

Chapter 7

Consumption Culture of Saudi Families During the COVID–19 Pandemic: A Field Study

Yasmin Alaa El-din Ali Youssef

Imam Abdul Rahman Bin Faisal University, Saudi Arabia

Asmaa Abu Bakr Abdul Qadir Saleh

Imam Abdul Rahman Bin Faisal University, Saudi Arabia

ABSTRACT

This chapter aims at revealing the extent of the change in the consumption culture of the Saudi family during the corona pandemic. To achieve the objectives of the chapter, the descriptive and analytical approach was relied upon, and the study sample consisted of 172 individuals from families in Saudi society, especially the eastern region in the kingdom. The necessary data were collected using a questionnaire with a stability coefficient of 0.830. It was applied to the study sample digitally. The results of the study revealed that there is a shift in the consumer preferences in terms of the type of goods and services that Saudi society used after the pandemic. Additionally, a set of proposals was put forward expressing the Saudi family's point of view on the consumption pattern in times of crisis.

INTRODUCTION

When researchers date the topic of consumption culture and study its economic, psychological and societal repercussions, this does not mean that a person was not consuming goods and services in one of his days; for the human being was created weak and lacking many of the necessities and needs, most of us are overwhelmed by the luxury and sometimes develop an egotistical nature with an attitude of buying frivolous products and services that he/she doesn't need. In the field of consumption culture, studies dealt with the period in which buying and selling changed from an economic process necessary for the

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functioning and regularity of life to a psychological and social goal towards which individuals walked, as if it were an inverted process in which the revolutions of industry, communication, information and trade facilitation no longer serve man. Accordingly, the subject of consumption has received great interest from researchers in more than one field of social sciences, which expresses the importance of the topic; because it is the ground on which researchers from different disciplines came together.

The chapter of the subject of consumption culture is considered one of important topics because of what it reveals about the patterns of consumer behavior in societies, whether on ordinary or exceptional days (Corona virus pandemic), as it provides officials in many sectors, especially the commercial sector, a clear image about how individuals follow certain consumer behavior patterns in a society, and thus avoid the occurrence of any consumption problem in advance, so that no crises arise from the shortage or scarcity of certain commodities in the markets, as well as planning to deal with any supply crises of essential goods by community officials. According to the previous statements, the goal of this chapter is to identify consumption nature and the approaches of Saudi family consumption behavior during Covid pandemic which resulted in a couple of recommendations that should be followed during crises. Based on the forgoing, the Study Problem and its Importance in consumption culture that considered a new addition to the field of sociology and social work, as the sociological interest in the study of consumption began in the eighties of the last century. Interest in consumption by other social sciences, especially psychology and economics began before that time. Thus, the consumption topic is not an exclusive to a social field by itself. Therefore, the problem of the study emerges in light of empirical observations that lead to the fact that society has undergone a tangible change in the forms of consumption. The Corona epidemic had a significant impact on consumer behavior, as the spending rate increased, accompanied by an increase in the psychological need to purchase both basic and non-essential products. The reason for this behavior is the presence of psychological factors that led to this effect, such as panic and insecurity as a result of the epidemic (Ceccato&Marchetti,2021:50).

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia has become aware of this and has taken many precautionary measures that helped control the spread of the virus, but some of these precautionary measures had a direct impact on the culture of consumption in society and what goods should be acquired and stored. Social control theory indicates that when an individual senses a danger emanating from him Counter-behaviors, an attempt to avoid or reduce the danger, and the Kingdom became aware of this and paid great attention to providing the basic needs for goods in stores, and this indicates the awareness and planning of decision-makers in order to achieve societal stability during the face of the pandemic. In light of the decline in oil revenues, the increase in spending needs and the increase in the value-added tax rate on consumption capacity, especially on the poor classes, as indicated by the International Monetary Fund, the Kingdom has moved to a speedy recovery from what the repercussions of Corona imposed on budgets and spending policies to set specific plans as soon as possible, including increasing spending on Social protection programs to support low-income families and help compensate for the decline in their purchasing power after the increase in the value-added tax rate and the abolition of the cost of living allowance last year. We welcome the planned reforms in social protection programs aimed at shifting to a new system based on providing subsidies on the basis of “need” rather than on the basis of “category” while guaranteeing a minimum income for the lowest income groups. However, increasing financial support for low-income families should not be delayed until the transition to the new system. International Monetary Fund: Saudi Arabia: Fund staff statement at the conclusion of the Article IV Consultation Mission May 4, 2021

And a new phase emerged that relies on electronic shopping, which represents an inflection point, and the beginning of a new phase that changed the way consumers shop from (free shopping in stores to

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