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COVID-19 Generation: A Conceptual Framework of the Consumer Behavioral Shifts to Be Caused by the COVID-19 Pandemic

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ABSTRACT

This paper reviews the potential impact of the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020 on global consumer traits, buying patterns, global interconnectedness and psychographic behavior, and other marketing activities. Eschewing the branding of generational cohorts by their birth segments (Baby Boomers, Millennials, Centennials, etc.), this paper focuses upon major historical milestones (JFK assassination, Vietnam War, Iran Hostage Crisis, Terrorism, 2008 worldwide economic contraction) and how those milestones had more effects upon future behavior than simply being born during a certain segment of years and labeling entire cohorts in that manner. The implications of this paper are to suggest to marketers the long-term behavioral shifts we could see from the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, and the resulting shifts in consumer behavior.

KEYWORDS

Consumer behavior; COVID-19; coronavirus; generational cohorts; global pandemic

Introduction and literature search

It has been common practice in global marketing to group consumer segments into target market categories. One of the more widely used is that of lumping generational cohorts into a group, and assigning traits to that group. By this definition, a cohort generation consists of individuals in a shared age bracket, and those individuals share a defined history where personality, behavior, and consumption patterns are influenced by that history (Strauss and Howe 1991). They are highly influenced by the external events that were occurring while they were “coming of age,” generally between the ages of 17 and 23 (Debevec et al. 2013). The most common of these generations are widely used names, but not commonly agreed upon years. One source states Baby Boomers (born 1943–1960), Generation X (born 1961–1981), Generation Y (born 1982–1991), and Generation Z (born after 1992) (Johnston 2013). Another source states Baby Boomers (born 1944–1964), Generation X (born 1965–1979), Millennials (born 1980–1994), and Centennials (born 1995–2015) (Kasasa 2019).

Some of the lack of clarity can be attributed to the debate as to whether “year born” is the correct method to use in forming a cohort, or if milestone is a more effective method of forming cohorts. Generations focus on year of birth where as “generational cohorts focus on cataclysmic events that produce a change in the value structure of society. These cataclysmic events create a shift in society and bring a new set of values to those coming of age during those events.” (Debevec et al. 2013, p. 21) Parry and Urwin (2017) suggested researchers must investigate whether any cohort-specific differences in attitudes are apparent, and where, if at all, these can be “cut” to identify distinct “structural breaks” between generations. Following this direction, and contributing to the research of cohort-specific grouping, this paper reviews the potential impact of the COVID-19 global pandemic of 2020 on consumer traits, buying patterns, psychographic behaviors, and other marketing activities. We then use these potential impacts to build a conceptual framework to suggest to marketers the long-term behavioral shifts we could

see from the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020, and the resulting shifts in consumer behavior.

The idea of generational cohorts, and their collective memory, or collective experience, of major events in history and the impact of those events on resulting behavioral patterns is not new. Karl Mannheim is highly cited as one of the pioneers in discerning the impact difference between biological relationships (born in the same time period) and social and political events experienced by a cohort (Schuman and Scott 1989). Examples of these social and political events are world wars, assassinations, civil rights movements, and space milestones. Since the publishing of Mannheim's study, events such as the global war on terror and the 2008 global economic contraction have occurred. According to Mannheim (1952), a cohort roughly begins to form a collective identity between the ages of 17 and 25. This thought was later reiterated by Rogler (2002) in quoting "late adolescence and early adulthood are the formative years". Rogler also termed the cohort impact events as "cataclysmic events and psychological processes".

There is a robust range of events studied for their impact on individuals and organizations. While some studies address life events in general (Koschate-Fischer et al. 2018; Shim and Cho 2000; Mathur, Moschis, and Lee 2003), others reflect on the impact of a specific event. As mentioned above, this includes the Great Recession (Best 2011; Cooper 2013; Debevec et al. 2013; Etzioni 2011; Griffith, O'Connell, and Smith 2016; Ng, Slining, and Popkin 2014; Yerex 2011; Zick, Mayer, and Glaubitz 2012), Hurricane Katrina (Kennett-Hensel, Sneath, and Lacey 2012; Sneath, Lacey, and Kennett-Hensel 2009) and the rise in terrorism (Moore, Cunradi, and Ames 2004). Natural disasters (Larson and Shin 2018) and isolated events such as poultry recalls (Mo 2013) have also been studied. Topics explored are wide ranging, including the impact on consumer behavior, social issues and generational cohorts. Using the Great Recession as an example, one notes research addressing many of the key issues we see unfolding as the COVID-19 pandemic spreads worldwide. There are multiple papers on social issues such as domestic violence, child abuse and mental health. Other studies explore

consumer behavior and organizational change. It begs the question; do they portend where we are headed throughout and post COVID-19? As one unfortunate example that they may indeed, we note an uptick in domestic violence being reported currently. In China, un-couplings began in March, 2020, soon after the quarantine orders were lifted. Domestic violence reports also multiplied during the quarantine (Prasso 2020).

Stressful life events result in initiation, intensification or changes in consumption habits in an effort to handle the stress (Mathur, Moschis, and Lee 2003). Risk-averse consumption behavior has been observed after large-scale events such as: terrorism (9/11) and its impact on the airline industry and tourism worldwide; tsunamis in Thailand, Indonesia and more recently in Japan; earthquakes in Haiti, Japan and New Zealand; major floods and devastation in New Orleans and Queensland; pandemics such as SARS, the H1N1 virus; wildfires in California and Victoria (Fortin and Uncles 2011).

Natural disasters, including those natural events we expect each year (e.g., hurricanes, tornadoes, wild fires, and floods), have resulted a downturn in economic activity (Fortin and Uncles 2011) and changes in utilitarian and hedonic shopping motives both during and after the event (Larson and Shin 2018). Utilitarian motives for purchase include restocking necessities, replenishing items, replacing items damaged by storms whereas hedonic reasons include the pursuit of freedom, to defy boredom, celebrate the end of the storm and to rekindle with family and friends (Larson and Shin 2018, 302–303). A three-part study conducted post-Hurricane Katrina (United States 2005) suggests that consumer behaviors changed both during the immediate transition after the storm and years later (Kennett-Hensel, Sneath, and Lacey 2012). Findings suggest that increased acquisition and buying demonstrated immediately after the event was followed by decreased consumption in the long-term; with some respondents indicating they were no longer willing to over-consume, less likely to overspend, and more careful in their choices (Ibid).

The Great Recession resulted in behavioral and attitudinal changes. Spending was reduced in

general; less expensive brands were purchased; concern for the carbon footprint increased as did environmental consciousness; many worried that society had become too shallow; society had grown intellectually lazy (Etzioni 2011). Studying household food consumption in the United Kingdom post-Great Recession, Griffith, O'Connell, and Smith (2016) report that households responded to worsening economic conditions "smoothing two aspects of consumption" by switching to calories that were cheaper in real terms, and the nutritional quality of their food baskets did not decline. Essentially, they increased their shopping effort and adjusted consumption by changing the nature of the shopping basket (Ibid, p.274). A longitudinal study of the consumer traits of Dutch consumers found that consumer traits are largely stable, but that stability does not preclude change (Steenkamp and Maydeu-Olivares 2015). Considering societal changes and specifically focusing on the Great Recession, they note that "consumers price consciousness is more susceptible to changes in the external environment than any other traits" (Ibid., p. 302). Thus, we would expect consumers to manifest price sensitivity post- Covid-19.

Consistent with the recommendations of Parry and Urwin (2017), Debevec et al. (2013) explored the Millennial generational cohort relative to the Great Recession. They concluded there is a splintering of the Millennial cohort attributed to the Great Recession, resulting in the emergence of a younger "entitlement" cohort, younger Millennials, that appear less thrifty, more secular, and more sexually permissive than older Millennials (Debevec et al. 2013). Additionally, younger Millennials are more pleasure seeking and possess a greater sense of entitlement than older Millennials; further, the economic impact of the Great Recession did not appear to have resulted in the value of thrift but rather the desire to enjoy life and make the most of it (Debevec et al. 2013). Additional research exploring the generational response to the Great Recession suggests financial planners should customize their retirement planning materials; as Older Boomers seemed scared by the Great Recession, whereas Millennials demonstrated financial planning resiliency (Zick, Mayer, and Glaubitz 2012, p.13).

Conceptual framework

As past cataclysmic events have shown, major shifts in viewpoints and behavior inevitably form from collectively experienced events. The global flu epidemic of 1918 helped create national health services in many European countries. The twinned crises of the Great Depression and the second world war set the stage for the modern welfare state (Baker 2020). But, those are shifts in governmental policy and social safety nets. In this framework, we want to postulate how consumer behavior will be impacted, and if that impact will vary by age. Will the COVID-19 pandemic, in effect, form a new generational cohort, as represented by the collective response of that group?

In terms of COVID-19, or the novel coronavirus-19, the general populace of each country reacted within roughly two weeks of being aware of the virus's presence in their country, to begin a stock-up mentality. As this mentality of preparedness kicked in, the following categories became a priority: medical supplies, rubbing alcohol, antibacterial wipes, first aid kits, antiseptics, cold and flu remedies, and cough remedies (Nielsen 2020). With many customers feeling "caught off guard", it could be seen as a precursor to items that will be kept in ready supply by the population in the future. As the population satisfied emergency health supplies, the buying patterns turned to pantry stock-up. The following categories saw the greatest gains in sales: powdered milk, dried beans, canned meat, chick peas, rice, tuna, black beans, biscuit mix, water, and pasta (Ibid). As the population filled pantries with shelf-stable products that could be both termed as filling and ready when needed (as opposed to fresh fruits and vegetables and fresh meats). In parallel, these items are similar to the pantry loading items during war time. As countries have progressed into a "new normal", many patterns of behavior have changed, such as using online for food deliveries, more personal isolation than previously, and a shift to less sharing of food, clothing, and any items where a virus can be transmitted.

According to another source, "For many, the scale of the coronavirus crisis calls to mind 9/11

or the 2008 financial crisis—events that reshaped society in lasting ways, from how we travel and buy homes, to the level of security and surveillance we're accustomed to, and even to the language we use." (Politico 2020). In terms of the potential changes in consumer behavior either driven by, or in response to, changes in retail, hospitality, and those settings which proved to be the most vulnerable or the most essential during the pandemic, we are suggesting the following changes will be seen as the public reemerges from quarantine into a post-pandemic existence.

Nationalism moving production inside borders as supply chain security

Although "With the launch of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in the year 2000, and later continuing through the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) begun in 2016, we have been living in a time of globalism" (Hotez 2019), pandemics are "a perfect example of the kind of crises to which global capitalism (with its constant movement of people and goods) is particularly vulnerable" (Davis 2020). Specifically in the COVID-19 pandemic, production of medicines and personal protective equipment (PPE) in other countries, while there is a global shortage, has forced governments to consider which supply chains are to be deemed vital to national security. In the United States, the pharmaceutical companies remain the global leaders in drug discovery and research/development, but most manufacturing has moved offshore. In one striking detail, the last American plant to make the key ingredients for penicillin closed its doors in 2004. Chinese pharmaceutical companies have supplied "more than 90 percent of U.S. antibiotics, vitamin C, ibuprofen, and hydrocortisone, as well as 70 percent of acetaminophen and 40 to 45 percent of heparin." (Swanson 2020). Before the pandemic, China (where COVID-19 originated) produced approximately half the world's face masks (Ranney, Griffeth, and Jha 2020). With the nonstop coverage of the COVID-19, the *desire of the generation that experienced the pandemic to promote nationalism and "close ranks" around the country's border is highly likely.*

In one example, Japan, which counts China as its largest trade partner, has earmarked 220 billion yen (over \$2 billion) for Japanese companies to shift production back to Japan, and 23 billion yen for Japanese companies to move their production to countries other than China (Reynolds and Urabe 2020). *Based upon the amount of questionable information having come from China during the pandemic, it would behoove countries to move essential goods production back inside their own borders, to ensure a safe supply in the case of another pandemic.*

Stock up mentality and online ordering

As seen from the war time generation of both World War I and II, the cohort living through that time generally had a "stock up" mentality that was seen as "old fashioned" by Millennials and Centennials, who tend to have the idea essential food supplies will always be readily available. Labor shortages, lockdown gridlock, closed ports, and hoarding created supply shortfalls not previously seen in developed countries. In this sense, it is conceivable the COVID-19 cohort will *return to the practice of pantry loading and maintaining an inventory of medical supplies and shelf stable provisions*, having seen inventory disruptions during the pandemic of 2020. According to Nielsen, the shift to online purchasing of food is one that will likely remain at a higher percent of the population than before the pandemic (Nielsen 2020). *It will be conceivable any products and services which involved "high touch" or close proximity to others will be permanently impacted by the pandemic.*

Return to experience and hedonism, with a caveat

As liquor stores and marijuana dispensaries were seen as essential businesses during the pandemic, the hedonistic attitude of "I could die tomorrow" or "You Only Live Once" could certainly see a resurgence. The COVID-19 pandemic caused a wave of stress and worry unseen in recent years. Stress from losing your job, stress from potentially losing your life, social separation, etc. are all stressors. Researchers reported last year that experiencing pleasurable emotions serves as a

buffer between chronic stress and depression. In studies, those who reported more pleasurable moments during high stress were likely to experience less severe depressive symptoms (Kozlowski 2020). The caveat, though, is the circle of friends and socialization will undoubtedly shrink, as germs become more top of mind for the future. Suggested personal interaction changes will be the *elimination of the handshake, the isolation preference, maintaining a smaller and more intimate circle of friends, an increased awareness of the presence of germs in public areas, more entertainment streaming at home, less attendance at concerts and sports events, less sharing of food (such as tapas), and a questioning of the necessity to fly to meet for personal or business reasons- as opposed to using online platforms, such as Zoom, WebEx, Skype, FaceTime and Loom.*

Work from home and worker status

As the work force, those who could move work to home, realized workers could be trusted to be productive, the desire to work at home (from both the employer and the worker) has a good reason to seem it will remain a permanent shift. When considering the hours spent commuting could either be used to be more productive at work, or to increase the work-life balance, this could be a strong push to *reorganizing how we work in the future to being a hybrid of both work at the office and working remotely.* Other cohort changes could potentially be the *increased status of doctors, nurses, pharmacists, teachers, caregivers, store clerks, utility workers, small-business owners and employees.* In the case of the 2020 pandemic, these front line providers of Maslow's Hierarchy Level 1 could potentially be elevated in status to the level of the armed services. Perhaps, in addition to allowing military service members "board the plane first", those who provide for our basic everyday needs will join that level of appreciation (Ibid.)

Political discontent

Potentially, the *belief in the effectiveness of the political system will either increase or decrease.* It will not remain the same. Leading into the 2020

pandemic, the polarization of politics in democratic societies had reached an all-time high. If the COVID-19 pandemic will force a bipartisan teamwork not seen in recent years in democratic countries, or further escalate the polarized rhetoric currently in place, is not known yet. It must be noted, the non-democratic countries, such as North Korea, China, and Russia, all have government-controlled media; therefore, there was already in place a mistrust of media findings from those countries. As the major media outlets strived to tell "their side" of the pandemic, the ability to trust the media and/or the government has dwindled in many countries. According to one source, *a stronger distrust of the government and the government's ability to be transparent in truth* (Politico 2020). Likewise, as states and countries were re-opening after the pandemic's "curve was flattened", the rhetoric and arbitrariness with which each local government eased the "stay at home" orders only further showed the divided political perspectives. In many countries, one political party appealed to the economic fears of workers and businesses concerned that livelihoods are slipping away; while the opposing political party would "ally themselves with public health experts warning that a hasty lifting of social distancing guidelines would have deadly consequences" (Lillis 2020). The forced surrendering of civil rights was seen as necessary for the greater good. As it prolonged, though, the divide in the population grew into a chasm of "open" versus "stay closed". *As countries approach their respective election years, the political contentment or discontent will sway voters to one side or the other- resulting in major long-term implications in each country.*

Online transactions previously not available

The ability to transact medical diagnoses, agency interactions which previously required in-person trips (Department of Motor Vehicles, Medicare filings, unemployment filings, etc.), and even schooling, will potentially be challenged to find solutions that at least involve a hybrid of in-person and online. With the 2020 pandemic, every institution of higher learning went to fully online and remote teaching, along with all benefits and pitfalls accompanying that shift. *To offer a hybrid environment, where the pitfalls are answered in-*

Table 1. Sectors rising and falling.

Sectors rising (%)	Sectors falling (%)
Community- Supported Agriculture (+405%)	Kids Activities (-62%)
Guns and Ammo Stores (+360%)	Breweries (-61%)
Fitness and Exercise Equipment (+344%)	Art Galleries (-57%)
Blood and Plasma Donations (+204%)	Coffee Roasteries (-55%)
Grocery (+160%)	Bridal Stores (-53%)
Pharmacy (+129%)	Amusement Parks (-50%)
Hiking (+116%)	French Restaurants (-47%)

Source: Yelp.

person and the benefits remain by remote, will be encouraged by the COVID-19 cohort. In remote regions of the world, doctor visits are performed by the same interaction platforms as were implemented to facilitate meetings and teaching. As the doctors eliminated waiting rooms, and restaurants went to pick-up and delivery only, the desire of the COVID generation could potentially be to leave it that way.

Virtual reality replacing travel

In other potential preferences by the COVID generation, *the enhancement of virtual reality (VR) to experience aspects of life that previously took in-person interaction or travel,* could truly be seen as fundamental shifts in what it means to experience a brand or travel to a region. Potentially, virtual reality could bring us closer together as the COVID generation could see VR traveling with partners from other areas of the world as a way for us to be that much more involved in each other's lives. According to the World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), it will take over a year for the travel and tourism industry to regain previous levels of participation, if it even does. WTTC's managing director Virginia Messina told Reuters that once the outbreak is under control, we may well see the appetite for VR tourism increasing in the coming months (Rogers 2020). The cruise industry, with multiple ships not allowed to dock during the pandemic, as well as mass virus infections due to small cabins and close proximity of travelers, may never recover (Luscombe 2020).

Shift to cooking at home and away from Sit-Down restaurants

As the COVID generation was forced to stay home for prolonged periods of time, coupled

with the closure of restaurants, *the ability to cook and prepare your own meals at home could become the new practice;* especially when you consider the shift to healthiness that comes from being in control of your own ingredients. As one source stated, "Control your own ingredients. In most cases, this means avoiding restaurants." (Zwanka 2020). According to one source in China, "What Covid-19 Could Mean For the Long Term Covid-19 reminds Chinese people to pay more attention to their health. Rising health consciousness will lead to increasing demands around food safety and balanced diets. After the Covid-19 outbreaks, Chinese people will go back to restaurants to eat together. However, we believe some of them may change the way they eat. While eating together, we see the potential for individual set menus and individual hotpots to grow at the expense of food sharing or big pots. This may boost growth in pre-prepared food for restaurants. Ready-to-cook food will also grow, as people may eat at home more often." (Rabobank 2020). *Additionally, as restaurants had to shift to delivery and takeout-only models, the customer is potentially likely to maintain this practice, as the awakening of germs on public surfaces alters behavior.*

And, at the ingredient level, meal kit companies like Hello Fresh and Blue Apron, almost out of business before the pandemic and self-quarantining hit, saw sharp increases in demand, Blue Apron, Hello Fresh, and Marley Spoon were all forced to hire workers and ramp up production ability (Tuttle 2020). Although a business model that was not a recognizable value to the consumer pre-pandemic will more than likely fall back in demand once other options are more widely available to consumers. In other retail, a future could easily be seen where cashiers wear gloves and have glass borders between them and the customer, where salad bars and hot bars disappear, and any form of leaving something for the next person to use (ketchup bottles, kiosks, pre-worn clothes, etc.) will fall out of favor.

As an adjunct to the discussion on food consumption and working from home, Yelp (in Table 1) has reported the following results in interest levels by consumers in the United States during the pandemic ("interest" is defined: the

many actions people take to connect with businesses on Yelp, such as viewing their business page or posting reviews.) (Ricker 2020).

As the pandemic eases, it is reasonable to expect interest in restaurants and day cares to resume, where interest in amusement parks and large gatherings will potentially take longer to resume previous levels of interest.

Increased focus on environmental stewardship

Along the same lines as the personal health shift, the COVID-19 pandemic's self-quarantines and mandatory quarantines cleared the water in Venice to the clearest in 65 years (Clifford 2020), markedly improved the air quality in New Delhi, India (Davidson 2020), and China's air pollution of nitrogen dioxide gas (NO₂) decreased by 30% during the shutdown of the Wuhan province (Stieg 2020), leading the way for many to believe the "new normal" of having less negative impact on the earth would be the preferred direction for the future. The COVID-19 pandemic shifted physical activity to outside parks and trails and other recreational areas, and away from gyms. *The newly found enjoyment of the outdoors could serve to revitalize the nation's parks and public recreational areas.*

Social safety net

The discussion of an income "safety net" and the tying of health insurance to your occupation will become more of a middle of the road topic, and seen less as an outlier. Previously seen as a "liberal" talking point, the COVID-19 pandemic removed many of the previous roadblocks, as political leadership in all countries discussed stimulus checks be sent to all citizens, forgave student loan debt, forbade evictions for nonpayment of mortgages and utility bills, and sought to provide healthcare to all (no matter if tied to employment). By the beginning of April, 2020, over 10 million in the United States had filed for unemployment, due to the pandemic's closing of industries, having ripple effects across the world (Rainey and McCaskill 2020). An additional impact, although not a positive one, is a decrease in retirement contributions by employers to meet

current liquidity demands. During the Great Recession, about 20% of companies pulled back contributions to retirement plans, and Graff expects this time could be even worse. "The breadth of this is enormous, and it's impacting everybody," he said. Employers cutting costs on retirement contributions a decade ago is part of the reason many are less prepared for retirement today, said Teresa Ghilarducci, who heads the Retirement Equity Lab at the New School for Social Research (McCarty Carino 2020).

Psychographic Long-Term shifts in beliefs

In a more long-term shift in psychographics, *we could certainly see a return to spirituality, or at least to the notion of "the world is all in this together"*. In the book *Epidemics and Society: From the Black Death to Present*, Frank M. Snowden, a professor emeritus of history and the history of medicine at Yale, points to major epidemics as almost always resulting in a "look in the mirror" about who we are, what we care about, our relationship to the natural environment, and how we care for others. Examples of past changes include the plague influenced man's relationship God (in a negative way, as in "How could you do this to us?"), the plague also influencing the introduction of the industrial revolution and unions, epidemics starting and ending wars, the formation of the World Health Organization (due to epidemic's greater impact on the poor than the rich), how cholera and tuberculosis widened the inequality gap globally, how the Ebola crisis influenced the formation of Doctors Without Borders, and even how Napoleon decided not to pursue further world dominance after a disease struck the majority of his army fighting the Haitian Rebellion (this decision to not pursue further dominance led to the Louisiana Purchase, nearly doubling the size of the United States) (Chotiner 2020).

Greater good versus individual liberties

As happened after the rise in terrorist attacks, the balance of civil liberties versus the "greater good" will become a major discussion point. As with the anti-vaxxer movement, and secondhand

cigarette smoke, the impact of your personal behavior on others moves to the forefront of the discussion. In many places, this argument is being used in determining whether or not those who are healthy should be required to wear face masks in public. How much “right” do you have to engage in an activity when it can have harmful effects on others not engaged with you? As one source stated, “*We don’t know exactly what this new future looks like, of course. But one can imagine a world in which, to get on a flight, perhaps you’ll have to be signed up to a service that tracks your movements via your phone. The airline wouldn’t be able to see where you’d gone, but it would get an alert if you’d been close to known infected people or disease hot spots. There’d be similar requirements at the entrance to large venues, government buildings, or public transport hubs. There would be temperature scanners everywhere, and your workplace might demand you wear a monitor that tracks your temperature or other vital signs. Where nightclubs ask for proof of age, in future they might ask for proof of immunity—an identity card or some kind of digital verification via your phone, showing you’ve already recovered from or been vaccinated against the latest virus strains.*” (Lichfield 2020).

Research limitations/implications/ future research

As the COVID-19 pandemic results in permanent behavioral changes by consumers, the conceptual framework will begin to manifest itself into reality. According to researchers at Western Michigan University’s Food Marketing Lab, the following questions will need to be answered: How enduring are the market alternatives for ordering and delivering food that emerge during an emergency? Are consumers’ food provisioning and consumption preferences permanently changed? Does the food hoarding that emerges in an emergency continue when normalcy returns? What types of food consumption behavior increase individuals’ sense of control in an epidemic? How does food consumption behavior impact or interact with attitudes such as hopefulness, fear and despair? (Veeck and Xie 2020). Understanding the utilitarian and hedonic

reasons for purchase post event will allow marketers to communicate effectively with their customers and should be used by retailers to determine inventory items and levels. A study of the Korean International Monetary Fund (IMF) crisis concludes with the observation that there are resulting challenges and opportunities for both domestic and global companies to design retail strategies reflective of the resultant changed consumer behaviors (Shim and Cho 2000). New marketing strategies and consideration of global versus domestic brands will serve to build or rebuild the customer base (Ibid.).

Future research will call for researchers to empirically test the conceptual framework implications suggested in this paper. Researchers should consider a survey during the pandemic (similar to the one being conducted by Western Michigan University), just after the pandemic, and three to five years after (akin to Kennett-Hensel, Sneath, and Lacey 2012), using one or more generational cohorts (akin to Debevec et al. 2013) to test for splintering as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical approval: This article does not contain any studies with human participants or animals performed by any of the authors.

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