

**THE IMPACTS OF COVID-19 ON TELE-ACTIVITIES, TRAVEL,
AND PURCHASING BEHAVIORS WEBINAR SERIES**

WEBINAR #1

Impacts of the COVID-19 Pandemic
on Purchasing of Critical Supplies:
*Roots and Measures to Mitigate
"Panic Buying"*

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**Webinar #1: IMPACTS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON PURCHASING OF
CRITICAL SUPPLIES: ROOTS AND MEASURES TO MITIGATE "PANIC BUYING"**

Questions and Answers

1. On slide 20, I am curious how "regularly" was or is defined. Or was it up to interpretation of the respondents?

R/ "Regularly" is the retail store they visit the most.

2. How have you defined opportunistic buyer and precautionary buyers?

R/ Opportunistic are those that seek some form or personal gain (unrelated to need); Precautionary are those driven by concerns for self of others.

3. Can I know how many people responded the survey? do you have any information on the distribution of the responses by U.S. Region? U.S. metro area? Other countries?

R/ More than 900 from all over the US.

4. How many records in each country?

R/ In ten countries, we have more than 200.

5. What can be the counter measures (in the field of logistics) to minimize panic buying?

R/ Minimizing panic buying requires actions to change customer behavior, which as indicated in the webinar may require engaging local disaster responders to help educate individuals about the negative effects of their actions. Increasing inventories is a possibility though it adds costs to the overall process. Rationing of scarce critical supplies at retail locations is very effective. Finally, public-private sector agreements to transfer a meaningful portion of critical supplies to emergency response agencies is a MUST.

6. Is there any way you consider to capture the behavioural change with change in restrictions such as at the time of lock-down?

R/ As part of the analyses, we are going to correlate the timeline of government actions to the responses obtained.

7. When vendors limit supply quantity purchases, is this in response to state of emergency orders or is this just a local vendor by vendor decision?

R/ It should be a coordinated action among private sector vendors, in concert with the public-private sector agreements.

8. Are there any similarities in behaviour during COVID versus earlier disasters?

R/ The panic buying followed the previous patterns, generally speaking. However, its geographic extent is unprecedented.

9. What would be the strategy to prevent opportunistic buying?

R/ It must be banned by law.

10. Any idea on the impact of commodity price hike during pandemic across different socio-demographic groups?

R/ As part of this research we are not looking into price changes that have resulted from the crisis.

11. Have you analyzed the factors affecting the buying behaviour?

R/ As part of this research we are looking into root factors of buying behavior, including individuals motivations, and what are the main influencers including social media, news, and friends and family.

12. The differences in respondents' stockholding levels in China are very interesting. Do you know if product shortages or product rationing were greater in China than elsewhere?

R/ These differences are indeed an interesting results, as part of the analysis we will look at all factors that may have caused the changes, including availability of supplies and rationing.

13. Are the any plan to convey these lessons learned to the major actors??

R/ That is the intent.

14. It's an interesting study, what measures have been adopted to distinguish valid vs precautionary buying?

R/ In practice, it is very difficult (if not impossible) to distinguish if the purchase made by a customer is “valid” or “precautionary”. The only way is to encourage citizens to do what is right, as a civic duty.

15. Customers are shifting to online solutions for reduced contact services. Will this have a major shift in online purchasing even after pandemic?

R/ The results of this research show that consumers are not looking to make permanent shifts and intend to return to their previous retailers after the crisis subsides. However, only time will tell what the continued shift to online will be.

16. Can I use the webinars in my class ?

R/ Yes.

17. Would any of the panelist be available to a interview?

R/ Yes, feel free to reach out to coordinate with any of the speakers by using the contact information located on the cite.rpi.edu website.

18. Where is your data about the U.S. from?

R/ Two main samples: a convenience sample distributed via email using a snowball approach, and a second sample collected from Amazon Mechanical Turk to correct for demographic factors.

19. Would the experience of countries with disasters would also influence buying behaviors?

R/ This is a good hypothesis that we will look into as we continue the research.

20. In the U.S. it is basically vendor by vendor. No the state of emergency orders are not followed by locals in many states in the U.S

R/ We plan to consider these local variances in the research.

21. Retail store rules stop opportuntistic buying.

R/ Using rationing, retailers can certainly curbe both precautionary and opportuntistic buying. However, rationing is typically implemented by large retail outlets with the corporate memory about the negative impacts of these behaviors. Small independent retail outlets are typically unaware of these issue. The brothers mentioned in the NY Times article (see <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/03/14/technology/coronavirus-purell-wipes-amazon-sellers.html>) bought their supplies in small stores in the “backwoods”, depriving these communities of access to critical supplies.

22. Great series, thanks!

R/ Thank you for participating.