

Professional Research Thesis

Titled

**The Impact of Cultural, Social and Psychological
factors on Consumer Behavior of Fast Food of the
light of the Covid-19 Pandemic**

Researcher

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Introduction

COVID 19 (Corona Virus Disease 2019) is the new severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus type 2 or SARS-CoV2 (severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2) that directly affects humans (IHME, 2021). The first cases were reported in Wuhan, China, by the World Health Organization (WHO) at the end of December 2019; this pandemic took an accelerated growth worldwide, same that caused unexpected isolation for the population with the prevention, security, and health care measures¹. However, medical specialists who treat patients with this virus mention that the damage generated by it is not only to the lungs but affects all organs, and it is difficult to control the condition of patients². The unexpected and widespread bombshell of the coronavirus pandemic directly affects countries with a high level of contagion since they depend on international trade, tourism, exports, and external financing, and due to the outbreak of this virus, they are forced to close these activities. On March 16 in Ecuador, with a total of 58 positive cases and two deaths, the relevant government took six emergency measures: 1) closing public services except for health, risk, and security services, 2) opening of hospitals, stores, supermarkets, 3) suspension of public and private working hours, 4) curfew for people and vehicles, 5) suspension of domestic flights, 6) suspension of interprovincial transportation. With these restrictions, it is estimated that the cost will be 3.5% of GDP per month³.

¹ Aburumman, A.A. 2020. COVID-19 impact and survival strategy in business tourism market: the example of the UAE MICE industry. *Humanities and Social Sciences Communications*, 7(1), 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1057/s41599-020-00630-8>

² Acemoglu, D., Chernozhukov, V., Werning, I., & Whinston, M.D. 2020. Optimal targeted lockdowns in a multi-group SIR model. National Bureau of Economic Research, 27102. <https://bit.ly/2N8L0C7>

³ Akpan, I.J., Soopramanien, D., & Kwak, D.H. 2020a. Cutting-edge technologies for small business and innovation in the era of COVID-19 global health pandemic. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 1-11. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2020.1799294>

Problem statement

Description of the problem reality

"Ninety-three percent of the population of Egypt, may have been infected with COVID-19", as stated to Agencia Efe (2020) by the head of the Regional Health Directorate of Loreto, Carlos Calampa. Despite the news that warned us of the magnitude of the problem, the pandemic found us careless and trusting. Like many other types of businesses, fast-food establishments have been hard hit in their economy by the pandemic. People's incomes have also been greatly affected since they could not go out to work and generate income, with some exceptions such as commodity traders, utility workers, public employees, and law enforcement because they are necessities and front line care in the face of Covid-19. The concern to avoid the contagion and spread of the deadly virus has forced the need to adapt the businesses to the security protocols established by the government, which demands that the establishments need financing and restructuring of their organization to focus on the new modality of attention and home deliveries.

On the other hand, the prohibition of social activities, nightlife, and curfew schedules have limited the range of spending offers that translate into greater availability of resources for people to choose other options such as fast food and the need for quick attention. Given this, it is quite possible that shoppers' interests have varied during the downturn. It may be that some have chosen to switch to a sustainable or responsible consumption habit (for health reasons, medical recommendations, government regulations, aesthetics, savings, etc.), and others have chosen to take the confinement with peace of mind, freely disposing of their wallet (but with the risk of being left with little liquidity or perhaps because they were receiving fixed incomes despite the

crisis). For this reason, we must now measure and take into account the factors that influence the consumption of fast food after the confinement due to the pandemic in order to understand it in-depth and that the analysis generated serves as a reference for the establishments to make decisions and to be able to continue offering the best products and services to customers⁴.

Formulation of the problem

General problem

- What are the factors influencing the behavior of the post-pandemic fast-food consumer in Egypt, 2020?

Specific problems

- What are the cultural factors influencing post-pandemic fast-food consumer behavior in Egypt, 2020?
- What are the social factors influencing post-pandemic fast-food consumer behavior in Egypt, 2020?
- What are the personal factors influencing post-pandemic fast-food consumer behavior in Egypt, 2020?
- What are the psychological factors that influence post-pandemic fast-food consumer behavior in Egypt, 2020?

Limitations

The research has limitations in the following aspects:

⁴ Akpan, I.J., Udoh, E.A.P. & Adebisi, B. 2020b. Small business awareness and adoption of state-of-the-art technologies in emerging and developing markets, and lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 1-18. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08276331.2020.1820185>

- Spatial: The geographical area of the study is the city of Egypt and its four (4) districts, so the conclusions and recommendations derived from the research are only applicable to this reality.
- Temporal: the study was developed in the year 2021, a time in which the confinement due to the Covid-19 pandemic was in its final stage.

Research Objectives

General Objective

- To analyze the factors influencing post-pandemic fast-food consumer behavior in Egypt, 2020

Specific Objectives

- To describe the cultural factors influencing post-pandemic fast-food consumer behavior in Egypt, 2020.
- To describe the social factors that influence consumer behavior of post-pandemic fast-food consumers in Egypt, 2020.
- Describe the personal factors influencing post-pandemic fast-food consumer behavior in Egypt, 2020.
- To describe the psychological factors that influence post-pandemic fast-food consumer behavior in Egypt, 2020.

The rationale for the research

Identifying the factors that influence the behavior of fast-food consumers in Egypt is very important for the following reasons:

- Social: In the business sphere, it will serve as a source of information for decision making by investors, businessmen, entrepreneurs, among other stakeholders, who wish or need to know the characteristics, trends, and factors that influence the behavior of fast-food consumers after the pandemic in Egypt. The final beneficiaries of these decisions are consumers, who will have the opportunity to verify solutions and improve product and service offerings.

- Scientific: It will serve as a bibliographic and methodological reference with scientific value for future research.

Conclusion

Covid-19 has generated an uncertain future in several industries, but in the case of e-commerce it generated an opportunity. It is not known how long the pandemic will last, nor is what its effect on society will be, and for this reason it is important for businesses to be resilient. It is time to adapt to the new way of life and change our mentality. It is time to stop seeing Covid-19 as a threat to companies, which implies the closure or disappearance of the same and start seeing it as an opportunity to open new business channels, which can be summarized in one word "Reinvent". To achieve success, businesses must be framed within the business versatility to respond to the demand for changes that depend heavily on some important factors such as the availability of technological tools, the synergy developed in the work teams and the discussion of change in their organizational culture. It is important to take this opportunity that Covid-19 indirectly brought with it and face other challenges that digitalization implies in the business marketing processes, both in the field of security, data management and protection and consumer experience, so that the end of the emergence of e-commerce continues.

Egypt has been suffering from enormous deficiencies in telecommunications infrastructure, culture and education to promote the growth of electronic markets, which represents a competitive disadvantage on the world stage. Currently, these deficiencies are being reduced through isolated initiatives from both the national government (through the development of public procurement projects, electronic money, electronic invoicing, among others) and the business sector. E-commerce in Egypt has been growing at a slow pace, because the majority of MSMEs, due to the size of their structures have refrained from getting involved in the world of trends in business strategies, have followed for decades a business paradigm based on

traditional trade, showing reluctance to change for fear, ignorance and especially distrust in new business methods that business brings as the business dynamics progresses. However, Covid-19, as a result of the suspension of activities in 70% of the business sector, achieved this turning point and activated the adaptive capacity of MSMEs, even so, the consolidation of electronic commerce points to a path that has been moderately explored in Egypt and which is expected to increase in the medium term. Public policies decreed by the government are fundamental to reactivate the MSMEs economy, through credits, through programs such as the Plan reactivate Egypt and National Financial corporation have been intended to help this sector, however, it is difficult to access financing, there are many obstacles for these small businesses. These policies implemented to help improve their financial situation and stay in the market are not working, many businesses complain that the resources do not arrive and time is running out. Therefore, support is essential to keep the economy reactivated.

Recommendations

It is also recommended that the sample size be increased in future similar studies. Studies with the use of regression and scale analysis are also, strongly recommended in this research context. This study was conducted during the period of confinement, the affective dimension of the crisis represented by the emotions in the theoretical part could not be measured in our quantitative study, because for reasons of sanitary restrictions, the questionnaire was administered at a distance, which did not allow the emotions felt to be observed and studied in this work. Faced with a crisis situation, consumers become masters of several affective reactions that influence their purchasing behavior. The neglect of the affective and emotional dimension in the analysis of the change in consumer behavior exposes the company to the risk of not adequately meeting the needs and expectations of consumers. Several authors (Zajonc and Markus, 1982; Holbrook and Hirschman, 1982, Holt, 1995; Filser, 1996; Sirieix, 1999) have recommended that the affective dimension be taken into account in the consumption process, while others (Roos, 1999; Fajer and Schouten; 1995; Holmund and Strandvik, 2000; Perrin-Martinenq, 2003) have shown the role of the affective dimension in situations deemed difficult and in periods of deterioration. We agree with these authors and we invite researchers to study the impact of emotions on consumer behavior in crisis situations, as this type of study is always dominated by a cognitive approach. Adding to this, a situation perceived as threatening to health gives rise to abundant negative emotions (Brunel, 2003), which is perfectly associated with the current Covid crisis.

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