

## Literature Review on Consumer Behavior with Various Aspects of Branding


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### Abstract

The consumer buying behavior have changed exceptionally and is in transformation during Covid times in this digital environment. Across the world, consumer behavior and branding have always been an ever-developing topic in marketing. The pandemic has brought changes in modern consumer's needs and their attitude about different brands. It is essential for the marketers to understand more about the changing behavior of their existing, as well as their potential customers. In this direction, this research explores the dominant topics being published on consumer behavior and branding at the time of Covid pandemic. A collection of published articles through a major database - Scopus was done, then through the synthesis of those articles, the final articles were identified. A systematic review of nearly 150 research articles from 7 reputed marketing journals on consumer behavior and branding have been analyzed. The four dominant themes that emerged were attitude structure, consumer purchase and choice, going local, and purchase loyalty. The outcome of this present research would cast light on the emerging topics on consumer behavior and branding that would generate a better understanding on the subject for academicians and practitioners alike.


**Keywords:** Branding, consumer behavior, Covid, marketing, consumer attitude

### I. Introduction


Consumer behavior has a vital role in marketing as modern marketing is mainly consumer oriented. Consumer behavior is the study which explains why, what, when and how a consumer buys goods or an item (Kumar, John & Senith, 2014). It is fundamentally a dynamic process, which keeps changing with the changing environment (Hornik & Zakay, 1996). A recent and drastic change is the COVID-19 pandemic and its socio-economic effect on the consumers and the market (JorgeCruz-Cárdenas et al., 2021). The pandemic has resulted in drastic changes for branding, as well, with respect to how a customer behaves (Sarma et al., 2021). Branding literature details the action taken by firms for unique identification of a focal object, say product or service, and its influence on consumer behavior (Shahri, 2011). The branding activities play a crucial role in affecting consumer behavior. Therefore, it is of paramount importance for the firms to understand the consumer dynamics by studying on how a customer behaves in the pandemic times. From an academic perspective, it is an interesting and vast topic, with a large body of research already in place, yet many aspects are unexplored creating a need for further research. As per the Oxford English Dictionary, the first findings and subsequent evolution of "brand" originated with

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Germanic meaning of brand called “brandr” identified as an image or a stamp imposed by burning with a hot iron, initially being practiced as recorded during 1552.

Currently in empirical marketing research there has been an enormous inflow of consumer’s data, ultimately contributing to an increase in the knowhow of customer’s behavioral pattern across various discipline. At present times with the fast innovation and development, there has been a change in consumers’ demand, behavior and expectation, this area of marketing continues to be the dynamic area of research and the study will provide insights into the current knowledge available in this domain, as well as will help to understand the consumer dynamics in emerging areas and the way ahead. Despite research abundance, there is a lack of research on the effect of branding on consumer behavior during the pandemic period. A review detailing the same will be useful for researchers to have a holistic understanding of the area, as well as for firms to better market their products and services. The object of this study is to understand consumers and their relationship with various aspects of branding, through secondary research from published articles of leading marketing journals during pandemic times.

For the current study, a total of seven marketing journals were selected. These include (a) Marketing Science (b) International Journal of Research in Marketing (c) Psychology & Marketing (d) Marketing Letters, (e) Journal of Contemporary Marketing Science, (f) European Journal of Marketing and (g) Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science. Papers which have already been published during the timeline of 2020-2021, were identified for this study.

Psychologically the behavior of a consumer is a dynamic process and can be influenced by the favorable or unfavorable surroundings (Osman, 2010). It becomes important from a firm’s perspective to study about consumer dynamics, to get a better understanding of how a customer behaves, so that those firms can take an appropriate step to attract their customers. The study will be useful for researchers to have a holistic understanding of the area, as well as for firms to better market their products and services. Consumer behavior has evolved into a multidisciplinary area of research within marketing. Coupled with branding, the study covers several aspects of how consumer behaviour has an impact on brands and vice versa. With an effort to cover multiple aspects related to these topics, the study, therefore has both academic and industry applications.

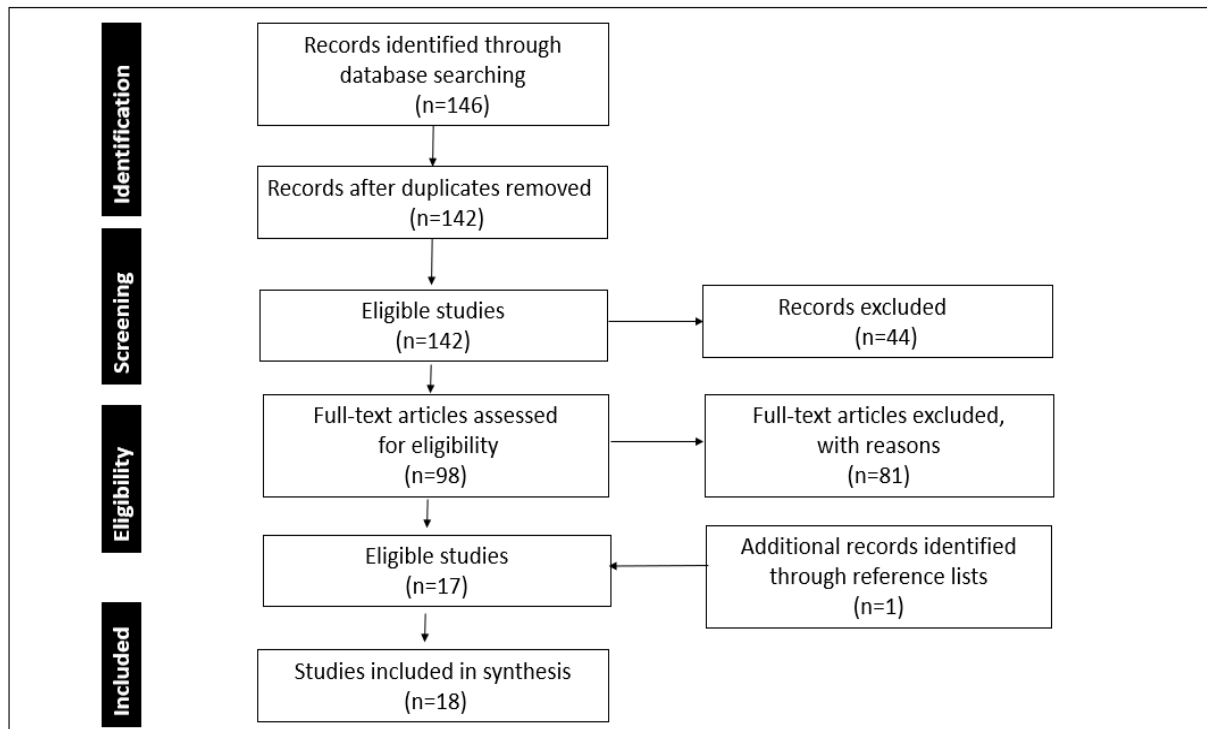
## II. Methodology

The main goal of conducting this study is to systematically spot the various consumer behavior related research articles, published in leading marketing journals during COVID-19 pandemic, with one of the keywords as brand, during that time. The literature review assesses and outlines the body of available research works related to a specific topic (Knopf, 2006). The time span of the published articles chosen for this study is from January 1, 2020, to December 31, 2021.

A total of seven marketing journals were selected for the current study. Below are the names of those selected journals:

1. Marketing Science
2. Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science
3. International Journal of Research in Marketing
4. Psychology & Marketing
5. Marketing Letters
6. Journal of Contemporary Marketing Science
7. European Journal of Marketing

A content analysis-based study is widely an acceptable review method “to map and assess the existing intellectual territory, and to specify a research question to develop the existing body of knowledge further” (Tranfield et al., 2003).

**Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart**

**Source:** Adapted from Moher et al. (2009)

Research papers published in above mentioned journals, with the title containing the word "consumer" and having one of the keywords as "brand", were selected. These were searched in two major databases – Scopus and Google Scholar – with results limited to articles published during the year 2020 and 2021. Out of those selected papers, only such papers which has already been cited in some other articles, were finalized for the current study. The articles which included the research work related to a particular region or a specific country, have been omitted. Also, the articles published on social media, e-commerce or advertising related topics have been omitted. Inclusion and exclusion criteria are mentioned in Table 1. As a criterion of minimum 15 number of articles to be analyzed were chosen for clarity of understanding to produce useful outcome through this current study.

### III. Literature Review

A systematic review is conducted to summarize the empirical evidence, to identify research gaps in existing literature and also to provide a background for further research activities (Keele, 2007). Due to the involved rigorous analysis, investigation and research, the process of synthesizing academic literature is widely accepted across several disciplines (Dorn et. al., 2016).

Konstantoulaki et al., (2021) examines consumers' decision-making process and their level of involvement. Konstantoulaki et al., (2021) states that the available alternatives to the consideration set may impact negatively while a consumer is deciding. Higher the level of involvement, more the consumer will be selective in nature during brand evaluation to make a purchase decision. Intention to make a purchase can be identified by the degree of involvement in any product category. Therefore, Konstantoulaki et al., (2021) suggest various marketing actions for magnifying brand attitudes or for strengthening a particular brand awareness based on the level of involvement of the consumer in decision making.

Ruvio et al. (2020) examines the relationship of consumer arrogance related to the Word of Mouth (WOM) communication in an online and offline mode. The study states that to excite a consumer's arrogance has greater impact for creating WOM than simply requesting for a positive feedback or review writing, as practiced by many organizations. They are of the view that it is critical to companies' marketing efforts to find ways to prompt the consumers' WOM communication and to ensure that such will have greater impact in achieving an organizational marketing goal.

**Table 1:** Inclusion and exclusion criteria

Inclusion	Exclusion
Peer reviewed journal articles	Conference papers, book chapters, commentary, notes, editorials
Published during the year 2020 and 2021	Published in any other time duration
Reputed marketing journals	Any other journal
Articles on consumer behavior and branding	Articles on any other topics

Zhang et al. (2020) states that the dynamic behaviors shown by consumers relate to their attitude. Hence, as an ever-changing consumer, an organization and the marketing professionals also need to accept the “dynamic mindsets” which will help them to grow and to win their dynamic consumers in this ever-changing world. Key to sustainable growth in business and marketing activity is knowing the reasons and various factors of consumer behaviour under different contexts and to handle them well will enhance the business profitably. They are also of the view that the availability of richer and granular data provides richer insights on consumer dynamics which has helped innovative firms to disrupt the game, redefine new marketing rules and influence their customers’ purchasing behaviors.

Bronnenberg et al. (2020) examines one of the biggest blockades of information regarding the demand of private label items compared to a famous domestic player in consumer-packaged goods (CPG) industry through a blind taste in a US Supermarket chain. They analyzed and understood that blind taste test improves a customer’s liking towards a private label, while affecting a much famous national brand negatively. Although consumers do not discriminate the value or taste of private label products, but they underestimate the probability of selecting a private label product in case of a blind taste test. They are of the view that this information barrier creates obstacles in the placement and acquisition of the market share along with new brands along with private labels, which provides almost equal value-satisfaction at a much lesser cost. Such blind taste test works as a networking and a kind of re-connection activity with consumers to create a higher impact than any other promotional activity.

Hewage et al., (2020) explores about the effect of various degrees of asymmetry through facial expressions that an emoji shows, on the variety of perceived judgment on a consumer’s mind. Study shows that there is a positive co-relation between a consumer’s evaluation and the asymmetric facial expression of an emoji. Emojis with an asymmetric facial expression score higher in terms of consumer evaluation. A practical implication of this could be applied with those customers who are more emotionally sensitive. Asymmetric facial expression has better connectivity with the potential customers as it has a human resemblance which creates more positive consumer responses.

Gorlier et al., (2021) examines the relationship between loyalty program rewards and consumer–brand association. Study shows that occasionally the special reward system has greater impact on a consumer than a regular reward system on the customer loyalty. Customers who have higher self-brand inclusion and self-expansion are positively affected by such reward system, which generates more positive feedback and recommendations. In this study the customer satisfaction acts as a moderator in such rewards system for loyalty program.

Liang et al., (2021) examines the impact of gratitude while choosing a sustainable item and also studies the human psychology behind it. The outcome enhances the knowledge of the relationship between gratitude and sustainable product choice. They are of the view that a sincere gratitude mixed in marketing communications can help marketers to increase consumers’ sustainable product choice.

Ranaweera et al., (2020) examines what type of impact a product’s texture and weight has on the consumer’s mind about a particular item. Texture could be smooth or rough, and the weight could be light or heavy. Such haptic characteristics of an item creates an impression of a consumer which results in the consumer’s purchase decision. Study shows, customers who are hedonically oriented towards autotelic-need for touch (NFT) have higher positive co-relation with haptic attributes of the item compared to an instrumental-NFT customer. They demonstrate that haptic characteristics of an item can have various impression on a consumer’s perception. They also state that the product personality acts as a mediator towards the decision of willingness to purchase.

Mishra et al. (2020) examines the consumer responses on various types of items. Item could be of a hedonic or a utilitarian type, as well as it could involve multisensory or haptic in nature. The study shows that users find multisensory environment/Augmented Reality (AR) type of items are relatively easy to use. Mishra et al. (2020) states that customer finds AR more customer-friendly while purchasing a hedonic item. Technology involving multisensory experience including visual and emotional appeal generates higher purchase intentions among the customers. The managerial implication of this study helps marketers to utilize such kind of purchasing environment which gives multisensory experiences to their customers, and as a result positive feedback could be generated.

**Table 2:** Name of publishers along with the total number of published articles

Publisher	Nos. of articles (in %)
INFORMS	16.66 %
Springer International Publishing	27.78 %
Wiley-Blackwell Publishing	33.34 %
Emerald Group Publishing	16.66 %
Elsevier	5.56 %

Orth et al., (2020) examines the relationship of consumers' response related to positive place emotions. Happiness, pride, enchantment, and contentment have been identified as different positive place emotions, which has an important and dynamic impact on the customer's buying intentions for particular items related to its place of origin. Study finds that the consumer's mood, product quantity, product knowledge, impulse purchasing habits and place cognition acts as a moderator in such purchasing intentions. As managerial implication, the marketers need to select matching emotions which attract their potential customers and should also differentiate their product offerings.

Mormann et al., (2020) in their article identifies customers' attentiveness; namely the order of eye movements and attentions while making a purchase decision. A relative association of observation and decision making are discussed considering four levels of choice making steps such as awareness, screening, evaluation, and choice execution. Mormann et al., (2020) states that the behavior of a customer is becoming more dynamic from the perspective of Choice theory by looking into the present-days scenario. Level of awareness relates to diverse choice selection steps which involve awareness, screening, evaluation within-alternatives as well as between-alternatives and then the choice execution. Mormann et al., (2020) states that the level of awareness gives the relevant proof to either support or counter-argue the available present steps of customers' choice making processes.

**Graph 1.** Journal-wise numbers of articles published



Wu et al. (2020) examines the various impacts of day-to-day words being used for the communication purpose, which probably has an impact on a customer's choice evaluation and the intention to buy. Study shows that technical words are negatively related with customers' reactions in case of a higher level of product complexity,

which makes the customer uncomfortable to understand and explain it. The study shows positive correlation if the customers are primed with systematic suggestions on technical usage of words. The impact of priming depends upon the ease of understanding of such technical words and the level of knowledge about the usage of those products by the customer. Technical product words for communication would have better impact on processing the information. Consumers with technical understanding will be able to process the information better if they would be exposed with technical words describing about the products or an item for use.

Malter et al., (2020) studies the advancement of consumer behavior of last five decades, states its present standing along with predicting its future for the next two decades. They are of the view that despite of changing scenarios, the main understanding of consumer behavior is unchanged, in terms of a consumer's intentions, choice making steps, values and expectations of consumers as they use products and items over time. However, by combining the previous findings and the new learning together, the future research works will equip the marketers to understand their potential consumers' behavior in a better way.

Hoskins et al. (2020) states that the brand localness gives a performance advantage to the companies, which results in improved demand and profit. Here in this paper of Hoskins et al., (2020) domestic is termed as localness. Marketing practices such as price variations or product variety, plays a vital role to strengthen the awareness of localness and brand value creation. Marketers need to apply appropriate marketing strategies to reinforce the brand authenticity to support the localness. Emphasizing localness as the main characteristic or connecting localness with brand identity, brand managers may get an advantage in terms of increased sales.

The article by Wedel et al., (2020) reviews the advancement of VR/AR applications and the growing research work happening in marketing specifically in the area of consumer behavior. The technological innovations of audio-video platforms and interactions have fostered an exponential growth of VR applications. Wedel et al., (2020) argues about the reason for such growth of usage of VR in the marketing area. Numerous organizations are making huge investments in VR/AR to capture future mass-market. Also, the start-up ecosystem is continuously bringing new upgradations in VR/AR applications. Such VR/AR applications are equally applicable even towards the academic and institutional research works. It has various managerial implications such as organizations may use a VR application in their customer relationship management, to build customer reward systems, to increase their customer- base etc. In future, VR will enable the organizations to network with their customers through virtual platforms as an avatar, and to provide services to enhance customers' experience in a virtual world. Wu et al., (2020) states that the special fonts are perceived as more distinctive and are relatively tough to comprehend as compared to the regular fonts. In this article fonts are classified as regular fonts and special fonts. Fonts play an important role in information filtering and choice evaluation. Special fonts should be considered as more unique compared to regular fonts. Study finds that unusual triggers are considered as special and unique (Ditto & Griffin, 1993; Kim & Markus, 1999). Unique fonts may trigger the uniqueness, as regarded a positive characteristic of the product in marketing (e.g., Snyder & Fromkin, 1977; Tian et al., 2001). By using different font types while describing an item can be a strategic move for altering the uniqueness and easiness/difficulty, in managing video or picture based promotional activity. While selecting an appropriate font for marketing activities, practitioners need to pay attention to some important factors such as the communication context and its short-term and long-term impacts as well.

The research article by Jiang et al. (2021), is on the investigation of practitioners re-capturing those potential customers who can be an easy target based upon the customer's online enquiry activities. A structural sequential search model was developed from looking at the consumer's search history. A series of counterfactuals were made to run for exploring the effectiveness of retargeting the customers, based on different strategies. It was done since the online retail platforms do not retarget its customers automatically. The outcome showed a substantial heterogeneity in response to retargeting customers. The result also showed that recommending a seller can be more effective in increasing the conversion rate in comparison to offering a coupon. To improve the retargeting efficiency, pricing mechanism such as auctions can be used in the online platform. The finding also states that, retargeting becomes more effective if a seller has an access of consumers' online search history.



**Figure 2.** Word-cloud from the abstract of selected articles



Biraglia et al., (2021) states that several time brands use the scarcity of its products for promoting sales. It also states that limited research is available investigating, how any customer reacts in case of not being able to get certain products or items, which were advertised using scarcity appeals due to being in a limited quantity. Through experimental and correlational studies, Biraglia et al., (2021) states that those consumers who do not get the product or item which resembled a type of scarcity, will have higher tendency for opting an alternative brand to satisfy their requirements. Such incidents arouse anger in customers. From a managerial's perspective, it is suggested to use such strategies with wisdom, because it has potential to rebound also and can damage the brand's image and ultimately affect the sales in a long run. Biraglia et al., (2021) suggested that branding practitioners should use the scarcity related advertisement with a limited time offer and not offers on volume discount, for the purpose of not losing any of their future customers.

Kristofferson et al., (2017) states that aggressiveness arising due to scarcity, can exist in case of a limited volume of items only, and it does not have much impact in case where time is the only factor. Research shows that customers' opting for the alternative option increases in case of customers experiencing an anger.

The research study with an approach-inhibition theory of power and the situated focus theory of power, Wan et al. (2020) found a favorable impact of the customer's feeling of being in-charge on their final behaviour. Wan et al. (2020) also states that such positive effect does not occur always. In this relationship, an individual's self-doubt plays an important role as a moderator. The findings of the study also state that, the favorable impact of being in-charge of an individual's self-confidence is difficult to be analyzed in case the self-doubt level of an individual is high. It indicates that the self-doubt works as an important criterion of favorable impact of being in-charge of one's self-confidence. The study also suggested that consumers felt more confident whenever they have a sense of power and in that case, they would give positive feedback and recommendations. So, organizations need to utilize such feeling of being in-charge, which will help the organizations for more active expression and feedback from consumers' side, on the issues which need an immediate action or an improvement.

## IV. Discussion and Findings

Blackwell et al., (2006) defines consumer behavior as a combination of various activities and associated choice-making steps by consumers towards their buying behavior for personal consumption. A word-cloud showing the prevalent words from the abstract of the selected articles (see Figure 2). The uninformative keywords such as consumer, product, marketing and findings were eliminated for further analysis. The informative keywords were emotions, behaviors, affect, purchase, choice, sustainable, authenticity, sense, local, purchase and rewards. The related keywords were merged to identify the dominant themes. The major themes identified were 1.) attitude structure, specifically affect and behavior driven by emotion; 2.) Consumer purchase consideration and choice making, specifically for sustainable products; 3.) Product authenticity and going local; and 4.) Purchase loyalty, driving purchase and rewards. One of the potential academic implications of this could be, the current and future research topics on which academicians are focusing and need to focus on.

Name of publishers along with the total number of published articles in terms of the percentage (see Table 2), shows the level of interests among publishers on this dynamic topic of consumer behavior and branding. The current study analyzed the published research works of seven leading marketing journals of high repute. A journal-wise total number of articles published (see Graph 1), depicts the final research work happened in this field.

**Table 3.** Identified gaps in literature

Sr. No.	Identified gaps	Reference
1	Limited to few product categories	Konstantoulaki et al. (2021)
2	The level of consumer's arrogance and related biases has not been captured	Ruvio et al. (2020)
3	Domains used to understand consumer dynamics is not exhaustive and the study covers the evolution of consumer behaviour over last few decades only	Zhang et al. (2020)
4	Limitation of product categories, absence of long-term effect and non-inclusion of important information involving purchase decision	Bronnenberg et al. (2020)
5	Negatively valanced emojis and context of the emoji has not been included	Hewage et al. (2020)
6	Experiment with fictitious brand in one context and with indirect awards	Gorlier et al. (2021)
7	Limited methods to measure individuals' sustainable consumer behavior, conduct of study in hypothetical situations and not in field experiments	Liang et al. (2021)
8	Measured effect of limited haptic stimuli on consumers' haptic perceptions, limited product categories, study on the effects of one sense only	Ranaweera et al. (2020)
9	The research cannot be generalized, considered novelty effects only, previous exposure to the product category not considered	Mishra et al. (2020)
10	Limited place emotions, the source of emotion and motive behind each emotion not accounted	Orth et al. (2020)
11	Limited factors for screening, evaluation and choice execution	Mormann et al. (2020)
12	Focuses on a few key thematic developments	Malter et al. (2020)
13	Limited product domains	Wu et al. (2020)
14	Limited product categories and time period	Hoskins et al. (2020)
15	To improve VR technologies and application designs	Wedel et al. (2020)
16	Validity of the assumptions taken during this study	Jiang et al. (2021)
17	Impact of annoyance with brand switching could be analyzed longitudinally	Biraglia et al. (2021)
18	Appropriate setting for an external validity and generalizability of the study.	Wan et al. (2020)

Konstantoulaki et al., (2021) states that the findings cannot be generalized due to use of limited product categories. So, future studies need to analyze the connection of consumer involvement and the available alternative options in front of consumers. Further research may include altering the brand assessment for checking "latitude of acceptance" towards the unfavorable impact of a consumer's engagement on a given consideration set. Again, an impact of recent innovations including big data may affect customers' decision-making process can be researched further.



Ruvio et al., (2020) states that future research is required for gaining the knowledge about frequent or in-frequent consumer's reaction on the transmitter's behavior and the potential outcome of such incidents. Further research could examine the probable outcomes of self-attributed consumption failures leading to the customer's hubris and unfavorable feedback. Studies may also be conducted on analyzing the sense of a customer's hubris and its impact on their choice-behavior. Future work needs to include the existing biases while making a choice decision in relation to the customer's hubris.

Zhang et al., (2020) states that the study has provided 15 substantive areas/domains to understand consumer dynamics which is not exhaustive. Again, the evolution of consumer dynamics in the last four decades have been included in current research, but it does not include how consumer dynamics had evolved prior to that period of time. Bronnenberg et al., (2020) states that the research is limited to the study done at a single supermarket chain within the US. Again, a limited number of product categories were included in the study. The purchasing behavior was also studied for a limited duration only. It does not include the impact of changing prices, buying behavior, availability of alternate products and customer loyalty. Future studies can be done to analyze the on-going nonprice activities as a sustainable marketing strategy. Hewage et al., (2020) studies and observes the emoji's expression being used in advertising. Further work is needed on negatively valenced emojis and its impact on consumers. How any symmetric or asymmetric emojis can produce a consumer's response can be studied further. Usage of different context can be researched further along with its impact of negatively valenced emojis on the customer's reaction.

Liang et al., (2021) states that the study uses limited techniques to compute a consumer's acceptable level of behavior. Again, the consumer's decision on acceptable items were measured in theoretical understanding and not in field experiments. The study examined only the mediating role of time discounting on sustainable consumer behavior and ruled out other factors. Further work needs to involve the impact of an individual's value-system towards gratitude and their actual behavior. Ranaweera et al., (2020) states that the study did not examine the effect of multiple haptic stimuli on consumers' haptic perceptions. Future work could include different haptic probabilities in various items across the categories and the way in which such can be affected by the customer's haptic perspectives. Further study needs an evaluation of sensory marketing and haptic cues related with the product's texture and weight.

Mishra et al., (2020) states that the findings need to be generalized with respect to young targets being an easy potential customer and an aggressive user of smartphones. Further research is needed to understand the level of attitudes and behavioral occurrence in a multisensory set-up. Further research may use longitudinal studies to analyze the customer's reaction.

Orth et al., (2020) states that the study captures only four place emotions. However, other probable place emotions left unattended which could include favorable as well as an unfavorable influence on a customer's buying intentions. Further research is needed to study the comparison between the source of origin related to place emotions and its associated experience. In future functional motives in connection with all the emotions could be studied. Gorlier et al., (2021) states that the study measures intentions rather than consumers' actual loyalty behaviors. It studies just an indirect reward, which means there is no direct association with the original item. Another avenue that could be pursued is the relational study of self-expansion in connection with reward and brand's identity.

Mormann et al., (2020) states that further study can investigate the elements which can stimulate shielding such as a product feature, easy to attend screening information and unexpected/novel features. Further study can analyze the better methods of evaluation, supporting elements and choice-making tactics from within alternative to between-alternative options. Further research is needed related with past-choice ambiguity while evaluating an available option. Few frameworks conclude that attention relates to the process of evaluation (Krajchich and Rangel 2010), while others conclude attention has an impact on the way an information is acquired (Towal et al. 2013). Therefore, a deeper study is needed further claim on causality. Further frameworks can use a bigger alternative set and a corresponding response format. Frameworks on attention and choice provides an acceptable result, so any particular sector's hero like Apple or Microsoft can take the benefit of the predictive capability of data processing on a real-time basis to decide which content needs to be shown (Domingos, 2015). Therefore, by leveraging the decision on data processing and the power of the machine learning to enhance the knowledge of choice-making and buying behaviour, an organization can get the added advantage.

Wu et al., (2020) states that future research is needed on the probable impact of usage of technical words while deciding an item to purchase. Malter et al., (2020) states that study is not comprehensive in nature and focuses on a few key thematic developments.

Hoskins et al., (2020) states that the future research could include additional product categories. Several other ways such as innovation and positioning tactics could be integrated into the study. Further study is required to understand the demand for local products' consumption in a longitudinal environment. It would be useful to replicate the findings of the study in markets excluding US with the latest set of entries. The limitation of data availability restricts the generalization of results in the current market scenario. Therefore, a further study needs to include the longitudinal factor while conducting the research on increasing demand of local items to examine its desirability in the current market scenario. Future work should also integrate promotional marketing tactics. Despite being governed by a bigger organization, whether a branded item can successfully be marketed as a local product needs to be examined further. Also, a future work is needed to find out whether a local item can be distributed efficiently taking consumers convince into consideration. Again, from a managerial perspective it would be useful to study whether starting a new localized brand will generate desired outcomes or not. The identified gaps in literature have been mentioned in Table 3.

## V. Conclusion and Limitation

The current study is focused on the articles published on consumer behavior and its relationship with various aspects of branding in seven reputed marketing journals, during pandemic times. Current study is comprised of qualitative research work and, is subject to author's biases in identifying the major themes and in observing the managerial implications. Through this study, it is understood that what all topics were of interest to various authors across the globe, in the field of branding and consumer behavior. Though a research article might have been both popular and relevant with respect to related themes, it might not have been considered, based on the relevance of chosen narrative, for instance, the study on internal branding and employees' behavior (Saleem & Hawkins, 2021). It is found that different topics have emerged as a research topic, ranging from choice evaluation, place emotions, promotional activities, emojis, AR/VR to WOM in consumer behavior. Findings showed that there are an increasing number of articles being published on the digital way of interaction between firms, marketers, and their customers. The themes with significant managerial implications are related to customer's purchasing behavior and choice making. Digital interactions and online presence have become a crucial platform for consumers to examine other consumer's feedback and reviews. As a managerial implication of this, marketers may utilize digital platforms for their digital presence to increase their potential customer base. This current study has several limitations. Firstly, since the study includes the articles published only during the Covid pandemic, therefore a longitudinal study needs to be done to understand the connection between consumer behavior and its various aspects of branding. Secondly, due to an enormous increase in published articles during Covid-19, chances are that some important articles could have been missed during evaluation of this study. Thirdly, apart from the chosen reputed journals, there may be several other journals which would have published the articles of this paper's interest, which can be studied and analyzed further. Lastly, to examine the change in trends on consumer behavior and branding, a comparative study of published articles during pre-Covid and post-Covid times needs to be conducted.

## Ethical approval statement

We have maintained the integrity of the research, and its presentation follows good scientific practice. We confirmed that this manuscript is our original work, and it has not been submitted to any other journal.

## Authors contribution statement

Authors contributed equally towards the research work.

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