

Panic buying sparks toilet paper shortages

10th March, 2020



Shoppers around the world are embarking on panic buying sprees because of fears over the coronavirus. People in countries as far afield as England, Japan, Singapore and Australia have been emptying supermarket

shelves of toilet paper, face masks, hand sanitiser and dried and canned food. Governments have advised their citizens that there is no need to "panic buy". They added that panic buying would only reduce the supply of products needed by medical staff and carers, which could exacerbate the problems the COVID-19 virus is causing. Footage of shoppers in Australia brawling over the last pack of toilet roll in a supermarket has gone viral across social media.

Psychologists say panic buying is an "irrational" behaviour that is part of a condition called FOMO - the fear of missing out. Dr Katharina Wittgens said a herd mentality sets in during disasters that causes people to copy the actions of others. People watch the news of items being bought in bulk and immediately rush out to the stores to do the same. She said people were overestimating the risks of dying from the coronavirus. She said: "Far more people die in car accidents or household accidents per year but we don't panic about these things in the morning before we go to work." Singapore's prime minister reassured Singaporeans that: "We have ample supplies. There's no need to stock up."

Sources: sky.com / snopes.com / aljazeera.com

Writing

There is no need for panic buying during the coronavirus outbreak. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

shopper / spree / supermarket / virus / sanitiser / panic buy / brawling / toilet paper / irrational / fear / disaster / news / buy in bulk / risk / car accident / supplies / stock up

True / False

- Shoppers in every world country are panic buying. T / F
- People are panic buying canned food but not dried food. T / F
- Governments said there is no need to panic buy. T / F
- Video of people fighting in an Australian supermarket is on social media. T / F
- FOMO means fear of missing out. T / F
- A psychologist said people follow each other like a fish mentality. T / F
- The psychologist said people are underestimating the risk of COVID-19. T / F
- Singapore's leader said the country has plenty of supplies. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. embarking | a. cut |
| 2. emptying | b. imitate |
| 3. reduce | c. fighting |
| 4. exacerbate | d. way of thinking |
| 5. brawling | e. sufficient |
| 6. irrational | f. starting |
| 7. mentality | g. worsen |
| 8. copy | h. chances |
| 9. risks | i. clearing |
| 10. ample | j. illogical |

Discussion – Student A

- What do you think about what you read?
- Should stores limit the amount of things shoppers can buy?
- What do you think of the FOMO condition?
- Do you ever worry about missing out on things?
- Why do we worry about coronavirus but not car accidents?
- Do you follow the herd?
- What advice do you have for people who are stockpiling things?
- What questions would you like to ask the psychologist?

Phrase Match

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------|
| 1. panic buying | a. last pack of toilet roll |
| 2. reduce the supply of products needed | b. supplies |
| 3. exacerbate the | c. behaviour |
| 4. brawling over the | d. sprees |
| 5. gone viral | e. bulk |
| 6. irrational | f. problems |
| 7. a herd | g. of dying |
| 8. items being bought in | h. across social media |
| 9. overestimating the risks | i. mentality |
| 10. We have ample | j. by medical staff |

Discussion – Student B

- What do you think of the panic buying?
- Why are people panic-buying toilet paper?
- Is there any need to panic buy?
- What are the most important things to buy at the moment?
- What are the most important things to do at the moment?
- Are you worried about not having masks, sanitiser, food, etc.?
- What is the worst thing to run out of for you?
- How is your country handling the coronavirus situation?

Spelling

- rmgbeaink on panic buying
- panic buying psere
- eetrabceax the problems
- fotogea of shoppers in Australia
- nrgbilwa over the last pack
- gone ilavr across social media
- panic buying is an iarantlio behaviour
- a herd nittalyme sets in
- emyamiitedl rush out
- itestngremioav the risks of dying
- Singapore's prime minister rsdueraes Singaporeans
- We have mapel supplies

Answers – Synonym Match

1. f	2. i	3. a	4. g	5. c
6. j	7. d	8. b	9. h	10. e

Role Play

Role A – Toilet Paper

You think toilet paper is the worst thing for stores to sell out of. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as necessary. Also, tell the others which is the least necessary of these (and why): bottled water, chocolate or face masks.

Role B – Bottled Water

You think bottled water is the worst thing for stores to sell out of. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as necessary. Also, tell the others which is the least necessary of these (and why): toilet paper, chocolate or face masks.

Role C – Chocolate

You think chocolate is the worst thing for stores to sell out of. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as necessary. Also, tell the others which is the least necessary of these (and why): bottled water, toilet paper or face masks.

Role D – Face Masks

You think face masks are the worst things for stores to sell out of. Tell the others three reasons why. Tell them why their things aren't as necessary. Also, tell the others which is the least necessary of these (and why): bottled water, chocolate or toilet paper.

Speaking – Sold Out

Rank these with your partner. Put the worst things for stores to sell out of at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- | | |
|---------------|------------------|
| • face masks | • toilet paper |
| • canned fish | • chocolate |
| • baked beans | • bottled water |
| • dried fruit | • hand sanitiser |

Answers – True False

a	F	b	F	c	T	d	T	e	T	f	F	g	F	h	T
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.