

# Consumer behavior in China and Russia: Comparative analysis

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## Abstract

This article is a study of consumer behavior in China and Russia. The research studies scientific publications and consumer preferences in both countries. Comparative analysis shows that Russia and China, which are rapidly entering a new era of consumption, differ in the level of development of consumer behavior that is directly related to the level of development of digital technologies. Therefore, the impact of COVID-19, the development of digitalization, and the spread of Internet technologies have led to an improvement in diversified consumer preferences that contributed to a change in consumer behavior in China. Currently, there is an insufficient level of digitalization of society in Russia, which does not allow to fully interact with consumers and influence their preferences. The authors also identify contemporary trends in consumer behavior worldwide. In addition, some factors that determine the choice of a certain type of consumer behavior are also identified: external factors, motivational factors, and functional factors. Based on the results of the study, a universal model of the influence of various factors on the behavior of Russian and Chinese consumers is formed and some recommendations are given to sellers during the COVID-19 period.

**Keywords:** China, comparative analysis, consumer behavior, consumers, COVID-19, Russia.

**JEL:** D11, D12, D18.

## Introduction

Market demand is based on consumer decisions. Such category as welfare depends on the synthesis and relationship between needs and consumption.

From an economic point of view, human behavior is considered through the prism of the law of supply and demand and the laws of effective management, and ultimately, by improving the standard of living, economic goals of an individual are achieved. Consumer behavior is considered as part of the economic behavior of an individual aimed at producing economic goods and using their properties in order to satisfy needs. Problems of customer behavior are studied in a number of works by Russian, Chinese, and foreign scientists.

The nature and characteristics of consumer behavior are influenced by a complex of various factors (income, social affiliation, profession, education, demographic characteristics, individual consumer abilities) that determine consumer behavior at the corresponding levels of its activity (Liu, 2016). In general, the most acceptable is the modern standard model, which is a conceptual approach that allows us to synthesize a large set of models to explain various aspects of consumer behavior.

Chinese, Russian and foreign scholars in the field of economics, psychology, sociology and other disciplines conduct research on consumer behavior from different perspectives, based on the characteristics of each discipline and its relationship with consumer behavior. These studies have a positive impact on economic development and decision-making and are a big step forward in enterprise development. However, along with important successes, there are still shortcomings in consumer behavior research. Integration of disciplines is not developed. Although there are many disciplines that study consumer behavior, most of them operate independently of their own research perspectives and methods and have few links and references to other disciplines. This approach cannot provide opportunities for general research in all disciplines. The research perspective is rather one-sided and is not conducted as a whole. Most of the studies are based on theoretical research of consumer behavior. Practical research is scarce and does not combine theory with practice. Therefore, research results often do not correspond to the real situation and the analysis of real consumer behavior is not of great importance. The results cannot be applied to specific activities of a marketing company. For example, many current studies use the consumer function theory to study behavior, but the hypothesis of this study is that the market is in a relatively stable position, while the current actual situation related to the spread of COVID-19 in China and the world as a whole does not meet this condition. Since Russia and China have different levels of digitalization and the market economy is constantly evolving and changing, the market is relatively unstable in both countries. So, today there is a need for further analysis of the factors influencing consumer behavior and the creation of a certain model of this behavior in both Russia and China, depending on contemporary conditions of their development.

## 1. Theoretical background

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, countries entered the era of universal consumption, when every citizen became a consumer. Since then, consumer research is no longer confined to the economic field, but is characterized as a social phenomenon involving various disciplines.

Many companies have developed consumer-centric marketing value concepts since the 1960s (Kent, 2012).

By the 1980s, consumer behavior research was mostly related to economics, psychology, and marketing. Obviously, we can study the factors that influence consumer behavior through the relationship between consumer preferences, culture, and social environment. We can conduct more in-depth research on consumer behavior and develop new effective approaches to managing consumer demand based on knowledge of the economic conditions of a particular society.

As for Marshall's approach, utility can be measured by the amount of money that a consumer is able to give in order to receive it back. With this in mind, Marshall tried to make utility measurements operational and to this end revived the concept of consumer surplus (Marshall & Bansal, 1992). Slutsky identified two effects — income and substitution, when he studied the dependence of consumption on price changes (Slutsky, 2011). The first effect is associated with a change in the consumer budget, and the second — with a change in the structure of consumption. Therefore, Keynes put the problem of dividing the aggregate personal income into consumed and funded parts at the center of the theory. That allowed him to explain the consumption function, which was not based on any rational calculation (Keynes, 1936).

Each theory of the consumption function is one-sided and can only partially explain consumer behavior, but cannot fully capture it, just as the traditional theory of the consumption function cannot accurately explain the current consumption situation in China and Russia. Due to differences in time, various characteristics of countries, different levels of economic development, and differences in social systems, factors affecting consumer behavior also differ. Consequently, factors of consumer behavior are also different. Thus, the same theory of the consumption function cannot be applied to different countries. Even if the research conditions are the same, as different researchers have different entry points and different levels of understanding problems, the obtained results will vary. Consequently, the study of consumer behavior in China and Russia requires a set of practical research theories that correspond to the national conditions of both countries. This theory requires a comprehensive consideration of the market conditions and additional key factors, such as: the influence of traditional Chinese and Russian concepts on consumers, characteristics of the market economy, regional differences between East and West, and differences in values.

Thus, the issues of studying and comparing online consumers in the field of electronic retail on the example of China and Russia were considered by Zao Ziyong. As a result of observing the structural elements of the e-retail sphere in China and Russia on the example of Marketplace Taobao and the Russian universal online store Yulmart (market leaders), the author found that the mechanisms of building trust in e-retail are multi-element and the consumer is involved in its work (Zao, 2018).

Another group of authors conducted a comprehensive assessment of opinions of Russian and Chinese consumers about the practice of using neurotechnologies for commercial purposes. Questions about the awareness of Russian and Chinese consumers about neurotechnologies and their own consumer behavior were analyzed. The results

of this study showed that in reality, consumers are tolerant to neurotechnology, without showing active discontent or fear (Molchanov et al., 2019).

A. A. Napolkova suggests developing recommendations for market operators on the use of mobile marketing tools based on selected consumer segments. The mobile marketing strategy involves step-by-step work aimed at identifying the needs of consumers, creating and promoting content, and involving visitors in active acquisition processes (Napalkova, 2019). Mobile marketing has become a key part of today's digital infrastructure (Golik, 2017). Advertisers have adapted to this new reality looking for new ways to turn traditional marketing strategies into effective mobile campaigns.

## 2. Methodology

The study of consumer behavior in Russia and China consists of analyzing and verifying useful information from a large amount of incomplete and random data on consumer behavior and extracting specific research indicators for accurate marketing research. The main content of consumer behavior research includes the following four categories: analysis of consumer decisions; analysis of consumer purchases; analysis of customer loyalty, and analysis of consumer characteristics. According to the analysis of consumer decisions, the following factors are important: the nature of the product, the complexity of the product, the possibility to try a product before buying, and the price. Categorical analysis of consumer purchases is based on RFM analysis, which divides consumers into groups depending on how long ago they made purchases, as well as how often and for how much they make them. Customer loyalty analysis assesses the customer's attitude towards a brand, product, service, visual identity, and other components of the brand. Analysis of consumer characteristics is carried out primarily in accordance with their cultural, social, personal, and professional abilities, etc. With the help of this information, a model of consumer behavior should be created based on various factors.

Once a consumer behavior model is established, business opportunities can be explored based on a deep understanding of consumer needs through his decisions, market opportunities, further refinement of consumer needs, and combining consumer characteristics and other factors to define them. Sellers should choose the best marketing strategy. Basically, precise marketing strategies are based on three aspects: consumer decision-making, purchasing behavior, and consumer behavior, and some differentiated marketing strategies are proposed based on consumer characteristics.

Modern scientists, such as Noskova, Zhang Rongrong, and Khvorova, proved the influence of cultural values on the behavior of Russian and Chinese consumers (Noskova et al., 2019). The authors developed and tested methods for measuring the impact of cultural values on consumer behavior in the retail sector in the context of the extended 8P marketing mix: product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence, productivity, and quality. It was concluded that consumer behavior would differ from country to country.

The features of the content, elements and functions of consumer behavior depend on and are in the range of desires, life values, interests, attitudes, and motivation of a particular individual, and the intensity of the process of satisfying needs, which determines the effective ways and means for implementing his consumer behavior.

### 3. Discussion

In the modern conditions of digitalization, the number of consumers making purchases via the Internet is growing, and the turnover of online purchases is growing, which has a huge impact on traditional consumption patterns. Due to the COVID-19 virus, more and more purchases are made over the Internet. Of course, characteristics of consumer behavior depend on the conditions of industrial society, trends of Internet development, and the information concept of society. With the spread of Internet technologies and development of information and social networks, social processes in consumer behavior of people are changing. Thus, interactions of consumers via the Internet significantly affects the purchasing process and consumer behavior in general. Today, social networks are becoming a full-fledged channel of marketing communications (Zhang, 2017). Both Russian and Chinese consumers have come to trust more and more the consumer experience of other buyers and their recommendations, which can be found on the Internet. It should be noted that communication with the seller through social networks increases the level of consumer loyalty.

If we consider psychological characteristics of people that determine their online behavior when shopping through online communities, we can see that their involvement in purchases is higher than in the Internet environment as a whole.

Thus, Cialdini's research on social networks generally confirms the laws of social psychology described in the works by Fromm (1968): people rely on the community's opinion to overcome anxiety associated with making a wrong decision.

That is why, according to the Briansolis portal, 81% of buyers ask for advice on social networks about advisability of purchasing a particular product.<sup>1</sup>

The development of network communication and increased trust in reviews received online leads to the fact that users often make purchases on the advice received via the Internet (50% of buyers) (Prokhorov, 2013).

It is obvious that social networks are a powerful tool for shaping purchasing behavior in favor of a particular brand and directly affect purchases on an equal basis with other communication channels, and from the point of view of trust, they are generally one of the priorities. The features of consumer behavior in social networks are as follows:

1. Consumers often spend time on the Internet without a specific purpose. However, being on the Internet under the influence of a certain content or information, they may realize the need for a certain product and its further purchase.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.briansolis.com](http://www.briansolis.com)

2. In general, social networks are becoming a source of information about a product, suppliers, or the purpose of buying a product with growing popularity.
3. After the purchase, users believe that it is necessary to express their opinion about the goods in order to help other users make the right choice.
4. The type of social media behavior of the same user on different social networks may vary depending on the type of social network, however, they are somehow interested in brands.
5. Communication with a brand on social networks increases the level of loyalty to it due to the possibility of two-way communication.
6. Consumers actively respond to offers from brands that allow them to stimulate purchases on a par with other communication channels.

After actualization of the need, the consumer, as a rule, searches for information about a product or a product category via the Internet on search websites. When evaluating options, the user actively refers to the websites of online stores and aggregator websites to find out prices, product availability from the supplier, and additional services. In addition, the consumer reads reviews on the websites of online stores about the selected product options. After reading customer reviews, having already tried the product, the consumer can revise the importance of the attributes of this product and, as a result, actualize a new need.

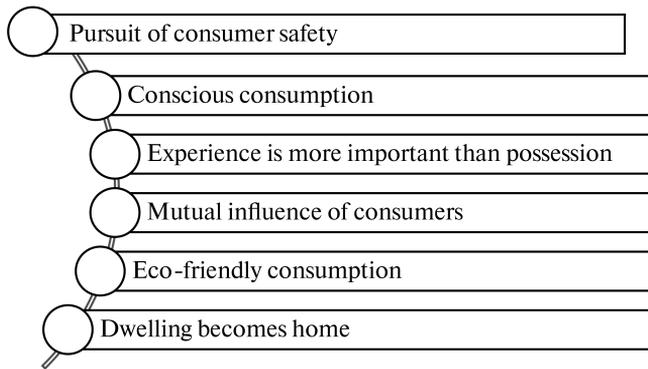
Thus, when making a purchase decision, the consumer is interested in the advisability of purchasing the selected product option on review and recommendation websites. When making a purchase directly, the consumer receives information from the manufacturer's or supplier's websites about the terms of purchase, delivery, and other technical issues.

After making a purchase decision and implementing it, the consumer can share his experience through social media channels, manufacturer websites, and reviews, thereby forming new content (Zhou, 2018) that will influence the behavior of other potential consumers.

Finally, the consumer returns to the initial stage of being on the Internet, as a result of which a new need for a product may be actualized. The channels of communication that he turns to during the purchase process and the nature of the content affect his buying behavior. However, at this stage of the research, it is important to focus on the activity of consumers online, as this aspect has not been sufficiently studied by domestic scientists, and practitioners often act intuitively making certain mistakes in their work that affect the presentation of goods in the network and, as a consequence, their sales and profitability.

Consumers' perception of online shopping is constantly changing with the development of web technologies and mobile devices. Companies in the e-commerce market are looking for new points of profit growth that go beyond the traditional trade-marketing model, which have an impact on the behavior of the consumer market. The market behavior of consumers in the modern world is changing rapidly. Its main global trends are shown in Figure 1.

One of the fundamental and most pronounced global trends in modern consumer behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic is the growing desire for consumer safety. The second major trend is the growth of consumer awareness. Another trend is the growing perception that experience is more important than consumption or the possession of an



Source: compiled by the authors.

**Figure 1.** Current global trends in consumer behavior

economic good. A special role in the modern world is played by the mutual influence of consumers on each other. It is connected with the fact that, thanks to the development of social networks and video hosting, consumers have increasingly begun to exchange opinions and recommendations regarding certain products.

Another trend of our time is ecologization of consumption. Speaking about the global consumption trends, it is impossible not to note such a phenomenon as “transformation of a dwelling into a home.”

Having considered the global trends in consumer behavior, it makes sense to proceed to describing and comparing the main trends in consumer behavior in Russia and China. We conducted a survey among Russian and Chinese buyers regarding their current consumer behavior (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Consumer behavior of Chinese and Russian consumers

	Russia	China
Awareness of the need	Previous product is out-of-order (60%) Previous product is outdated (40%)	Previous product is out-of-order (50%) Previous product is outdated (50%)
Search for information	Personal experience (30%) (30%) Internet review (50%) (50%) Recommendations of friends / acquaintances (20%)	Personal experience (20%) Internet review (40%) Recommendations of friends / acquaintances (40%)
Evaluation of alternatives	Price (30%) Quality (30%) Technical characteristics (20%) Brand (20%)	Price (20%) Quality (20%) Technical characteristics (20%) Brand (40%)
Purchase	Shop (50%) Online store (50%)	Shop (40%) Online store (60%)

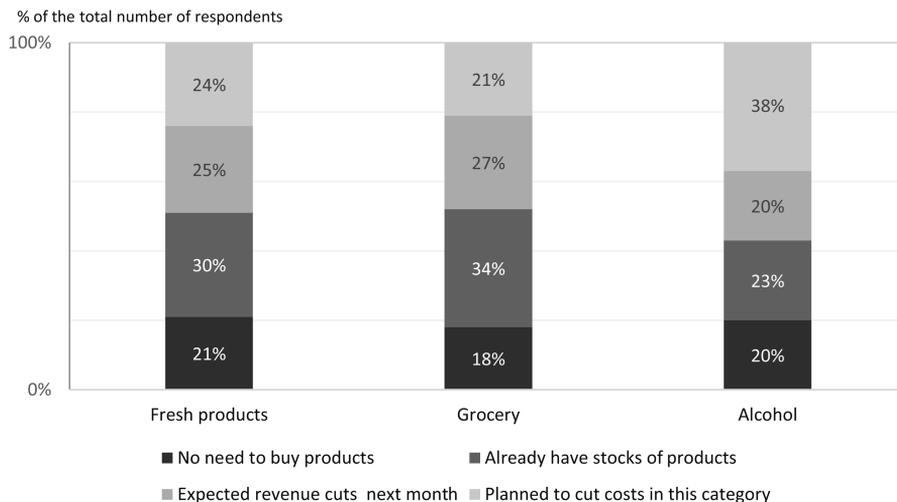
**Table 1.** Continued

	Russia	China
Influence at the time of purchase	Seller's consultation (40%) Sales/discounts (30%) Recommendations of friends / acquaintances (30%)	Seller's consultation (20%) Sales/discounts (40%) Recommendations of friends / acquaintances (40%)

*Source:* compiled by the authors.

The results of the analysis of consumer behavior of Chinese and Russian buyers showed that there are differences: 50% of Chinese buyers prefer to buy products when they are outdated, while for Russian buyers this figure is 40%. In addition, 50% of Chinese buyers prefer to buy goods in online stores than in regular shops, and in Russia this figure is 40%. Besides, when choosing a product, at the time of purchase, the seller's consultation has the greatest influence on the Russian buyer — 40%, while for the Chinese buyer, recommendations of friends / acquaintances are more important — 40%, as well as bonuses / discounts — 40%.

A survey of consumer sentiment in relation to COVID-19 among Russian consumers was also conducted, which showed that a decline is expected for the entire “Products” category, with the exception of the “Fresh products” segment, and those consumers who increase expenses do this solely to create stocks during the period of self-isolation (Figure 2).

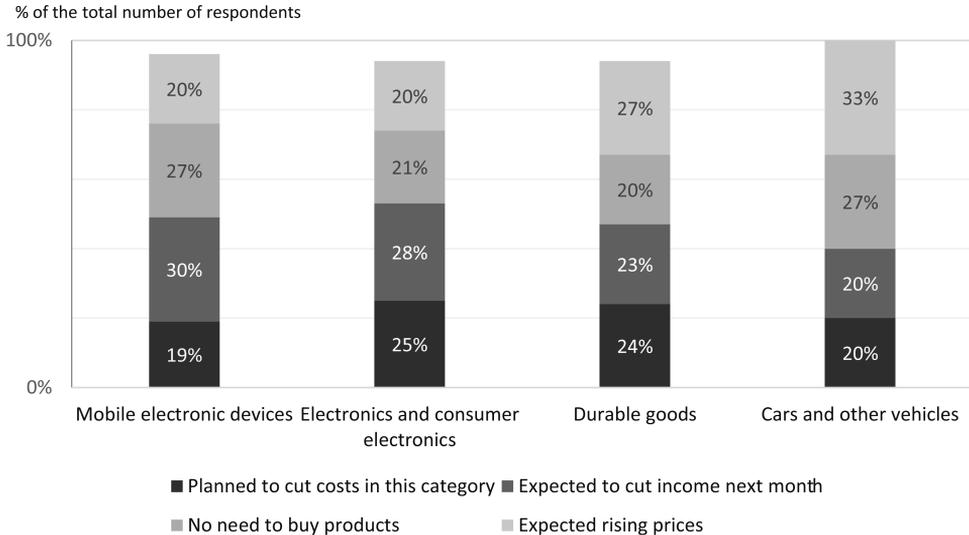


*Sources:* compiled by the authors based on BCG and ROMIR: COVID-19 Consumer Sentiment Survey, 2020.<sup>2</sup>

**Figure 2.** Consumer sentiment in the “Products” category

<sup>2</sup> <https://romir.ru/studies/issledovanie-bcg-i-romir-novaya-realnost-rossiyskogo-potrebitelskogo-rynka-na-fone-pandemii-covid-19-i-prognoz>; <https://www.bcg.com/publications/2020/covid-consumer-sentiment-survey>

In the “Clothes and footwear” category, a decline is expected in all segments, except for children’s clothing. In the “Durable Goods” category, the largest drop occurred in the home electronics segment, and the smallest — in “Cars and other vehicles.” Consumers either planned to buy earlier or bought out of fear of higher prices (Figure 3).



Sources: compiled by the authors based on BCG and ROMIR: COVID-19 Consumer Sentiment Survey, 2020.<sup>3</sup>

**Figure 3.** Consumer sentiment in the “Durable goods” category

In terms of research, online sellers should make full use of online resources and conduct in-depth research on the impact of online promotion patterns on consumer behavior and attitudes in order to formulate appropriate online marketing strategies to attract more consumers and maximize their profits, taking into account the current situation related to the spread of the COVID-19 virus and the large-scale digitalization of the population.

Online promotion is based on online shopping. It provides online users with advertising information about products or specific services in the vast virtual marketplace of the Internet. It creates desire by stimulating consumer demand for a product. Making a purchase turns into actual shopping behavior (Lin et al., 2014). Various promotion methods are popular on the Internet, such as price rise, free delivery, limited time burst, unconditional return, and product discounts.

Absolute digitalization and innovative business models create new purchasing power and change consumers. Behavioral habits have spawned a unique new consumer market (Jin & Chen, 2018). China was one of the first to enter a new era of consumer modernization. Consumption has become the main driver of China’s economic

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

growth. The Chinese consumer market is highly digital, both in terms of market size and degree of digitalization. In 2017, the number of online shoppers in China and total online retail sales more than doubled compared to 2016. The share of consumers using mobile payments has more than tripled, which is more than in any other country in the world.<sup>4</sup>

The Goldman Sachs research found out factors that determined the Chinese consumer market and influenced behavioral preferences (the political situation, demand, supply and digitalization), thereby reflecting the prospects for the recovery of the Chinese economy and predicting opportunities for long-term growth in various areas. The results of the Goldman Sachs survey show that compared to changes in wealth, China's consumption growth is more sensitive to changes in residents' incomes. Low-income Chinese residents have a higher marginal propensity to consume, and epidemic prevention measures have a greater impact on industries that employ more low-income people. Imbalance in the marginal propensity to consume may increase the decline in consumption (Goldman Sachs, 2020). To mitigate the negative economic impact of preventing COVID-19, Chinese consumers are also looking for a new shopping experience, and more companies are looking for new product launches to accelerate the recovery of production. In some industries, both increases and decreases in prices were recorded.

It's also worth noting that some trends will continue in the future:

1. Raising health awareness promotes sales of healthy food and hygiene / personal care products and encourages healthy lifestyles, such as choosing high-quality meals and exercising.
2. The trend towards the production of high-quality goods can be caused by understanding the importance of high-tech goods and the rise in their prices.
3. The requirement to maintain a certain social distance can help optimize the cost structure of sellers.
4. Industry integration: market leaders recover faster (Lannes, 2020).

The COVID-19 virus has dealt a heavy blow to society and business, and consumer behavior has undergone tremendous changes in a short period of time. After many countries had experienced isolation, sudden shutdowns of operations and production, consumers also quickly adjusted their consumption patterns.

Chinese consumers cut their spending in 2020. Total retail sales fell by 19% in the first quarter of 2020. This is the biggest drop in history. Total spending on paid services fell by 6.7%, on food and beverages — by 7.7%, and on other categories — by 4.6%. However, during the epidemic, it is worth noting the rapid growth in sales of health and hygiene products, which will also continue to grow in the future. According to the results of the Nielsen research, 64% of respondents began to wash their hands more often, 26% of respondents began to do the cleaning more often, and another 13% wash clothes more often in the conditions of Covid-19<sup>5</sup>. This trend influences

<sup>4</sup> <https://wearesocial.com/special-reports/digital-in-2017-global-overview>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.nielsen.com/us/en/insights/report/2019/>

consumer interest in buying household appliances to keep their homes clean. The same people will be interested in products of the mobile electronics segment with a health monitoring function.

China is rapidly entering a new era of consumption. The advancement of digitalization leads to improvement in diversified consumer preferences as a result of digital mastery, which fosters new consumer behavior patterns.

Potential consumers who depend on online shopping make up 60% of China's total online shoppers, according to the report on online shopping behavior research by Nilsen, the world's leading information and analysis company.<sup>6</sup>

In addition, according to the Nielsen's "Internet Shopping Behavior Survey," Chinese consumers who shop online can be divided into four main types: the potential type (34%), the network dependent type (26%), the network rational type (24%), and the sensitive type (16%). According to Nielsen's research and classification, the majority of potential online buyers were born in the 1990s. The majority of online shoppers are in their 1930s and 1940s. Most of them have a relatively high level of education and their monthly household income is relatively high.<sup>7</sup>

Behavior of consumers in the case of a certain experience of purchasing a certain product is more predictable. The challenge for marketers in such a situation is to provide the consumer with relevant information that he may need in order to reduce the probability of switching to other brands (for example, through advertising). In case of a normal purchase of goods, the consumer may behave in a standard manner based on the prevailing attitude towards this trademark; in this case, advertising can be aimed at supporting perceived benefits.

The 2019 UPS survey on online shopping behavior shows that consumers in the Asia-Pacific region, including China, prefer to buy more items in a single order to reduce shipping costs and are more likely to try professional shipping services worldwide.<sup>8</sup> As consumers have more online shopping options, competition intensifies, and consumer expectations continue to rise. The report notes that retailers need to be smart and fast enough to adapt to changes in order to stand out in a competitive environment. When sellers provide incentives to consumers, this is reflected not only in provision of unique products, but also in the delivery service which is critical to the success in the evolving e-commerce environment. Additionally, the survey of buying habits of online shoppers (B2B) shows that many buying patterns of online consumers are the same as those of regular consumers.

It is worth noting another trend in the behavior of Chinese consumers — the growth of the Chinese market of e-commerce carried out using mobile devices (Figure 3).

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<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.pressroom.ups.com/pressroom/ContentDetailsViewer.page?ConceptType=PressReleases&id=1564710106551-985>.



Sources: compiled by the authors based on Emarketer, Criteo, BCG Analysis, Iresearch.<sup>9</sup>

**Figure 3.** China's mobile online commerce (US \$ Billion)

This Figure shows that China's online trading volumes are growing steadily from 2 bln USD in 2011 to 1147 bln USD in 2020. And this process does not stop. The mobile marketing strategy involves step-by-step work on identifying the needs of consumers, creating and promoting content, and involving visitors in active acquisition processes. The spread of COVID-19 did not affect these processes in any way.

McKinsey's 2020 report on China Consumer Survey revealed some emerging trends:<sup>10</sup>

1. New generation of consumption in middle- and low-population cities has become a new engine of growth.
2. Most consumers have a hierarchy of consumption: some pay more attention to quality, and some — to cost.
3. The concept of a healthy lifestyle.
4. More emphasis on shopping experience.
5. Growth in the number of local luxury brands.

Moreover, IiMedia Research's analysis of the impact of the new corona epidemic on consumer behavior shows that there is a large impact of the virus on Chinese people's perceptions of consumption. Chinese consumption has become more rational, moderate and practical: more attention is paid to meeting basic needs; more attention is paid to the consumption of medical and health products; awareness of hygiene has increased; confidence in domestic brands has increased; and people pay more attention to distribution of their own income. However, the decline in residents' willingness to consume did not fuel the growth of the Chinese consumer market in 2020.<sup>11</sup> Apart

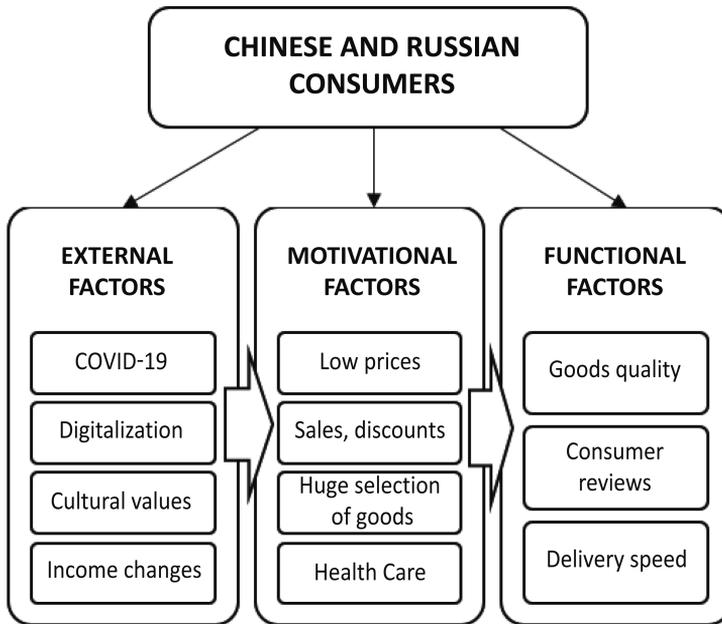
<sup>9</sup> <https://www.iresearch.com>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.mckinsey.com.cn/2020>

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.iimedia.cn/c400/70726.html>

from that, consumer demand for products of foreign brands will decline significantly in the future. Thus, domestic brands will have good development opportunities in the next months or a year.

According to the results of the study, a universal model of the influence of various factors on the behavior of Russian and Chinese consumers in modern conditions was formed (Figure 4).



*Source:* compiled by the authors.

**Figure 4.** Universal model of the influence of various factors on consumer behavior in China and Russia

Classification of consumers is based on the following factors: external factors, motivational factors, and functional factors that establish certain dependencies (for example, division along lines of gender, age, educational level, profession, income). The foundations of studying the factors of motivational and external influence on consumer behavior, the possibility of their influence on consumer behavior through marketing activities, as well as the main aspects of consumer behavior determine the choice of a certain type of consumer behavior. The success of a company's strategic development depends on the preferences of consumers, and the ability to competently analyze the process of consumer decision-making about the purchase of goods.

The consumer should clearly understand the factors that affect him and determine the behavior of consumers in order to make a decision about his action.

External factors include: COVID-19, digitalization of society, cultural values, changes in the incomes of citizens. It is necessary to take into account the individual characteristics of this group of factors: information about social relations, lifestyle, consumer behavior

and the decision-making process; how its representatives view life, perceive and interpret surrounding events; what peculiarities of the world perception in China and Russia are formed in this group.

Cultural values have the greatest impact on consumer behavior in the retail sector compared to other elements of the culture model. Social environment has the least influence on consumer behavior (Zhao, 2017).

The second group includes motivational factors: low prices, sales and discounts, a huge selection of goods, and health care. During the purchase process, the consumer is motivated by low prices, promotions, and a wider selection of goods. The buyer goes through various stages: from awareness (the need for a product), knowledge (about a product that satisfies this need), and preference to conviction (that only this product is the best for satisfying his need) and purchase. Subsequently, the consumer may feel satisfaction from the purchase of this product in connection with receiving a discount or any bonuses provided by the advertiser. Moreover, an additional motivation is to adopt a healthier lifestyle.

The third group of factors is functional factors. The process of buying a product varies greatly, ranging from a strong to a weak urge to buy. There are several generally accepted stages: awareness of the need, search for information, evaluation of information and comparison of possible purchase options, selection of the place of purchase, making a decision to buy a product or services, and evaluation of the product or service after purchase. Experience shows that buying expensive goods and services is a more circumspect step than buying inexpensive ones. The first option is more complicated, the second is simpler. Obviously, the quality of the product is important for the consumer, as well as feedback from friends and relatives, and delivery.

## Conclusion

A comparative analysis of consumer behavior in China and Russia shows that there are significant differences in the characteristics of elements of cultural models in China and Russia, which indicates the influence of elements of the institutional environment on the specificity of consumer behavior in relation to price characteristics and product selection. For both countries, the modern factors that determine the choice of a certain type of consumer behavior are external factors, motivational factors, and functional factors. The study shows that Russia and China, which are rapidly entering a new era of consumption, have different levels of digital technologies, but it is worth noting the influence of the same factors on behavior of both Russian and Chinese consumers. Thus, in China, the impact of COVID-19, the development of digitalization, and the spread of Internet technologies have led to an improvement in diversified consumer preferences, which has contributed to a change in consumer behavior. But in Russia, there is an insufficient level of digitalization of society, which does not allow to fully interact with consumers and influence their preferences. During the spread of COVID-19, it seems to us that the convenience of switching to digital mobile marketing technologies will become a general

trend. In this regard, credibility of local brands, customer experience and value orientation will become the goals aimed at gaining consumer confidence.

Apart from that, based on the above, the Internet is turning from a communication channel into a habitat where consumers interact in the information society. With unrestricted access to goods and the ability to share consumer experiences, users influence each other's consumer behavior more than ever before. These features should be taken into account when developing scientific and methodological foundations for managing consumer behavior on the Internet.

Thus, the following conclusions can be drawn:

1. Russian consumers are most often guided by personal experience when choosing products, while Chinese consumers are guided by recommendations of friends / acquaintances / family.
2. The most popular place to buy for both Chinese and Russian consumers is an online store.
3. At the time of purchase of the product, Russian consumers are mainly influenced by the seller's advice, while for Chinese consumers, the most important factor is the availability of sales / discounts.
4. For Russian consumers, the most important characteristic when choosing goods is quality, and for Chinese consumers — price and quality.
5. Awareness of their health is important for both Russian and Chinese consumers, which contributes to the sale of healthy food and hygiene / personal hygiene products and encourages people to lead a healthier lifestyle.

Based on the above, sellers should adhere to the following guidelines during COVID-19:

- turn to the online format in various service sectors, which has begun to gain popularity among users, thereby forcing companies to seriously address the issues of digitalizing their business processes: online orders, contactless delivery, remote training, communications, etc.
- pay more attention to the above consumer trends and focus on the most important areas; reinforce the concept of “customer focus.” There is an overabundance of information on the Internet, therefore buyers prefer channels with the most necessary, relevant and useful content, so now people need confident and entertaining content, given the period of uncertainty
- raise consumer awareness of health, pay attention to health and hygiene products. In a situation of uncertainty, fear and anxiety, people begin to worry about their mental state. Therefore, not only products and services for improving mood, enhancing brain function, and relieving stress (goodies, drinks, vitamins, entertainment, etc.) are quite popular, but also all kinds of services
- accelerate business development through the use of e-commerce and a mobile marketing strategy. It is worth paying attention to the creation of short and fast multisensory messages
- focus on the sale of high-quality products and the development of new domestic products that are in demand among consumers. The international supply chain began to falter due to borders closure in many countries. However, this has a

positive effect on the rise of local producers and reinforces the trend towards national identity.

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