

COVID-19 Lockdown and Hue Preferences

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Summary: The COVID-19 pandemic lockdown policy has left a profound impact on our society. How does it change people’s affective status and hue preferences for commercial products? A cross-cultural longitudinal study suggests lockdown measures decreased consumer’s feeling of happiness and slightly increased their liking for hot-colored (i.e. red) products. I also found a vast majority of participants favored cool-colored (i.e. blue) products both when major social activities were put on halt and after people emerged from lockdown. This research provides an interesting perspective on how a global humanitarian crisis can have spillover effects on consumer well-being and color perceptions.

Introduction

Research Question

- Do COVID-19 lockdown policies change people’s hue preferences for commercial products?

Hypotheses

- People in general feel more upset by COVID-19 lockdown policies and happier once these measures have been lifted
- Consumers favor the hue that brings them happiness and excitement during COVID-19 lockdown
- Hot-colored products are more likely to generate positive feelings and preferred by consumers during COVID-19 lockdown

Contribution

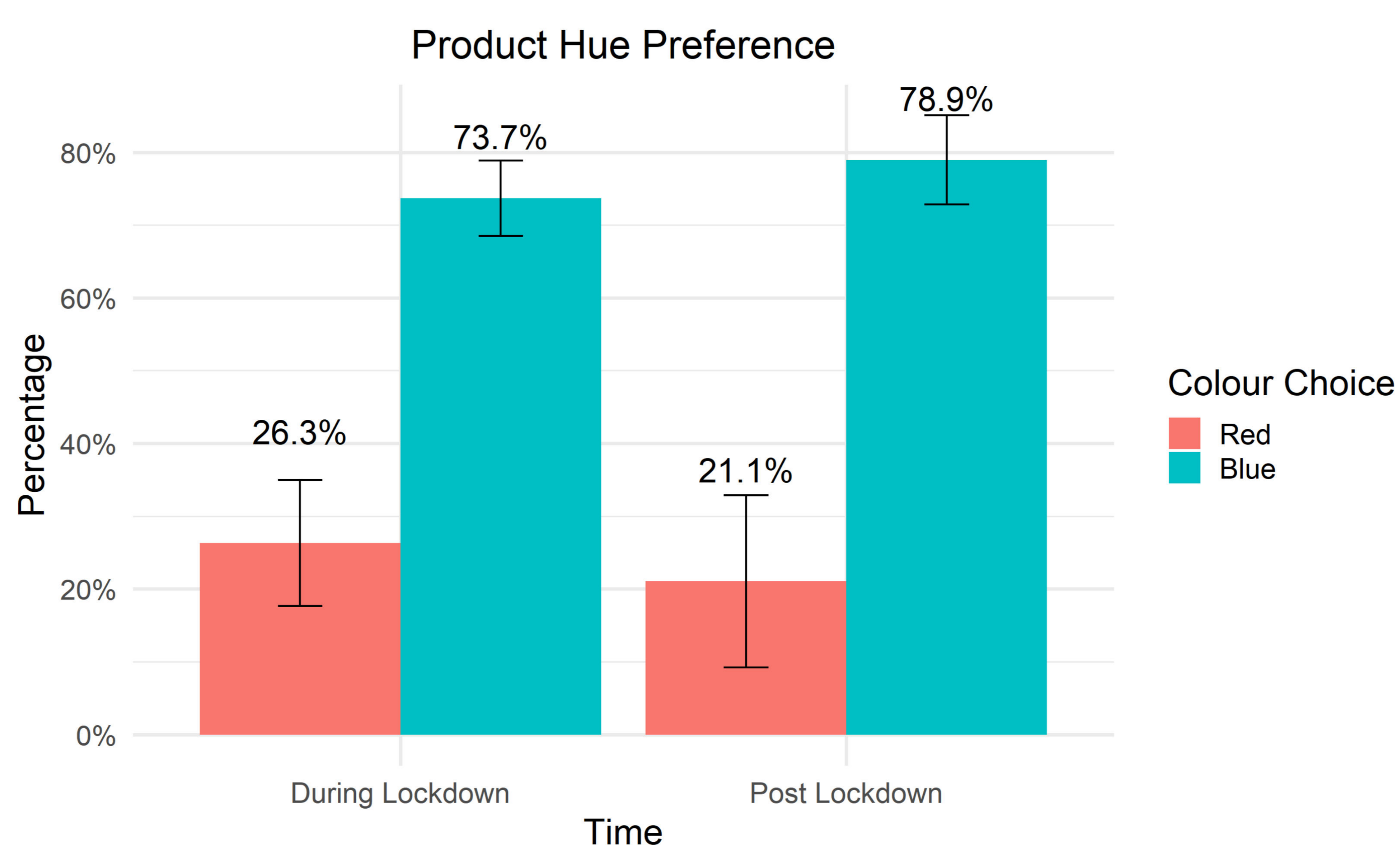
- A conceptual replication on how mood drives color preferences (Jonaskaite et al. 2019)
- Investigates the functional role of color in signaling affective appeal to consumers
- Enriches debates on the political consequences of lockdown

Comparison

Overall, participants reported less joy ($M = 3.88, SD = 1.39$) during COVID-19 lockdown ($M = 2.48, SD = 1.07$), $t(103) = 9.48, p < .001$ compared to before. Furthermore, people felt much happier post lockdown ($Z = -2.61, p = .009$).

Importantly, the role that participants were being assigned to had no effects on their subsequent affective experiences $F(1, 55) = 1.00, p = .32$; $F(1, 55) = .03, p = .87$.

There was a slight decrease (from 26.3% to 21.1%) in preference for the red-colored bottle after lockdown has been lifted. However, the share of was not significantly different from that of during lockdown, $\chi^2(1) = .44, p = .51$



Data and Methods

Data

- Convenient sampling via social media platforms across ten countries (from April 21st to May 5th, 2020 (CEST))
- 527 responses in total, only 104 of which are valid. Vast majority (399 people) failed an attention check question at the beginning

Research Design

- **Forecasters vs. Non-Forecasters:** “Looking ahead, how happy would you feel immediately after the lockdown measures from the government have been lifted?”
- **Hue Preference:** “Recently, a new brand of water bottle is being introduced to the market. There are two colors, which one would you choose?”

Procedure

- Participants were randomly assigned to two conditions (forecasting vs. non-forecasting). All made an assessment on current affective status and reported number of weeks spent in quarantine, daily feelings of anxiety, and feelings of uncertainty
- Hue preferences are measured twice for all participants - during and after lockdown.

Conclusion

- Vast majority of participants favored cool-colored (i.e. blue) products both during and after lockdown
- Share of preferences was not significantly different between the two time periods

Limitations

- Participants’ choice based on a specific merchandise
- High attrition rates
- Uncontrollable factors
- Self-reported measures

References

Jonaskaitė, Domicela, Betty Althaus, Nele Dael, Elise Dan-Glauser, and Christine Mohr. 2019. “What Color Do You Feel? Color Choices Are Driven by Mood.” *Color Research & Application* 44 (2): 272–84. <https://doi.org/10.1002/col.22327>.

DeLorme, Denise E., George M. Zinkhan, and Scott C. Hagen. 2004. “The Process of Consumer Reactions to Possession Threats and Losses in a Natural Disaster.” *Marketing Letters* 15 (4): 185–99. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11002-005-0456-z>.