

Sunday Temitope Oladunjoye

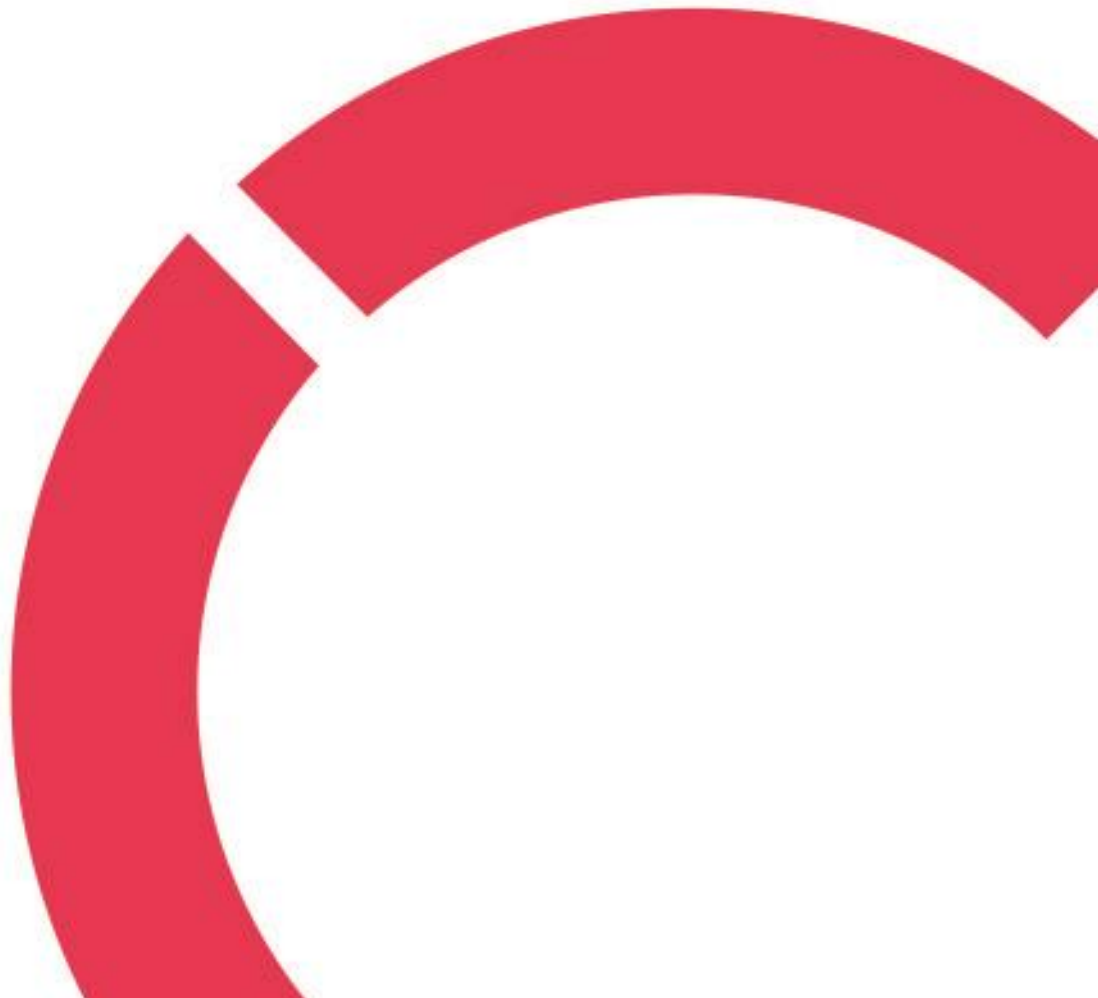
**IMPACT OF COVID-19 PANDEMIC ON RETAIL CONSUMER
BEHAVIOUR IN FINLAND**

Thesis

CENTRIA UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

Bachelor of Business Administration, Business Management

November 2023



ABSTRACT

Centria University of Applied Sciences	Date November 2023	Author Sunday Temitope Oladunjoye
Degree programme Bachelor of Business Administration, Business Management		
Centria supervisor Leena Jungner	Pages 31+5	
<p>The coronavirus outbreak caused significant changes in how human beings operate across different dimensions, most notably the economic field. The containment measures set by different governments across different countries included the suspension of some economic activities including physical purchasing of goods from physical retail outlets. In Finland, this caused changes in the behaviour of consumers that include frequency of visits to the retail outlets.</p> <p>The main aim of this research was to examine the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on retail customer behaviour in Finland to assist both retailers and consumers to adapt to the changes in their environment. It concentrates on delving into changes in customer behaviour, such as shopping habits, payment methods, and preferences for products that are produced locally and type of product. The techniques that retailers use to adapt to the new normal and meet the changing needs of their customers' views of retail were outlined at the end of the thesis for use by the Finnish retailers and buyers.</p> <p>This thesis used a questionnaire to collect data from a sample size of 46 participants. The results of this study showed that prior to the pandemic, most of the respondents frequently visited the retail outlets physically. Based on the results, it is evident that 19.57% of the research participants reported reducing their visits to physical retail stores after reporting being satisfied with the experience of shopping online. Additionally, preference for different types of products varied.</p>		
Keywords Consumer behaviour, COVID-19, Finland, pandemic, retail		

ABSTRACT
CONTENTS

1 INTRODUCTION.....1

2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR4

2.1 Traditional consumer behaviour theories4

2.2 Consumption behaviour in Finland6

3 CHANGES AND STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR SHIFTS
9

3.1 Changes in consumer behaviour during the pandemic9

3.2 Retailer strategies to cope with changes in consumer behaviour11

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY13

4.1 Research method13

4.2 Research participants.....13

4.3 Data collection and analysis14

5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS15

5.1 Background of participants.....15

5.2 Consumer behaviour before the pandemic.....16

5.3 Consumer behaviour after the pandemic17

5.4 Recommendations for Finnish retailers.....24

6 CONCLUSION26

REFERENCES.....29

FIGURES

FIGURE 1. Nicosia model of consumer behaviour (Viksne, Salkovska, Gaitniece & Puke 2016, 233) .5

FIGURE 2. Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model of customer behaviour (Viksne, Salkovska, Gaitniece & Puke 2016, 234)6

FIGURE 3. Participants' characteristics by age..... 15

FIGURE 4. Distribution of participants by employment status 16

FIGURE 5. Frequency at which consumers visited physical retail stores before the COVID-19
Pandemic..... 17

FIGURE 6. Changes in their frequency of visiting physical retail stores changed since the COVID-19
pandemic..... 18

FIGURE 7. Factors that influenced respondents' decision to visit physical retail stores during the
pandemic..... 19

FIGURE 8. Consumer satisfaction with the online shopping experience during the pandemic20

FIGURE 9. Types of products preferred for purchase by consumers online during the COVID-19
pandemic.....21

FIGURE 10. Participants anticipated a long-term permanent shift in their retail shopping behaviour
due to the pandemic.....23

FIGURE 11. Reasons for anticipated change in consumer behavior.....24

TABLES

TABLE 1. Factors that influenced respondents' decision to visit physical retail stores during the pandemic18

TABLE 2. Relationship between changes in physical retail shopping and satisfaction with online shopping experience20

TABLE 3. Codes for the reasons used in FIGURE 1123

1 INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization labelled Covid-19 as an infectious disease after its worldwide spread on the 11th of March 2020. The virus - found to have originated from Wuhan, China - caused many fatalities around the world making it one of the deadliest viruses to ever infect humans. This virus later spread quickly to 196 nations globally. As a result, a majority of nations implemented rapid precautions and rigorous limitations on the daily activities of individuals, such as remote working and studying, enforcement of social distancing, temporarily halting economic activities, and closing learning institutions, and other public places, to slow down the spread of the virus. This occurrence had an impact on the lives of people, leading to a long-term shift in perspectives based on the cultural, economic, and social viewpoints of people around the world.

Covid-19 is regarded as a public health issue because it has already significantly impacted the global economy. Similar outbreaks have had a variety of effects in various nations, and these effects are typically influenced by the population's overall health, the occurrence of infection incidents, the development and expansion of these nations' healthcare systems, and the state of their economies. As a result, the global society has acted in several ways to address this healthcare issue because, in a typical setting, a buyer's choice of products is influenced by both internal and external variables. However, in instances of pandemics like Covid-19, consumer product preferences significantly change, almost comparable to their business environment and lifestyle. The issues that the healthcare systems face also tend to impact the quality of lives of the people and the state of the economy.

The global COVID-19 pandemic has significantly impacted business activities across every continent around the world, particularly the businesses that operate within the retail industry. Retailers operating within Finland have not been an exception to this phenomenon, witnessing the pandemic causing major disruptions in the industry. This pandemic has forced retailers in Finland to adapt to new approaches to conducting business and meeting the constantly changing needs of their customers. The transition like purchasing goods online has been one of the major shifts in the behaviour of retail customers since the beginning of the pandemic. Many customers have adopted online shopping as a means of purchasing most of the items they need while staying at their houses due to social isolation and lockdown policies that were put in place during the pandemic. The usage of e-commerce platforms by businesses operating within Finland has increased as a result of this transformation, thus making it crucial to look at how this change has affected consumer behaviour. Even though Finland is

among the nations that managed COVID-19 fairly well, the lives of everyone had been altered dramatically. People began to adopt remote study and jobs, cut back on shopping trips, and ceased meeting individuals from outside their families. All of these elements resulted in a significant impact on how individuals lived their lives, influencing their purchasing habits. Consumer motivations and ideals had to be entirely re-examined.

Another shift in the behaviour of retail consumers that has occurred due to the Covid-19 pandemic is a choice and preference for goods that are produced locally. Since many companies - particularly manufacturers - experienced a global supply chain disruption, buyers developed a higher awareness of the significance of promoting local enterprises. This shift in consumer behaviour leads to an opportunity for Finnish retailers to modify their line of goods and advertising techniques to meet the change in their customers' tastes and preferences. Other than changes in purchasing behaviours and tastes for products manufactured locally, the pandemic also resulted in shifts in terms of payment methods. Because of the greater emphasis on using contactless transactions as a form of embracing social distancing to limit the spread of the virus, Finnish retailers also had to modify their methods of payment to accommodate their customers' most preferred way and to enhance safety in their operations (Clausnitzer 2021).

During the pandemic, many people around the world, including Finland, shopped in retail establishments less frequently throughout the pandemic outbreak. There were no significant differences in the sorts of retailers frequented by customers in Finland throughout the pandemic, however, going to shopping malls and department stores was unpopular compared to how it was before the pandemic. Therefore, people also predicted that their buying habits would not shift by that time, making the change an unexpected occurrence. The findings of this thesis, therefore, seek to obtain a better knowledge of how and why the changes in consumer behaviour occurred.

The main aim of this study is to thoroughly examine how and why the COVID-19 epidemic influenced the retail customer behaviour of people living in Finland. To achieve the main objective, the specific objectives include assessing the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has on retail consumer behaviour in Finland's retail industry, identifying the approaches that the retailers in Finland used as a remedy to adapt to the new retail environment, and highlighting how these retailers can modify their strategies to suit the consumer needs that have evolved as a result of the pandemic. This thesis will primarily focus on changes that exist in purchasing behaviours after the end of the peak of the pandemic like product and service preferences and payment methods that are currently in use within the food and beverage

retail sector. This will be achieved through a systematic analysis of previous studies in the food and beverage retail market as well as surveys of consumers.

This thesis is composed of five main chapters, the first one introducing the subject matter in the form of a background, the rationale behind the study, and the study objectives. The second chapter highlights previous studies on the impact of COVID-19 on the retail business by focusing on consumer behavior. In the third chapter, this study focuses on the changes that occurred in consumer behaviour and how retailers apply or have applied different strategies in combating these changes. The fourth chapter outlines the implementation of the study and the considerations like the data collection and analysis methods. The fifth chapter of this thesis outlines and analyses the results and the last chapter concludes the study and gives recommendations for players within the retail market.

2 CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

This chapter highlights theories that describe consumer behaviour in the retail business, showing their characteristics and how effective they have been. These theories describe how consumers behave traditionally and what influences their purchasing behaviour. Lastly, this chapter highlights how consumers behave with respect to the Finnish retail market under the influence of factors that exist in Finland.

2.1 Traditional consumer behaviour theories

Before conducting a comparative examination of the models that describe how customers behave, it is necessary to explain the semantics employed to guarantee a common understanding of the terminology utilised. The terms consumer behaviour, and decision-making among consumers are also defined in the following paragraphs. The examination of consumer behaviour focuses on how people, organizations, and groups choose, purchase, utilize, and discard products, services, and concepts to fulfill their preferences and needs (Bhuvaneswari & Jesuraj 2019, 623). According to Viksne Salkovska, Gaitniece and Puke (2016, 233), consumer decision making, behaviour of a consumer that comes before, influences, and follows their decision to acquire needs-satisfying goods, concepts, or services (FIGURE 1).

The Nicosia model is one of the models that describe the consumer behaviour (FIGURE 1). As one of the first customer decision procedure frameworks that the majority of experts in the marketing fields acknowledged it specifically describes the decision process of consumers. (Viksne et al. 2016, 233.) This model includes four primary areas - consumer attitude design, search and evaluation for information, a purchase act, and feedback from customers after using the product. In this framework, customer perception, inspiration, purchasing behavior, and overall satisfaction are the outcomes of matching key fields, and these outcomes have a substantial impact (Viksne et al. 2016, 233).

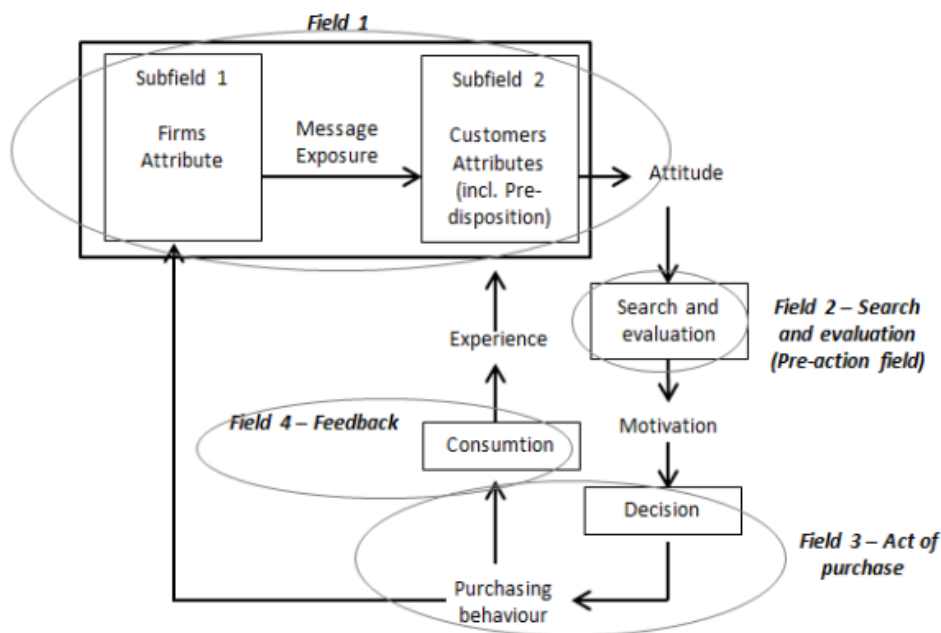


FIGURE 1. Nicosia model of consumer behaviour (Viksne, Salkovska, Gaitniece & Puke 2016, 233)

On the other hand, the Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model (FIGURE 2) describes the mechanism of decision-making process in stages, which are influenced by characteristics like situational factors and social factors (Engel, Kollat & Blackwell 1973, 48). The external environment, often known as stimuli, and the internal environment are the two main groupings of factors that influence individual behavior in the stimulus-response model. Marketing stimuli is one of the categories of external environment factors over which businesses have some degree of control. Both the features of the customer and their psychology are indirectly influenced by these environmental elements. The factors influencing human behavior are classified into two categories in the stimulus-response model (Viksne et al. 2016, 234). These categories are the external environmental variables or triggers and elements within the internal environment (Viksne et al. 2016, 234). The elements of the external environment also have two categories, which include stimuli based on marketing, which retailers have influence over, and others that they have little control over (Viksne et al. 2016, 234). Such environmental variables indirectly impact both the psychology and characteristics of consumers (Viksne et al. 2016, 234).

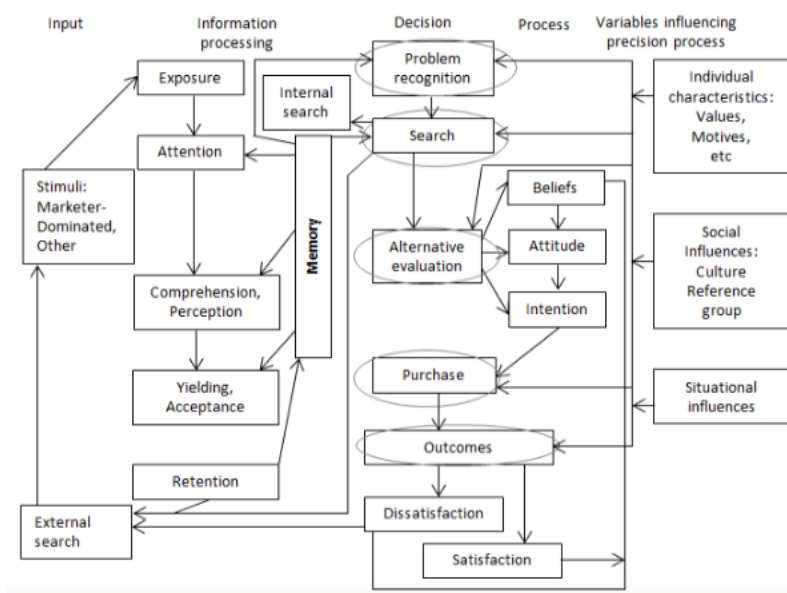


FIGURE 2. Engel-Blackwell-Miniard model of customer behaviour (Viksne, Salkovska, Gaitniece & Puke 2016, 234)

This model (FIGURE 2) can describe the situation that Finnish people experienced during the pandemic, which greatly influenced their buying habits in the retail market. For instance, the lockdown, the risk of contracting the virus, as well as change in preference for essential products are some of the personal characteristics that influenced the consumer behaviour change in Finland during the pandemic. Similarly, the situation of interrupted supply chain made people switch towards locally manufactured or sourced products and services.

2.2 Consumption behaviour in Finland

Consumption behaviour is a constantly changing and complicated element of the retail industry, hence influencing consumers' purchasing decisions. Several elements, including cultural, social, psychological, and economic factors, often have a significant impact on consumer behaviour in Finland (Haapio, Mero, Karjaluoto & Shaikh 2021, 212). Considering these variables is important in assisting businesses in developing effective marketing plans that respond to the demands and tastes of Finnish consumers.

Popovic, Bossink, and van der Sijde (2019, 7-9) report that Finnish consumers' commitment to environmental sustainability is one of the primary cultural variables influencing their behaviour since

they are ecologically sensitive and choose environmentally friendly items over those that are not. This trend has significantly increased demand for sustainable products and services across different industries. Furthermore, since Finland is a robust welfare state and a culture of equality, Finnish consumers frequently stress justice and social responsibility whenever making purchasing decisions. Technological factors have also had a significant impact on Finnish consumer behaviour, with smartphones, social media, and e-commerce changing the way consumers research, shop, and interact with brands (Karjaluoto, Shaikh, Leppäniemi & Luomala 2020, 332). Finns are thought to be technologically savvy and heavily rely on digital channels when making purchasing decisions. This shift to online shopping has created new opportunities for businesses, but it has also increased competition and made it more difficult for retailers to differentiate themselves. Economic conditions, in addition to cultural and technological considerations, also influence consumer behaviour in Finland (Clausnitzer 2021). This reflects how the nation's relatively high standard of life (Koivunen, Portegijs, Sillanpää, Eronen, Kokko & Rantanen 2022, 2) makes consumers in Finland have more disposable money than in many other European nations. They are also more price-sensitive and have a propensity to shop for the greatest offers as a result, though.

Kumar, Talwar, Murphy, Kaur, and Dhir (2020, 2) report that in Finland, social norms influence consumer behaviour as well. Because Finland is a strong welfare state and a culture of equality, Finnish consumers are frequently motivated by values such as fairness and social responsibility (Kumar et al. 2020, 2). Rondoni and Grasso (2021, 10) also discovered that Finnish consumers were willing to pay more for products produced ethically and in a socially responsible manner. Even though these studies highlight Finnish consumer behaviour fairly, one major drawback they show is the lack of diversity in research samples. Most of these studies tend to focus on the urban population, and there is little research on consumer behaviour in rural or small towns in Finland. Furthermore, most of these studies are conducted in Finnish or Swedish, making them inaccessible to non-Finnish-speaking researchers and readers. Additionally, these studies often depend on self-reported data, which rarely reflect actual consumer behaviour accurately. Lastly, most of these studies are cross-sectional, hence they provide a snapshot of consumer behaviour at a specific point in time. This makes identifying trends and changes over time difficult.

Aside from technology, other factors such as personality traits, attitudes, and motivations all have an impact on Finnish consumer behaviour. According to Strielkowski, Tarkhanova, Baburina, and Streimikis (2021, 5), Finnish consumers were more likely to purchase products that aligned with their values such as social responsibility and environmental sustainability. Strielkowski et al. (2021) adds

that preferences and behaviour among Finnish consumers also tend to be price-sensitive and are more likely to purchase products that offer value for money.

3 CHANGES AND STRATEGIES TO COPE WITH THE CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR SHIFTS

Due to the changes in operations during the pandemic, many businesses had to cope with consumer behaviour changes in different ways. This chapter discusses some of the approaches that these companies applied to adapt to the characteristics of the changed retail market.

3.1 Changes in consumer behaviour during the pandemic

The COVID-19 virus outbreak had a major influence on consumer behaviour all across the world, including in Finland. It caused widespread health concerns and economic uncertainties, influencing how Finnish people shop, what they buy, and how they consume products and services. The shift to e-commerce has been one of the most significant developments in Finnish consumer behaviour during the pandemic. With physical establishments closing and movement limitations as some of the containment measures that were proposed by the government, more Finnish customers turned to online shopping to buy goods and services. According to a 2020 poll done by Statistics Finland, 73.2% of Finnish citizens had completed an internet transaction or shopped online as reported by the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce (2022). This data was representative of the group of people aged between 18 years old to 74 years old, with the older population showing a higher rate of online shopping compared to the younger groups (International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce 2022). Many studies showed that the senior members of society are more prone to the virus and also more likely to experience fatal effects in case of infection. This may be one of the reasons behind this dynamic in online purchasing in Finland. Companies have had to spend on digital marketing and e-commerce infrastructure as a result.

The other notable shift in consumer behaviour during and even after the pandemic has involved a focus on health and safety more than any other factor. Consumers around the world have become more health-conscious, and many have changed their buying habits to prioritize safe and healthy products and services. This trend has significantly increased the demand for products that improve or promote health like health supplements, workout equipment, as well as home gym accessories. Meanwhile, products and services that were previously perceived as potentially harmful, such as non-essential travel and dining out, have witnessed a drop in demand or shifted dramatically. (International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce 2022.)

One of the factors in the external environment is the occurrence of the pandemic, which shifted Finland's retail market. For instance, books (30%), cosmetics (33%), home electronics (40%), and clothing (55%), had been listed as the top-selling industries in Finland across online platforms in 2021 (International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce 2022). Excluding 2021 and 2020, travelling and services like digital media, games, plane tickets, hotels, and trains also sold relatively well on online platforms in Finland. Although online purchasing of food is growing, it continues to have a minor role in general, with only 11% of total grocery purchasing being carried out via the Internet in 2020 and 6% in the year 2018 as reported by the International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce (2022). The online retail industry continued to wait for whether the rise in sales throughout the COVID-19 period would ultimately modify the buying habits of consumers. However, in 2021, business-to-business exchanges used e-commerce as a major tool for purchasing 47% of their total purchases, rising up from 36% in the previous year (International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce 2022).

Since consumers are getting more health conscious, they also tend to adjust their lives and diets as a result of constant concern about getting sick and limited mobility (Sánchez-Sánchez, Ramírez-Vargas, Avellaneda-López, Orellana-Pecino, García-Marín & Díaz-Jimenez 2020, 2). According to initial research, the type and intensity of the effects of COVID-19 differ among individuals and are dependent on their residence status, socioeconomic level, age, and related demographic factors (United Nations, 2020). Personal hygiene and cleaning products like hand sanitizer are examples of 'new demand' as reported by Chaudhuri (2020). This can be considered to be the same for products such as those that are used for healthy living like immunity boosters, healthy foods, personal care products, home care products, organic and fresh foods, as well as packed beverages and safe foods (Knowles, Ettenson, Lynch & Dollens 2020, 2). These demands, together with the rise of digital platforms, have resulted in an increase in demand during and after the COVID-19 restrictions (Debroy 2020). Buyers also demonstrated replacement behaviour throughout the outbreak period (Knowles et al. 2020, 4), drastically modifying consumption in terms of both quantity and choice. Product substitution has been evident during this pandemic also as a result of changes in lifestyles, whereas taste modifications have been noticed as a result of increased health awareness.

The epidemic has also had an impact on Finnish consumers' purchasing preferences, with many preferring necessities over non-essentials. As they aim to cut their expenditure, Finnish consumers have grown increasingly price-sensitive, with many opting for cheaper options such as private-label

products. Furthermore, Finnish consumers have become more loyal to domestic and local brands, indicating a growing tendency of nationalism and support for local firms. Martin, Markhvida, Hallegatte, and Walsh (2020, 454) report that decreased affordability experienced by many people during the pandemic also played a role in limiting their spending to largely healthcare products and necessities, as they cut back on non-discretionary items. Such a shift has culminated in a decrease in purchases and sales of numerous nonessential products over the period of the pandemic. However, the outbreak has ended up in a considerable demand increase in entertainment and wellness items offered via online stores (Madnani, Fernandes & Madnani 2020, 461). Because these services for consumers are considered to be optional as stated by Singh (2020). Das, Sarkar, and Debroy (2022, 701) anticipated that the pandemic's lowered affordability would have an impact on the generation of new demands. Alternatively, a favourable adjustment in purchasing power would have an advantageous effect on the use of these kinds of goods (Madnani et al. 2020, 461; Bakhtiani 2021).

During the epidemic, social issues also influenced Finnish consumer behaviour (Madnani et al. 2020, 462). With the increased use of remote work and virtual communication, social isolation has become a major issue. To combat this, Finns have increased their usage of online social media and e-commerce platforms to connect with others and buy products (Madnani et al. 2020, 462). Furthermore, Finnish consumers have become increasingly supportive of enterprises that demonstrate empathy and social responsibility, leading to an increase in demand for ethically made and environmentally sustainable products. Companies that can comprehend and respond to these changes are more likely to succeed in satisfying the requirements and preferences of Finnish consumers during and after the pandemic.

3.2 Retailer strategies to cope with changes in consumer behaviour

COVID-19 has caused considerable shifts in purchasing habits all around the world. Because of such shifts, retailers have been compelled to change and come up with new tactics to match evolving customer requirements and tastes (Tien, Ngoc & Anh 2021, 54). This thesis looks at some of the techniques used by Finnish retailers to deal with shifts in buying habits throughout the outbreak period. The shift from traditional to e-commerce has been among the greatest shifts in purchasing habits throughout the pandemic. As a result, Finnish retailers have made significant investments in e-commerce and digital advertising infrastructure (Tien et al. 2021, 54). To accommodate the increased demand for online shopping, the market had to improve on the creation of online shopping platforms as well as the deployment of delivery and pickup alternatives. For example, Kesko, one of Finland's

leading retail chains, raised its e-commerce sales dramatically during the epidemic, with home delivery and click-and-collect services being the most popular options (Tien et al. 2021, 54).

Another technique used by Finnish retailers to adapt to changes in consumer behaviour is to prioritize health and safety (Das et al. 2022, 701). Retailers have taken safety precautions such as supplying hand sanitizer, requiring the wearing of face masks, and enforcing social separation. To guarantee the safety of its customers and employees, retailers used measures like erecting plexiglass shields at cash registers and strengthening cleaning efforts (Das et al. 2022, 701). Finnish shops have also reacted to changes in consumer behaviour by providing necessary goods and services. Many stores have shifted their product offerings to emphasize necessities like food, cleaning supplies, and personal protective equipment. Furthermore, shops have raised their stock levels to avoid shortages and match consumer demand. For example, K-Citymarket, a Kesko retail chain, launched a "daily essentials" marketing that prioritized critical goods and ensured consumer availability (Okwuosa 2011, 28).

Finally, to retain consumers during the pandemic, Finnish retailers have developed loyalty schemes and promotions. Many businesses have devised discounts and special offers to persuade clients to return to them. For example, Lin and Bowman (2020, 90) report that S Group developed a loyalty program that provided members with discounts on essential items prior to the pandemic as a way of attracting consumers. This technique was also applied during the pandemic as it showed significant influence. It is important to note that many foreign authors have had interest in studying the effect of the pandemic on Finland. This may be because Finland is one of the countries that responded to the outbreak positively.

4 IMPLEMENTATION OF THE STUDY

This chapter addresses the method used in this study to develop insights for the main aim. The sections included in this chapter include the research method, the area of study, as well as data collection and analysis tools. Generally, it involves an outline of the whole process involved in the entire research.

4.1 Research method

The research method employed in this study is a survey, relying on the collection of primary data through a structured questionnaire. The questionnaire used for this study was designed for the assessment of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on retail consumer behaviour, allowing for a systematic collection of data regarding various aspects of consumer behaviour. This includes changes in shopping habits, shifts in these shopping habits, and a change in interest for certain sets of products. This study used a convenience sampling method to reach a diversity of consumers who received the questionnaire through online channels. The online channel involves the use of Webropol to collect data. During this process, consent was emphasized since the participants got informed about the purpose of the study and their freedom to withdraw participation in order to encourage honest and free responses (Mukherjee 2019, 94). The data obtained through the questionnaires were then subjected to analysis and visualisation to show the trends and patterns in consumer behaviour during and post-pandemic periods. Farrokhi and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad (2012, 789) report that this research method can be used to achieve an objective understanding, for instance, in investigating the shifts in retail consumer behaviour in Finland, providing valuable insights for both retailers and consumers as they adapt to the evolving retail landscape.

4.2 Research participants

The research participants for this research encompasses the residents in Finland who are also considered to be the consumers in this case. This study has a specific target on individuals who have engaged in retail shopping activities within Finland, both before and during the pandemic. Therefore, the participants for this research consists of individuals residing within Finland, regardless of their

nationality or origin, with a broad age distribution. Similarly, this study involves participants of all genders from various socioeconomic backgrounds to assess the general impact of the pandemic on consumers with no consideration of the consumers' financial statuses. In terms of geographical location, the participants selected for this study came from various regions in Finland in order to capture potential regional variations in consumer behaviour. Generally, the convenient sampling method used for this study meant that participants were selected based on their accessibility and willingness to participate in the research (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad 2012, 786). This is because this sampling method is known to offer practicality – which was required for this research – but is also subject to some level of sampling bias (Farrokhi & Mahmoudi-Hamidabad 2012, 786). Therefore, to enhance the representativeness of the findings, the participants who took part in this survey came from various demographic backgrounds and regions within Finland.

4.3 Data collection and analysis

The questionnaire administered to the respondents, shown in APPENDIX 1, generated a variety of responses that were recorded on a spreadsheet for analysis. As much as the 46 respondents agreed to take part in this survey, some of them failed to complete the survey as expected, leaving some questions unanswered. This occurrence may have been resulted to by a variety of reasons, like limited information. This was common for the open-ended questions, which often required relatively longer responses. For the analysis, the data was used to generate charts, which give a quick visualization of the dataset. These charts provide a generalised view of each of the variables, assisting in the exploration of the subject matter. This involves using the output to answer the research question through the objectives. The charts generated by the dataset, therefore, show the trends and patterns that exist within Finland with respect to consumer buying behaviour.

5 RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The study's findings and discussion of results are presented in this chapter. Additionally, this chapter offers recommendations based on findings of the analysis. In particular, it looks over the study's findings regarding the respondents, their demographics, and the impact that Covid-19 pandemic has had on retail consumer behaviour in Finland.

5.1 Background of participants

In this study, a total of 46 respondents received the questionnaires, giving a total of 46 responses. This shows that the response rate was 100%. According to Story and Tait's (2019, 192-193) report, a minimum response rate of 40% for a survey is considered to be valid and reliable. Therefore, the response rate for this survey makes it classify as a valid and reliable survey. The participants in this study were aged between 18 years to 60 years, with the modal category being the 26 to 40 years range (67.39%). This was followed by the group of participants aged 41 to 60 years old (17.39%) and the youngest, who also formed the minority in the participation, is the group aged between 18 to 25 years (15.22%). In general, figure 3 shows that none of the participants was aged above 60 years.

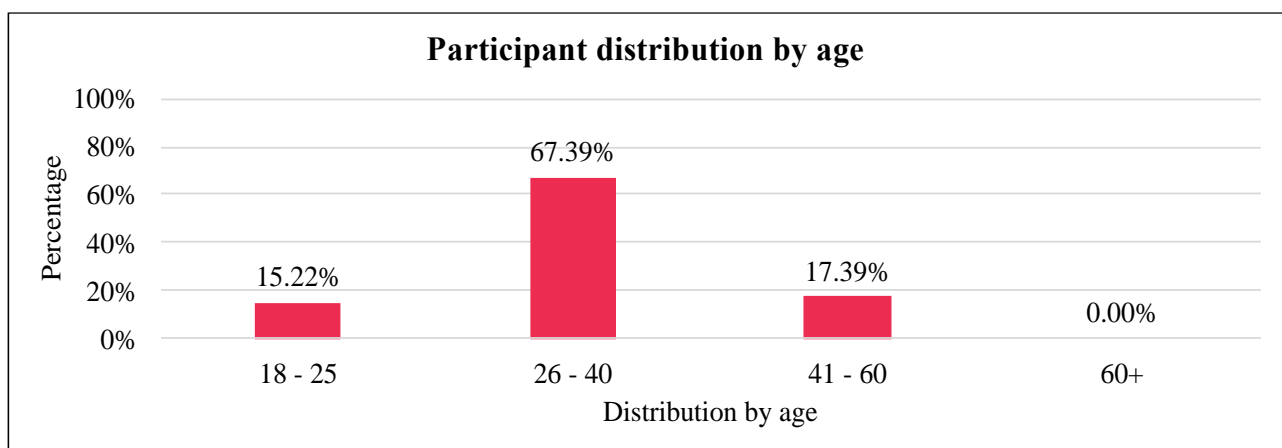


FIGURE 3. Participants' characteristics by age

In terms of employment status, the majority of this group was composed of 43.48% students, 23.91% permanently employed individuals, 8.70% temporarily employed individuals, and 21.74% self-employed individuals (FIGURE 4). Only 2.17% of the participants preferred not to disclose their

employment status. These statistics classify the participants as people who have a significant financial capability, thus have adequate knowledge of the retail industry as buyers.

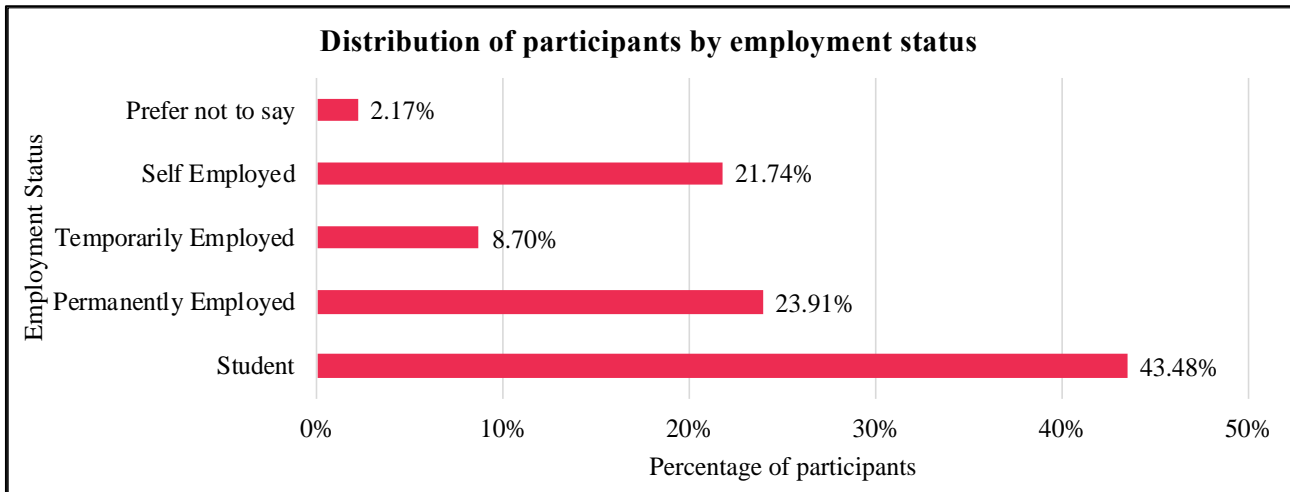


FIGURE 4. Distribution of participants by employment status

5.2 Consumer behaviour before the pandemic

The consumer behaviour prior to the beginning of the pandemic was measured through the frequency at which consumers visited physical retail stores before the COVID-19 Pandemic. To assess this, the respondents were asked how frequently they visited physical retail stores before the COVID-19 Pandemic. As presented in figure 5, the majority of the respondents (58.70%) reported visiting physical stores multiple times a week – four or more days of the week. This is considered to be the period where the retail industry in Finland, and other countries around the world, experienced normal operations. About 23.91% of the respondents reported going to physical stores at least once a week, which could sometimes go to twice a week but less than 4 times in a week. The least frequent visits were reported by 10.87% of the respondents, while 6.52% reported never visiting physical retail stores. Based on the results of this survey, it can be concluded that most people frequented retail stores prior to the onset of the pandemic.

These results are in line with the results of a study conducted by Adibfar, Gulhare, Srinivasan and Costin et al. (2022, 160-171) in Florida on shopping behaviour prior to Covid-19 pandemic, which found that the number of visits to physical shopping centres was relatively higher prior to the pandemic. This study broke down the results for different commodities for both in-store shopping and online shopping. In several accounts for in-store shopping – which is considered to be similar to visits

to physical stores for this study – there were relatively high frequencies of purchases before the peak of the pandemic compared to the peak period and the post-peak period. However, these periods are recorded by Adibfar et al. (2022) as before, during and after the pandemic period.

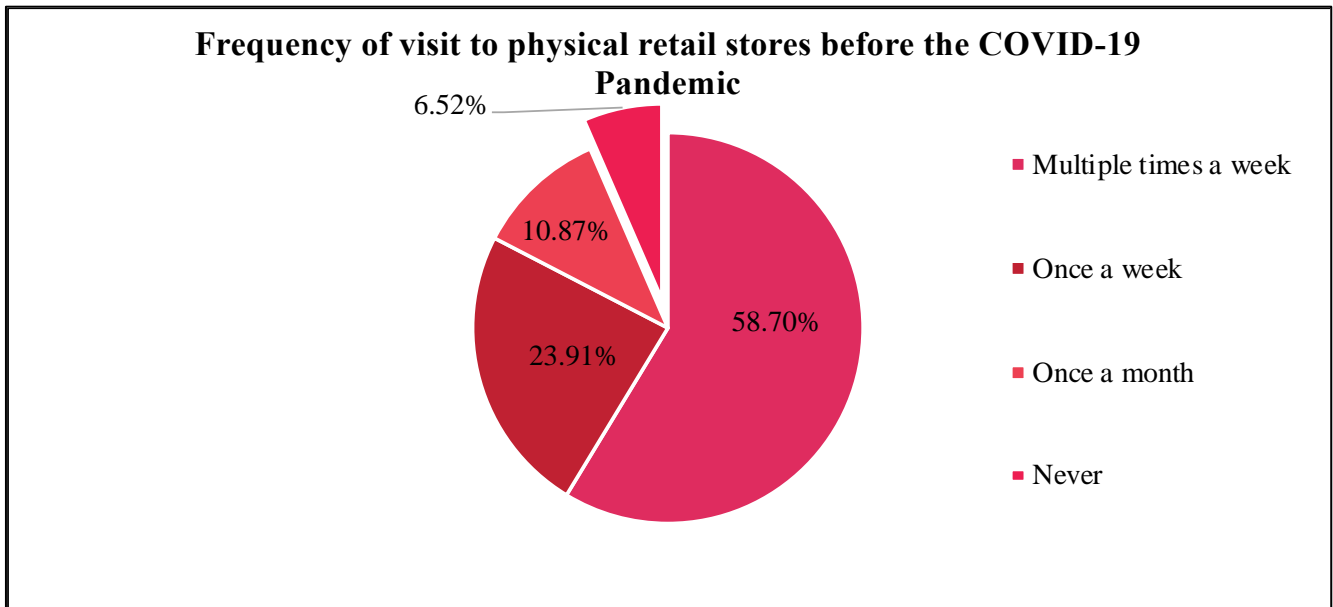


FIGURE 5. Frequency at which consumers visited physical retail stores before the COVID-19 Pandemic

5.3 Consumer behaviour after the pandemic

The results for the pre-pandemic period shows relatively higher retail activity. However, this study anticipated that the response would show that these retail activity on the consumers side would be relatively lower for the period after the pandemic had started. Figure 6 shows the responses for the survey question that asked the respondents to report the changes in their frequency of visiting physical retail stores changed since the COVID-19 pandemic. From the data collected, 36.96% of the respondents reported experiencing a similar activity in terms of the frequency of their visits to physical stores while 32.61% reported a moderate decrease of their retail activity. About 8.7% of the respondents reported significant decrease in retail activity. However, the remaining 21.74% of the respondents reported an increase in their retail activity, where 13.04% reported a moderate increase as 8.70% reported significant increase. These figures show that even though the pandemic made some individuals get used to online shopping and other forms of remote retail purchases like home delivery, others still stuck to visiting physical retail outlets and even experiencing more visits.

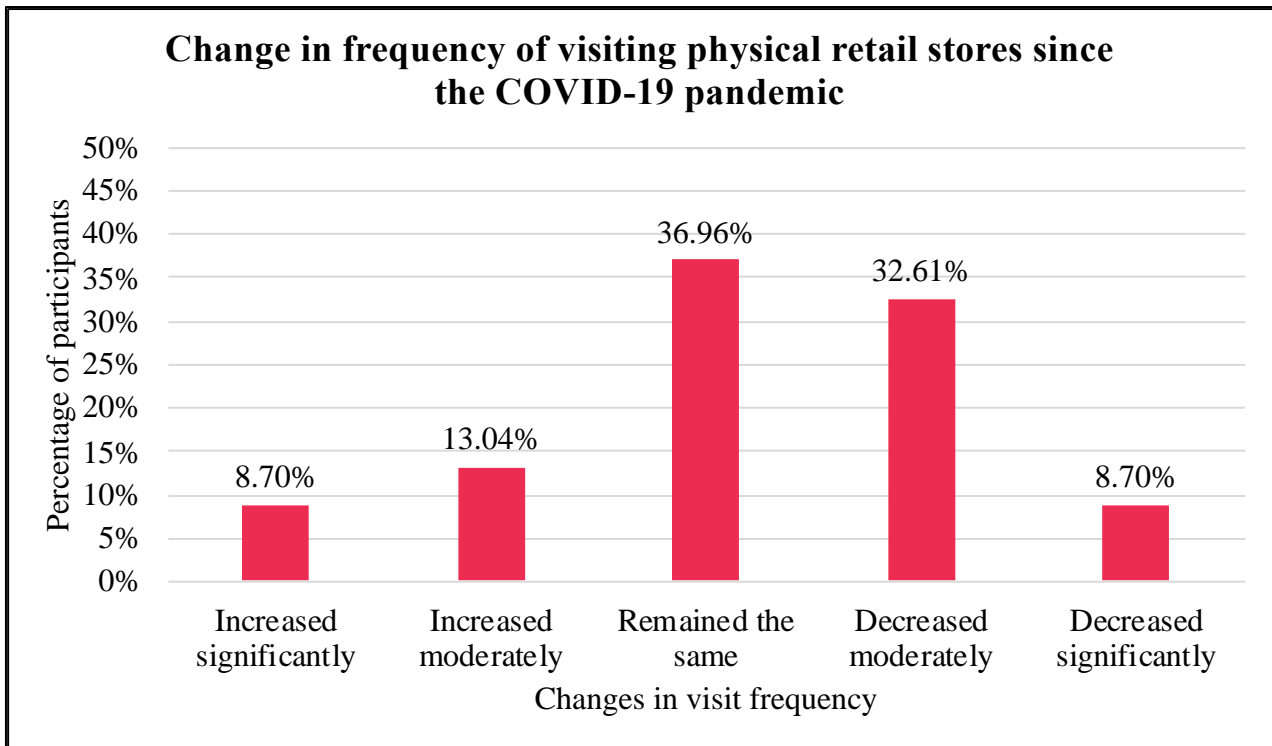


FIGURE 6. Changes in the frequency of visiting physical retail stores changed since the COVID-19 pandemic

As reported in the study by Adibfar et al. (2022, 160-171), it is evident that this increase or maintenance of visits to the retail outlets can be due to the search for specific items like grocery or electronics, which showed this dynamic in consumer behaviour. In another question that asked the respondents to select which factors they think influenced their decision to visit physical retail stores during the pandemic across a range of reasons, respondents selected combinations of pre-determined reasons to develop their responses. For the analysis of the responses that were received for this question, table 1 shows the codes used for the factors as shown in figure 7.

TABLE 1. Factors that influenced respondents' decision to visit physical retail stores during the pandemic

Code	Reason
A	Availability of sanitization measures (e.g., hand sanitizers, disinfecting wipes)
B	Compliance with social distancing guidelines
C	Quality of products (Concern over quality of products sold by virtual stores)

D	Product pricing (Physical stores saved on cost of delivery from the overall pricing)
E	Unawareness/Absence of online shopping alternatives
F	Origin of the product (local or imported)
G	Priority of the essential products you need
H	The urge to meet and interact with people (even with social distancing)

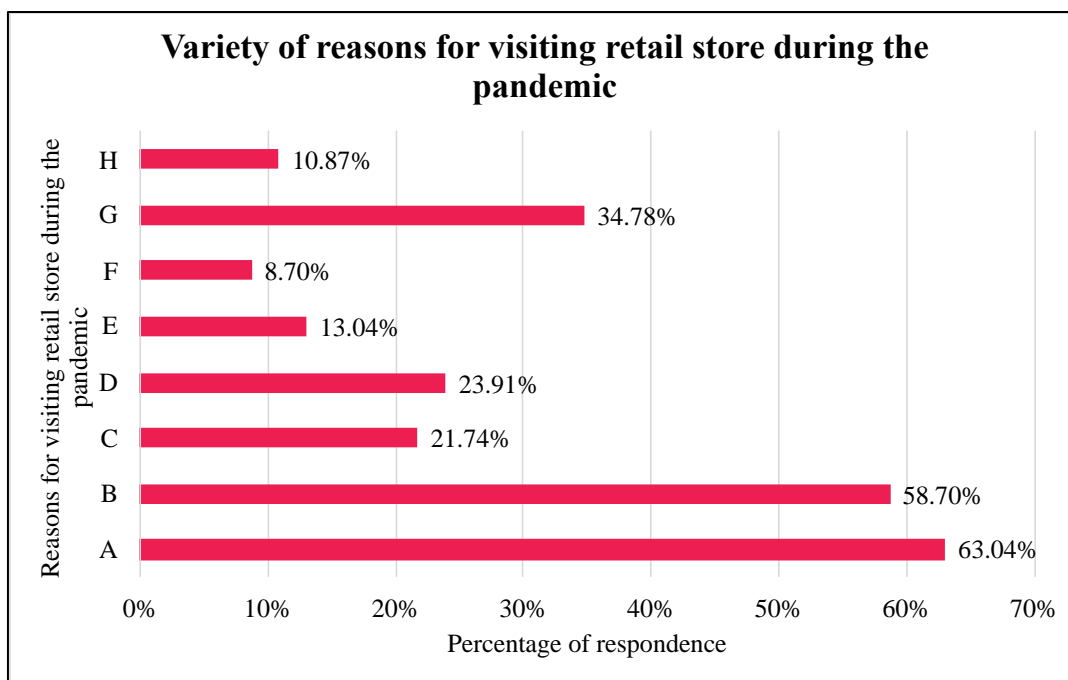


FIGURE 7. Factors that influenced respondents' decision to visit physical retail stores during the pandemic

Figure 7 shows that the availability of sanitization measures (e.g., hand sanitizers, disinfecting wipes) in the physical retail outlets was the most chosen factor by 63.04% of the respondents. This factor ensured the consumers' safety while in the retail outlet. Hwang, Nageswaran and Cho (2020) conducted a study and reported that health safety was one of the major concerns of consumers who visited retail outlets. This makes the use of sanitization measures a motivation for some consumers to visit a physical retail outlet, because they perceive them as safe. This factor, as shown by this study, was followed by the physical retail stores' compliance with social distancing guidelines (58.70%), which also determines the safety of the retail outlet. Other factors selected include the quality of products (concern over quality of products sold by virtual stores) (21.74%), product pricing (physical stores saved on cost charged by online retailers for delivery on the overall pricing) (23.01%),

unawareness/absence of online shopping alternatives for some products (13.04%), origin of the product (local or imported) (8.70%), priority of the essential products needed by the consumer (34.78%), and the urge to meet and interact with people even in the presence of social distancing (10.87%) as shown in this study. While these respondents engaged in physical shopping, it was also observed that at some point, they also engaged in online shopping based on their responses on satisfaction with shopping from online retailers. A survey question that asked the respondents how satisfied they have been with the online shopping experience during the COVID-19 pandemic yielded the results in figure 8.

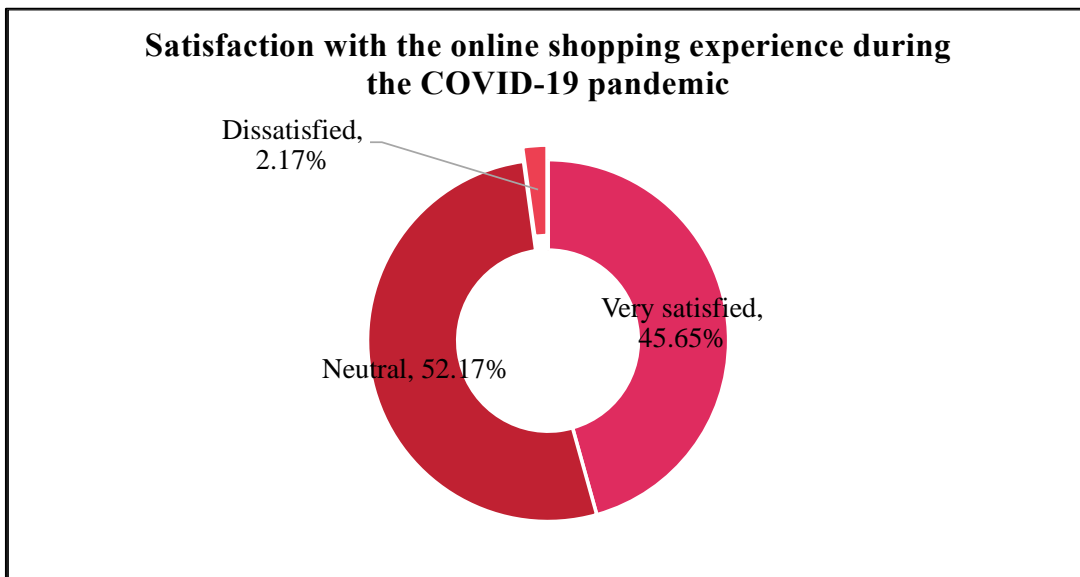


FIGURE 8. Consumer satisfaction with the online shopping experience during the pandemic

Figure 8 shows that 45.65% of the respondents reported being very satisfied with their online shopping experience, with 52.17% reporting being neutral as only 2.17% reported being dissatisfied by the online shopping experience. These results show that as much as many consumers still went to the physical stores, others still preferred the online retail experience, especially those that reported a decrease in their visits to the physical retail stores.

TABLE 2. Relationship between changes in physical retail shopping and satisfaction with online shopping experience

Satisfied		Dissatisfied		Neutral	
Increased	Decreased	Increased	Decreased	Increased	Decreased
1	9	1	-	6	9

2.17%	19.57%	2.17%	0.00%	13.04%	19.57%
-------	--------	-------	-------	--------	--------

As a percentage of the overall sample, this study shows that 19.57% of the research participants reported having a lower frequency of visits to physical retail stores while also reporting being satisfied with online shopping experience (TABLE 2). This was the same for those who reported having a lower frequency of visits to physical retail stores while also reporting being neutral with their online shopping experience (19.57%). Therefore, this group of consumers can be considered to be happy with their transition from physical shopping to online shopping which in this case is assumed to be a result of the pandemic. Additionally, research participants who increased their visits to retail outlets regardless of being satisfied or dissatisfied with online shopping experience each formed 2.17% of the total number of participants. However, none of the participants reported having a lower frequency of visits to physical retail stores despite being dissatisfied with online shopping experience.

During the pandemic, the consumers' taste and preference for certain products changed (Boyacı-Gündüz, Ibrahim, Wei, & Galanakis 2021, 6). This study listed a range of products and asked the respondents to select which types of products they preferred to purchase online during the COVID-19 pandemic. Figure 9 shows the responses that were recorded with respect to this question.

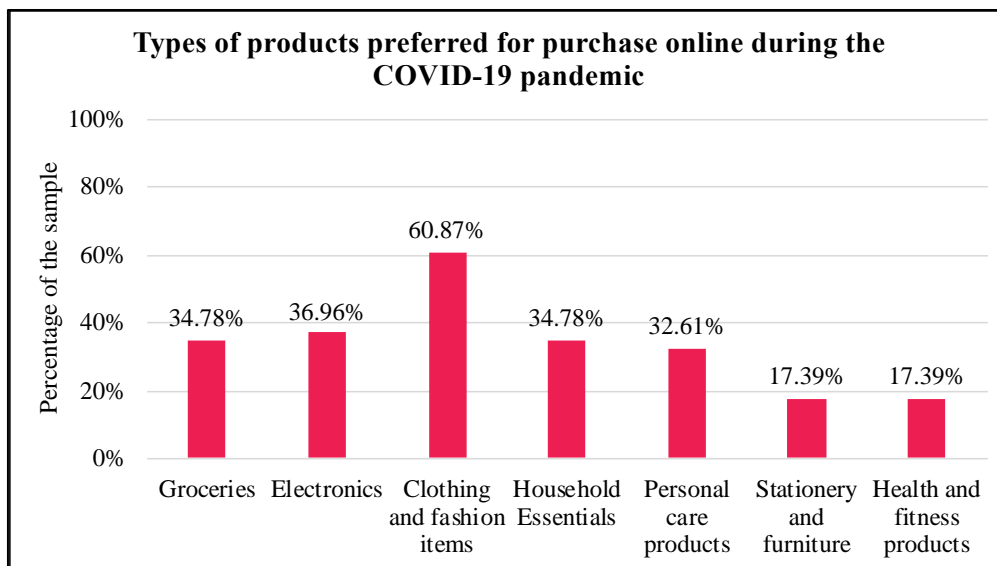


FIGURE 9. Types of products preferred for purchase online by consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic

According to the responses, clothing and fashion items topped the list (60.87%), followed by electronics (36.96%), while the least purchased items were stationery and furniture as well as health

and fitness products – both trailing at 17.39% each in terms of the percentage of the responses. Martin et al. (2020, 454), Singh (2020) and Madnani et al. (2020, 461) have an opposing finding with regard to these responses, reporting essential products used during the pandemic at a higher priority – healthcare, sanitation, personal care – than luxury items like clothing and fashion. The main reason for such dynamics was the decrease in the consumers' purchasing power. However, this study was conducted after the peak periods of the pandemic, especially after the period when the virus had been considered to be no longer a threat on a global scale and people went back to their original lives. Therefore, the results of this study show that consumers went back to purchasing more non-essential products after the pandemic compared to the period during the pandemic. However, some respondents still anticipated permanent changes in their purchasing behaviour on a long-term basis considering the fact that the virus is not yet completely eliminated but just contained at a level that it cannot be harmful to the larger global population.

The respondents were also asked if they have encountered any challenges or difficulties while shopping online during the COVID-19 pandemic in an open-ended question. Some of the challenges that were mentioned involved the products not matching the consumer's expectation, delayed delivery, fluctuating product availability based on demand, concerns over security online, issues with return or refunds, as well as difficulty in selecting preferred items. For the section of the preferred items, one of the respondents described the challenge by saying "Sometimes, it is hard to check the quality of groceries online. Size measurements of clothing was also hard and sometimes, received the wrong size."

Another question that was asked in the questionnaire enquired if the participants anticipated a long-term permanent shift in their retail shopping behaviour due to the pandemic. Figure 10 shows that a majority of the responses (54.35%) anticipate that they will not permanently shift their retail shopping behaviour as a result of the pandemic. This means that at some point, they are likely to move back to their traditional behaviours. 28.26% of the responses showed uncertainty while 17.39% had a strong anticipation for this change.

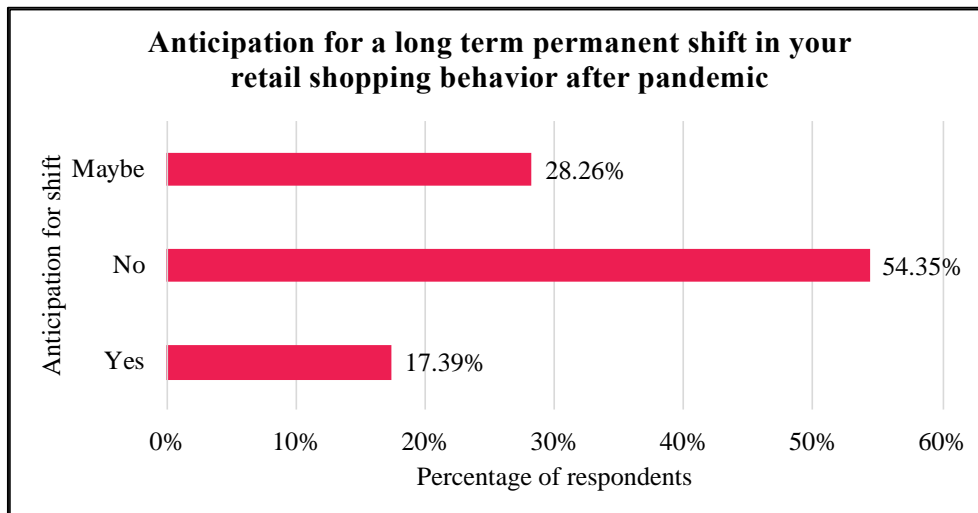


FIGURE 10. Participants anticipated a long-term permanent shift in their retail shopping behaviour due to the pandemic

According to Sheth (2020, 282), new procedures and regulations governing the way buyers shop and purchase goods and services are likely to change them even as consumers return to their old habits. Technology advancements, shifting demographics, and creative ways people have learnt to deal with the blending of the lines between work, play, and education will all contribute to the emergence of new habits. Finally, the respondents listed possible reasons for anticipating the changes as coded in table 3 and shown in figure 11. For instance, the bar represented by A on the pyramid chart (FIGURE 11) represents “Technological Advances”. Technological advances (45.65%) and changing lifestyle (43.48%) were the most mentioned reasons for anticipating a permanent change. The least mentioned reason was physical limitations, which was recorded by 8.70% of the respondents. However, most of the respondents who ended the survey with general remarks mentioned experiencing changes in their purchasing behaviour while some reported noticing no change, especially as a result of the pandemic.

TABLE 3. Codes for the reasons used in FIGURE 11

Code	Reason
A	Technological Advances
B	Pandemic effects
C	Changing lifestyle
D	Environmental consciousness
E	Financial considerations
F	Preference for convenience
G	Personalization and recommendations
H	Social influences

I	Health and safety concerns
J	Time constraints
K	Physical limitations
L	Cultural and societal shifts
M	Personal experience

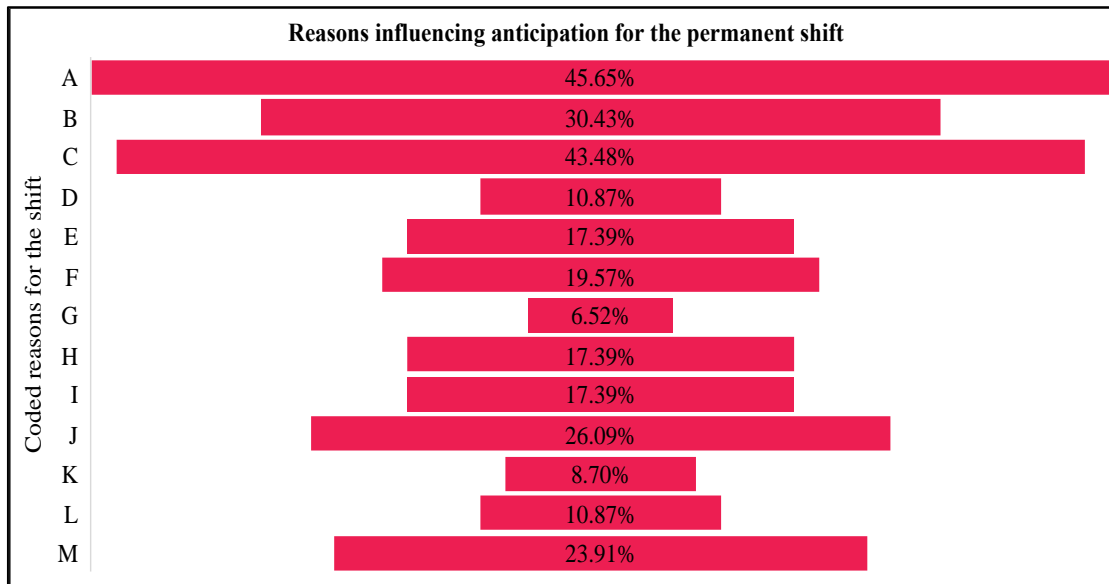


FIGURE 11. Reasons for anticipated change in consumer behavior

5.4 Recommendations for Finnish retailers

Tien et al. (2021, 54) propose that the retail industry has to constantly apply necessary measures to adjust to the changing retail environments. For this case, the changes that resulted from the pandemic in the Finnish market have also caused the players in the retail industry to apply necessary adjustments to cope with these changes. Haukkala, Niinimäki and Turunen (2023, 9) conducted a study on the textile retail industry in Finland in the context of the pandemic and found some strategies to be in application as part of the efforts to remedy the changes in the retail industry.

Some of the strategies include ensuring health and sanitation, prioritising essential products, modifying the pricing to suit the consumer purchasing power, and ensuring products are of standard quality. These strategies are in line with the finding presented in figure 7, which shows that consumers have a consideration for health and sanitation, priority for essential products, pricing, and quality of the products they purchase. Secondly, the increase in innovation, as reported by Haukkala, Niinimäki and Turunen (2023, 10), shows that companies had to engage in using emerging technology for operations

like online shopping. However, this approach also had its challenges. The third strategy involves practicing of risk management to assist in similar turbulent situations that put physical retail stores in danger as a result of the restrictions during lockdowns (Haukkala, Niinimäki & Turunen 2023, 10). Lastly, the changes that resulted into shifting towards sustainability among consumers became more environmentally aware during the pandemic. However, this may also have been resulted to by consumer behaviour (Haukkala, Niinimäki & Turunen 2023, 10).

Generally, the results of this study show that prior to the pandemic, most of the respondents frequently visited the retail outlets physically. However, with the restrictions that emerged as a result of the pandemic, many of these research participants adopted to new purchasing behaviour like online shopping. However, this group included another group of individuals who generally used online shopping or a similar form of shopping like sending other people to the retail stores. Therefore, it can be theoretically stated that the advent of the pandemic influenced some of these individuals' behaviour. Based on the results, it is evident that 19.57% of the research participants reported reducing their visits to physical retail stores after reporting being satisfied with the experience of shopping online. Therefore, hypothetically, the satisfaction with online shopping – which got popularized more by the pandemic – is linked to a rise in the number of people who have less frequent visits to retail stores. Additionally, the preference for different types of products varied. However, this research did not involve the survey on preference for different products before the pandemic to allow for a comparison. This analysis shows how the event (Covid-19) affected the purchasing behaviour.

Therefore, for retailers to be able to survive in the market, they have to modify their operations to suit the changes that have been experienced in the retail market. Some of the aspects that they need to focus on include the reasons that consumers report to be why they are likely to change their behaviour in the long term as a result of the pandemic. These include technological advances, environmental consciousness, preference for convenience, social influences for consumption of products, health and safety concerns, as well as cultural and societal shifts. From the results, it is evident that most of the respondents changed their purchasing behaviour with respect to the products purchased, frequency of visits to physical retail stores, as well as the mode of shopping.

6 CONCLUSION

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on retail consumer behaviour in Finland has been profound, as also evidenced by the findings of this study, featuring 46 participants. This thesis has shed light on how the pandemic has reshaped shopping habits, influenced preferences, and generated both short-term and potentially long-term changes in the retail landscape. Additionally, the players in the Finnish market have demonstrated adaptability and resilience in response to these shifts. Prior to the global pandemic, Finnish consumers exhibited a strong affinity for physical retail stores, with a significant proportion visiting them multiple times a week. However, this study has found that the pandemic brought about substantial changes. For instance, while some consumers continued their physical store visits, a substantial portion reduced their retail activity as demonstrated by the reduction in their visits to the physical retail stores. The adoption of online shopping, driven primarily by concerns for health and safety, offered an attractive alternative with a considerable number of participants reporting being satisfied with their online shopping experiences. These consumers mainly reflected the growing acceptance of e-commerce in the post-pandemic era.

This study also looked at the factors that influence the decisions of the consumers to visit physical stores during the pandemic. Some of the factors that were listed in this context include the availability of sanitization measures and adherence to social distancing guidelines – which underscore the importance of safety measures in retaining and attracting customers. The consumers' preference for online shopping was also found to be influenced by the nature of products, with clothing and fashion items being the most popular category for online purchase. Finnish retailers may benefit from these insights by tailoring their product offerings and marketing strategies in alignment with the changing consumer preferences. Looking to the future, many respondents in this study do not anticipate permanent changes in their retail shopping behaviour, especially due to the pandemic. However, a significant minority of the participants foresees long-term alterations in their consumption behaviour – driven by factors like technological advances, environmental consciousness, and a preference for convenience.

Therefore, to remain competitive and adapt to this evolving retail environment, Finnish retailers have employed remedial strategies like favouring domestically produced goods, embracing innovation, risk management, and sustainability initiatives. Haukkala, Niinimäki and Turunen (2023, 11) report that these strategies have been instrumental in navigating the challenges brought about by the pandemic.

Generally, the survey results align with previous studies that have shown that the COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated shifts in retail consumer behaviour in Finland. While some of these changes are expected to revert to pre-pandemic norms, many will persist with their norms. Therefore, retailers and policymakers have the duty to understand and respond to these shifts because they have a potential to shape the future of the retail industry in a post-pandemic world. By combining innovation with strategies that align with changing consumer preferences, the retail sector in Finland can remain resilient and thrive in this dynamic landscape.

This study considers changes at a specific point in time, and does not show the long-term perspective of this subject matter. Therefore, subsequent studies in this field should consider using a longitudinal approach to capture the long-term changes in consumer behaviour within the Finnish retail market. Similarly, the retail industry in Finland should also conduct more studies in specific regions, with larger sample sizes to give more specific and more accurate representation of this phenomenon in more specific contexts. Additional quantitative studies in this field should also be considered to improve the detail captured by this study.

REFERENCES

- Adibfar, A., Gulhare, S., Srinivasan, S. and Costin, A. 2022. Analysis and modeling of changes in online shopping behavior due to COVID-19 pandemic: A Florida case study. *Transport Policy*, 126, 162-176.
- Bakhtiani, G. 2021. How the wellness market in India is witnessing a meteoric rise. *Financial Express*, February 6. Available at: <https://www.financialexpress.com/brandwagon/how-the-wellness-market-in-india-is-witnessing-a-meteoric-rise/2189156/>. Accessed 5 May 2023.
- Bhuvaneswari, N. & Jesuraj, A., 2019. The Influence of Social Media on Consumer's During Their Purchase Decision Making Process. *Think India Journal*, 22(21), 622-630.
- Boyacı-Gündüz, C.P., Ibrahim, S.A., Wei, O.C. and Galanakis, C.M., 2021. Transformation of the food sector: Security and resilience during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Foods*, 10(3), 1-14.
- Chaudhuri, S. 2020. Lysol maker seeks to capitalize on Covid hygiene concerns in hotels, and on planes. *The Wall Street Journal*. Available at: <https://www.wsj.com/articles/lysol-maker-seeks-to-capitalize-on-covid-hygiene-concerns-in-hotels-on-planes-11595939726>. Accessed 5 May 2023.
- Clausnitzer 2021. *Shopping behavior changes of consumers during the COVID-19 outbreak in Finland 2020*. Available at: <https://www.statista.com/statistics/1117482/shopping-behavior-frequency-of-consumers-during-coronavirus-pandemic-in-finland/>. Accessed 5 May 2023.
- Das, D., Sarkar, A. and Debroy, A. 2022. Impact of COVID-19 on changing consumer behaviour: Lessons from an emerging economy. *International Journal of consumer studies*, 46(3), 692-715.
- Debroy, L. 2020. How online exercise sessions are keeping India fit during the lockdown. *Outlook*. Available at: <https://www.outlookindia.com/website/story/india-news-how-online-exercise-sessions-are-keeping-india-fit-during-the-lockdown/350026> Accessed 5 May 2023.
- Engel, J. F., Kollat, D. T. and Blackwell, R. D. (1973) *Consumer Behavior*. Holt, Rinehart and Winston marketing series.
- Farrokhi, F. and Mahmoudi-Hamidabad, A., 2012. Rethinking convenience sampling: Defining quality criteria. *Theory & practice in language studies*, 2(4).
- Haapio, H., Mero, J., Karjaluo, H. and Shaikh, A.A. 2021. Implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on market orientation in retail banking. *Journal of Financial Services Marketing* 26(4), 205-214.
- Hwang, E.H., Nageswaran, L. and Cho, S.H., 2020. Impact of COVID-19 on omnichannel retail: Drivers of online sales during pandemic. Available at: https://papers.ssrn.com/sol3/Delivery.cfm/SSRN_ID3657827_code1189497.pdf?abstractid=3657827&mirid=1. Accessed 5 May 2023.
- International Trade Administration, U.S. Department of Commerce, 2022. *Finland - Country Commercial Guide*. [Online] Available at: <https://www.trade.gov/country-commercial-guides/finland-ecommerce>. Accessed 7 May 2023

- Karjaluoto, H., Shaikh, A.A., Leppäniemi, M. and Luomala, R. 2020. Examining consumers' usage intention of contactless payment systems. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*, 38(2), 332-351.
- Knowles, J., Ettenson, R., Lynch, P. and Dollens, J. 2020. Growth opportunities for brands during the COVID-19 crisis. *MIT Sloan Management Review*, 61(4), 2-6.
- Koivunen, K., Portegijs, E., Sillanpää, E., Eronen, J., Kokko, K. and Rantanen, T. 2022. Maintenance of high quality of life as an indicator of resilience during COVID-19 social distancing among community-dwelling older adults in Finland. *Quality of Life Research*, 1-10.
- Kumar, S., Talwar, S., Murphy, M., Kaur, P. and Dhir, A. 2021. A behavioural reasoning perspective on the consumption of local food. A study on REKO, a social media-based local food distribution system. *Food Quality and Preference*, 93(1), 1-13.
- Lin, C. and Bowman, D., 2022. The impact of introducing a customer loyalty program on category sales and profitability. *Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services*, 64, p.102.
- Martin, A., Markhvida, M., Hallegatte, S. and Walsh, B. 2020. Socio-economic impacts of COVID-19 on household consumption and poverty. *Economics of disasters and climate change*, 4(3), 453-479.
- Madnani, D., Fernandes, S. and Madnani, N. 2020. Analysing the impact of COVID-19 on over-the-top media platforms in India. *International Journal of Pervasive Computing and Communications*, 16(5), 457-475.
- Mukherjee, S.P., 2019. A guide to research methodology: An overview of research problems, tasks and methods.
- Okwuosa, M., 2011. The Meaning of The Fairtrade Certification Mark on Food Products: Consumer Perceptions in K-Group Food Stores in Helsinki.
- Popovic, I., Bossink, B.A. and van der Sijde, P.C. 2019. Factors influencing consumers' decision to purchase food in environmentally friendly packaging: what do we know and where do we go from here? *Sustainability*, 11(24), 1-22.
- Rondoni, A. and Grasso, S., 2021. Consumers behaviour towards carbon footprint labels on food: A review of the literature and discussion of industry implications. *Journal of Cleaner Production*, 301.
- Sánchez-Sánchez, E., Ramírez-Vargas, G., Avellaneda-López, Y., Orellana-Pecino, J.I., García-Marín, E. and Díaz-Jimenez, J. 2020. Eating habits and physical activity of the Spanish population during the COVID-19 pandemic period. *Nutrients*, 12(9), 1-12.
- Sheth, J., 2020. Impact of Covid-19 on consumer behavior: Will the old habits return or die? *Journal of business research*, 117, 280-283.
- Singh, D. 2020. How is the coronavirus impacting the streaming platforms with an increasing appetite of viewers? *Financial Express*. Available at: <https://www.financialexpress.com/brandwagon/how-is-coronavirus-impacting-the-streaming-platforms-with-an-increasing-appetite-of-viewers/1919916/>. Accessed 5 May 2023.
- Story, D.A. and Tait, A.R., 2019. Survey research. *Anesthesiology*, 130(2), 192-202.

Strielkowski, W., Tarkhanova, E., Baburina, N. and Streimikis, J. 2021. Corporate social responsibility and renewable energy development in the baltic states. *Sustainability*, 13(17), 1-18.

Tien, N.H., Ngoc, N.M. and Anh, D.B.H., 2021. Change of consumer behavior in the post Covid-19 period. *Change*, 2(1), 53-58.

United Nations, 2020. *Everyone Included: Social Impact Of COVID-19*. Available at: <https://social.desa.un.org/everyone-included-social-impact-of-covid-19>. Accessed 12 May 2023

Viksne, K., Salkovska, J., Gaitniece, E. and Puke, I., 2016. Comparative analysis of customer behaviour models. In *Proceedings of the 2016 International conference on Economic Science for Rural Development*, 231

APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1/1: Survey questionnaire

The impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on consumer buying behavior in Finland

Thank you for participating in this study. This questionnaire is designed to gather information on the impact of the Covid-19 Pandemic on consumer buying behavior in Finland. Your valuable responses will contribute to a better understanding of this topic. Please answer the following questions to the best of your knowledge and experience. The link to this survey is sent via text and the responses are required to be completed by the date 10.10.2023. This survey is done as a requirement for my BBA thesis and you can contact me through email which is sunday.oladunjoye@centria.fi. All responses given by you will be kept confidential and used for thesis purposes only

1. What is your age? (Please select where your age falls among the Ranges given below

- 18 - 25
- 26 - 40
- 41 - 60
- 60+

2. What is your current state of employment?

- Student
- Permanently Employed
- Temporarily Employed
- Self Employed
- Prefer not to say

3. How frequently did you visit physical retail stores before the COVID-19 Pandemic ?

- Multiple times a week
- Once a week
- Once a month
- Never

APPENDIX 2/2

4. How has your frequency of visiting physical retail stores changed since the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Increased significantly
- Increased moderately
- Remained the same
- Decreased moderately
- Decreased significantly

5. Which of the following factors influenced your decision to visit physical retail stores during the pandemic? (Select all that apply)

- Availability of sanitization measures (eg, hand sanitizers, disinfecting wipes)
- Compliance with social distancing guidelines
- Quality of products (Concern over quality of products sold by virtual stores)
- Product pricing (Physical stores saved on cost of delivery from the overall pricing)
- Unawareness/Absence of online shopping alternatives
- Origin of the product (local or imported)
- Priority of the essential products you need
- The urge to meet and interact with people (even with social distancing)

6. Have you shifted more towards online shopping during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Yes
- No

7. If you have shifted towards online shopping, what were the main reasons for doing so? (Select all that apply)

- Technological Advances
- Pandemic effects
- Changing lifestyle
- Environmental consciousness

APPENDIX 3/3

- Financial considerations
- Preference for convenience
- Personalization and recommendations
- Social influences
- Health and safety concerns
- Time constraints
- Physical limitations
- Cultural and societal shifts
- Personal experience

8. How satisfied have you been with the online shopping experience during the COVID-19 pandemic?

- Very satisfied
- Neutral
- Dissatisfied
- Very dissatisfied

9. Which types of products have you preferred to purchase online during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Select all that apply)

- Groceries
- Electronics
- Clothing and fashion items
- Household Essentials
- Personal care products
- Stationery and furniture
- Health and fitness products

10. Have you encountered any challenges or difficulties while shopping online during the COVID-19 pandemic? If yes, please describe.

APPENDIX 4/4

Your answer

11. Do you anticipate a permanent shift in your retail shopping behavior after in a long term due to the Pandemic?

- Yes
- No
- Maybe

12. If you anticipate a permanent shift, what are the main reasons influencing your decision? (Select all that apply)

- Technological Advances
- Pandemic effects
- Changing lifestyle
- Environmental consciousness
- Financial considerations
- Preference for convenience
- Personalization and recommendations
- Social influences
- Health and safety concerns
- Time constraints
- Physical limitations
- Cultural and societal shifts
- Personal experience

APPENDIX 5/5

13.

Is there any additional feedback or comments you would like to provide regarding your retail consumer behavior during the COVID-19 pandemic? (Open-ended)
