

# GLOBALIZATION AND CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR IN COVID-19 ERA: A STUDY OF EVANGEL UNIVERSITY AKAEZE, EBONYI STATE

**Okocha, Ebere Rejoice**

*Department of Marketing  
Evangel University Akaeze Ebonyi State, Nigeria  
Email: [humblerejoice@yahoo.com](mailto:humblerejoice@yahoo.com),  
(07039719768)*

&

**Agu, Okoro Agu**

*Department of Business Management  
Evangel University Akaeze Ebonyi State, Nigeria  
(Corresponding Author) email: [don\\_okojomboagu@yahoo.com](mailto:don_okojomboagu@yahoo.com).  
(08066544449)*

## **Abstract**

*This study focused on globalization and consumer behaviour in the covid-19 era: A study of Evangel University Akaeze, Ebonyi State. The objective was to determine the relationship between technology and consumer behaviour. The study is a descriptive survey research that is fact-finding in nature. The sources of data collection used in this research were primary and secondary data. The primary data was collected from a sample of 171 respondents using questionnaire. This was a four-point scale questionnaire. The data collected for the study were analyzed using both descriptive (tables, mean, etc.) and inferential (correlation) statistics and SPSS to test the hypothesis. The hypothesis formulated was tested at 0.05 level of significance. The finding of the study was that there is a significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) relationship between technology and consumer behaviour. Finally, it was recommended that there is need for firms and organizations to understanding the key factors affecting the behaviour of consumers. The importance of the factors, the intensity of their effect and their relationship with consumers and globalization characteristics is crucial for firms' project team to improve its chances of making the right decisions.*

**Keywords:** Globalization, Technology, Consumer behaviour and Covid-19

## **Introduction**

Ever since the beginning of the twenty-first century, intense changes have been in progress in the international economy, the dominant economic term on the lips of both small and big business is globalization. Truly, only few people understand the full meaning and implications of the term globalization. Nevertheless, its effect has been quite pronounced in so many areas. Globalization is the new phenomenon that has come of age to dominate the world. It has acquired considerable emotive force. Globalization implies that the world is gradually being intertwined into one huge, yet easily accessible web, making the search for knowledge limitless and practically without any barrier or hindrance (Unyimadu, 2017). Globalization, according to Cristadoro (2018), refers to the phenomenon whereby people, countries, businesses and other groups around the globe relate without difficulty. Globalization is characterized by increase in flows of trade, capital and information across borders, promoted by rapid liberalization and advances in information technologies. Globalization is therefore multidimensional. Globalization has brought a change that is currently affecting the physiology of human society today through its imposition of constraints of policy-making autonomy or independence of states vis-a-vis their capacities for the authoritative allocation of scarce and critical societal values of resources among other functions (Aimiuwu, 2014). It is a global change in the business world today in the areas of technological transfers; human capital

development and improved well-being of human kind has made globalization an evolutionary trend and the epic-center of most developmental and intellectual discourse (Ajayi, 2013).

One important feature of globalization is technology. Technology originates in a Greek term meaning the systematic treatment of an art or craft. It has come to be used to refer to physical and symbolic tool systems. Technological developments are conceived as the main facilitator and driving force of most of the globalization processes (Milner, 2019). Technology as a sociological term is defined as the socialized knowledge of producing goods and services (Hiroshi, 2013). Advances in technology are the main reasons that globalization has escalated in the past decade. Technology has made the world seem a smaller place and assisted in the rise of globalization. Technology has not only played a role in ushering in the age of globalization, it has been the main catalyst for its advancement. Major breakthroughs in information technology, communication and transportation have been the driving forces behind the early 21st century global market boom (Stephens, 2013) Technological innovations may be the source of competitive advantage for entities in the market that base their business strategy on continuous use of technological advances, while those who do not adopt new technologies and innovations will lag behind competition.

Corona Virus Disease (COVID-19) was described as an infectious disease that is caused by severe acute respiratory syndrome corona virus. It was witnessed first in Wuhan, a commercial center in China in November 2019 and speedily spread to about 196 countries in every continent globally (Gabriel, 2020). The pandemic has caused a global lockdown that has abruptly shut down core businesses and caused a worldwide recession. During the period, the prediction for smooth academic activities was alarming. Given that COVID-19 shutdown multiple core services (such as academic institutions, aviation, food services, supply chains, and export and import markets), there is an enormous deficiency in critical information to inform priority decision making for companies where this uncertainty is likely to impact negatively upon recovery. During the pandemic, firms, companies, institutions and consumers moved dramatically toward online activities, which were promoted by technology. During COVID-19, firms experienced

unprecedented shocks. Their supply chains were disrupted as were their relationships with customers and workers; demand plummeted, as no one knew what would happen next. The dual shocks pushed firms to look for new ways to stay afloat and navigate their businesses. But in some cases, the crisis became an opportunity for innovative businesses, especially those that increased the adoption of digital technologies. After Covid-19, markets and lives at all levels were disrupted. As cases around the world soared, executives were stunned, unprepared for the rapid shifts that would test even the most experienced of experts. The disruption wreaked by this pandemic was swift, unprecedented, and underestimated. While it largely reset the world we once knew, the term “new normal” became a staple in how we defined these novel times. But the impact on, and shifts in, markets and human behaviors were far from normal and definitely elusive of offering insights necessary to recognize any sense of normalcy or clear path forward.

Consumer behaviour is a very important aspect of marketing. This is not far from the fact that the consumer constitutes the nucleus of every business venture. The knowledge of consumer behaviour helps the marketer to understand how consumers think, feel and select from alternatives like products, brands and the likes and what factors influences them. Consumer behaviour is the study of the processes involved when individuals or groups select, purchase, use, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to satisfy needs and desires (Solomon, 1995 in Lynn & Angeline, 2011). In the marketing context, the term ‘consumer’ refers not only to the act of purchase itself, but also to patterns of aggregate buying which include pre-purchase and post-purchase activities. Pre-purchase activity consists of the growing awareness of a need or want, and a search for and evaluation of information about the products and brands that might satisfy it. Post-purchase activities include the evaluation of the purchased item in use and the reduction of any anxiety which accompanies the purchase of bought items. Each of these has implications for purchase and repurchase and they are amenable in differing degrees to marketer influence (Orji, 2013). The dynamics of consumer behaviour makes it difficult to understand and predict the consumer; because the thinking, feelings, and actions of a consumer whether individually or in a group and a society at large are constantly changing. The

fact that consumers and their environments are constantly changing, highlights the importance of on-going consumer behaviour research and analysis (Rajput, Kalhoro, & Wasif, 2012). On the other hand, the multidimensional effects of globalization on consumer behaviour and environments have dramatic consequences for market and marketing strategies, especially in the covid-19 era.

### **Statement of the Problem**

In this era of globalization, marketing in a fast IT developing nation like Nigeria is becoming very complex; consumers are faced with new technological applications and also are challenged with the techniques and abilities to adjust to those developments. Consumers want to be abreast with the global trend of 3G (Third Generation) Phones, palm coders, e-technologies, which is fast taking over the IT world. The emergence of globalization has brought in new opportunities to developing countries, greater access to developed countries markets and technology transfer hold out promise for improved productivity and higher living standard. It has impacted on the quality of life, the peace and stability of the environment and sense of relevance in a new millennium.

An initial analysis of novel data collected between April 2020 and January 2021 from Bulgaria, Poland, and Romania, suggests that the pandemic triggered some innovation and has some benefits associated with it. In some cases, the crisis became an opportunity for innovative businesses, especially those that increased the adoption of digital technologies. The dual shocks pushed firms to look for new ways to stay afloat and navigate their businesses. Customers who were reluctant of embracing the technological change trend finally followed the trend.

However, during COVID-19, firms experienced unprecedented shocks. Their supply chains were disrupted as were their relationships with customers and workers; demand plummeted, as no one knew what would happen next. The customers who were technologically disadvantaged found it difficult to fit in and by implication, their purchase behaviour affected. Based on these challenges, this study seeks to investigate the effect of globalization on consumer behaviour in the covid-19 era using technology as proxy for globalization. Hence, it is hypothesized that technology has no

significant relationship with consumer behaviour in the covid-19 era.

### **Conceptual Review**

#### ***Concept of Globalization***

Globalization is a recent term used to describe the changes in societies and the world economy that result from dramatically increased international trade and cultural exchange. It describes the increase of trade and investing due to the failing of barriers and the interdependence of countries. In specifically economic contexts, it is often understood to refer almost exclusively to the effects of trade, particularly trade liberalization or free trade (Oledun, 2012). Robertson, an early pioneer in globalization theory, sees globalization as a process representing the universalization of modernity. In his 1992 study, *Globalization: Social Theory and Global Culture*, Robertson provided perhaps the most widely accepted definition of globalization among scholars: 'Globalization as a concept refers both to the compression of the world and the intensification of consciousness of the world as a whole, both concrete global interdependence and consciousness of the global whole in the twentieth century' (Robertson, 1992). He posited that the 'global field' is constituted by cultural, social and phenomenological linkages between the individual, each national society, the international system of societies and humankind in general, in such a way that the institutions of modernity become universal. He further stated that this cultural, social and phenomenological transfer will bring the world together and as well transfer both good and bad ideas.

From purely economic view, Globalization simply means liberalization and integration of the world economy; larger and freer international trade made possible by breakthrough in information and communication technologies.

In the words of Utomi (2008) in its simplest form: globalization is about the process of integration of economies of the world. The process is driven by an information and communication revolution. The convergence of three streams of technology viz, computing, technology and broadcasting was to ensure that the once far-fetched, almost science fiction, global village had become reality. The dramatic drop in the cost of transportation, extraordinary productivity gains brought on by technology and the collapse of the great ideology

wall or Iron curtain when Mikhail Gorbachev began a process that developed its own momentum and consumed the Soviet Union were to ensure inevitability of globalization. (p.55)

Globalization, according to Anozie (2012), is the broadening and deepening linkages of national economies into a worldwide market for goods and services, especially capital.

Ajayi (2013) had also highlighted five major disadvantages of globalization to developing nations, which asserts that: globalization entails many risks including inequality between rich and the poor countries; the threatening of the sovereignty of small nations that could lead to both social and political instability; the exploitation of workers in developing countries; the destruction of the environment of small and poor nations that lack the capacity to influence the policies of international corporations, and the risk of destabilizing capital movement.

### **Concept of Technology**

Technology known as Augmented Reality (AR) is designed to add information (augmentation) to a view of a real-world environment. It is this real-world environment that sets augmented reality apart from similar technology such as virtual reality. Rather than creating a new world, augmented reality operates within the existing world. Technology and cheap access to energy have altered the way the world does business, by reducing the costs of certain types of business-to-business transactions. Advances in technology are the main reasons that globalization has escalated in the past decade. Technology has made the world seem a smaller place and assisted in the rise of globalization. Technology has not only played a role in ushering in the age of globalization, it has been the main catalyst for its advancement. Major breakthroughs in information technology, communication and transportation have been the driving forces behind the early 21st century global market boom (Stephens, 2013). These reduced transaction costs, driven by changes in government policies and improved communications infrastructure, have led to a wide array of business practices referred to as globalization (Perez, 2010).

ICT acts as a catalyst due to faster transfer of information and increased networking activity that amplify the effect of globalization. Owing to globalization, the world has become a “global

village”, and these changes affect people both at local and global level. Technology is the vital force in the modern form of business globalization. Technology has helped us in overcoming the major hurdles of globalization and international trade such as trade barrier, lack of common ethical standard, transportation cost and delay in information exchange, thereby changing the market place (Hiroshi, 2013). ICT contributes to spatial and temporal convergence. Innovative approach and new business techniques are evident in the creation, distribution, and information on telecommunication offerings. Since the internet and modern technology with more accessible information, have drastically affected everyday life and business, they directly and indirectly affected the creation of telecommunication products. ICT changed the way of doing business and introduced an innovative attitude in business from its conception to implementation. Development of new technologies will lead to greater efficiency and reorganization of communication strategies and business of service providers (Okechukwu, 2012), thereby, better efficiency; personalization, and networking of market participants are achieved. Technological globalization can be defined as the increasing speed of technological diffusion across the global economy. It refers to the spread of technologies around the globe, and particularly from developed to developing nations (World Bank, 2018)

### **Concept of Consumer Behaviour**

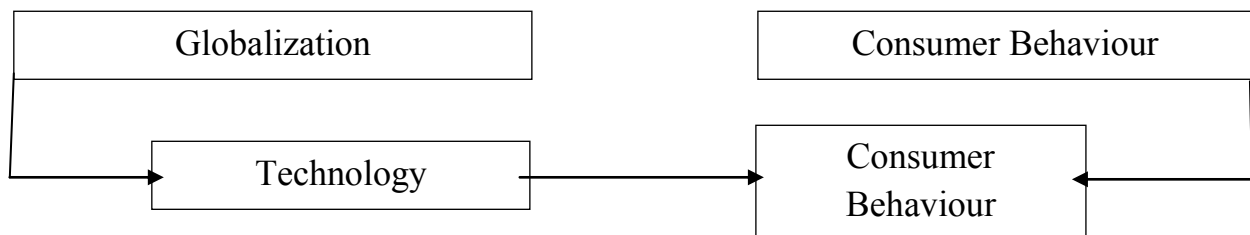
Consumer behaviour is a very important aspect of marketing. This is not far from the fact that the consumer constitutes the nucleus of every business venture. The understanding of consumer behaviour can be facilitated if we appreciate its relationship with human behaviour. Consumers are final users of finished products; they could be industrial, institutional, government, intermediate or households. Essentially, purchases are made either for immediate consumption or for further production. According to *Khosla (2010)*, human behaviour is the set of endeavour in which individuals engage to further their physical, social and economic status in line with their individual values. Consumer Behaviour is the study of individuals, groups, or organizations and the processes they use to select, secure, use, and dispose of products, services, experiences, or ideas to satisfy needs and the impacts that these processes have on the consumer and society (Lipiec, 2010). It blends elements from

psychology, sociology, social-anthropology, marketing and economics. It attempts to understand the decision-making processes of buyers, both individually and in groups such as how emotions affect buying behaviour (Lynn and Angeline, 2011). It studies characteristics of individual consumers such as demographics and behavioural variables in an attempt to understand people's wants. It also tries to assess influences on the consumer from groups such as family, friends, sports, reference groups, and society in general Elizabeth and Lynn (2014). Customer behaviour study is based on consumer buying behaviour, with the customer playing the three distinct roles of user, payer and buyer. Research has shown that consumer behaviour is difficult to predict, even for experts in the field Scott (1991) in Elizabeth and Lynn (2014). One of key arguments in favour of future success of consumer behaviour relates to the necessity of understanding the critical trends and using their positive effects while at the same time neutralizing or avoiding the negative ones. For example, the aging of world population and active lifestyle of older generation create new market segment. Changes in consumer behaviour of younger generation shouldn't be neglected as better economic situation, employment and income allow them to actively participate in ICT

and introduce changes in preferences focusing on new products and active participation in their creation.

**Concept of Covid-19**

Corona virus disease (Covid-19) is a highly transmittable and pathogenic viral infection caused by acute and severe respiratory syndrome corona virus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), which emerged in Wuhan China, a commercial City towards the end of 2019. This deadly disease caused damages to both human lives and business activities, crashing so many great economies of the world. Michael (2020) states that Covid-19 era sparked off digital marketing in Nigeria and all over the world. Many customers who avoided e-payment previously are left with no other option than to comply with the trend of e-marketing. During COVID-19, firms experienced unprecedented shocks. Their supply chains were disrupted as were their relationships with customers and workers; demand plummeted, as no one knew what would happen next. The dual shocks pushed firms to look for new ways to stay afloat and navigate their businesses. But in some cases, the crisis became an opportunity for innovative businesses, especially those that increased the adoption of digital technologies.



**Fig 1:** Conceptual Framework on Globalization and Consumer Behaviour  
**Source:** The Researchers (2021)

**Theoretical Framework**

Various theories of consumer behaviour exist; like the Howard-Sheth Model, Engel-Blackwell-Miniard Model and Kotler's Behaviour Choice Model amongst others. The theory upon which this study was based is the synthesized theory of consumer behaviour developed by the researcher. For this research, the synthesized theory was used to analyze and develop a framework on consumer behaviour. This theory helps in understanding one of the variables of globalization, which is technology; an external factor and its relationship with the behaviour of the consumer while making purchases or getting services.

**Empirical Review**

It is pertinent to observe that many studies have been conducted to assess the effect of globalization on some issues and consumer behaviour as well. Chikwe (2020) conducted a study on age of globalization: impact of information technology on global business strategies in the Covid-19 Era: A study of selected manufacturing firms in Enugu State, Nigeria. The objective was to know the nature of the relationship between ICT and Covid-19 effect. The study sampled some multinational and national firms in Enugu, Nigeria. It made use of secondary data gotten from the companies' bulletin. The study adopted a longitudinal survey

and sampled the different cadres of management in the firms studied. The hypotheses were tested and analyzed with the use of SPSS. The findings revealed that there is a significant relationship between ICT and Covi-19 and by implication on organizational overall performance.

Anozie (2021) conducted a study titled effectiveness of ICT on consumer behaviour after the incidence of Covid-19. A study of some telecommunication companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. The aim of the study was to investigate the effects of communication on consumer behaviour and its effect on organizational performance. The study used primary and secondary data. The survey method of research was adopted in the study. Selected telecommunication firms were used as sample. The hypothesis was tested with inferential statistics and used SPPS to analyze it. The study found that communication has a significant effect on consumer behaviour.

**Methodology**

The study adopted descriptive survey design, which is fact-finding in nature and requires the collection of data from populations or samples of population through the use of questionnaire or

other data gathering device. The study was delimited to staff of Evangel University Akaeze, Ebonyi State. A sample size of 171 respondents was used. The two main sources of data collection used in this research were the primary data collected from the field survey, using questionnaire which was constructed by the researcher. This was a four-point scale questionnaire with the following responses; strongly agree, agree, disagree and strongly disagree. The secondary data were collected from books, reports, journals, existing literature review, information from library, internet etc. The data collected for the study were analyzed using both descriptive and inferential statistics. The descriptive statistics that were used are percentages, frequency tables, means and standard deviation in answering the research questions while the inferential statistics used was Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient (PPMCC) to test the hypotheses. All the hypotheses formulated were tested at 0.05 level of significance.

**Data Analysis and Discussion**

The data generated in this study were analysed and the results obtained were discussed in this section.

**Table 1: Return Rate of Questionnaire**

Administered	Returned (%)	Not Returned (%)
171(100)	167 (97.66)	5(2.34)

Table 1 is the return rate of questionnaire. The table showed that out of 171 questionnaire administered to the respondents, 167 copies representing (97.66%) were properly filled and

returned while 4 copies representing (2.34%) was not returned. This implies that a good number of the questionnaire was returned and therefore used for the analysis of data.

**Table 2: Analysis on technology and consumer behaviour**

Questions	SA	A	D	SD	Total	Mean
Technology has a great influence on the perception of consumers	70	73	18	6	541	3.24
The sophisticated nature of most technology has created a pronounced gap based on social class of consumers	5	28	69	65	307	1.84
The instant accessible of internet has data improved the positive behaviour of consumers	76	66	14	11	541	3.24
Technology transfer holds out promise for improved productivity, higher living standard and has impacted on the quality of life of consumers	35	80	24	28	456	2.73
<b>Grand Mean</b>						<b>2.80</b>

Table 2 is the result of the analysis of the respondents' opinion on technology and consumer behaviour. This result suggests clearly a

significant relationship between technology to a tune of mean score of 2.8 and consumer.

### Test of Hypothesis

Ho<sub>1</sub>: Technology has no significant relationship with consumer behaviour in the covid-19 era

**Table 3: Correlation analysis between technology and consumer behaviour**

		Technology	Consumer behaviour
Technology	Pearson Correlation	1	.617*
	p-value		.031
	N	167	167
Consumer Behaviour	Pearson Correlation	.617*	1
	p-value	.031	
	N	167	167

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

The result of correlation analysis showed a significant correlation coefficient of 0.617 with p-value of 0.031 which is less than 0.05. Hence, we reject H<sub>0</sub> and conclude that there is a significant relationship between technology and consumer behaviour.

### Discussion of Findings

The findings of the hypothesis, which states that there is a significant relationship between technology and consumer behaviour agrees with the empirical underpinning of Anozie (2021), who conducted a study titled effectiveness of ICT on consumer behaviour after the incidence of Covid-19. A study of some telecommunication companies in Lagos State, Nigeria. The aim of the study was to investigate the effects of communication on consumer behaviour and its effect on organizational performance. The study used primary and secondary data. The survey method of research was adopted in the study. Selected telecommunication firms were used as sample. The hypothesis was tested with inferential statistics and used SPSS to analyze it. The study found that communication has a significant effect on consumer behaviour.

### Conclusion and Recommendation

Globalization, which is the integration of economies of the world involves the transfer of ideas, culture, belief among others can only be done through information technology and communication. The study identified technology as a variable of globalization which has relationship with consumer purchase behaviour. The finding of the study indicated that there is a significant relationship between technology and consumer behaviour in Covid-19 era. The empirical studies suggest that globalization has created new approaches and the study therefore concluded that

consumers need technology to enable them share and receive information, expand their views and vision, allow for free flow of goods and services.

The researcher wishes to advance and recommend that there is need for firms and organizations to understanding the key factors affecting the behaviour of consumers. The importance of the factors, the intensity of their effect and their relationship with consumers and globalization characteristics is crucial for firms' project team to improve its chances of making the right decisions.

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