



A Reflection of Advertisements as an Engine of Change in Behavior and Lifestyle during Covid Period

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Abstract: The scourge of coronavirus has jolted every nation directly or indirectly. Macro level effects were seen as economies plunged with many countries reporting negative growth rates. To tackle this storm, countries across the globe went full ballistic to spread information and bits of coronavirus to its citizens. Information was bombarded via every source that was available in the arsenal be it social media, print advertisement, Tv advertisement and radio. Some things were made compulsory, some were told to modify and some to be completely discarded. India was no different. Here too the government imposed lockdowns and traveling restrictions leaving its citizens no choice but to stay home and simply wait it out. Continuous influx of information from all sides created a new norm for society. Suddenly wearing masks was within my comfort zone and multiple hand washing was not annoying anymore. There was a change in behavior patterns as well. Social distancing became the new norm and people accepted it eventually. All these changes were possible because of the sheer number of advertisements people were subjected to. These advertisements created a new normal. There are so many examples in the past of how advertising has changed our attitude, behavior, lifestyle, likes and dislikes. This paper analyzes in depth synthesis of how advertisement not only creates a market for itself but in a way changed our perception and lifestyle in turn to create new norms.

Keywords: Advertisement, behavior, social norms, Coronavirus, perception.

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INTRODUCTION

The impact of advertising on society has brought in a great change. It has made people think beyond their compact world of stability and has pushed society to change their way of living. As the global population rises and society becomes more diverse, effective advertising is more important than ever. Advertisements nowadays influence buying decisions so much that the concept of brand loyalty is commonplace. In India, television penetration stands at 66% making it one of the most effective ways of communication. Even more so during times of distress. Now Because of the worldwide spread of

a novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) on January 30, 2020, the World Health Organization (WHO) declared COVID-19 as a global pandemic. The scientific communities worldwide have been searching for solutions to minimize the spread of the disease with a big push for vaccines and associated medical research using modern technologies. On the other hand governments around the world have been pushing to minimize its spread by urging its citizens to maintain social distancing and by following mask etiquettes. Television advertisements are playing a major role here in India. TAM ADEx data shows an increase of 40 % in

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ads during Covid period indicating the sheer amount of data the audience are subjected to. Most of these advertisements were related to personal care products (BARC). While strict preventive measures are necessary to protect public health, they may, however, radically change individuals' daily habits, including lifestyle-related behaviors. Staying and working at home can affect one's psych. In the time of COVID-19 pandemic, home fitness and the use of new technologies (videos and apps) are the solutions for being active (Magdalena G *et al*, 2020). On the other hand, because of the isolation period, avoiding sedentary behaviors or physical inactivity is difficult and, consequently, reduced physical activity and lower energy expenditure could negatively affect physical and mental health. These changes influence buying behaviors as well. Therefore, the present study aimed to identify these changes in the Indian urban city of Patiala. The city is the 4th largest city in the state of Punjab and has an urban population of 446246 (Census, 2011) and a literacy rate of 71%. The scope of the study will be limited to hand sanitizers and face masks.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Adam B *et al*, (2020) states that the use of soap in rural areas of India might not be related to hand hygiene. Paper states that the use of soap after faces touch was less as compared to its use before food intake. Magdalena G *et al*, conducted study on dietary habits during the coronavirus period in the country of Poland. It states that sitting at home may have positive and negative effects on dietary habits. People above the age of 40 were more prone to increased BMI.

(Laura Di R *et al*, 2020) conducted a study on Italian population lifestyle, eating habits and adherence to the Mediterranean diet pattern during the COVID-19 lockdown. An increase towards organic fruits and vegetables were observed in some areas of Italy. Interestingly, there was a decrease in the number of smokers by 4 % during the Covid period.

(Sreejith S N *et al*, 2014) conducted a study at the Navodaya Medical College at Raichur, India. Study concluded that nursing student's attitudes regarding hand hygiene were significantly better than medical students. WEI, (Ran, 1997) divided

consumers segments in China into 5 different categories namely traditionalists, status quo, modern, transitioners and generation "x" ers. Here the study states different responses of these consumers towards advertisements. Where traditionalists lead an old life and resist change, generation X segments favor a western life and spend freely on products.

OBJECTIVES

- To identify the increase in the number of television advertisements with regards to the prevention of Covid 19.
- To study the changes in people's behavior towards sanitation in urban areas of Patiala
- To analyze behavior and lifestyle changes due to advertisements especially in hand sanitization and face mask etiquettes.

METHODOLOGY

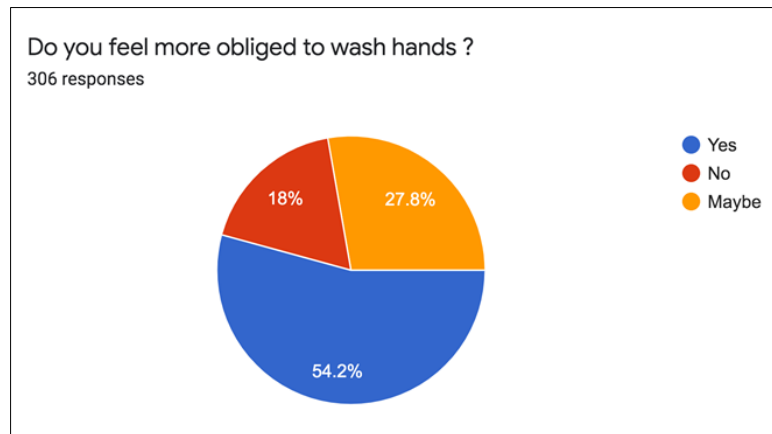
Study Design and Participants

This study was a rapid, medium cross-sectional online survey. It was conducted using the Google Forms web survey platform. The link to the online survey was shared through social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp, and by personal contacts of the research group members. We also asked the participants to share the study link to increase the number of persons who receive the invitation. Our study aimed to look at the impact of advertisements on the behavior of people after Covid 19 pandemic happened among the urban people of Patiala city. The study was conducted by a structured questionnaire where the starting included the demographic information (age and place of permanent residence). Names and contact numbers were not asked. 11 questions were asked in total. The answers were saved only by clicking the "submit" button after filling the questionnaire. A total of 310 responses were received and after careful scrutiny, 307 numbers of respondents were added to the final data set.

Questionnaire

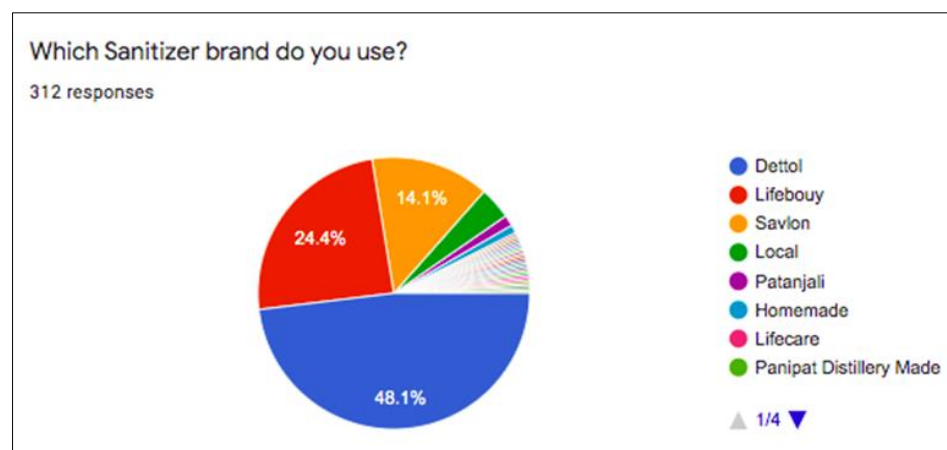
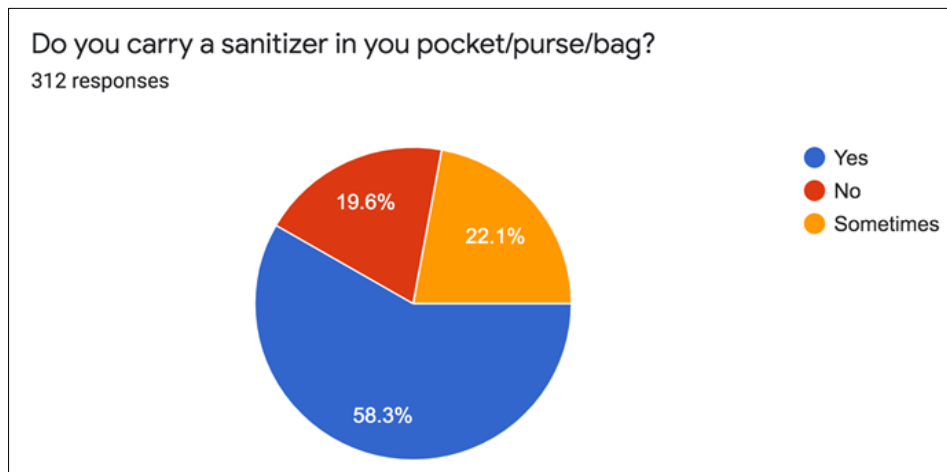
The questionnaire was available between 25 August to 15 September during partial lockdown in India. The questionnaire titled "Covid Habits" included questions on attitudes towards sanitation from pre to after Covid 19.

RESULTS



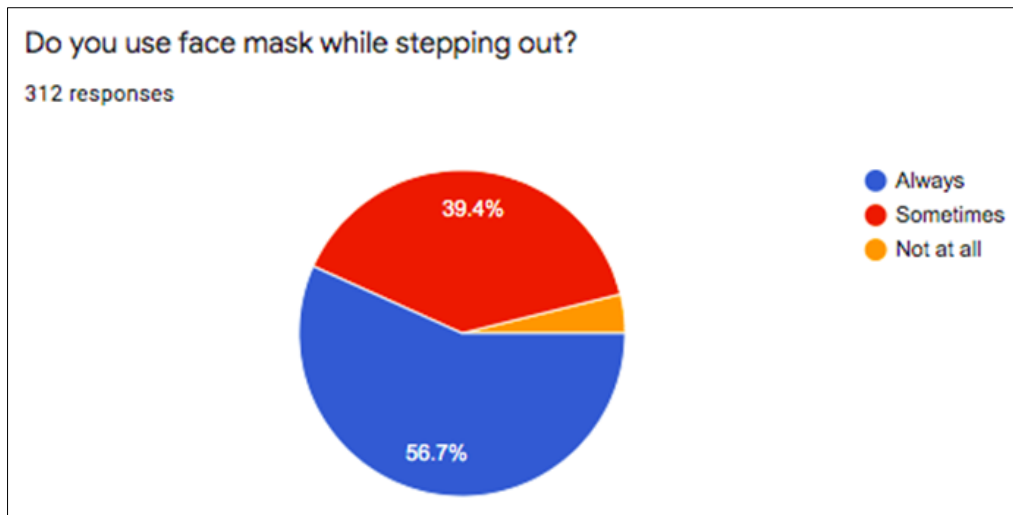
As per the data collected, more than half of the respondents felt more obliged to wash hands as compared to pre-covid period. This could be attributed to the hand hygiene advertisements the

respondents were subjected to. Similar trends were seen when respondents were asked if carrying a sanitizer was a necessity.



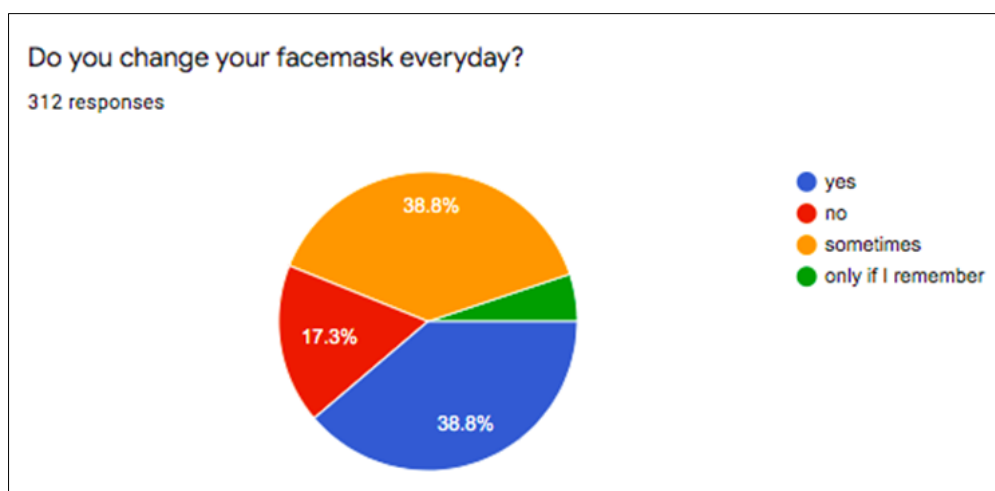
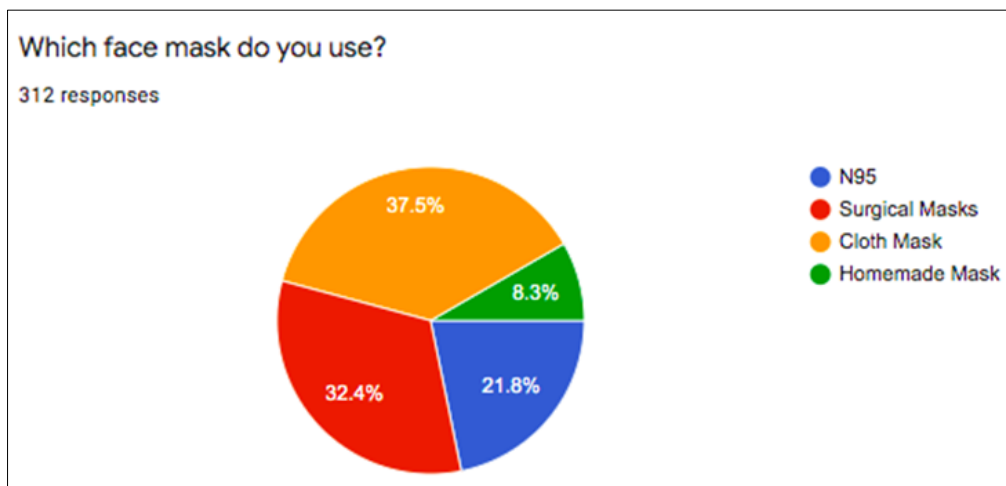
Indian brands that were able to capitalize on the Covid wave saw the most increase in sales. Reckitt's Dettol saw the highest preference. This corresponds to BARC data which stated an increase

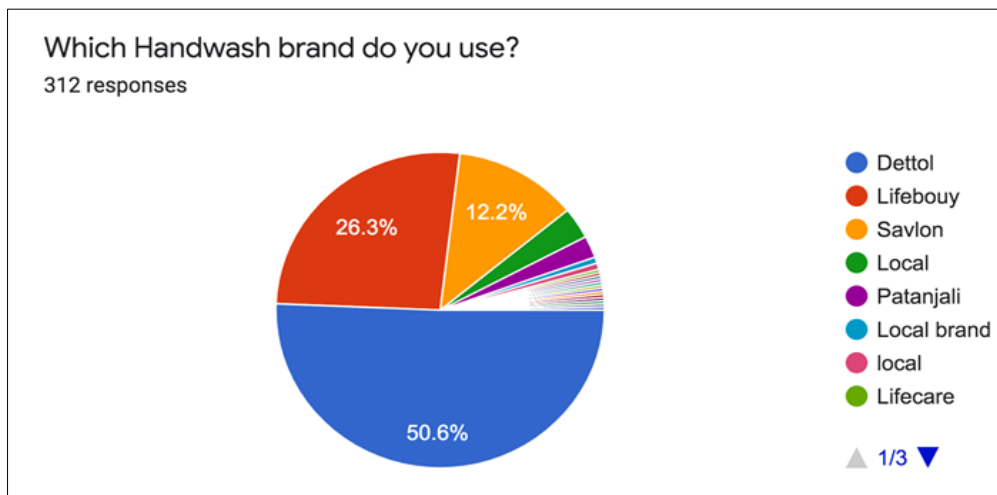
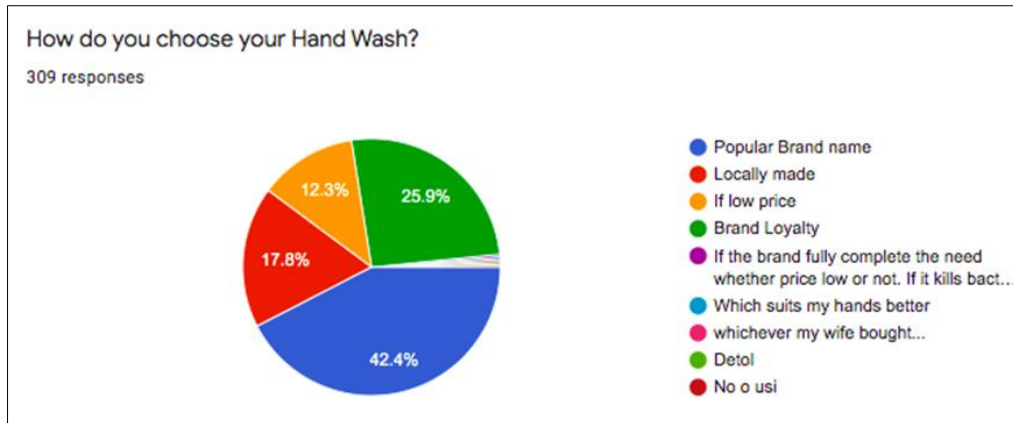
of 118% and 136% increase in sales of this particular brand's hand sanitizers and soaps respectively.



Face masks became a phenomenon during this period. More than half of the respondents felt more obliged to wear face masks in India. Although two third of respondents opted for cheap cloth and surgical masks. N95 masks were less used. This may be because of low per capita income in India as

many households simply cannot purchase N95 on a regular basis. However, when it comes to mask etiquettes, the result was that more than half of the respondents choose not to change facemask every day, registering poor etiquettes.





When it comes to hand wash, respondents choose popular brand names as criteria for selection. However one third chooses locally made and low priced hand wash soap making similar trends as sanitizers. Here too Dettol made the most gains as half of the respondents preferred this brand.

CONCLUSION

Be it the use of hand sanitizers, face mask or hand wash, a change in attitude was noted during the study. Brands that used the resources at its disposal drove the most out of it. Advertisement played an important role in decision making. This study surmised that the use of sanitizers and face masks had created a long term psychological change. Although income levels dictate buying behavior and usage, change is here to stay.

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