

# **Consumer Consumption Behavior in Online Store and in Brick-and-Mortar Store**



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Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tutkia, miten kulutuskäyttäytyminen on muuttunut yhteistyöyrityksen kivijalkakaupassa verkkokaupan avaamisen seurauksena. Opinnäytetyö kirjoitettiin yhteistyössä erään Suomessa toimivan päivittäistavarakaupan kanssa.

Opinnäytetyön teoreettinen viitekehys sisältää määritelmän kulutuskäyttäytymisestä, ostoprosessin vaiheista sekä ostajan kuluttamiseen johtavat syyt. Teoriaosuudessa on myöskin verrattu kivijalkakaupasta sekä verkkokaupasta ostamisen hyötyjen erot. Viime vuosina mm. digitalisaatio ja monikanavaisuus ovat muuttaneet kulutuskäyttäytymistä. Tämän vuoksi opinnäytetyössä on otettu huomioon, miten kulutuskäyttäytymistä tutkitaan ja miksi yrityksen on tärkeää pysyä voimakkaassa kehityksessä mukana. Opinnäytetyössä on pohdittu sekä kulutuskäyttäytymisen nykytilannetta että historiaa.

Tutkimus toteutettiin laadullisena- sekä määrällisenä tutkimuksena, jossa hyödynnettiin erilaisia henkilöhaastatteluja, sekä yrityksen liiketoiminnan raportoinnin tuottamia tilastoja. Yhteistyöyrityksen työntekijät ovat täyttäneet yrityksen liiketoiminnan kannalta kaikista tärkeimmät tiedot erinäisiin Excel -taulukoihin, joiden pohjalta tehtiin opinnäytetyötä varten kolme erilaista pylväsdiagrammia. Pylväsdiagrammien avulla tutkittiin kolmen eri muuttujan kehitystä, joita olivat kivijalkakaupan kokonaismyynnin kehitys, verkkokaupan kokonaismyynnin kehitys sekä kivijalkakaupan asiakasmäärien kehitys.

Opinnäytetyössä tehdyn tutkimuksen perusteella saatiin selville, miten verkkokaupan avaaminen on vaikuttanut Yhteistyöyrityksen kokonaismyynnin sekä asiakasmäärien kehitykseen. Opinnäytetyöstä myöskin selviää, että onko verkkokaupan avaaminen esimerkiksi laskenut kivijalkakaupan kokonaismyyntiä tai asiakasmääriä.

**Avainsanat** Kulutuskäyttäytyminen, Kuluttaminen, Verkkokauppa, Kivijalkakauppa

**Sivut** 31 sivua

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The aim of the thesis was to study, how consumer behavior has changed in the commission company's brick-and-mortar store as a result of the opening of the online store. The thesis was written in cooperation with a grocery store, which operates in Finland.

The theoretical framework of the thesis contains a definition of consumption behavior, stages of the purchasing process and the reasons for the consumer's consumption. The theory of the share has also been compared with the differences in the benefits of buying from a brick-and-mortar store and an online store. As consumer behavior has changed over the past few years as a result of digitalization and omnichannellisation, the thesis has taken into account how consumption behavior is studied and why it is important for the company to keep up with strong development. In order to understand the change caused by digitalization in terms of consumer behavior, the thesis has also considered not only the current situation, but also the history of consumer behavior.

The study was carried out as a qualitative and quantitative research using various interviews with commission company, as well as statistics produced by the company's business reporting. The employees of the commission company have filled in the most important information for the company's business in various Excel tables, on the basis of which three different column charts were made for the thesis. The column charts were used to study the development of three variables, such as the development of total sales of brick-and-mortar stores, the development of total online store sales and the development of the number of customers in the brick-and-mortar store.

Based on the research carried out in the thesis, it was discovered how the opening of the online store has affected the development of the commission company's total sales and customer numbers. The thesis also shows whether the opening of the online store has caused, for example, significant downturns in the total sales of the brick-and-mortar store or the number of customers.

Keywords Consumer Behavior, Consumption, Brick-and-Mortar store, Online Store

Pages 31 pages

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# **1 Introduction**

## **1.1 Research Question and Objectives**

The subject of this thesis is consumer consumption behavior and its changes. The thesis examines how opening of an online store has affected the consumer behavior of the partner company's store consumers. The aim is to use various research methods to find out how behavior and behavior habits of consumers has changed as a result of the opening of an online store. The research question for this thesis is: How opening an online store affected Company X's brick-and-mortar store Consumer Behavior?

This thesis focuses only on consumer consumption behavior, which is also called purchasing behavior. The thesis does not take a position on other models of consumption behavior, such as recycling. In this thesis, the consumer is referred to as three different appointments: consumer, buyer and customer.

## **1.2 Finding the subject**

The topic of the thesis was born out of an interest in consumer behavior, and how consumers' consumption habits and purchasing processes have changed over the past few years as a result of digitalization. Several years of personal experience as an employee in field also confirmed the interest in the topic of the thesis. In the thesis, commission company is called as Company X.

## **1.3 Thesis Structure**

The theoretical framework of the thesis contains a definition of consumption behavior and why it is being studied. This thesis has looked at the history of consumer behavior and how digitalization has changed consumer behavior and consumption habits. As a result of omnichannelisation, the thesis has compared the differences in the benefits of buying from a brick-and-mortar store and an online store. The last aspect of the theoretical framework addresses the study of consumption behavior and why it is important for business to understand development.

After the theoretical framework, research and results will be presented. The thesis has analyzed the results of the research and considered the reliability of the sources. The last entity of the thesis is a conclusion.

## **2 Consumer Behavior**

Consumer behavior is a multidisciplinary field, the research of which has become an increasingly important part of the company's business in recent years. Consumption behavior has been studied under the leadership of many different researchers, and the researchers represent many different fields of research. When studying consumer behavior, emphasis is not only on a particular area, but on different perspectives affecting the research in relation to how and what consumption behavior is to be investigated. (Solomon 2018, 45.)

The key to a successful business is to understand the consumption behavior of its customers. Based on consumption behavior, marketing and sales paths are built for the company, which the company aims to use to make the transaction a success. The challenges for understanding purchasing behavior are caused by rapid changes in their needs among customers, and the company has not been able to react to these changes in good time, which leads to unexpected downturns in the company. Sometimes it's hard for a company to understand what a customer wants today, let alone in two months. The longer the time, the harder it becomes to predict the customer's consumption behavior. The company's interest in its customers' consumption behavior is largely related to product development and service improvement, for example. (Clootrack n.d.)

Research into consumer behavior is of paramount importance to the company and its marketers. By understanding consumer behavior, marketers seek to find out and anticipate the consumer's purchase of the decision. The aim of marketing is to market a product or service to satisfy the consumer's desire or need. By studying consumer behavior, the aim is precisely to find an answer to this equation. The purpose of the study is to understand what consumers are acquiring, but it is even more important to understand why they are acquiring that particular product. (Clootrack n.d.)

It is important for the company to learn how the consumer chooses, uses or disposes of the product in question as an individual or group. Or how consumers share the experience of

satisfying need or desire. Understanding this makes it easier for marketers to target specific products to specific individuals or a targeted group. (Ukessays 2020)

Consumer consumption behavior examines the consumer's consumption process, in which individuals or groups select, purchase, use or dispose certain product or service that has been purchased to satisfy the consumer's desire or need. The needs and desires people try to satisfy vary from different reasons. Some people try to satisfy hunger whereas someone else spiritual fulfillment. (Solomon 2018, 28.)

Consumer Behavior is studied by many different specialists. The field of consumer behavior is perceived interdisciplinary: it is studied by researchers from many different fields who are interested in how the consumer interacts with companies. Researching consumer behavior is not easy, because it is influenced by many different factors: consumers have different preferences, views, favorites and dislikes. Each consumer has its own consuming pattern when purchasing products. (Ukessays 2020)

Consumer consumption behavior is studied so that the company can understand the customer and their behavior when deciding a product to satisfy a need or want. Research can help identify the reasons that drive consumers to buy and use certain products. It is the most important for marketers to understand what their customers want and their future expectations. By studying consumer behavior marketers can figure out the reasons why the consumers buy a specific product. However, understanding why consumers behave somehow is important for the company for finding success both its current and future's new products. (Ukessays 2020)

## **2.1 Who is consumer?**

Consumer is a person who by buying, using or recycling uses a variety of commodities. The commodities can be for example one time commodity, as food or semi- durable commodity as clothes. In three-step consumption process consumer express need, problem or want and purchase the commodity and in the end of the process consumer dispose it. Supplier and user of the commodity is not necessarily the same person, for example parents purchase clothes to children's use. (Solomon 2018, 29.)



## 2.2 Why people consume?

The reasons that make people consume, for example by buying or using, are often straightforward, for example many think when buying basic food groceries that what kind of food is overall suitable or desirable. In some cases, can be noticed, that how much emotional bonds can affect buying or non- buying some product or service. Sometimes it is hard for consumers to recognize what lead them to purchase or make consumption decision. (Solomon 2018, 173.)

In consumption, as in life anyway people do something because of some specific reason. People need motivation to act in a certain way. Motivation usually comes out when consumer want to satisfy some of his/her born need. The reason, which motivate people to consume depends on different reasons and it can be complicated and variable. (Solomon 2018, 173)

So that sales organization would know what to offer for the consumers, they have to know which are consumers both needs and wants and why they want to use specific products or services as a tool of satisfaction need. Primary mission of being a marketer is to understand how to satisfy their customer's needs, but it can be exceedingly difficult, because not all the consumers have same reasons to purchase some product or service. Understanding motives of the consumers is important step, in order to predict, that the product appropriately satisfy needs of the consumer. (Solmon 2018, 173.)

Motives act as a kind of guide for the consumer. They have a lot of impact on what the consumer ends up buying, as the motives are goal oriented. In other words, the motives only show the consumer the direction to satisfy the need. (Solomon 2018, 174.)

## 2.3 Needs and wants

Satisfying the consumer's needs and desires is the most important position in the business. The consumer chooses the products or services of the company that feels that they are best able to satisfy the need or desire. Needs create certain kind of strain in the consumer, which try to get the consumer decrease or remove it. (Solomon 2018, 173.)

### **2.3.1 Needs**

The consumer has a problem, which she/ he wants to satisfy. Needs are justifiable and necessities. The needs are vital for human survival and they remain fairly similar. A lot of people have similar basic needs. The needs of the consumers can be Utilitarian or Hedonistic. (Solomon 2018, 173.)

- Utilitarian: The desire of satisfying some specific functional or practical benefit, in other words people develop some preference about products either based on usefulness or futility. (Ryall 2017.)
- Hedonistic: Sensual, fantasy, emotional aspects of the consumers interactions with products. Hedonistic needs are subjective and experimental. (Ryall 2017.)

### **2.3.2 Wants**

The consumer has the problem, which she/he wants to satisfy in a certain way. Wants are desires, which are not obligatory for human survival, for example. Desires are not permanent and can vary from day to day and all people do not share same desires. In other words, a person's desire is highly influenced by personality and cultural upbringing. (Solomon 2018, 175.)

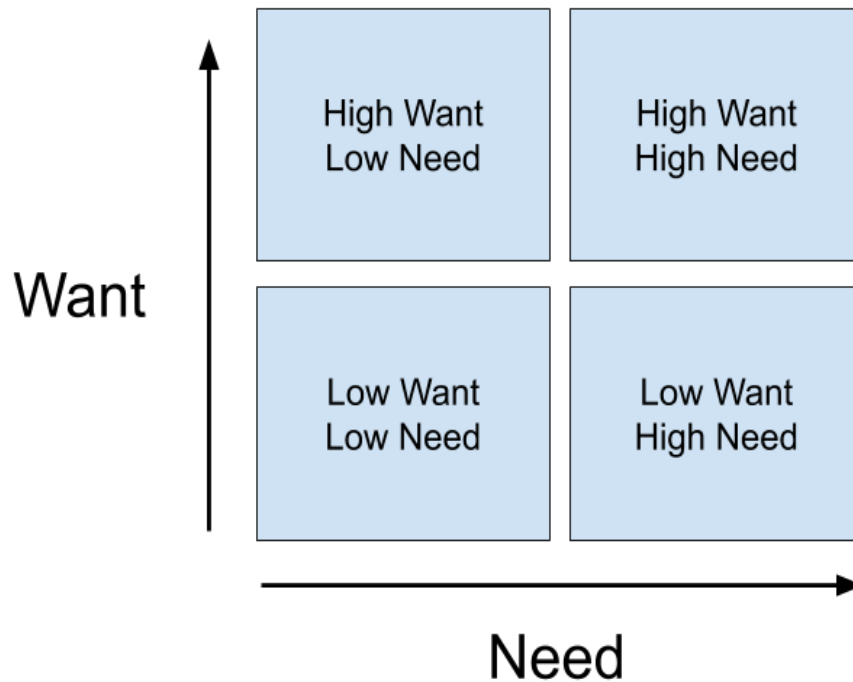


Figure 1. Simple Living

Daily (Need vs Want, 2019)

The diagram above can be used to identify needs and desires. The categories shown in the diagram are not static, but dynamic. Every consumer makes a definition of necessity and necessity, which often changes during life. Things placed in categories may change, but the strategy for solving the category will always remain constant. (Thrive Global 2017)

High Want & Low Need – This area takes into account the needs that are needed little, but there is a great desire. For example, a consumer could eat dinner at home, but wants to eat in a restaurant to save time in making dinner or pamper themselves. Often this category includes sensible things, but they can also be irrational desires. There should be items in this category that actually give you happiness to life. (Thrive Global 2017 & Simple Living Daily 2019)

High Want & High Need - This category includes the things that the consumer needs, but also wants. For example, material things are food, clothes and housing that many people need and want. Intangible things that the consumer values include, for example, the financial security, health and relationships provided by work. In this category, the need is often proven by desire, for example, buying a bigger house. (Thrive Global 2017 & Simple Living Daily 2019)

Low Want & Low Need - There is a category in the lower left-hand corner of the chart that is useless to the consumer. The category includes goods and services that are useless to the consumer. I'm sure every consumer will notice at some point in their lives that they've acquired something involuting. (Thrive Global 2017 & Simple Living Daily 2019)

Low Want & High Need -The last category in the chart includes things the consumer doesn't feel they want, but they have to be. Items in this category are often apparent. For example, paying taxes and insurance. It's a good idea to minimize the cost of this category. (Thrive Global 2017 & Simple Living Daily 2019)

## **2.4 Progress of buying process**

Different facets, for example marketers, psychologists and sociologist have investigated consumer's behavior extensively. The most important aspect while doing research about consumer behavior is to understand why and how consumer does certain buying decision. Company which can best read consumer's mind will be usually rewarded by consumer's money. (Hiltunen 2017, 21.)

Buying process usually gets started, when consumer will experience feeling about need. Stimulus, which need cause can be internal as hunger or external author, for example advertisement in social media. To understand better consumer's buying process there are figure which shows whole buying process from the beginning to the end. (Hiltunen 2017, 23.)



Figure 2. Hiltunen (Mitä tulevaisuuden asiakas haluaa, 2017)

Consumer's decision of buying action and which affect to buying decision is for example considered from Neoclassical point of view. This view illustrate consumer as a rational creature, which consuming decision is affected by benefit decision can offer to the consumer. Differing from neoclassical view, consumer's buying behavior is affected also for example by social pressure and trends, and therefore the consumers does not act that rational. For example, if utilitarian viewpoint in other words countervalue for money would be only determinant in buying decision, may buying of luxury products decrease because even using a smaller amount of stake would be enough. (Hiltunen 2017, 22.)

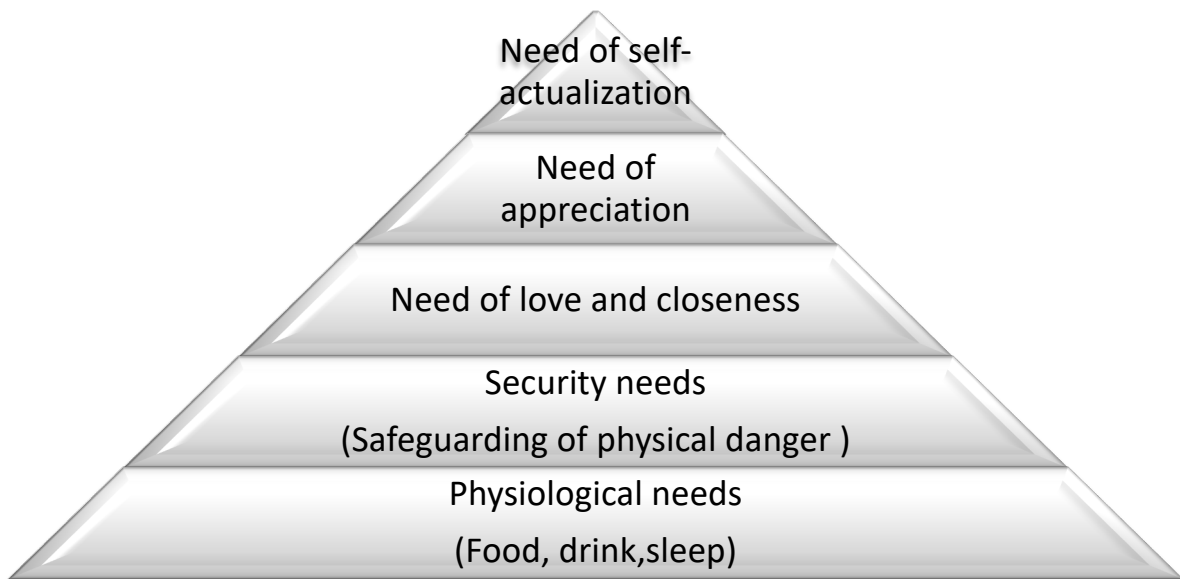
Therefore, buying decision is strongly influenced by different emotional states and not so rational needs. As a result of this nowadays in marketing and advertising aim to influence consumer's feelings and for example create visualization of some product neither focusing on to explain to consumer rational benefits of product. (Hiltunen 2017, 22.)

#### 2.4.1 Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

The choice of commodity and in the end, which commodity consumer decide to purchase is influenced by consumer's personal and psychological reasons, for example: personality, events of life, age, gender, social class, values, motivation, attitudes, opinions et cetera. Decision making is moreover affected by several reference groups, which are for example culture, family background and social class. (Hiltunen 2017,23.)

Abraham Maslow was an American psychologist who became known after developing Hierarchy on Needs- tool. Maslow's tool include human's needs and their priorities. A pyramid- shaped

hierarchy of needs can be used as relief when deepened into people's behavior, because according to Maslow authors of listed in pyramid lead people's behavior. (Hiltunen 2017, 24.)



Figure

3. Solomon (Consumer Behavior 2018)

At the bottom of pyramid there are physiological, in other words the needs which are necessary for survival, for example food, drink, heat and respiratory air. These needs are requirement of the hierarchy pyramid and without these needs it is impossible to satisfy other needs. Next, Maslow listed the needs of security, which include, for example safeguarding of different dangers. Third most important aspects are the needs of closeness and love, which, for example, friends, family and partner can give. Second and the top is the need of appreciation, such as self-esteem, experiencing respect from others and respecting others as well. Thus, according to Maslow's theory, the need for cultivation can be considered the least "most important" and this need can be chased after lower "more important" stages are accomplished systematically. (Hiltunen 2017, 25.)

However, the tool, which has gathered some criticism, describes well the prioritization of people's needs. If there are difficulties in physiological needs, for example purchasing food, many would not at this point use their last money for buying a coloring book in order to execute themselves. Maslow's tool has been criticized of its culture-bound problem. Meaning that assumptions of pyramid may apply only, for example to Western culture, or not even to everyone in Western culture. The most important part of interpreting Maslow's tool is to remember that not all of the

consumers have same priorities of needs, and they might change depending on different stages of consumer's lives. (Hiltunen 2017, 25.,26.)

### **3 Market situation analysis**

#### **3.1 History of market situation**

Clear changes in the market began to occur for the first time during the years 1560-1760. At that time, wholesalers had power to decide what was offered to the consumers in Europe. Wholesalers sold domestic- and foreign commodities. Wholesalers had clear domination in markets and the consumers had practically nothing effect at all on what kind of commodities were available. The wholesalers had idealistic situation from business point of view, because there was flagrant shortage in many products. In another words this means that maintaining high prices was not a very high risk. Situation was also the most awesome to the companies which sold commodities to the consumers because almost all of the commodities was sold, and nothing was in stuck of storages. Domination of the wholesalers started little by little to pass because of the Industrial Revolution and at the same time other operators started to desire dominance for themselves. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 21.)

As a result of the Industrial Revolution, from the 1760s until the beginning of World War II, dominance in the markets for itself was captured by the manufacturers. They were people who owned factories and they decided which products were produced and who were the lucky wholesaler for retailing products for the consumers. This was part of the world's history when serial production was seen first time as a consequence of the Industrial Revolution. Serial production enabled larger selection of production which meant that the products could be sold with cheaper prices. Retailers were so-called traders who forwarded right products at the right time for the huge mass of the consumers for satisfying their needs. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 21.)

Dominance of manufacturers started to flag down when between the 1970s and 2000s the market started to show up more sales oriented. Manufacturers were almost forced to move for background from the position of dominance because number of retailers increased powerfully and

they were ready to serve new kind of shopping empire for the consumers by opening different kind of brick-and-mortar stores, department stores and supermarkets. Rapid increase of sales organizations forced the manufacturers to consent the way market situation instructed and listen to production hopes of retailers. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 22.)

Strong branding of the companies began, when in the early 2000s, the activities of retailers started to remind more marketing- oriented. The companies started to mind more about own competition position by creating memorable and unique brands, which were allocated to target groups. As a result of the transition the companies sold different product ranges but also feeling about the brand which the consumer could identify with. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 22.)

After the 2010s, the transition toward buyer orientation has begun, where the dominance of buyers has risen, and nothing seems to stop this. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 22.)

### **3.2 Situation nowadays**

Changes in consumer's behavior can be described certain kind of revolution, which is not ending in a flash. This revolution will affect more or less to all industries. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 15.)

Nowadays the consumers are more aware of the companies, products and services than ever before. Digitalization has allowed for the consumers to make comparison between products and services easily online which is part of the consumer's buying process at the beginning. Nowadays, switching provider from the current to the new is not a prerequisite for the consumers. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 13.)

The current market situation is going through so-called great revolution, where historically the consumers can enjoy dominance for the first time. As a result of this so- called revolution, competition between companies has increased in totally new level. In other words, the consumers have in practically influence on what sales organizations offer. Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 22.)

In order for the company being able to keep its customer base in a challenging competitive situation, it must offer for the consumers: information, answers, prices and solutions. Nowadays, the sellers must understand that all her/ his professional skills and knowledge must be given to the



consumer and the know-how should not be pledged, as the possible buyer has probably done all the necessary background work about the available market situation. A face-to-face meeting with a professional buyer is the last chance for the seller to assure the consumer that alternative seller will not be able to offer the commodity the consumer is looking for. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 163.)

In the challenging competition situation and dominance of the buyers, the companies no longer have the opportunity to cherish the old-fashioned "take it or leave it" saying if the company wants to keep its customer base and avoid bankruptcy. When the market is in the situation where the buyer dominates the market, there is only one solution for the sale person: give more and earlier. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 164.)

### **3.3 New model of hybrid consuming**

Hybrid consuming is based on consumer's own value system and everyone defines by herself/himself which is the price she/he is ready to pay, and which brings feeling of satisfaction. By visiting in a grocery store hybrid consumer appreciates large and comprehensive product range which can offer different products for different events. As consuming habits have changed a lot during past few years, does it mean that for example, product ranges of the grocery stores have grown and versatile rapidly. (Kesko 2017)

#### **3.3.1 Hybrid consumer**

Hybrid consumer is perceived as demanding customer, whose favorite products, which are high quality, ethical, local and healthy alternatives, but the hybrid consumer is very price conscious about some other same product at the same time. The hybrid consumer acts rationally and irrationally. The hybrid consumer is very aware of price and quality, willing to consume and save as well as ecological. By acting consumer compares own choices to other environment and own state of health condition and wonders what kind of person she or he is or would like to be. According to the hybrid consumer, there should also be products, which are higher quality alternatives to basic products in grocery stores, because then customer is willing to pay and purchase more expensive alternatives. (Kesko 2017)

### **3.4 Online vs offline shopping & importance of being an omnichannel company**

Consumers have to make many decisions during buying process, one of them is considering buying place. Digitalization has changed purchasing habits and allowed ease of buying online than ever before. (Retailminded 2020)

#### **3.4.1 Benefits of buying brick- and mortar- store**

- Individualization and experience of customer service
- Satisfaction of used time/ buying
- No need to wait for product to arrive
- Ease of exchange and return
- Reliability of products size, material or authenticity

#### **3.4.2 Benefits of buying online**

- Ease of buying (Buying is possible to make at anywhere and anytime)
- Ease of price comparison and reading available product reviews
- No pressure to make buying decision because of presence of salespersons
- Buying already familiar products online from a familiar company can be considered reliable.

#### **3.4.3 Brick-and- Mortar Store or Online Store?**

One of the most important factors for customers is when buying from brick and mortar is to get customer service and feeling that they are important to that company. By visiting in store concretely it gives for the customer possibility to ask from the company's expert if there is something mind bothering in product. Investing in good customer service increase the satisfaction of customer experience. Customer service generated by humans is almost impossible to compare with the chat boxes maintained by online store's robots. With good customer service, the company is able to lead the customer towards the buying decision and the company might get

new customers when existing customers recommend the company ahead. Therefore, the quality of customer service is still a key factor nowadays. (Mash 2019)

It is possible to receive the products immediately from brick-and-mortar store. Getting the product right away allows consumer to be sure of what she/ he is buying and whether, for example, the size is right, or the quality of the product meets consumer's expectations. (Retailminded 2020)

Exchange and return possibility are easier and faster to make in store than online. The complained product does not need to be sent first to the company and then wait even months to have new one. (IndianWeb2 2019)

By visiting in a brick-and-mortar store is important to many as a sense of experience. Going shopping with a friend or family member adds enjoyment of spent time together. (Retailminded 2020)

One of the biggest positive sides of online shopping is its ease and quickness. Online stores are open without closing time and internet connection enables consumer to buy from home or even in a lunch break at work. However, the consumers do not have to use time for planning of how to get to the grocery store or how long the whole trip will last. (Bom Gamer 2017)

Online shopping allows consumer to make quickly price comparison or read product reviews while shopping whereas it is more arduous to do by going from store to another store in "real world". Making price comparison will lead the consumer to right online store which can offer the best deal for consumer. (Retailminded 2020)

Online shopping is a great way to avoid buying pressures caused by salespersons. Many consumers do not like buying when there are pushy salespersons around. Instead of that consumer can for example make price comparison in peace and try to find the best product- or service provider. (Retailminded 2020)

### 3.4.4 Omnichannel

Digitalization has brought many new opportunities for companies, for example, to develop their business and to stand out from competitors in this way. It has enabled the customer to connect with the company, but at the same time has also put pressure on the company to succeed equally well in each channel. Facilitation and its provision to the consumer are considered to be one of the most important starting points of omnichannellity. From the customer's point of view, dealing with the company should be natural regardless of the channel, and the basic service provided by the company or the quality of the goods, for example, cannot vary between different channels. However, it's worth the effort to sell multichannel sales, although it may create more challenges for the company, as it allows the company to have greater visibility and sales growth. (Svea 2018)

Due to its omnichannelisation, the company is able to create more value for the customer, as the customer gets to choose the best channel for them to shop with. In this case, the company is able to expand its own customer base when it is able to offer the possibility of buying from more than one particular channel. Not all consumers want to buy online while another customer avoids going to a brick-and-mortar store. (Svea 2018)

Being an omnichannel company means that the consumers can reach out the company along different channels. Omnichannel company usually has for example social media accounts, websites, online store as well as brick and mortar shop. Buying decision can take place any of these channels as a result of omnichannel. (Svea 2018., Primaseller 2019)

Challenges of omnichannel selling is to keep pleasant buying experience in every channel. Buying experience should be connected to image in every channel, so that consumers do not think that channels are separated operators. Omnichannel selling offer for the company to be connected along many channels with customers in a new way. It allows customer ship development between the consumer and the company. (Svea 2018)

Starting point of the omnichannel selling is to offer for the consumers regardless of the channel same products or services. In other words, consumers should have same products available in an online store than in the brick-and-mortar store. (Svea 2018)

Omnichannel selling would be worth of considered as an additional service for example, besides of the brick-and-mortar store. Even though omnichannel allows to serve larger number of consumers, the company should not forget the importance of customer service and consumer's buying experience. As omnichannel selling affects in a positive way of the company's sales and its visibility, it is still extremely important to remember which are for example factors influencing customer's satisfaction and not merely operate under the excuse of additional sales. Omnichannel selling is a good way to collect data of consumer's behavior and how they act in every channel, and how does it differ to another channels. (Svea 2018)

#### **4 Researching Consumer Behavior & understanding the improvement**

Consumer behavior and its research have become an important part of the business in an increasing number of companies today. Understanding the consumer and their behavioral patterns is complex and is widely influenced by a wide range of factors. With the right research methods, it is easier to identify the consumer and their motives. Consumption behavior includes psychology, motivation and behavior. (Radu 2019)

Consumer behavior examines, for example, how consumers perceive different options when it comes to brands, how the consumer behaves when shopping or how the environment affects the consumer's behavior. (Radu 2019)

The above research subjects are influenced by three factors:

- Personal factors, such as the consumer's own interests and opinions. These are influenced, for example, by the age of the consumer, gender culture and so on. (Radu 2019)
- There are four psychological factors that influence Consumer Behavior: motivation, perception, learning and belief system. (Popovic 2020)
- Social factors influenced by opinions and attitudes through the environment (family and friends). Social factors are also influenced, for example, by the consumer's income and education level. (Radu 2019)

Customer behavior has been intensively studied through a variety of methods in organizations. The purpose of market research is to in some way catch up with customers' preferences and purchasing behavior. The disadvantages of marketing subsidies are their truthfulness, namely that

the consumer does not always necessarily answer research questions truthfully – the consumer may lie intentionally or unintentionally about the questions asked, or he may talk about his purchasing behavior in a different way from what it actually is. (Radu 2019)

Certain behavior and behavior habits can be observed partly based on different forms, observations and interviews. Efforts have also been made to use technological advances to study the ideas that guide the consumer's behavior. For example, Big Data has been utilized today in the study of consumer behavior, and thanks to the development, it can be utilized even more strongly. (Radu 2019)

#### **4.1 Big Data & AI**

In recent years, Big Data has risen to the surface, which is for example utilized in marketing and sales situations. Big Data means type of statistics that, as its name implies, shows a large amount of information that a researcher should be able to research the most relevant data for the company. Big Data enables the company to make analytical activities that the company retain, share and analyze. Big Data accumulate a huge amount of information, and it means that researcher need to be careful and the have to know what it is intended to find out in order for the analytical activity remain of sufficient quality. (Invid n.d., Leino 2018)

Big Data is used to collect data about the customers and their consumption behavior. In order for the company to be able to act as the best possible provider for the customer at the right time, it has to gather enough data about its customers. For example, data sources such as consumer surveys, regular customer cards, and customer feedback accumulate big data for companies. There also exist other data sources, which cand be electronic or non-electronic. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015,

By interpreting Big Data correctly, the company can, for example, try to predict the consumer's intentions towards future. Development of Artificial Intelligence and analytics have allowed the companies to predict what customers might be interested in or worried about in the future. Predicting customer's needs has also been possible by using artificial intelligence. (Invid n.d.)

Even though analyzing Big Data it may seem first out of control due to the large amount of data, but it is not. Big Data challenges its analyst to find out only the most relevant data from the company's point of view. Big Data is used mainly for the company's operations in order to be able to search for relevant data, for example about consumer behavior. In order for the company to get all possible information and benefit of Big data, the company has to be able to manage and evaluate the data, or otherwise data manages the company. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015,

The use of Big Data has been criticized for the difficulty of doing its analytical work. Interpreting Big Data might take a long time and may not be ready to use in required time, nor is the structure of the data automatically clear, for example structure of customer feedback or online reviews are complicated and unclear data. As big data has only been in use for a few years, the tools which are used in analyzing process are still under the development. In the future, however, the companies will be able to use advanced analysis tools to analyze, for example real- time consumption behavior and changing market trends. (Aminoff & Rubanovitsch 2015, 117.)

## **4.2 How to keep up with improvement?**

The consumer's buying behavior has changed a lot during past years. For example, online stores, mobile applications and social media have contributed to the change. Today, competition about customer attention has intensified among service providers and at the same time consumers will demand more and more from service providers. Only focusing on offline store will not lead salesman far in today's competition position. (OP-Kassa n.d.)

- The customer's buying process has changed significantly compared to the previous straightforward and easily predictable buying process. The current modern buying path is perceived as more complex than before. Nowadays, the consumer's best friend can be considered as a price comparison, which allows the consumer to tender different companies. However, the consumers purchasing decision might happen not until at home, if the consumer experiences for example that there is better selection of payment methods. (OP-Kassa n.d.)
- Seamless buying. Paying attention to store's opening hours is key when thinking about improving competitiveness. (OP-Kassa n.d.)

- Return- and exchange policy. The flexible return- and exchange option is an effective factor in the buying process for many consumers. In case, the consumer feels, that the return is too cumbersome, for example choosing the wrong size it may negatively affect the consumer's purchase decision. Whereas a well- planned and effortless return process reduces additional annoyance in consumers. (OP-Kassa n.d.)
- Keep product balances up to date. Having the stowage up to date is important for the entrepreneur but also for the consumer. In case, the product balance of a certain product in the online store shows zero, the consumer relies on the information received and then does not go to check the real time situation from the store. And vice versa, if the online store shows to have abundant product range, but in reality, the product range is not available in the store, it will cause unnecessary annoyance in consumer when she or he has arrived at the store in vain. (OP-Kassa n.d.)
- Understanding the data that company produce. Business development based on existing knowledge and data is key factors in business. Sales reports cause to accumulate a lot of business data for the entrepreneur. On the basis of this data, for example, consumer behavior can be examined. When the data is analyzed and utilized correctly, it can be used to for example develop the company's marketing. (OP-Kassa n.d.)

## 5 Research & Results

The thesis has been carried out in cooperation with the Finnish grocery store, which is called in the thesis as Company X. The purpose of the thesis was to find out how the addition of the online store alongside has affected the consumption behavior of brick-and-mortar store – whether the number of consumers decreased in brick-and-mortar store and how total sales developed in a brick-and-mortar store as a result of the opening the online store. The topic of the thesis was selected from the author's own interest in consumption behavior.

Qualitative- and quantitative research was chosen as the research methods for the thesis. The aim is therefore to utilize information based on materials, literature and personal interviews. The aim of qualitative research is to try to understand the subject to be studied, such as consumers and their consumption behavior in this thesis, and which affects the consumer's purchasing decision. The purpose of qualitative research is to get answers to frequent questions about 'how' and 'why'.



These research questions are so-called open questions that give more in response than just 'yes' or 'no' answers. (Proakatemia 2017)

## **5.1 Commission Company**

Commission company in the thesis is a grocery store operating in Finland. In the thesis, the company is called Company X, which has been a brick-and-mortar store for several years. Company X is part of a larger group in Finland, and the Group has several similar companies that also operate in Finland. Company X has been a brick-and-mortar store for several years and it operates as a B2C company. Being B2C company's purpose is to sell from the business to the consumer. (Itewiki n.d.)

In the summer of 2018, an online store was opened alongside company X's brick-and-mortar store, when Company X became the only player in the region in terms of online store. In 2018, online was a fairly new project throughout the Group, so Company X's online store was to be opened alongside a brick-and-mortar store and see how ordering grocery goods through online store through home delivery would work among Company X's customers. There were no big assumptions about the future of online store or its profitability at the beginning, as it was a new project throughout the Group, and the group's other similar companies did not have, for example, more early evidence of the profitability of the online store for many years. (Company X, Head of Department Store 2021)

### **5.1.1 Company's process of researching Consumer Behavior**

In Company X, not a lot of resources have yet been devoted for studying consumption behavior. The group in which the company is part has carried out some research at the chain level on consumption habits and its changes today. Company X has collected statistics over several years on how total sales have developed, what kind of service customers like and how total online store sales have developed since the beginning of operations. (Company X, Head of Department Store 2021)

## 5.2 How was the research made?

The aim was to carry out a research-oriented thesis in which the purpose of the research is to show how the opening of the online store has affected the operations of Company X's brick-and-mortar store – for example, have customer numbers decreased considerably as a result of opening the online store and how the company's total brick-and-mortar store sales have occurred.

The study was conducted using various reports produced by the company's systems, from which the company's employees have filled out excel tables to track the items being examined. (Figure 4 & Figure 5). Excel tables collect the most relevant information for your company, not the number of customers, and total sales. The thesis examined three different points based on excel tables, from which the thesis author compiled column charts to obtain averages.

The study started immediately in 2018 in the summer, when the online store was introduced. The years 2018, 2019 and 2020 were taken as a comparable time to ensure that the period to be investigated was long enough and the verifier of the study was more accurate. The study compared monthly averages. In the study, the reference date was determined as a result of the opening of the online store, which is why the thesis has a reference date from June to December.

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Figure 4, Company X

ASIAKASMÄÄRÄT							MYYN TI					
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Figure 5, Company X

The research wanted to investigate the development of total sales of brick-and-mortar stores, followed by "Tot myynti kl päivä" and "tot myynti ip päivä". To determine the number of customers, "as määrä kl päivä" and "as määrä ip päivä" were used. "tot myynti verkkokauppa", shows the total sales of the online store.

The study has also used personal interviews involving Company X's Head of the Department store and Head of the Customer Service. The interview session was investigated, for example, on interpreting customers' needs and desires, studying consumer behavior within the company and developing online store over the years. The interviews were conducted several times.

### 5.2.1 Hypothesis

The hypothesis of the study is that the opening of an online store has a negative impact on the operation of the brick-and-mortar store, and more and more customers would become supporters of online store. In other words, the number of customers and total sales of the brick-and-mortar store would show significant downturns.

### 5.3 Customer feedback as part of the research process

Company X receives a large number of customer feedback, on the basis of which the company aims to improve and develop its own operations. Customer feedback comes from both brick-and-mortar stores and online store customers. Producing an excellent customer experience as a result of omnichannelisation is equally important in each of the company's different channels, allowing customer feedback to work better based on feedback in the future.

When reviewing customer feedback, it is important to be able to identify the situation in which the customer has written the feedback in order to utilize customer feedback. For example, has the customer been completely upset, for some reason, or whether the feedback has only come about as a result of a long reflection. (Company X, Head of Department Store, 2021)

Most of the feedback is currently related to online store and can be divided into positive and action-developing feedback. In developing feedback, consumers hope that more attention will be paid to commodity dates and the quality and condition of packaging in the future. Consumers have also compared Company X's online store platform to other competitors and found Company X's online store platform more pleasant to use. (Company X, Head of Customer service, 2021)

Positive feedback most often affects the company's range and diverse options in different product categories. Consumers are attracted both by local producers and by commodities arriving from abroad, which may already be familiar to the consumer, for example through a social media channel or influencer.

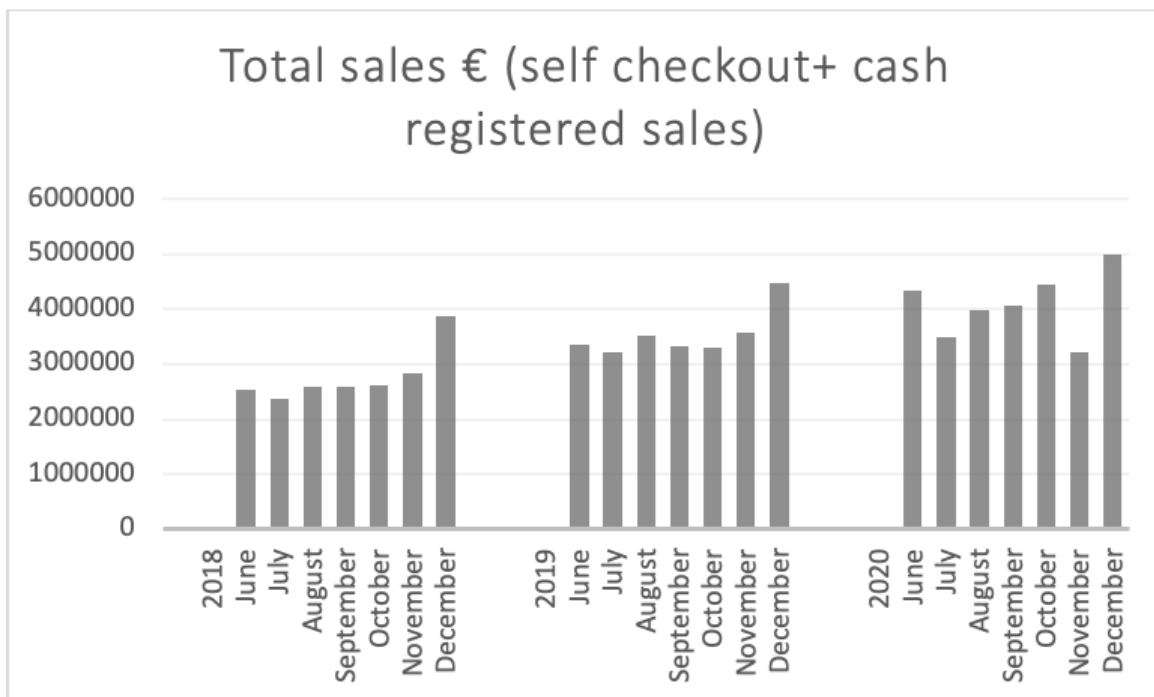
Attention has also been paid to the speed at which customer feedback is responded to in the company. People handling customer feedback have noticed that even slightly lower customer

satisfaction can be influenced when the customer's feedback is taken into account in time and reacted to as quickly as possible by responding back to the customer. Company X, Head of Department Store, 2021)

## 5.4 Results Of the Research

The aim of the study was to find out by various means how the online store affects the operation of brick-and-mortar store. The study produced three different diagrams that examined the total sales of brick-and-mortar stores as well as customer numbers and total online store sales. The diagrams carried out in the study were able to study the development on an annual and monthly basis. The results are presented in different paragraphs, after which the results of the study are summarized.

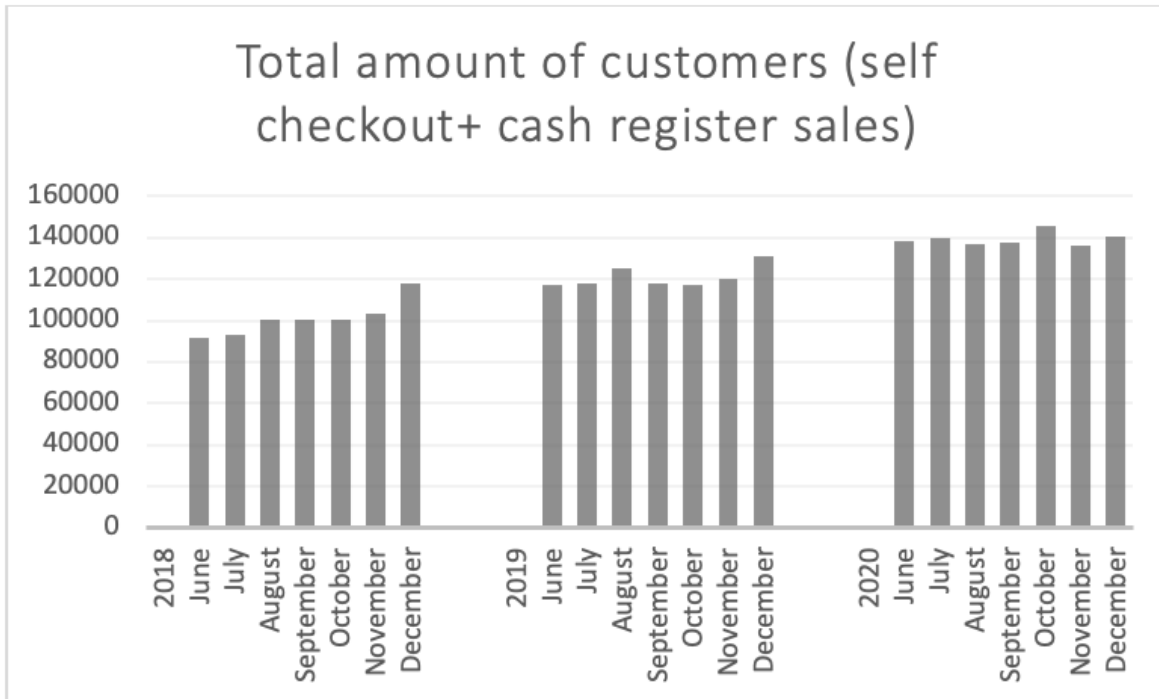
### 5.4.1 Brick and mortar



The Total Sales € diagram describes the total sales of a brick-and-mortar store over three years on a monthly basis. The total sales include sales made through a traditional checkout line or self-service checkout. The diagram shows the positive development of sales of brick-and-mortar store

almost every month compared to the same month of the previous year. Total sales are affected by the sale of Company X's food products as well as consumer goods.

#### 5.4.2 Total Amount of Customers



The diagram describes the development of customer numbers in brick-and-mortar store every month for each year. The diagram can be used to see that the number of customers has not decreased in any month compared to the previous year, on the contrary, the number of customers has only increased. The years 2019 and 2020 show only a positive development in the growth of the number of customer numbers.

Based on customer feedback received by Company X, the company is perceived among customers as providing an experience, based on the goods and services it provides. Company X's brick-and-mortar store will continue to offer customers a variety of services in addition to grocery goods. Company X's high customer numbers can be explained by providing a wide range of products and services, which has succeeded in serving the different needs and desires of its customers. (Company X, Head of Department Store, 2021)

### 5.4.3 Total Sales of Online Store



The diagram above describes the development of the company's online store sales in euros (€) and how the total sales for the year have been distributed on a monthly basis.

In the first year of research, online store growth was fairly steady and continuous from month to month. In the summer of 2019, the popularity of online store had already multiplied compared to the previous year. Whereas in 2020, the popularity of online store had fallen in the summer and early autumn. In December 2020, the company's online store has achieved the best results.

Although the development of total online store sales has generally been positive, it is very unlikely that Company X will serve its customers as an online store in the future. Today, the sale of Company X's online store consists of the sale of food and consumer goods in the grocery trade. For the most part, however, total online store sales are still made up of food sales for the time being. In the future, e-commerce would be developed so that some products could be ordered from it, for example, which could not be purchased at all from a brick-and-mortar store. The aim is also to expand the commodity range to online store. The group's desire to develop online shopping and to raise awareness of the possibilities of online shopping for an increasing number of existing

customers and potential new customers is a step towards the renewal of online store. (Company X, Head of Department Store, 2021)

In addition, e-commerce has been seen as good alongside the operations of the brick-and-mortar store. However, the better results of Company X's total sales come from the brick-and-mortar store. Buying online is considered more systematic than what buying is in a quack shop. In other words, the average purchase made in an online store is larger than what it is in a brick-and-mortar store. Making small individual purchases and so-called "impulse purchases" is not common in the online store, but brick-and-mortar shopping happens all the time. (Company X, Head of Department Store, 2021)

## **5.5 Analyze of the results**

The cyclical fluctuations in total sales of brick-and-mortar store have remained relatively similar in 2018 and 2019. In 2020, the variation between months has been more variable, which has been mostly influenced by the uncertainty caused by global coronavirus in consumers. Despite the coronavirus pandemic, company X has, as a rule, been able to improve the result of total sales on a monthly basis compared to the same month of the previous year.

Since the opening of the online store, the number of customers in the brick-and-mortar store has also continued to develop, and the result in customer numbers has been better each year than when compared to the same month of the previous year. As with total sales, a small decrease in the number of customers can be noticed during the summer, which can be justified during the holiday seasons.

After opening the online store, the popularity of online store started to grow well, and more and more customers took over the online store. Comparing 2018 and 2019, it can be seen a very high and rapid development in total online store sales, which can be justified by the freshness of online store. However, rapid growth and development began to level off and the development of online store in 2020 was no longer as high as it was in late 2019.

The company's marketing is carried out at the chain level, and Company X has in practice no control over what kind of marketing is targeted or when it takes place. As can be seen from the



diagrams, the company's weakest months, both in terms of sales and customer numbers, are the months of daylight-saving time both in the brick-and-mortar store and in the online store.

During the summer, for example, marketing has been considerably lighter than it was in December, for example. December's high success can be explained kind of in a market that has been fully focused on the chain level. Christmas and the surrounding season are the most successful time for grocery stores.

Company X's brick-and-mortar store has collected a large amount of feedback on its modern look, wide range of products and good customer service. The company's operations are based on values on which the company strives to offer its customers the best products in its field and to know the needs and expectations of its customers. In addition to products, company X's brick-and-mortar store has a lot of services that have been used to add value to the customer. For example, restaurant-style food services that can be purchased while shopping for food during the week or by utilizing a professional chef at the service counter who can tell the customer individually the recipe for the product customer has purchased. The company's range includes a wide range of products to ensure that the company is able to serve more and more customers to meet different needs and desires.

The success of the brick-and-mortar store today is also influenced by the fact that the online store cannot get all the same products as the brick-and-mortar store offers. For example, makeup and clothing are only available from a brick-and-mortar store. Alcohol and tobacco products are not delivered to customers via the online store.

In company X's brick-and-mortar store, making additional sales to the customer is more easier than it is in the online store. For example, it is not possible for a company to make various pop-ups or wake-up calls online before making a payment, while in a brick-and-mortar store before going to checkout, the corridors are full of emotional campaign stalls.

The development shown by the diagrams (with the exception of a few months) after the summer towards autumn and winter can be justified by the holiday seasons that many consider to be in summer. During the holiday seasons, the customer base is more changing and permanent customers may make more random use of the services offered by their own store. During the

holiday seasons, consumers take advantage of the services and restaurants that have been serviced by holiday trips, where not so much is done in the midst of busy everyday life.

Diagrams made using Excel tables can be used to conclude that the opening of an online store has not had a direct negative impact on people's desire to use brick-and-mortar retail, which can be proven as a development of total brick-and-mortar sales and customer numbers. Head of the department store also does not believe that online store can completely beat brick-and-mortar stores.

## **5.6 Reliability of the references**

As a discipline, consumer behavior is very new and so far, there is not so much written information about it, as in another discipline that has been studied for many years. Written and digital articles used in the thesis can be considered true, as they are written on the basis of information about what is currently known about consumption behavior.

The cooperation with the company can be considered to be true and realistic, as they are professionals in their field and have been in the field for several years and have successfully developed Company X's business.

The column diagrams made for the thesis can be considered indicative, but not entirely true. Excel files on which the diagrams are made are filled by humans, and some values have been calculated by company staff, so the error margin is greater than, for example, if the tables were filled with robots.

The column diagrams used in the thesis are worked on the basis of excel-based monitoring tables made by the company, which have been used for several years to monitor the company's operations. The results of the diagrams can be considered fairly true and indicative. However, the company itself has manually filled most of the data into the tables and calculated some values from the bottom of the reports, making the error margin greater and therefore the accumulated information cannot be considered 100% fact. Some cells also lacked values that distort the calculated result. If all the data had been transferred directly from reports to excel tables, for example, the data could be considered more realistic.

The reporting systems used by the company were also kind of challenging, as, for example, not all reports could be used on a monthly basis, but only at a year-on-year level, making it virtually impossible to analyze the result for one month. Some sectors may also have lacked a result, so that it could not be taken into account in the full month's result.

The opening hours of the company's brick-and-mortar store have also changed several times during the period under investigation, which brought challenges to study consumer behavior. This thesis has been used during store opening hours from 8 a.m. to 10 p.m., although the company now serves customers from 24H.

Night consumption behavior was not compared in this research, as the study would have been very short in time and the activity could not have been compared to previous years, as the company has not served customers during the nighttime in 2018 and 2019.

## **6 Conclusion**

The aim of this thesis was to study how cooperation in the grocery sector would change the consumer behavior of the company's customers in the brick-and-mortar cup as a result of the opening of the online store. The study has provided indicative answers to the questions sought in the study. The column charts and personal interviews conducted in the study show that the operation of the network trade has not directly affected the consumption behavior of the customers of the brick-and-mortar store.

The study was carried out as a qualitative and quantitative study. The study utilized personal interviews with Company X's supervisors, as well as data generated by various company reports. The company's reports had been supplemented with excel files, which were used as sources in this thesis. Based on the Excel files, three different column diagrams were made, with the bases being able to assess the development of total brick-and-mortar retail sales and customer numbers when the online store was opened alongside the brick-and-mortar store. The hypothesis of the thesis was that changes in the number of customers or total sales of a brick-and-mortar store could be explained by the opening of an online store.

Based on the results of the thesis, the opening of an online store has not had a negative impact on the total sales or customer numbers of brick-and-mortar stores. The "weakest" months of brick-and-mortar trade were the summertime months, when the date to be investigated was from June to December. The results of the thesis can be considered indicative, on the basis of which consumption behavior could be further investigated in the company.

The factors influencing the results of research cannot be considered to be entirely unambiguous, as the consumer's decision is influenced by a wide variety of factors. In order to utilize consumption behavior, for example, in the development of the company's business, consumption behavior would need to be studied more closely on a company-by-company basis, rather than at the chain level. Consumer questions could also provide more accurate and analytical results as to why, for example, the consumer would rather choose a brick-and-mortar store instead of an online store.

The most challenging aspect of the thesis process was the collection of high-quality sources that correspond to today's consumption behavior, which has undergone a major change as a result of digitalization. Going through and interpreting the data generated by Company X's business also brought challenges to writing the thesis. The number of challenges was caused by the amount of information and the lack of relevant information in excel files, which may have left some essential values missing.

The thesis as a process was challenging but rewarding. I've never written such a laborious project before, so writing a thesis itself was an educational experience. When writing a thesis, I learned many new perspectives of consumer behavior, and why studying it is almost necessary for the company's successful business. Digitalization in the midst of "turmoil" was also pleasant as the consumer to see that other consumers also want to use and shop traditionally in a brick-and-mortar store instead of buying online.

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