



The Impact of the Pandemic to the Buying Behavior of the Filipino Youth

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Abstract

Amongst the people living in the Philippines, the youth takes up a significant number of its total population. When the pandemic became a global health emergency, its impact influenced a change in their buying behaviours. This study aims to answer how that impact affected the Filipino youth in their buying behaviour. The sampling method used is convenience sampling, which included 21 participants who were interviewed through focus groups discussion (FGD) and are in the age range of 15 – 24, considered Filipino youth. The study is qualitative research that used the case study design. From the data gathered, the researchers found that most youths were conscious of what or where to use their money, and online shopping had become a coping mechanism for them. Another result indicates that youths decreased their out-of-home spending and transitioned to cashless payments through online transactions; also, they now prefer online shopping rather than physical stores.

Keywords: adaptability; consumer behavior; COVID-19 pandemic; new normal; online shopping.



1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a worldwide health emergency that impacted the health of the people, the economy, education, as well as the buying behavior of the consumers. The COVID-19 pandemic, along with lockdown and social distance restrictions, has altered consumer spending and shopping behaviors. Consumers are adjusting to new situations and developing new habits (Sheth, 2020). In addition, consumer attitudes, intentions, and purchase habits changed significantly due to the COVID-19 pandemic (Vázquez-Martínez et al., 2021). Thus, according to Truong & Truong (2022), individuals' typical purchasing patterns have been influenced by the spread of COVID-19, increased safety protocols, and social distancing. Furthermore, one of the most significant and likely longest-lasting changes brought on by the pandemic is a quick shift to internet purchasing and alternate delivery methods (Crispell, 2020). Consumers' willingness to replace in-store shopping visits with online orders has not reduced throughout the pandemic, according to Numerator (2020) survey data; in fact, it has increased. This trend has been observed by 30-50 percent of customers since March, with the highest numbers in July.

The Philippines now holds the biggest youth generation in its history. Further, in a significant population of Filipinos, the youth contains a hefty portion of the people of the country (UNFPA Philippines, 2016). According to UNESCO, the youth are those between the ages of 15 to 24. In addition, according to Shoaib (2021), they play a significant role in developing the country. Therefore, youth is the pillar of society and determines all communities' futures. Moreover, Filipino youth are characterized by high social awareness and efforts with a greater purpose. The Government of the Philippines appreciates the unique qualities of Filipino youth, the prospects for new developments, and the crucial role they may play in achieving equitable economic development and prosperity (Ambisyon Natin 2040, 2019).

In today's consumer-oriented industry, consumer buying behaviors are evolving at a faster rate. In order to attract consumers, new technologies are being developed. Because of its simplicity of use, the internet is increasingly being used by the youth of today for a variety of purposes, including the purchase of products and services (Painoli et al., 2021). The youth is more internet literate, and they have adopted new methods of purchasing goods from numerous websites that provide a wide range of products (Kulkarni, 2017). Customer attitudes vary when it comes to manufactured products, pricing, product attributes, quality, durability, numerous uses of a product, packaging and branding, social media, advertisement, and so on. However, youth is a particularly difficult demographic to connect with. The changing tastes and preferences of today's youth have an impact on the purchasing model since they regularly follow changing fashion, tastes, and preferences according to the flow of time. Furthermore, the younger generation is more attracted by internet shopping rather than traditional shopping. (Kumar & Mahesh, 2020).



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This study is qualitative research that focuses on how the impact of the pandemic affects the buying behavior of Filipino youths. The study has three purposes; (1) to determine how the pandemic affected the buying behavior of Filipino youths, (2) to compare the buying behavior of Filipino youths before and during the pandemic, and (3) to identify the changes in Filipino youth buying behavior brought by the pandemic. Furthermore, the purpose will be addressed by the following research questions: (1) how is the buying behavior of the Filipino youth influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic? (2) how is the buying behavior of the Filipino youth before and during the pandemic? (3) what has changed in the buying behavior of Filipino youth due to the impact of the pandemic?

2. Research Method

The primary goal of this study is to learn how the pandemic influenced Filipino youth's purchasing behavior and to distinguish between their purchasing behavior before and after the pandemic. With the nature of this study, this research study will take on the approach of a qualitative study as the proponents of the research would like to uncover the changes in the buying behavior of the Filipino youths during the pandemic, and to gather data that would answer to the questions of how, and why. According to Tenny et al., (2021) qualitative research is a type of research that includes open-ended questions to examine, explain, and give deeper insights into real-world situations. The design of the research paper will be a case study design. As stated by Crowe et al., (2011), the goal of a case study is to produce or establish an understanding of complex issues in a real-world setting.

In selecting participants, the researchers used convenience sampling in selecting the participants. Researchers use this non-probability method for participants who are easiest to reach and available to participate (Crossman, 2019). Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling technique in which researchers choose their sample only for its convenience (Simkus, 2022). According to Gaille (2020), this method is an affordable way to get data that doesn't take much effort and it also saves time that makes the process easier. Since we are still in the midst of the pandemic, the researchers chose participants that are convenient to them such as their family, friends, and colleagues.

The researchers interviewed twenty-one (21) participants for this study about how the pandemic impacted their buying habits. As stated by Vasileiou et al., (2018), increased expertise in establishing a random sample study along with the sample size for qualitative research are (20-30 interviewees) and individual cases (15 to 30 interviews) were a good idea for the researchers. All genders of the Filipino youth are welcome to participate. Students, working students, and employed people between the ages of 15 and 24 can participate in the study as long as they are within the age range of Filipino youth. The researchers carefully selected these individuals to ensure that they would be appropriate for answering the research questions about the impact of the pandemic on youth's buying behavior.



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For the data collection of this study, the researchers made use of focus group discussions (FGD) to obtain the needed information and data to answer the research questions. Focus group discussions are the best to use in explaining the “why” and “how” of a topic. It also helps in getting a deeper understanding of a topic that you cannot obtain through a survey (Prasad, 2017). In addition, according to O.Nyumba (2018), focus group discussions obtain the data from an intentionally selected group of participants instead of obtaining the data from a statistical sample group of a large population. The researchers made use of the online platform Zoom to conduct the focus group discussion per batch. The focus group discussion lasted for a week to accommodate the participants’ availability.

Furthermore, the data obtained by the researchers were encoded and transcribed as the responses of the participants. To explain and examine the data obtained from the focus group discussions (FGD), framework analysis will be used. According to Goldsmith (2020), the primary aim of framework analysis is to find, explain, and analyze common themes inside and across situations and topics of interest. The collected data from the focus group discussions were able to help the researchers to understand how the pandemic impacted the youth’s buying behavior.

3. Results and Discussion

This qualitative research study aims to understand how the pandemic impacted the buying behavior of Filipino youth. Through the use of focus group discussions (FGD), the researchers were able to obtain the data needed to answer the research questions.

Table 1. Presentation of data analysis for research questions number 1 using codes and corresponding descriptive themes.

Research Question 1	Codes	Themes
How is the buying behavior of the Filipino youth influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Made the participants more conscious and aware of their purchases• Participants cannot physically see and touch the products• Lack of trust to products without customer ratings and feedbacks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Consciousness and awareness of products



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online shopping became a coping mechanism • Participants make purchases out of boredom • Impulsive buying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coping mechanism
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The first research question explains how the COVID-19 pandemic influences Filipino youth's buying behavior. The participants gave different explanations. However, most of the participants came up with reasons such as the pandemic made them more conscious and aware of their purchases and online shopping became a coping mechanism. The pandemic made them conscious or aware of how to spend their money wisely on their purchases because they should know what to buy or not, they couldn't physically see the products they purchased online, difficulty to trust a product without customer ratings and feedbacks, and they should know if the product or services they purchased is worth their money. According to Mullen (2021), an assessment of Deloitte on the impact of the pandemic on groceries and retail stated that more conscientious consumerism is likely to continue even after shopping behaviors return to normal since the lockdown and the pandemic have allowed many consumers to pause and examine their purchasing patterns. Another majority response from the participants, online shopping became their coping mechanism. They stated that since there is nothing to do, they purchase things online out of boredom. Due to the easy access to online shops, people turn to buying as a coping mechanism with just one click.

Furthermore, shopping as a coping method is not a new concept. Phones and social media, on the other hand, have made retail therapy even more convenient, with items available with only a tap on the phone. When the pandemic first broke out last year, there was a significant increase in individuals purchasing online, with many of them making impulsive purchases (Moderator, 2020).

Table 2. Presentation of data analysis for research questions number 2 using codes and corresponding descriptive themes.

Research Question 2	Codes	Themes
How is the buying behavior of the Filipino youth before and during the pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transition to online shopping and transactions (e.g., Gcash) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online shopping linked to safety protocols



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Easy to canvass prices and products on online shops • Online shopping is attracting to use • Out-of-home spending decreased due to safety protocols • Participants lessen going out of their homes • Lazy to go out because of the pandemic • Fear of physical interaction and virus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced spending and going out following health and safety protocols
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The second research question discusses the buying behavior of the youth before and after the pandemic. Most of the participants responded that they decreased their out-of-home spending, such as eating out, due to the safety protocols implemented by the government. In addition, they had to transition to online shopping (e.g., Shopee, Lazada) and use online transactions (e.g., Gcash) during the pandemic. They also stated that before the pandemic, they did not use online transactions to purchase items. Furthermore, during the pandemic, the need to adapt online is necessary because of the fear of physical interaction and it is more convenient to use. According to Painoli et al., (2021), because the internet is simple to use, the youth use it for different purposes like purchasing products and services. Moreover, due to the pandemic and safety protocols, consumers are adjusting to the new normal and developing new habits (Sheth, 2020).

Table 3. Presentation of data analysis for research questions number 3 using codes and corresponding descriptive themes.

Research Question 3	Codes	Themes
What has changed in the buying behavior of Filipino youth due to the impact of the pandemic?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preferred online stores compared to physical stores • Advantages online 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Online shopping as a preference over physical store



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	<p>shopping can provide</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rapid growth of e-commerce • Online shopping at home • Waiting for and opening parcels gives enjoyment • Enjoyed online shopping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Comfort and enjoyment
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The third research question explains the changes in the Filipino youth's buying behavior due to the pandemic's impact. As a result of the pandemic, there was a significant change in the buying behavior of the Filipino youth due to the rapid growth of e-commerce. The majority of the participants preferred purchasing items through online stores compared to physical stores. Kumar and Mahesh (2020) indicated that online shopping is more engaging to the younger generation than physical stores. They also stated that they enjoyed shopping for items online, and it is much more convenient and easier for them because they do not need to go to the physical store anymore. According to the participants, it is much cheaper to purchase items online. In addition, waiting of the parcel to come and opening parcels is a way for them to enjoy. Furthermore, according to Vázquez-Martínez et al., (2021), because of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumer perception, intentions, and purchasing behaviors considerably changed.

4. Conclusion

This study aims to know the shifts in the buying behavior of Filipino youth amidst a global pandemic; compare what is now considered a norm to what was considered before. In the research findings, most youth will not go out during the pandemic unless it is necessary. Moreover, the pandemic made them more conscious and aware of how to spend their money buying a product, and it has been a coping mechanism for them when they could not get outside. Online selling platforms such as Shopee and Lazada became more popular to the Filipino youths as the pandemic made them transition from the past norms wherein they would buy in physical stores. Additionally, the pandemic has made the Filipino youth decrease their out-of-home spending as they could not go outside. Filipino youths also now enjoy online shopping more than physical stores.; this is because it was more convenient for them, and they could quickly look for the items or products they wanted.



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This study is limited to convenience sampling, which took 21 participants who are considered a convenient source of data for the researchers. Due to the nature of a qualitative study, results from this paper come from the participants' opinions. Due to time constraints, the data gathered could not cover all aspects of changes in the buying behavior of Filipino youths. These findings could be used as a basis for further studies that concern changes in buying behaviors during a pandemic.

For future research, the things that can be improved are to gather more accurate data. The proponents suggest that future research could be a quantitative study to determine how many youths still prefer buying in physical stores and those who prefer online shopping.

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