

# CONSUMPTION PATTERNS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC



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The Covid-19 pandemic has brought about drastic changes in the world in many aspects whether it is the economy, work culture, food preferences, habits of people or their spending/consumption patterns. During pre- covid times, people spent their money primarily on goods that gave them happiness or improved their social status like gadgets, branded clothes or accessories and even expensive holidays (some expended money on these merely for putting up pictures on the social media). This pandemic changed the whole meaning of life and existence for people whereby these consumption patterns changed owing to factors like months of lockdown, impact on the salaries, accessibility to the goods and markets and above all the entire focus on health and well being. The most important thing that was highlighted by World Health Organisation was maintaining hygiene (personal and at home) and good health that depend upon good immune system. People

preferred to spend their money on certain category of goods and services, which are as follows.

### **Hand soaps, house cleaners and Sanitizers**

WHO highlighted the fact that this pandemic and spread of disease could be controlled through clean hands so that there are lesser chances of the virus entering into the body. So it was advocated that continuous use of hand wash or sanitizers can control the spread of the virus. This led to a huge surge in the sales of hand wash, hand sanitizers, house cleaners etc. The sales particularly surged from March 2020 onwards when the corona virus cases were on the rise in India. Accordingly, the companies offering good in this segment such as Reckitt Benckiser(with its brand name Dettol), HUL (dealing with Lifebouy sanitizers), ITC (with products under brand Savlon) and Himalaya Drug company, to name a few, immediately ramped up their production levels to meet the demands of the consumer. Before the

lockdown was announced, the demand for sanitizers had already exceeded their supply due to which their prices immediately shot up. Later on, the government fixed the price of sanitizers by declaring them essential commodities so that the consumers should not be at the receiving end.

### **Immunity Boosters**

Since Covid-19 was a new strain of virus which the world had witnessed, so there was no specific medicine and vaccine available for curing it. The only way advocated to remain safe from the virus was by having a strong immune system. Therefore, in order to safeguard their health and boost immunity, people in India relied on the ancient system of medicine, i.e., ayurveda. This led to an immediate shift in the preferences of the people to buy supplements consisting of ayurvedic ingredients including licorice and guduchi. A very high demand was also witnessed by companies such as Dabur India Ltd. and The Himalaya Drug Co, for traditional products like chyawanprash (combining important herbs and spices), which has been quite popular among Indian masses in the pre- Covid19 times. According to Nielsen Holdings Plc, Chyawanprash sales across the industry grew 283% in June and branded honey rose 39% and acc to Dabur, one of India's largest ayurvedic products suppliers, its chyawanprash sales surged 700% from April to June (Source: <https://www.livemint.com/news/india/here-s-what-indians-have-been-spending-their-cash-on-during-covid-19-pandemic>

11596757692925.html). A change was also witnessed in the types of products available in the market to meet the rising demands of the people for immunity boosters whereby companies innovated and brought out new products to the market. Amul, one of the largest Indian dairy co-operative societies, brought out 'Tulsi Doodh' and 'Haldi Doodh' in the new category of products, which also helped boost immunity. Also, some other companies came up with tonics

consisting of giloy, amla, tulsi, honey and some others introduced immunity boosting tea combining similar types of herbs which ayurveda has been advocating from years but somehow gained importance among masses in the past one year.

### **Appliances**

The lockdown announced by the government in March 2020 taught us the foreign work culture where everybody does their own household chores and we do not have maids or house helps to do the day to day work. From cleaning of the house, washing clothes and utensils to cooking food, everything was to be done by people themselves. This increased the searches and sales of white goods like mixer, grinders, food processors, washing machines, microwaves etc. Personal grooming was another challenge faced by the people, with salons and barbers shut for most part of 2020. This increased the sales of male and female grooming products and devices. Acc. to Havells India Ltd., monthly sales of trimmers were close to five times as high in this quarter compared to pre-Covid times. Philips India Ltd. recorded a 60%-70% jump in sales of its grooming products from May-June (Source:<https://www.livemint.com/news/india/here-s-what-indians-have-been-spending-their-cash-on-during-covid-19-pandemic-11596757692925.html>). Since the entire education sector switched online with online classes for schools and colleges, this also led to an increase in demand for laptops and computers by the students, who did not require them in normal situation in the pre-covid times. The flip side to this was that most of the parents could not even afford to provide the children with them due to loss of their jobs or pay cuts.

### **Digital services**

Staying indoors and shut in their homes for long has not been normal for human nature. Since people were forced to do so and cut off from their social lives, they turned towards entertainment for support.

There was a huge reliance on digital services and internet for both work and recreation. According to OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development),

□ Since the beginning of the COVID-19 crisis, demand for broadband communication services has soared, with some operators experiencing as much as a 60% increase in Internet traffic compared to before the crisis.

□ Network operators and content providers have successfully maintained services and efficiently utilised pre-existing capacity, and in certain cases expanded this capacity, till date.

The daily active users of online content increased manifold and it also witnessed an increase in number of subscriptions for Netflix, Amazon prime, Zee5 and the like. The online education startup like Byju's also gained more number of users with children studying from home. The company now intends to introduce more number of courses in vernacular languages and also more subjects to retain existing users.

To conclude, this pandemic brought about a drastic change in the consumption patterns among people with money being spent on health, ease of work, education and entertainment which helped people bear the testing times. People strived to maintain good health as the pandemic situation forced the people to take care of themselves which they had forgotten in their busy schedules and hectic lives. Also, while understanding the importance of services, which are cheaper and readily available in India as compared to their availability in the foreign nations, people also strived to achieve 'Atma-Nirbhar' (self dependent) status.