

## Consumer Behavior during the Pandemic in Malaysia: A Study of Grab Mart

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#### ABSTRACT

During the COVID-19 pandemic, delivery service is in demand in Malaysia due to the implementation of MCO (Movement Control Order), CMCO (Conditional Movement Control Order), RMCO (Recovery Movement Control Order), and FMCO (Full Movement Control Order), the government to stop the spreading of the virus COVID-19. Goods delivery service provides consumers with various products such as groceries, packaged food, and healthcare products. The study focuses on the Grab Mart goods delivery service. 100 Grab Mart consumers are expected to participate in this survey. The findings show that consumers use more Grab Mart goods delivery services during the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Keywords:** Consumer Behavior, Delivery service, Grab Mart, Malaysia, Pandemic.

## **INTRODUCTION**

COVID-19 is a global crisis that affects the worldwide socio-economy. COVID-19, also known as Coronavirus disease 2019, was first reported in Wuhan, China, in December 2019. The virus has spread over all the countries in the world, including Malaysia. COVID-19 was found in Malaysia on the 25th of January 2020 and traced back to 3 Chinese nationals who previously had contact with one of the Singaporeans that have been infected (Elengoe, 2020). The pandemic in Malaysia has caused lockdowns, school closures, and, most importantly, lifestyle changes. To minimize the spread of the pandemic, the Malaysian government has forced MCO (Movement Control Order), CMCO (Conditional Movement Control Order), RMC (Recovery Movement Control Order), and FMC (Full Movement Control Order). Many SMEs have ceased operations due to various obstacles during the pandemic (Hu & Kee, 2022). The pandemic, a double-edged sword, presents an opportunity for delivery services to optimize performance (Kee et al., 2021).

COVID-19 has led to an explosion of delivery services providing mobile apps, websites and Facebook pages offering takeaway delivery, fresh fruit and produce, and even groceries immediately delivered to the consumer's door. Delivery services see growth in purchases of essential items during MCO (Birruntha, 2020). To comply with the movement restriction, Malaysians are encouraged to stay home to reduce human contact. The practice contributed to the rise of demand for goods delivery services. Grab has become one of the greatest food deliveries in Southeast Asia (Kee et al., 2021b). One main reason Grab services are doing well is influenced by customer satisfaction (Adam et al., 2020). Given that Grab has become one of the greatest food deliveries in Southeast Asia, this paper focuses on Grab Mart.

Grab Mart was introduced in Malaysia by Grab Holdings Inc. in November 2019, even before COVID-19 was found in Malaysia. Grab Holdings Inc is headquartered in Queenstown, Singapore. The company offers various services, such as food delivery, goods delivery, and digital payment services. Grab Holdings Inc. operates services in Asia countries such as Malaysia, Singapore, Thailand, Cambodia, Myanmar, Philippines, Thailand, Vietnam, and Japan. Grab Mart, one of their services, provides consumers with the goods delivery service to the consumers using the phone application platform. Consumers can conveniently order various goods such as groceries, packaged food, and healthcare products. The service enables consumers to purchase their desired products without going out from home, which complies with the rules and regulations set by the government during the pandemic.

Consumers' behavior is essential because it helps marketers understand the consumers' buying decisions and helps them determine on how to serve their products to generate a maximum impact on consumers (Radu, 2021). This research investigates how Grab Mart's consumers choose and consume the service by comparing their behaviors before and after the pandemic. Some factors, such as personal, psychological, and social factors affected the consumers' behavior at Grab Mart during the pandemic. The outbreak has pushed consumers out of their regular routines, and consumers are adopting new habits and behaviors (Fabius, Kohli, Timelin, & Moulvad Veranen, 2020). Consumers have significantly changed their purchasing habits after the hit of the pandemic as their lifestyles changed. For instance, the time consumers stay at home is more extended than outside the house. The needs and habits are different now than before the pandemic.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior studies consumer processes to choose, use, and dispose of products and services, including consumers' emotional, mental, and behavioral responses (Radu, 2021). Knowing how consumers behave and the factors that influence consumers' behavior enables companies to organize the marketing mix, branding, and communication more effectively (Svajdova, 2021). Multiple factors determine buyer behavior, such as social, psychological, and personal factor. The pandemic has significantly changed business and consumer behavior (Donthu & Gustafsson, 2020; Pantano, Pizzi, Scarpi, & Dennis, 2020).

Not only human health that affected by the occurrence of the pandemic but also damaging economies and businesses various industries. More than 159,000,000 people worldwide have been infected, and over 3,300,000 people have died (Cleveland Clinic, 2021). SMEs are not spared from the impact (Hu & Kee, 2022). Laato, Farooq, Vilppu, Airola, and Murtonen, (2022) have stated that the government set up a lockdown which may have spread fears of what will happen in the future by closing schools, public services, shops, and restaurants, and this fact is will be a consideration of customers' possibility in shopping habit. Besides, Sheth (2020) claimed that the less predictable context, developing the global COVID-19 pandemic, governs or disrupts consumer habits.

Personal factors are the individual factors that strongly influence their buying behaviors (Jargons, 2016). Some important personal factors that influence buying behavior are lifestyle, age, personality, economic situation, occupation, and self-concept (Shah, 2010). Human psychology is a major determinant of consumer behavior, and those factors are difficult to measure yet powerful enough to influence purchasing decisions. (Cloomtrack, 2021). Consumer psychology deals with how individuals or groups are involved with consumer activities and their effect on them (Vainikka, 2015). Four psychological factors stated by B.Q.C Team (2018) that influence consumer behavior i.e. motivation, perception, learning, and attitude or belief system.

## **RESEARCH METHOD**

Research method has two types that are: the qualitative method and the quantitative method. This research is using the quantitative method. A questionnaire is designed to get primary data from the public. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and distributed to the public using social media such as Facebook, Telegram, and WhatsApp. Part B and part C of the questionnaire are using a 5-Point Likert Scale to let the respondents specify their level of agreement along with a statement ranging from (1) 'Strongly Disagree' up to (5) 'Strongly Agree'.

## **RESULTS**

**Table 1.** Summary of Respondents' Demographics (N=100)

Response	Frequency	Percentage
Gender		
Male	28	28%
Female	72	72%
Age		
18 - 25 years old	58	58%

26 - 30 years old	30	30%
31 - 35 years old	6	6%
36 - 40 years old	5	5%
41 - 45 years old	1	1%
46 - 50 years old	0	0%
Above 50 years old	0	0%
Ethnicity		
Malay	18	18%
Chinese	74	74%
Indian	4	4%
Iban	2	2%
Bidayuh	1	1%
Iban	1	1%
Education Level		
High School or Equivalent	2	2%
Diploma	18	18%
Bachelor's Degree	75	75%
Master's Degree	4	4%
Ph.D. Degree	1	1%
Employment Status		
Student	45	45%
Employee	43	43%
Self-employed	11	11%
Unemployed	1	1%
Annual Income		
No income	43	43%
RM 10,000 or below	11	11%
RM 10,001 - RM 30,000	29	29%
RM 30,001 - RM 50,000	13	13%
RM 50,001 - RM 100,000	4	4%

Table 1 indicates the demographic profiles of the 100 Grab Mart users in Malaysia who completed the survey. Based on Table 1, the users of Grab Mart are mainly female, where the percentage is 72%. Over half (58%) of the respondents were mainly young consumers aged 18 to 25 years old. About three-quarters were Chinese (74%). Most respondents had a bachelor's degree as their education level (75%), and 45% of the respondents were students.

**Table 2.** Summary of Customer Loyalty towards Grab Mart Goods Delivery.

Response	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
How often do you use Grab Mart goods delivery service per month?				
0 times	4	4%	7	7%
1 - 2 times	89	89%	30	30%
3 - 4 times	5	5%	22	22%
5 - 6 times	2	3%	30	30%

6 times above	0	0%	11	11%
What category/categories of products that you usually buy by using Grab Mart goods delivery service				
Fresh Product	27	27%	51	51%
Food Essentials	57	57%	70	70%
Beauty and Personal Care	26	26%	43	43%
Cakes	24	24%	47	47%
Baked Goods	23	23%	43	43%
Snacks and Confectionary	29	29%	49	49%
Baby Care	14	14%	24	24%
Organic Food	18	18%	47	47%
Dairy Product	27	27%	58	58%
Beverage	38	38%	53	53%
Health Care	16	16%	41	41%
Household	18	18%	45	45%
Books and Stationery	12	12%	39	39%
Gifts and Decorations	15	15%	39	39%
Frozen	12	12%	50	50%
Fashion and Accessories	6	6%	23	23%
Electronics	6	6%	37	37%
Non-Halal Product	6	6%	33	33%
How much do you spend on Grab Mart goods delivery service for each time of purchase on average?				
RM 50 or below	93	93%	31	31%
RM 51 - RM 100	7	7%	41	41%
Above RM 100	0	0%	28	28%
Are you willing to wait more than 1 hour (the promised time to deliver the product by Grab Mart goods delivery service) to receive your ordered products?				
Yes	13	13%	60	60%
No	66	66%	18	18%
Depends	21	21%	22	22%

Table 2 shows customer loyalty towards Grab Mart goods delivery service before and during the pandemic in Malaysia. Before the pandemic, 89% of the respondents only used Grab Mart goods delivery service 1 to 2 times per month. During the pandemic, 30% used Grab Mart goods delivery service 1 to 2 times and 5 to 6 times. 11% used the Grab Mart goods delivery service 6 times per month. The result shows that the respondents are not often using the Grab Mart goods delivery service before the pandemic. Next, the question allowed the respondents to choose more than one of the categories of products they usually bought using the Grab Mart goods delivery service. Before the pandemic, food essential (57%) was the product category that most respondents bought by using the service. The result shows that most of the respondents frequently bought food essentials through the service before the pandemic. During the pandemic, food essentials remained the category of product that the respondents usually bought, but the number of respondents increased from 57% to 70%. The results revealed that food essential remains the product category that most respondents bought by using the service during the pandemic. Customers have a high demand for food essentials through the service before and during the pandemic. The overall categories of products

that respondents usually bought using Grab Mart goods delivery service increased from before the pandemic to during the pandemic.

Besides, the question asked the respondent how much they spend on Grab Mart goods delivery service for each time of purchase on average. The result shows that most of the respondents spend less on the service before the pandemic. Before the pandemic, 93% spent RM50 or below on Grab Mart. During the pandemic, on average, 69% spent more than RM50 using Grab Mart. The result indicated that most consumers increased their spending on Grab Mart during the pandemic.

The last question asks about the willingness of respondents to wait more than 1 hour (the promised time of Grab Mart to deliver the product to customers) to receive their ordered products. Before the pandemic, 66% choose 'no'. During the pandemic, 60% choose 'yes'. The result indicated that most respondents are willing to wait more than the promised time during the pandemic. It can conclude that most respondents are willing to wait for more than the promised time during the pandemic.

In conclusion, customer loyalty toward Grab Mart goods delivery service increased during the pandemic. The increase in the frequency of using the service, categories of products bought, money spent on the service, and the willingness to wait for the products to be delivered during the pandemic shows that the respondents are more loyal to Grab Mart goods delivery service compared to the time before the pandemic.

**Table 3.** Summary of Consumer Behavior Factors that Influence Consumers to use Grab Mart Goods Delivery Service.

Response	Before Pandemic		During Pandemic	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
<b>Personal Factor</b>				
I am lazy to go out shopping.				
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	1	1%
Disagree	1	1%	16	16%
Neutral	5	5%	13	13%
Agree	23	23%	50	50%
Strongly Agree	71	71%	20	20%
I am busy with my work/studies/homework.				
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Disagree	1	1%	0	0%
Neutral	32	32%	6	6%
Agree	46	46%	39	39%
Strongly Agree	21	21%	55	55%
To avoid close contact with other people.				
Strongly Disagree	-	-	0	0%
Disagree	-	-	0	0%
Neutral	-	-	2	2%
Agree	-	-	16	16%
Strongly Agree	-	-	82	82%
<b>Psychological Factor</b>				

Grab Mart's goods delivery service provides a greater variety of product categories.				
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Disagree	24	24%	2	2%
Neutral	43	43%	11	11%
Agree	23	23%	44	44%
Strongly Agree	10	10%	43	43%
Grab Mart goods delivery service often offers promotions.				
Strongly Disagree	0	0%	0	0%
Disagree	28	28%	1	1%
Neutral	50	50%	10	10%
Agree	14	14%	50	50%
Strongly Agree	8	8%	39	39%
Grab Mart goods delivery service rider provides me a better customer service than other goods delivery services.				
Strongly Disagree	2	2%	0	0%
Disagree	14	14%	0	0%
Neutral	52	52%	11	11%
Agree	25	25%	56	56%
Strongly Agree	7	7%	33	33%
Grab Mart goods delivery service offers a wide range of delivery coverage areas.				
Strongly Disagree	4	4%	0	0%
Disagree	21	21%	2	2%
Neutral	49	49%	12	12%
Agree	18	18%	42	42%
Strongly Agree	8	8%	44	44%

### **Personal Factor**

Table 3 summarizes consumer behavior factors that influence consumers to use Grab Mart's goods delivery service to purchase the goods rather than going to the store. The first part of Table 3 is the personal factor. Before the pandemic, 94% used Grab Mart goods delivery service because they were lazy to go shopping, compared to 70% during the pandemic. The results suggest that most respondents used Grab Mart goods delivery service rather than going to the store before the pandemic due to laziness and convenience. During the pandemic, 98% reported using Grab Mart because they were trying to avoid contact with the public.

### **Psychological Factors**

The second part of Table 3 shows the psychological factors influencing consumers to use Grab Mart goods delivery service to purchase the goods rather than going to the store. Before the pandemic, only 33% responded positively to the statement, "Grab Mart goods delivery service provides a greater variety of product categories.". The result shows that most respondents do not agree and have a neutral opinion that the greater variety of product categories provided by Grab Mart goods delivery service influences them to use the service. However, during the pandemic, the positive responses increased to 87. The result shows that during the pandemic, the respondents agree that the greater variety of product categories provided by Grab Mart does influence them to use the service.

22% responded positively to the statement “Grab Mart goods delivery service often offers promotion.” before the pandemic. The result shows that most of the respondents are not agree and have a neutral opinion that the promotion offered by Grab Mart influenced them to use the service before the pandemic. However, during the pandemic, the positive responses increased to 89%. The result shows that the respondents agree that Grab Mart often offers promotions during the pandemic, influencing them to use the service.

The way promotion affects the consumers' behavior shows the consumers' perception of the service. The marketing strategy of Grab Mart gives some promotions to attract consumers. When customers see advertisements, customer reviews, promotions, and social media feedback relating to a product, they build up some impression of the product (Cloodtrack, 2020). During the pandemic, Grab Mart often offers promotions to its users as their marketing strategy. The promo code provided could be applied when consumers order goods from their platform. For instance, Grab Mart provides a 50% discount for their new users in the year 2021 and what the consumers need to do is just key in the promo code 'NEW2MART' when they are checking out from the page to proceed to payment. The respondents develop a good impression of the service and are influenced to use it during the pandemic. Before the pandemic, as stated above, Grab Mart's newly launched in November 2019, and only limited promotions were made. The limited promotions did not influence the respondents' use of the service.

32% responded positively to the statement, “Grab Mart goods delivery service rider provides me a better customer service compared to other goods delivery services.”, before the pandemic. The result shows that most respondents have neutral and negative responses that the better customer service provided by Grab Mart goods delivery service riders compared to other goods delivery services influenced them to use the service in purchasing the goods rather than going to the store before the pandemic. However, the positive response increased to 89 during the pandemic.

Lastly, before the pandemic, there were only 26 positive responses to the statement, “Grab Mart goods delivery service offers a wide range of delivery coverage areas.” However, the positive response increased to 86. The results show that more respondents agree that the wide range of delivery coverage areas influences them to use the service to purchase the goods rather than going to the store during the pandemic.

## **DISCUSSION**

Before the pandemic, laziness could be attributed to tiredness after work and classes. Knott (2020) stated that it is common to feel tired after work, and people might not be willing to step out of the house again once they return from work. During the pandemic, consumers using Grab Mart could be due to the restrictions by the government and the Standard Operation Procedures (SOP). Many procedures must be followed, and people are more likely to stay home rather than go out. For instance, people need to scan the QR code before entering the premises, social distancing, and they also need to keep themselves sanitized all the time or when they reach home. In conclusion, personal factors do influence consumers' behavior. The factors such as laziness, busyness, and self-protection influence the respondents to use the Grab Mart goods delivery service to purchase the goods rather than going to the store during the pandemic.

Consumer perception is consumers sense a marketing stimulus and organize, interpret, and provide meaning (Jyothsana, 2020). The consumer's psychological state can influence their purchasing decisions, such as motivation, perception, learning, beliefs,



and attitudes. The result shows the consumer perception toward the service. The wide product range provided by Grab Mart is one of their market strategies, and this encourages consumers to use the service. Alam and Yasin (2020) stated that product variety is a key factor influencing consumers' satisfaction with online shopping. The results show that the respondents agree more with the statement during the pandemic. It was probably because Grab Mart was just introduced by Grab Holdings in November 2019, 2 months before the COVID-19 outbreak in Malaysia. The product variety provided by Grab Mart was limited as the service was just newly launched. However, Grab Holdings has announced the pilot launch of its new service under Grab Mart called Grab Supermarket which offers a wider variety of household needs ranging from fresh produce, packaged food, frozen food, and beverages to homecare household products, supplements, personal health, etc. Launching the new service provides consumers with a wider variety of products, influencing them to use the service rather than going to the store to purchase goods during the pandemic.

Grab Mart provides comprehensive service guidelines and training programs before a person is qualified to be a rider. An excellent service performed by the rider fulfills customer satisfaction and influences them to keep using the service, thus becoming loyal consumers. According to Yusra & Agus (2020), online food delivery providers must first attain customer satisfaction before securing customer loyalty. The statement applies the same thing to goods delivery providers. Kee et al. (2021) reported that Grab Food delivery had risen tremendously during the pandemic. The respondents are giving more positive responses during the pandemic because Grab Holdings provides more training to their riders during the pandemic to power up the ability of the drivers to handle the rise of orders. According to Gong & Tong (2020), delivery platforms such as Grab and Foodpanda noticed a 30% rise on the first day of Movement Control Order (MCO).

The rise of the positive response is due to the coverage broadening to many areas in Malaysia as Grab Mart receives a high demand during the pandemic. The wide range of delivery coverage areas provided by Grab Mart during the pandemic enables the driver to deliver products located far away from the consumers to them. The marketing strategy of providing wide coverage areas can retain customers. Consumers can purchase the goods even though there are no marts available nearby where the consumers are located. In conclusion, psychological factors influence consumers' behavior during the pandemic. The efforts of Grab Mart in implementing marketing strategies such as providing a wider range of product categories, frequently offering promotions, providing better customer service, and offering a wide range of delivery coverage areas had influenced the consumers psychologically and encouraged them to use the service.

## **CONCLUSION**

The summary focuses on goods delivery service for the research as it can be seen a surge in demand due to the service. The research identified the change in consumers' behavior, such as the consumers' loyalty and the factors that influenced their purchasing behavior during the pandemic compared to before the pandemic. To achieve the objectives, a survey has been distributed to the consumers of Grab Mart. Based on the survey result, the customer loyalty of respondents toward Grab Mart goods delivery service increased during the pandemic. The study finding reveals that consumers frequently use Grab Mart during the pandemic, showing customer loyalty. Besides, most of the product categories that consumers usually buy increased. Other than that, the average spending for each order time increased, and lastly, the consumers are willing to wait for a longer time to receive their products during the pandemic.

This research focuses on two factors that affect the consumers' behavior by influencing the consumers to use Grab Mart goods delivery service in purchasing the goods rather than going to the store. The first factor is the personal factor. The personal factor is the individual factor that strongly influences consumer behavior. Based on the survey result, laziness, busyness, and self-protection awareness contribute to the personal factor influencing the consumers to use the service. The second factor is the psychological factor. The psychological factor is the motivation, perception, learning, and attitude or belief system that the consumers have, influencing their behavior in consuming products. Based on the survey result, the effort of Grab Mart in implementing more efficient marketing strategies such as providing a wider range of product categories, frequently offering promotions, providing better customer service, and offering a wide range of delivery coverage areas influence the consumers' behavior by changing their perception in deciding whether to use the service during the pandemic.

Consumers' behavior is so important that it helps economic decision-makers such as marketers and manufacturers understand consumers' buying decisions. During the pandemic, consumers' behavior changed drastically. Grab Mart needs to be alert to the change in the consumers' behavior so that they can plan and implement the strategies successfully. This paper contributes to the literature on consumer behavior, where a clear shift in consumer behavior was observed before and during the pandemic.

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The authors declared no potential conflicts of interest

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