

FORMAL PROTOCOL DRAFT

INTRODUCTION

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this interview. My name is _____ and I am a Ph.D. student at Virginia Tech's Pamplin College of Business.

I am working with Prof. Dipankar Chakravarti and a fellow student on a research project for a Ph.D. marketing course that aims to explore and understand the consumer experience of shopping for household goods during the COVID-19 pandemic. We wish to understand how consumers think and feel before, during and after shopping during a civic crisis.

We are most interested in your personal views and opinions on this topic as they reflect your own individual experiences.

Before we start, we want to assure you that your identity will be held in confidence and will not be revealed to anyone other than my fellow team member and Prof. Chakravarti. Your opinions and views will be shared only in aggregate form and will not be attributed to you by name in any report of the study, which is being conducted for course credit and not for general publication. Upon completion, we will be happy to share our report, if you are interested.

Although we will take notes during the interview, it will be very helpful if we have your permission to video record this conversation so that we accurately capture your opinions and input. We will remove all personal identifiers from the recording and will follow Virginia Tech's institutional policies on the safe keeping of this material. You are free to withdraw your participation at any time during the course of this study, including now.

(Use a video recorder or laptop-based auto-transcriber if permission is granted. Otherwise hand-record your notes).

QUESTIONS

Q1: To begin the interview, how has the COVID-19 pandemic affected your life?

Elaboration Probes:

- How has your typical day changed?
- How have your priorities changed?
- How have your thinking or feelings changed?
- Life experience during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic
 - Impacts on day-to-day life
 - Stress and concerns: overall stress level, health concerns, monetary concerns
 - Feeling, emotion and moods: distracted, anxious, uncertain

Time check: 5 minutes

Q2. Think back in time to before the COVID-19 pandemic and describe how you typically shopped for groceries and other household goods.

Elaboration Probes:

- Objective of shopping (e.g., for family, for self, for roommates)
- Typical shopping experience
 - Typical frequency: x times per week, weekly, monthly, quarterly
 - Typical state of mind: rushed/relaxed, enjoyable/nuisance
 - Typical amount of money spent per shopping trip
 - Typical time spent during each shopping trip
 - Items usually/frequently purchased, and amount of these items purchased in each shopping trip
- Shopping channels: online vs. in-store vs. both;
 - Online: Amazon, Target.com, Walmart.com, others
 - In-store: big box (e.g., Target, Walmart), high-end supermarket (e.g., Whole Foods), supermarket chain (e.g., Kroger), dollar stores (e.g., Dollar General, Dollar Tree, Family Dollar), convenience stores (e.g., 7-11, Circle K), local grocery stores
- Shopping approach: shop when needed (more random) vs shop as planned (more organized); shop as part of other errands; shop with/without discounts/coupons

Time check: 15 minutes

Q3. Now think about mid-March when the pandemic became a severe issue in the United States. How did your shopping patterns change?

Elaboration Probes:

- Nuances or changes in shopping behaviors (compared to pre-pandemic shopping behaviors)
 - Change in what to purchase (i.e., typical items purchased)
 - Change in how much to purchase (i.e., number of typical items purchased)
 - Change in how often to shop (i.e., shopping frequency)
 - Change in where to shop (i.e., shopping channels)

Time check: 25 minutes

Q4: Describe what you may know about what people sometimes call “panic buying”.

Elaboration Probes:

- Have you observed it?
- Do you have any thoughts and feelings about it?

Time check: 30 minutes

Q5: When shopping in a store or online during the pandemic, did you ever consider buying or actually buy an unusual amount of an item “just in case”? (if ONLINE ONLY, skip to Q7b; if NO, skip to Q8b)

Q6: Tell us more about the time(s) during an in-store shopping experience when you considered buying, or actually bought, more than you needed of an item. What did you think about and how did you feel at that time(s)?

Elaboration Probes:

- Decision-making process
 - What did you end up deciding: buying more or not?

- What was your thought process: emotion-based or reason based?
- How did the (real or perceived) behavior of others affect your thinking?
- What was different about that shopping experience relative to others when you didn't buy more?
- Strategic considerations
 - Which items and why these items
 - How much more and why this much more
 - Where to buy and why choose one over others (e.g., choosing Target over Walmart because of the better mitigation strategies taken)
 - When to buy and why this (these) time(s) (e.g., shopping in the morning because of the small number of shoppers)
 - What tricks and how the tricks are figured out (e.g., refreshing at midnight on Amazon for re-stock)
- Cognitive state: readiness, distraction, consciousness, certainty, confusedness
- Affective state: distress, calmness, alertness, confidence, anger
- Emotion and mood
- Influence of shopping environment and other shoppers
 - Shopping environment: mitigation strategy, store layout, home atmosphere
 - Other shoppers: choice, behavior

Time check: 40 minutes

Q7a: How were things different during the time(s) you considered buying, or actually bought, more than you needed of an item online?

Elaboration Probes:

- How different from in-store?
 - Different time of day
 - Different weather
 - Different item(s)
- How has online buying changed since pandemic?

Q7b: Tell us more about the time(s) during an online shopping experience when you considered buying, or actually bought, more than you needed of an item. What did you think about and how did you feel at that time(s)?

Elaboration Probes:

- Decision-making process
 - What did you end up deciding: buying more or not?
 - What was your thought process: emotion-based or reason based?
 - How did the (real or perceived) behavior of others affect your thinking?
 - What was different about that shopping experience relative to others when you didn't buy more?
 - Why did you start shopping groceries and household goods online (if they did not do this before the pandemic)?
- Strategic considerations
 - Which items and why these items
 - How much more and why this more

- Where to buy and why choose one over others
- When to buy and why this (these) time(s)
- What tricks and how the tricks are figured out (e.g., refreshing at midnight on Amazon for re-stock)
- Cognitive state: readiness, distraction, consciousness, certainty, confusedness
- Affective state: distress, calmness, alertness, confidence, anger
- Emotion and mood
- Influence of shopping environment and product information
 - Shopping environment: product page design, website ads, home atmosphere
 - Product information: price, limited quantity, stock information, consumer reviews

Time check: 45 minutes

Q8a: Back to today, have your shopping patterns remained the same as they were during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, have they returned to the way they were before the pandemic, or somewhere in between? Why?

Q8b: Back to today, based on your observation, have other people's shopping patterns remained the same as they were during the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, have they returned to the way they were before the pandemic, or somewhere in between? Why?

Elaboration Probes:

- How long did your/people's pandemic shopping patterns last (if the informant has returned to/thinks people have returned to pre-pandemic shopping patterns and has not engaged in panic buying anymore)?
- How long do you expect the pandemic shopping patterns will last (if the informant is still in/thinks people are still in pandemic shopping patterns and continue to engage in panic buying)?
- Would you say you/people have adapted to some new hybrid shopping patterns and how long do you expect these hybrid shopping patterns will last (if the informant is/thinks people are in between)?
- How the current situation is similar to or different from the peak? When did the difference start becoming apparent (if the informants suggest the difference)?
- How did your shopping patterns change when that difference became apparent?

Time check: 55 minutes

Q9: Before we close for today, would you like to add any other comments related to panic buying that we have not covered yet?

WRAP-UP

To complete our survey, allow us to collect some basic demographic information, which we will keep anonymous.

- Year of birth:
- Gender:
- Education:

- Occupation:
- Annual household income:
- Marital status:
- Household definition:
 - Type of family (e.g., nuclear, single)
 - Number of kids / age of kids
 - Size of household
- Religious beliefs:
- Political beliefs:

Thank you for your time today. My professor, research partner, and I truly appreciate your participation and willingness to share your views with us. As a token of our appreciation, please accept this gift card for your enjoyment.

We want to reaffirm our original assurance of confidentiality. Would you object to us thanking you by name in our finished report (without attributing any opinions)?

Record response: ☐ Yes – feel free to thank me by name ☐ No – do not identify me

Finally, if you are interested, we will be pleased to provide you a copy of our final report, which should be completed by the end of August. Are you interested in receiving a copy?

Record response: ☐ Yes – please provide me a report ☐ No – do not send a report

Once again, thank you so much for your time and your perspectives.