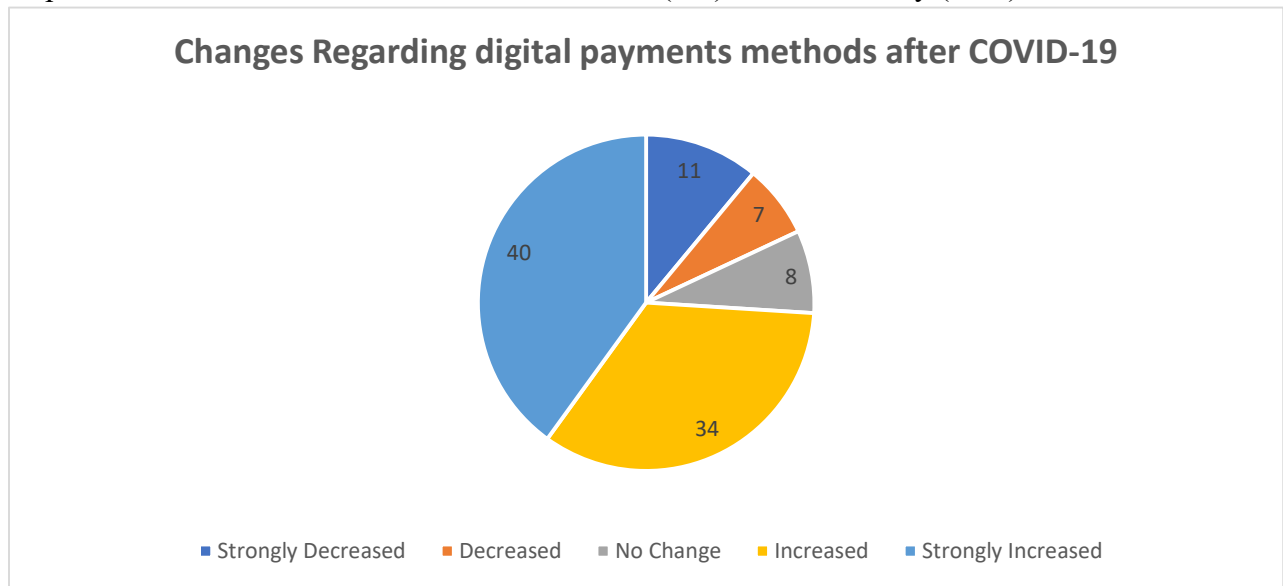


Table 7: Changes Regarding digital payment methods after COVID-19

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Decreased	11	11
Decreased	07	07
No Change	08	08
Increased	34	34
Strongly Increased	40	40
Total	100	100

Similar trends have been observed after the Covid-19 epidemic, with the majority of respondents (74%) continuing to indicate an increase in their use of digital payment methods for expenditure. In particular, 34% of respondents reported a minor rise in their expenditure using digital payment methods, whereas 40% of respondents indicated a big increase. Nonetheless, we observe a minor rise in the percentage of participants who reported a reduction in their expenditure, as 18% of

respondents indicated a decrease, either somewhat (7%) or considerably (11%).



After comparison of both tables, it is found that the Covid-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on people's buying behaviour through digital payment methods. As people increasingly preferred contactless payments during the pandemic, many have increased their spending through mobile wallets, UPI, and QR codes. While we see a slight increase in the proportion of respondents who reported a decrease in their spending after the Covid-19 pandemic, the majority still reported an increase, suggesting that digital payment methods have become more important to people even as the pandemic situation improves.

Table 8: Changes Regarding Frequency of online shopping during COVID- 19

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Decreased	5	5
Decreased	12	12
No Change	08	08
Increased	39	39
Strongly Increased	36	36
Total	100	100

Based on the data collected, it is observed that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on people's frequency of online shopping behaviour. During the COVID-19 pandemics, a majority of respondents (75%) reported an increase in their frequency of online shopping, either slightly (39%) or significantly (36%). Only a small proportion of respondents (17%) reported a decrease in their frequency of online shopping, either slightly (12%) or significantly (5%).

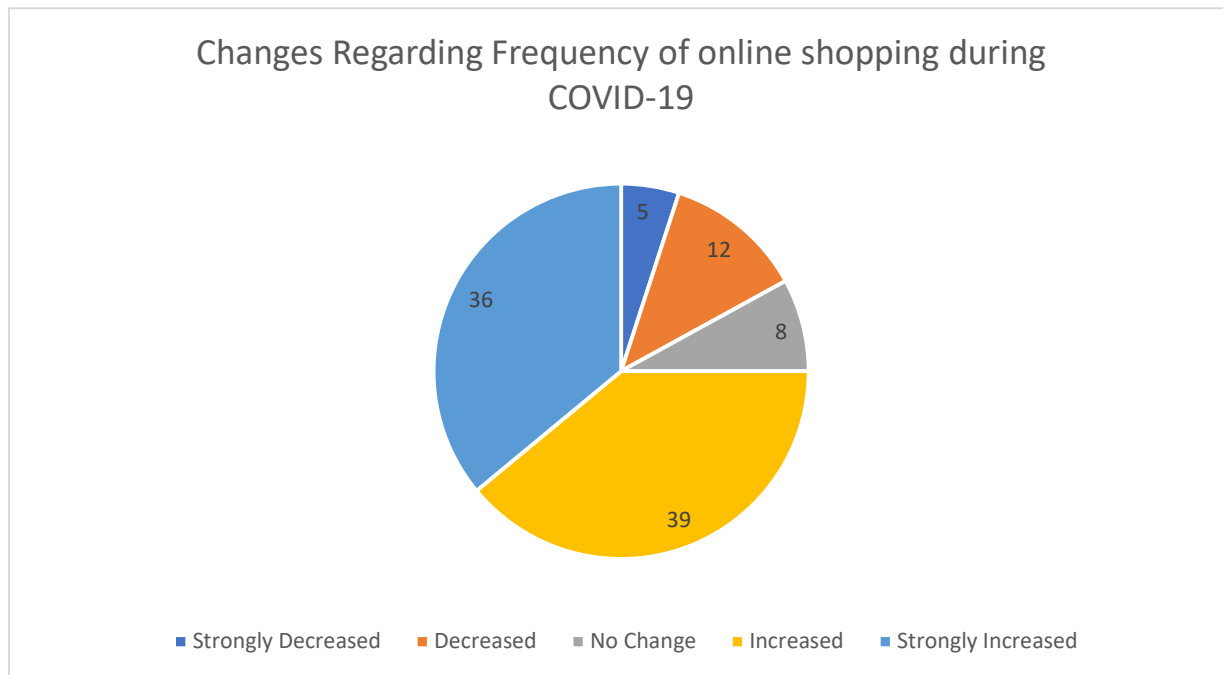


Table 9: Changes Regarding Frequency of in store shopping during COVID- 19

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Decreased	47	47
Decreased	19	19
No Change	04	04

Increased	16	16
Strongly Increased	14	14
Total	100	100

Based on the data collected, it can be seen that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on people's frequency of in-store (offline) shopping behaviour. During the COVID-19 pandemics, a majority of respondents (66%) reported a decrease in their frequency of in-store shopping, either slightly (19%) or significantly (47%). Only a small proportion of respondents (30%) reported an increase in their frequency of in-store shopping, either slightly (16%) or significantly (14%).

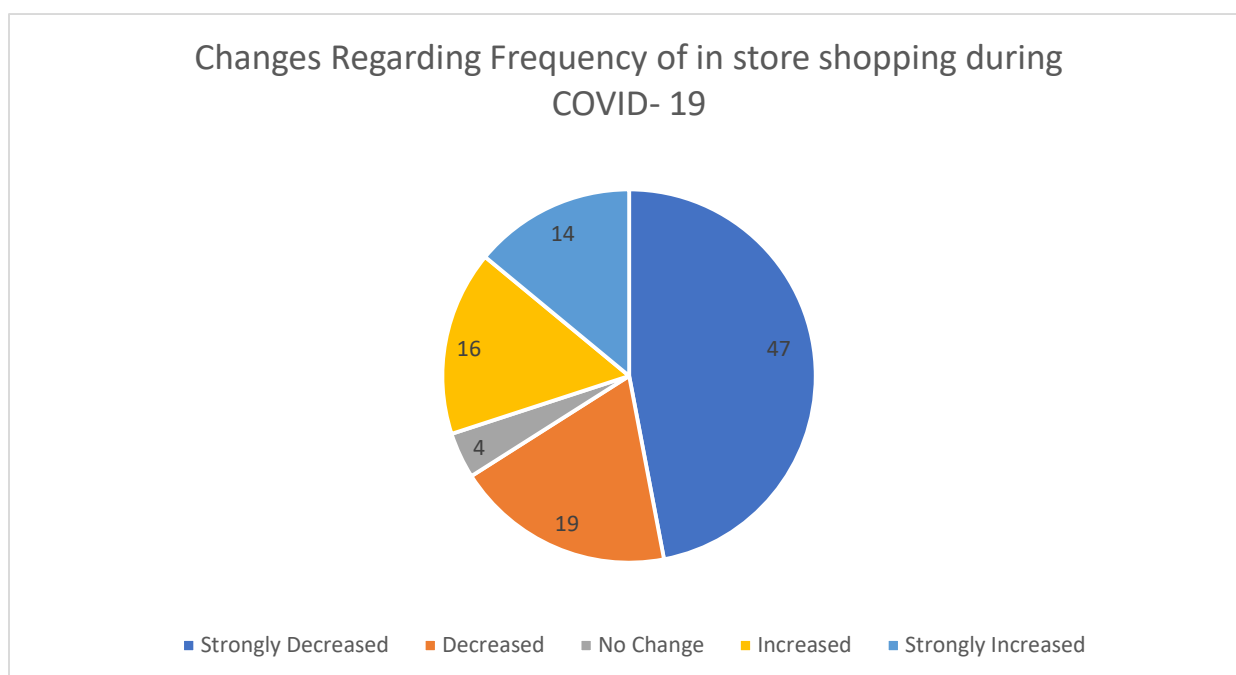


Table 10: Changes Regarding Frequency of local brands shopping during COVID- 19

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Decreased	18	18
Decreased	20	20
No Change	09	09
Increased	19	19
Strongly Increased	34	34
Total	100	100

Based on the survey results, it appears that there has been a significant increase in the frequency of buying local brands of Indian companies during COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemics,

53% of respondents reported some level of increase in buying local brands, with 34% reporting a significant increase.

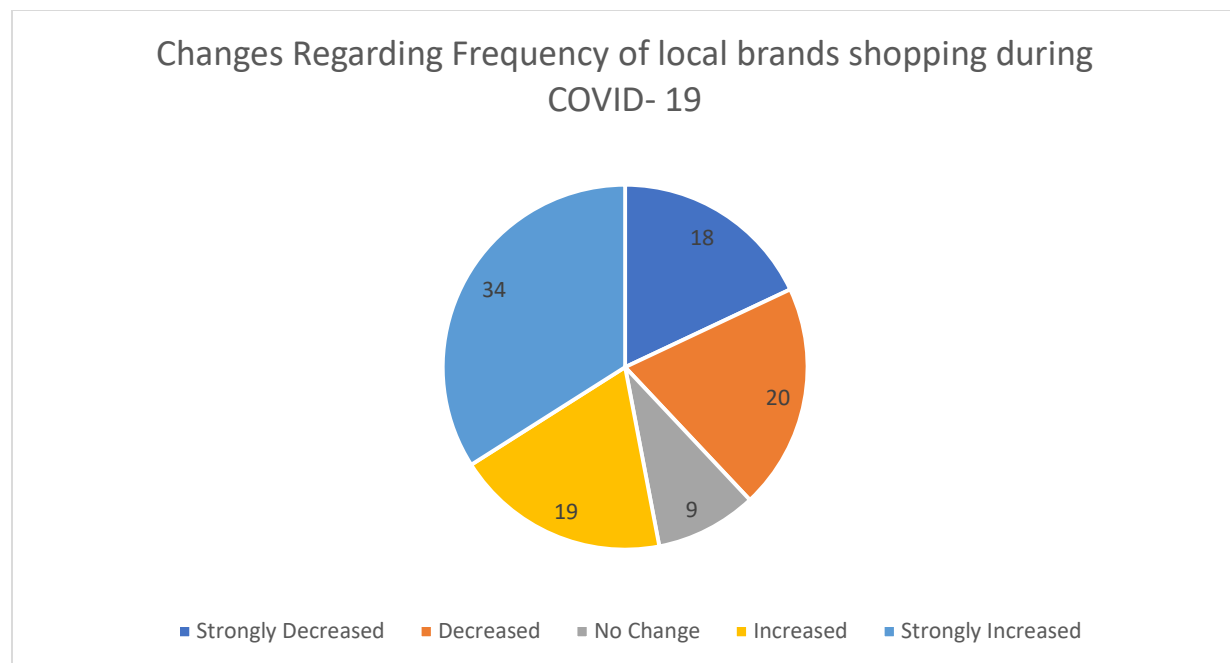


Table 11: Changes regarding panic buying behaviour during COVID-19

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Decreased	10	10
Decreased	08	08
No Change	02	02
Increased	34	34
Strongly Increased	46	46
Total	100	100

Based on the survey results, it is observed that the COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on panic buying behaviour. During the COVID-19 pandemics, 46% of respondents reported a significant increase in panic buying, while 34% reported a slight increase.

Changes regarding panic buying behaviour during COVID-19

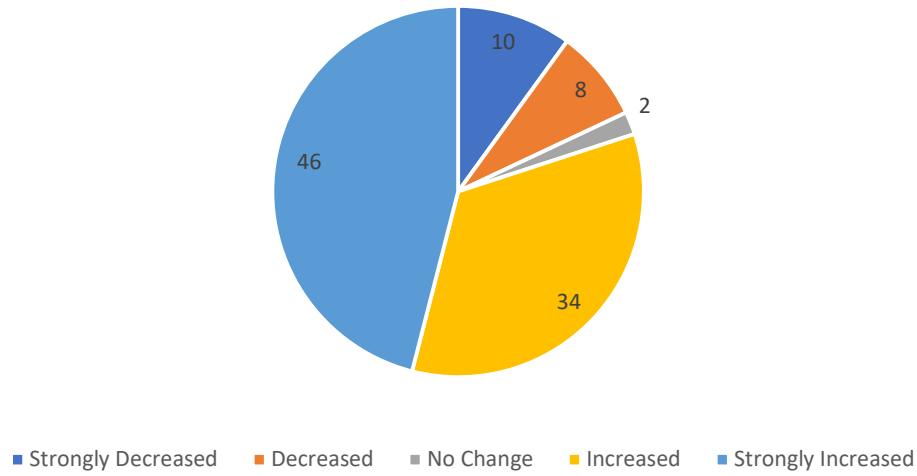
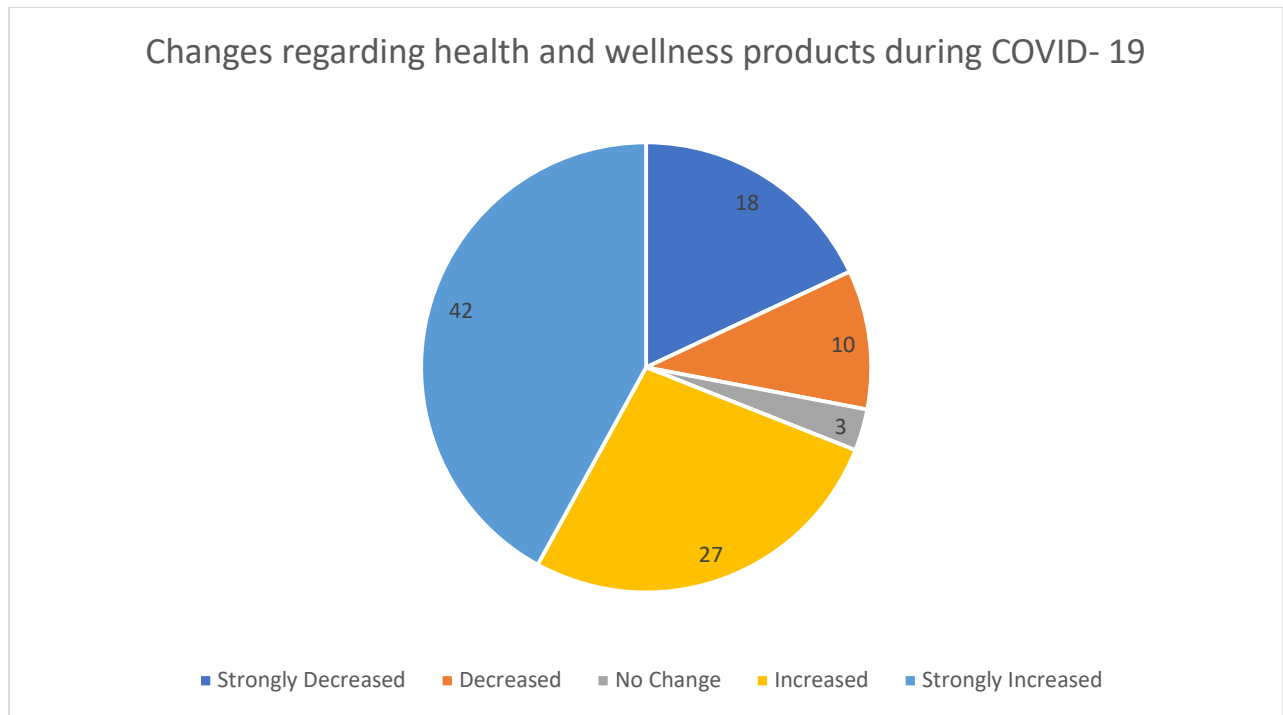


Table 12: Changes regarding health and wellness products during COVID- 19

	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Decreased	18	18
Decreased	10	10
No Change	03	03
Increased	27	27
Strongly Increased	42	42
Total	100	100

Based on the collected data, during the Covid-19 pandemics, 69% of the respondents indicated an increase in their buying of health and wellness products. Out of this, 42% reported a significant increase, while 27% reported a slight increase. On the other hand, 3% reported no change, while 10% and 18% reported a slight and significant decrease, respectively.



Conclusion

Increase in Digital Payment Usage: The pandemic has led to a significant increase in the use of digital payment methods such as mobile wallets, UPI, and QR codes. A majority of respondents reported higher spending through digital payment methods during and after the pandemic, indicating a shift towards cashless transactions.

Rise in Online Shopping Frequency: There has been a notable increase in the frequency of online shopping during the pandemic, with a majority of respondents reporting higher engagement in online shopping activities. This trend suggests a preference for the convenience and safety of online shopping platforms amidst the pandemic.

Decline in In-Store Shopping: Conversely, there has been a decrease in the frequency of in-store (offline) shopping during the pandemic. This decline indicates a shift away from traditional brick-and-mortar retail outlets, possibly due to concerns about virus transmission and lockdown restrictions.

Support for Local Brands: There has been a significant increase in the purchase of local brands from Indian companies during the pandemic. This trend reflects a growing preference among consumers to support local businesses and products, possibly driven by factors such as nationalism, supply chain disruptions, or a desire to contribute to the local economy.

Panic Buying Behaviour: The pandemic has also triggered a notable increase in panic buying behaviour, with a significant proportion of respondents reporting stockpiling of essential goods. This behaviour could be attributed to fears of shortages or uncertainty surrounding the availability of essential items during periods of lockdown or restricted movement.

Rise in Health and Wellness Product Purchases: There has been a substantial increase in the purchase of health and wellness products during the pandemic. This trend suggests a heightened

focus on personal health and well-being among consumers, possibly driven by concerns about immune system support or general wellness amidst the health crisis.

Overall, the data indicates significant shifts in consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic, including a greater reliance on digital transactions, changes in shopping preferences towards online channels and local brands, as well as notable instances of panic buying behaviour and increased focus on health-related purchases. These trends are likely to have long-term implications for businesses and marketers, necessitating adaptation to evolving consumer preferences and behaviour in the post-pandemic era.

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