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**ABSTRACT Purpose:**



The changes in Dublin Consumers Behaviour  
during the COVID-19 outbreak and Fast  
Fashion Industry responses.

## **ABSTRACT**

**Purpose:** This project aims to analyse changes in consumer behaviour in Dublin related to Fast Fashion purchases during and post the COVID-19 pandemic and how retail companies have responded to these changes.

**Methodology:** This report is based on exploratory research with interpretive analysis based on understanding the problem's nature. This project will analyse changes in consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic related to fast fashion purchases and how retailers have adapted to these changes. It is also based on phenomenological research, which will explore the phenomena that happened during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The mixed method of qualitative and quantitative research uses surveys and interviews for data collection in the Dublin area.

**Results:** Based on the primary and secondary researches, it is feasible to conclude that changes in Consumer Behaviour during the pandemic are also perceived as a trend that will influence retail strategies beyond the lockdown period.

During the pandemic, the majority of retail businesses in Dublin did not have a crisis management strategy in place, which cost them the benefit of a quick and effective response. Companies will need a stronger plan in the future if another crisis occurs. They will also need to adjust their methods to meet the changing customer demand.

**Contributions of the Study:** This paper appears to contribute to an essential and vital discussion regarding the permanent changes in Consumer Behaviour by highlighting prospective trends that retail businesses in Dublin will need to focus on.

**Keywords:** Consumer Behaviour. Purchasing Behaviour. COVID-19 effect on sales. Fast Fashion industry. Dublin market.

## **Acknowledgements**

First of all, I would like to thank God for making me capable of doing a Bachelor's Degree in a different language than not my native one.

All the students went through a difficult time throughout the pandemic, but through God's help, we could overcome any obstacles.

I would also like to take this opportunity to extend my profound gratitude to my supervisor, Josh Joyce, who was extremely kind and supportive during the entirety of this process and helped me immensely. I am at a loss for adequate words to express how much I appreciate all of your help. You will always have my sincere admiration.

I also want to express my gratitude to Doctor Daniel O'Sullivan for being a great master for us over the past several semesters and to all those who took part in the questionnaires and interviews that made it possible to conduct this research.

The learning process was challenging during these tough times, but the master's words and motivation kept us going.

## List of Acronyms

**BREXIT** – BR stands for Britain, and EXIT stands for the Exit. It is an acronym for the United Kingdom's (UK) exit from the European Union (EU).

**COVID-19** - Is an acronym that consists of the letters CO for Corona, VI for the Virus, D for Disease, and 19 for the year 2019, when the disease was first found

**CRM** – C stands for Consumer, R stands for relationship and M stands for Management

**GDPR** – G stands for General, D stands for Data, and PR stands for Protection

**ILO** – I stands for International, L stands for Labour and O for Organization

**The UK** – The United Kingdom

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## **Chapter 1.0 – Introduction**

The objective of this first chapter is to provide the background information concerning the changes in Consumer Behaviour due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

This chapter will also identify the aims and objectives of the research as well as Research Sub-Questions.

### **1.1 – Research Title**

The changes in Dublin Consumers Behaviour during the COVID-19 outbreak and fast fashion industry responses.

### **1.2 – Research Background**

Over the past years, human civilisation has suffered the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic as an unusual and unique phenomenon affecting and changing how we used to live and behave in everyday society.

In light of the potentially devastating effects of the Coronavirus, the government of Ireland was forced to make the difficult decision to temporarily close retail stores during the most risky phase of the virus contagion. This was done in an effort to impede the spread of the new Coronavirus while the public and private sectors battled to control the COVID-19 epidemic.

As a result of these actions, many businesses in Dublin have suffered with the new guidelines, and some were unable to survive this crisis period.

The fact that humanity has not lived through a pandemic as extended as Coronavirus in the last almost 100 years has shown us a lack of consumer behaviour studies and crisis management strategies for an epidemic of such magnitude.

Every pandemic or epidemic occurrence in history has drastically affected societal norms and consumer behaviour. Panic and fright are common reactions in an individual's behaviour when confronted with an unknown threatening circumstance. The primitive instincts of our brain will cause us to adapt our behaviours to survive the threat. According to McDonald (2020), when in surviving mode, the human being is likely to switch to panic buying behaviour



and stocking products that otherwise they would not purchase in such large amounts. The study suggests that consumers in certain marketplaces will have a stronger reaction to this behaviour than in others.

Knowing that this study will explore the negative and positive impacts on consumer behaviour related to the fast fashion industry and also the retail strategy to deal with these uncertain times.

### **1.3 Aim and Objective**

This research aims to investigate consumer behaviour in the fast fashion industry in Dublin during the pandemic to comprehend people's choices, evaluate and compare data to see if and how the epidemic is producing new customer categories, which channels people use to get fashion industry items and how retail companies in the sector has adapted to these changes.

This research will consider different aspects that can or cannot have influenced changes in consumer behaviour and analyse if those changes are permanent and how fast fashion retailers in Dublin responded to them.

*The objectives of this research are discussed below:*

*Objective 1:* To analyse the changes in Consumer Behaviour and the purchasing process.

*Objective 2:* To explore online trends in consumer behaviour and new digital strategies adopted by retailers during and after the lockdown period.

*Objective 3:* To assess consumer concerns related to online shopping.

*Objective 4:* To identify the impact of the lockdown related to sales.

*Objective 5:* To determine the effects of a crisis contingency plan or a lack of it in the fast fashion companies in Dublin.

### **1.4 Research Sub-Questions**

- What are the changes in consumer behaviour during and post-pandemic?
- How vital was the online presence of fast fashion retail companies during the

lockdown for their business?

- Do consumers have data security concerns when purchasing online?
- What is the impact of the lockdown on sales?
- What are the strategies adopted by retailers to deal with changes in Consumer Behaviour?

## **Chapter 2.0 – Literature Review**

The literature review is a narrative review that aids in reflecting the current understanding of a particular subject by including theoretical and methodological contributions. Literature reviews are classified as secondary research since they do not entail any experimental, unique, or new work.

This research study's literature review chapter represents secondary data connected to the research topic "The changes in Dubliners' consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 outbreak and fast fashion industry responses."

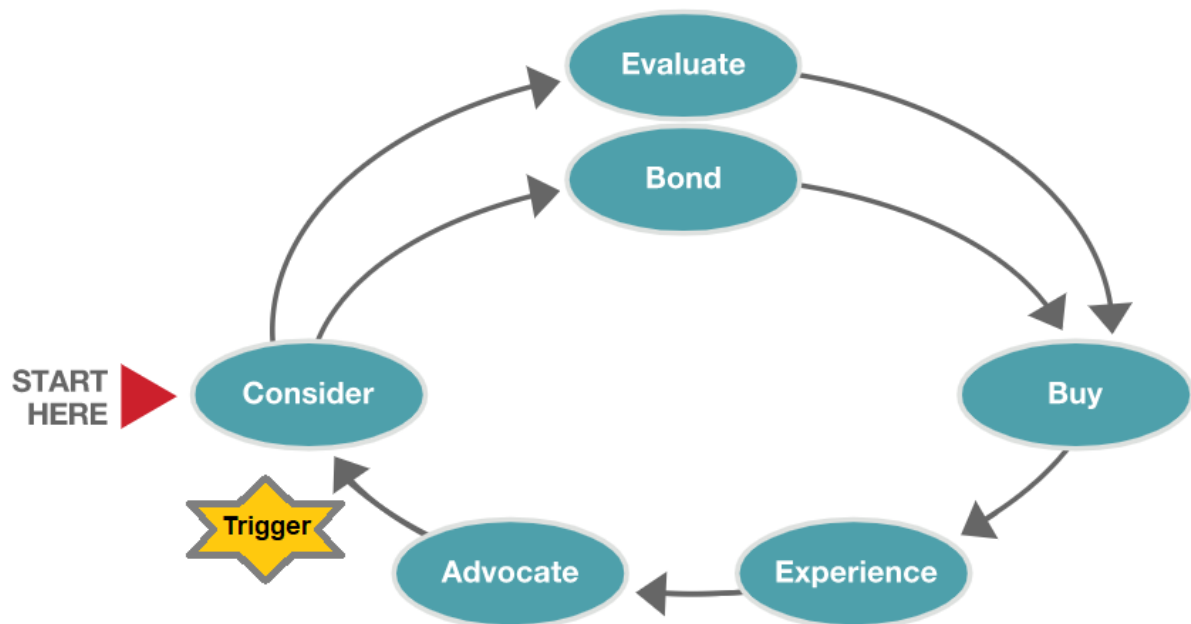
### **2.1 Theme 1 – Consumer Behaviour and its Nuances**

According to Solomon and Bamossy (2016), the definition of consumer behaviour is the process through which "individuals or select groups acquire, utilise, or dispose of products, services, ideas, or experiences to meet the requirements and desires of the consumers."

Consumer behaviour is encompassed in many dimensions, which range from the process of choosing a product to the disposal of the product after consumption. The regular buyer's journey covers a consumer's steps while purchasing anything, such as awareness, evaluation, and decision. (Solomon and Bamossy, 2016).

In the new McKinsey Consumer Journey Model (McKinsey & Company, 2015), it is stated that the companies must understand each step of the journey to be able to create a specific strategy for each stage, understand the consumer's motivations, desires and drive the Company's strategy to meet consumers' needs. McKinsey states that the old marketing funnel model is no longer applicable as the consumers have changed their behaviours related to searching and buying products

## The New Consumer Decision Journey McKinsey (2015)



(Edelman and Singer 2015)

Consumer behaviour also includes the perception, emotional, mental and behavioural responses to the purchased products and services.

To Salomon (2016), knowing customer behaviour is beneficial for business, especially during crises. The affirmation that businesses exist to meet needs was never so true. Businesses can only meet these demands if they understand the consumers that will use the items and services they are attempting to offer.

On the striking of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland, there was evident closure of businesses which was a response to the World Health Organization directive to minimise physical contact. Therefore, the consumers had to remain at home with less physical interaction while purchasing products from businesses. A study by Omar et al. (2021) on the effects of COVID-19 on consumer behaviour focused on examining psychological factors and their impact on the change in consumer behaviour. Some of the psychological factors proposed include uncertainty, perception of severity, perception of scarcity, and anxiety. These psychological factors brought panic to consumers, leading to changes in purchase behaviour. For instance, the perception of the severity of the pandemic, as there were fewer interventions carried out to deal with it, led to the perception of severity, that led to a change in consumer behaviour

characterised by purchasing of some bulky goods in large quantities to stock in their houses to avoid future shortages which were mainly foodstuffs (Goldsmith & Lee, 2021).

To comprehend how individuals consume items and classify them as urgent or non-urgent is essential to understand that consumer behaviour is defined in different ways. Solomon (2016) points out that consumers are different, and the products they consume can be of all types so that their needs and desires are fulfilled, ranging from hunger and thirst to love and status or personal fulfilment, as also explained in Maslow's Theory of Needs (Maslow, 1970).

## **2.2 Theme 2 – Digital Marketing and Online Sales Strategy**

As stated by Ritz (2019), a digital communication strategy, including social media, websites for advertisement, and emails, among many others, is extremely important in the on-demand economy.

According to the author, in a modern society whereby customers are used to transact using mobile devices, a solid digital marketing strategy is critical to determine retail business success once it helps retail businesses reach out to various target populations.

Considerably, an online sales strategy is a plan for strategic positioning and selling products or services online to buyers in a particular way that differentiates the retail solution from other competitors. An online sales strategy plans to sell products to customers by incorporating digital technology, communication, and modern media (Dwityas et al., 2020).

According to research done by Ritz about digital marketing adoption and success for retail businesses, there is a strong suggestion that despite the little known about online marketing strategy, many retail businesses have thrived and grown their customer base through digital marketing and online sales strategy (Ritz, Wolf, & McQuitty, 2019). The researchers advocate that small businesses would benefit significantly from engaging in and developing digital marketing and online sales strategies. The existence and creation of such strategies have helped in narrowing the gap between large and small businesses due to an increase in available opportunities to reach out to the target population and also target buyers across the world. Retail businesses have made a greater step in decision-making strategies, which has helped in forming a marketing strategy focused on digital channels (Ritz et al., 2019). The authors advocate that although access to digital marketing media has been free and open

small businesses have been subjected to the "learn by doing it yourself" method. Through this method, small businesses have learned a sense of control and ensure that marketing strategy enhances good customer relationships.

Additionally, Smith's research on effective digital marketing strategies for small businesses shows that despite the challenges small businesses face, about 88% of the Caribbean retail businesses have succeeded after adopting digital marketing and online sales strategies. This reflects the potential available for retail companies (Smith, 2021).

Optimisation of digital marketing strategy is a stepping tool to business success. There are several impacts of choosing a good marketing and online sales strategy: value chain structures, pricing strategies, marketing communications and branding. Furthermore, an effective digital sales strategy helps retail businesses to mend a good marketing strategy. Building confidence is integral to establishing, developing, and maintaining an effective buyer-seller relationship (Rowley, 2018).

The authors Chaffey & Ellis (2019), which focus on effective marketing and sales strategy, claim that a strong business-customer relationship is critical to building customer loyalty and preferences. The interaction of customers and sellers during marketing strategies helps to develop customer trust in the retail business.

In their book, the authors Chaffey and Ellis suggest that retail businesses use CRM tools to get more information from consumers to offer a personalised experience to each of them. According to the authors, in a market as competitive as the present one, businesses that can provide it have a greater chance of success (Chaffey & Ellis, 2019).

## **2.3 Theme 3 – Data Protection and Awareness of GDPR**

Research has proven that consumer perception of risk has been highlighted as an antecedent that contributes to consumers' reluctance to embrace online purchasing due to the feeling of being at risk of suffering attacks from hackers when shopping online. (Yang et al., 2015). The authors state that to minimise the fear of being victims of a data breach, consumers will assess the risk of searching about the Company before the purchase is made to feel more secure when buying online.

All retail businesses should guarantee the consumer's privacy of the information provided.

The General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR, 2018) is a policy that provides set guidelines for organisations to ensure there is improved Consumer Data Privacy and Protection. The consumer's Data is mainly shared purchases, such as personal names, addresses, contact details, identification numbers, access cards, audio-visual recordings, and location data (Voigt & Von Dem Bussche, 2017). Therefore, data protection for consumers means actions or principles aimed at preserving the information provided by the customer, especially during purchasing and selling of products, from being accessed by the wrong persons or used by businesses for undesired purposes (Dato, 2018). GDPR highlights the principles of consumer data protection, especially the personal data and actions businesses should keep in place to ensure consumer data protection.

Data protection means that personal data should not be stored by companies and only should be stored on a lawful basis. In addition, data protection allows consumers to access the data held by businesses and have a right to its manipulation and erasing in some instances (Zhang et al., 2020).

Once the Data is used for the reserved purpose, it should be erased, and during the erasing process, the principle of transparency should be considered.

Kim et al. (2009) found that in order to reduce the risks associated with online purchases, customers may seek advice or permission from others in their social circle. Suggestions from relatives and friends and firm reviews on reputable websites were critical risk-reduction strategies adopted. According to the report, businesses should notify consumers online about how they protect consumers' data in order to make them feel more comfortable when choosing a company.

## **2.4 Theme 4 – Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sales**

All activities of selling a product or a service to a consumer or business are referred to as sales. The COVID-19 pandemic mostly affected retail sales, which refers to selling goods and services to consumers mainly in physical stores (Fairlie & Fossen, 2022).

In Fairlie and Fossen's (2022) study focused on the early impacts of the pandemic on business sales, the authors found that the interventions are taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19, which included lockdown and social distancing resulted in significant losses that many

businesses were not ready to cope with their business closed.

Within a few days following the lockdown, European Countries were highly concerned about the collapse of the economy due to the impact on sales, which also caused considerable loss of employment. An initial estimate by the International Labour Organization (ILO) indicated that about 25 million jobs might be lost all around the world as a result of COVID-19, and it's possible that number could even reach 40 Million (ILO 2020).

Gabe and Crawley (2021) research indicated that some online sales strategies were used to overcome the crises during the Covid-19 pandemic. Some of these strategies were the use of apps and websites which introduced a stay-at-home order. Consumers could order goods and services through apps and websites to be delivered to their homes. This positively improved the sales numbers for the companies that joined the online sales modality.

A study focusing on the production of goods and services related to the COVID-19 pandemic showed that there had been a decreased production volume after the lockdown have been lifted, impacted negatively the companies' warehouses resulting that sellers could not produce or supply goods to the consumers in abundance to meet the consumer demand after the restrictions being removed (Muhammad et al., 2021).

According to the Economic and Social Research Institute findings, there is a massive disparity between the global financial crisis and the Coronavirus's effect on the Irish economy. When compared to the effects of the global financial crisis, the impact of the COVID-19 issue on the Irish economy was far more severe once the sales dropped significantly (ESRI, Coffey, and others, 2020). It can be explained that not so many Irish retail businesses were selling online. Despite COVID-19 and the ongoing conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the Santista (2022) report on the fashion industry predicts that the online market will continue to expand in the coming years. This is due to the fact that customers are increasingly moving their shopping from in-store to online and from desktops to mobile. According to the study's findings, it is projected that the market will expand at an annual rate of 14.21% from 2022 to 2027 (Santista 2022).

## **2.5 Theme 5 – Crisis Management Strategy of Retail Companies.**

Many retail businesses have both crisis management and risk management strategies, as they

are prone to any crisis in the market. Crisis management ensures prompt response to the crisis the companies face and help to recover and return to normal business operations. As defined by Booth (2015), crisis management is typically the process of preparing through devising proper crisis management strategies, Management of the crisis, and the actions involved in limiting damage from unexpected adverse events.

The major global crisis faced by retail companies is the COVID-19 crisis. The pandemic called for prompt Management as the retail companies strained to return to their normal business operations. More precise crisis management involves identifying potential threats or crises and planning the necessary actions. Identifying and preventing potential threats are much of the risk management, while the response to the crisis is crisis management (Alves et al., 2020). In the formulation of a crisis management strategy, there are some considerations that retail businesses need to consider. Firstly, in crisis management, there should be prompt decision-making on what actions to take. For instance, the Covid-19 pandemic crisis required rapid decision-making and actions. Research done by Barrett (2015) identified major essential elements in crisis management that are considered when devising crisis management strategies.

The elements are also referred to as the four Ps: Prevent, Plan, Practice, and Perform. Firstly, to prevent means that the strategy should contain actions to prevent the crisis. For instance, in a grocery retail business, the workers should work in a better environment to avoid the implications of the risk of a health crisis. Also, planning in the crisis management strategy means that the retail Company should have actions in place for prompt action when the crisis occurs.

There have been evident that some retail companies lack crisis management strategies; therefore, it is recommended that every business have a crisis management plan. To practice means that the Company should try to the effectiveness of the strategy formulated (Pecujlija & Cosic, 2019). Perform in the crisis management strategy suggests the carrying out of the stipulated tasks that are found there in the plan.

In the study, the author also focuses on the other four Ps used to survive the 2009 economic crisis. Jack Stack, the chief executive officer of the Illinois equipment company SRC Holdings Corp., suggested that the additional four Ps were essential in surviving the economic crisis and would be necessary for surviving and dealing with other retail business crises. The essentials were people, positive cash flow, practices, and positioning. The people are mainly

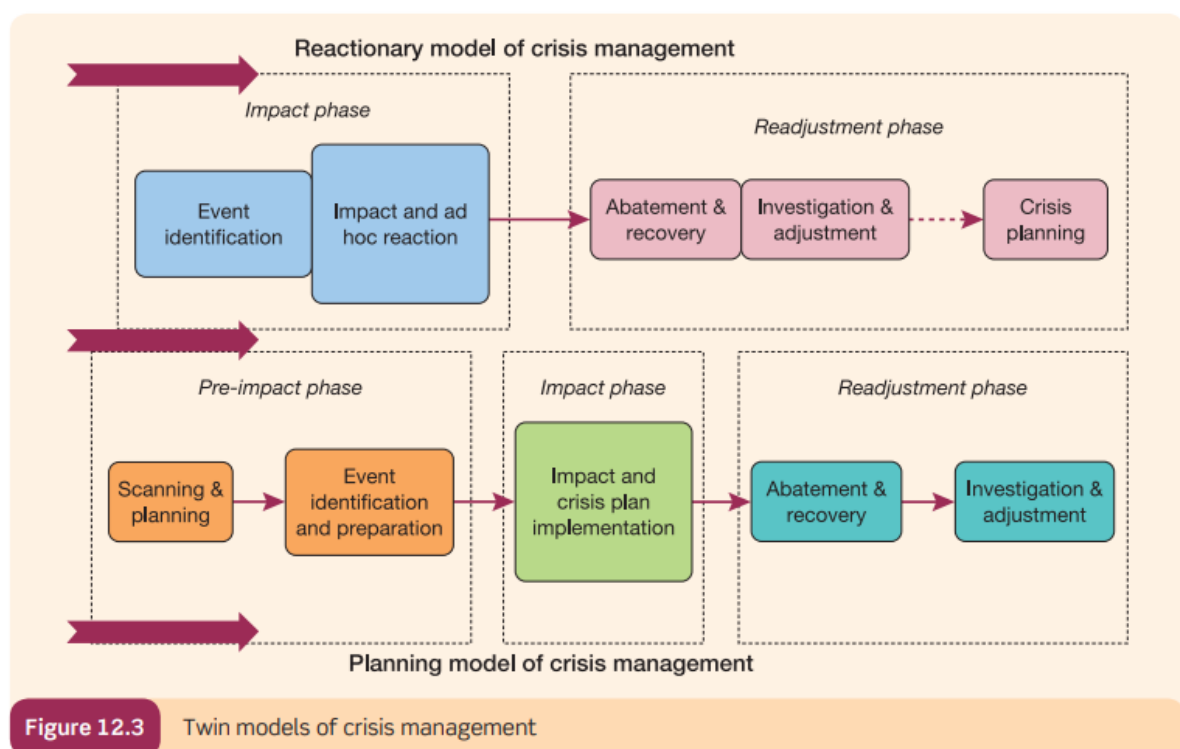


the employees in the Company, and it is stated that the employees should be informed of any crisis, especially when it is not an emergency. The retail Company should also have clear and open methods of communication to ensure faster and more efficient ways of information dissemination.

The number of phases varies depending on the sort of crisis management used by the organisation.

The difference between companies that have a plan in place and those that fail due to a lack of a contingency plan is that the first has a model to follow throughout the crisis time, whilst the other must be managed by reacting to crises events as they occur.

Fill and Turnbull (2019) suggest using a three-phase framework for developing a crisis management plan, which includes pre-impact, impact, and readjustment stages, as seen in the figure below.



Fill and Turnbull (2019)

Companies that have not developed a crisis management planning model will eventually end up utilising a reactionary crisis management model, which has fewer phases and produces less effective results once it is poorly planned.

## **Chapter 3.0 – Methodology**

This chapter of the research study will provide an explanation of the methodology used by the researcher for gathering, interpreting, and analysing the data. It will support and answer the research questions.

This report will be built on exploratory research and interpretivist analysis to contribute to a deeper understanding of a problem based on its nature. In this case, the purpose is to research changes in customer behaviour and the responses of fast fashion retailers to these changes.

It is considered to be founded on phenomenological inquiry since it examines a phenomenon. Data for this study will be gathered through interviews and surveys as part of a mixed-method strategy that mixes qualitative and quantitative methodologies. These will be given to customers who lived in Dublin during the Covid-19 epidemic and retail managers in the fast fashion business to understand better how consumers and retail dynamics have changed since the pandemic.

### **3.1 – Methods**

Mixed methodologies research brings together different aspects of quantitative and qualitative research to offer a better overview of the research subject. Due to the fact that it takes the best aspects of both quantitative and qualitative research and combines them into a single approach, using mixed methods can help obtain a more comprehensive understanding of the topic at hand than a study that relies only on either quantitative or qualitative.

#### **3.1.1 – Quantitative Research**

For the quantitative research, a survey was carried out on Google Forms and shared on social media such as Facebook, WhatsApp, and Instagram and had a sample of 130 respondents.

This survey consisted of eleven open-ended, close-ended and multiple-choice questions, including five sub-questions and was directed to the consumers in Dublin.

Before sending out the survey, a pilot survey was sent to a group of 5 people and the project supervisor.

A pilot survey aims to test the Questionnaire's effectiveness in a small study group. (Baker, 1994). As a result, a pilot study is an abbreviated form of a more extensive and investigative study that will show any possible changes that should be made before the final version is realised.

The researcher got valuable feedback on making the final questionnaire more effective by applying the pilot questionnaire.

### 3.1.2 – Qualitative Research

The qualitative research was based on an interview questionnaire with ten open questions delivered to Dublin's Fast Fashion retail managers.

The first contact with this sample was made on LinkedIn, where the researcher explained the nature of this research project and invited them to participate in an interview.

The qualitative research was conducted in three interviews sent on the respondent's Gmail.

The three interviews' full responses are found in the appendixes at the end of this document.

### 3.2 – Sample Codification

The participants were randomly assigned the titles "Interviewee 1" and "Interviewee 2" in order to ensure that the information gathered remains anonymous and confidential.

Interviewee 01	Interviewee 01 was a store manager in a big company in the fast fashion sector in Dublin with experience of 1 year and 4 months working in the Company during the lockdown period.
Interviewee 02	Interviewee 02 has been working in the Company for the last 04 years as a store manager of a small size fashion store in Dublin
Interviewee 03	Interviewee 03 worked in the Company from October 2019 to January 2022 and was a store manager of a large size fast fashion

	company in Dublin.
--	--------------------

Table 01 – Table of interviewee's codification

### 3.3 – Ethical Section

Application for Ethical Approval and Informed Consent Form for online survey and interviews are attached to the Appendixes.

## Chapter 4.0 – Findings and Discussions

In this chapter, the work will analyse the primary and secondary research data.

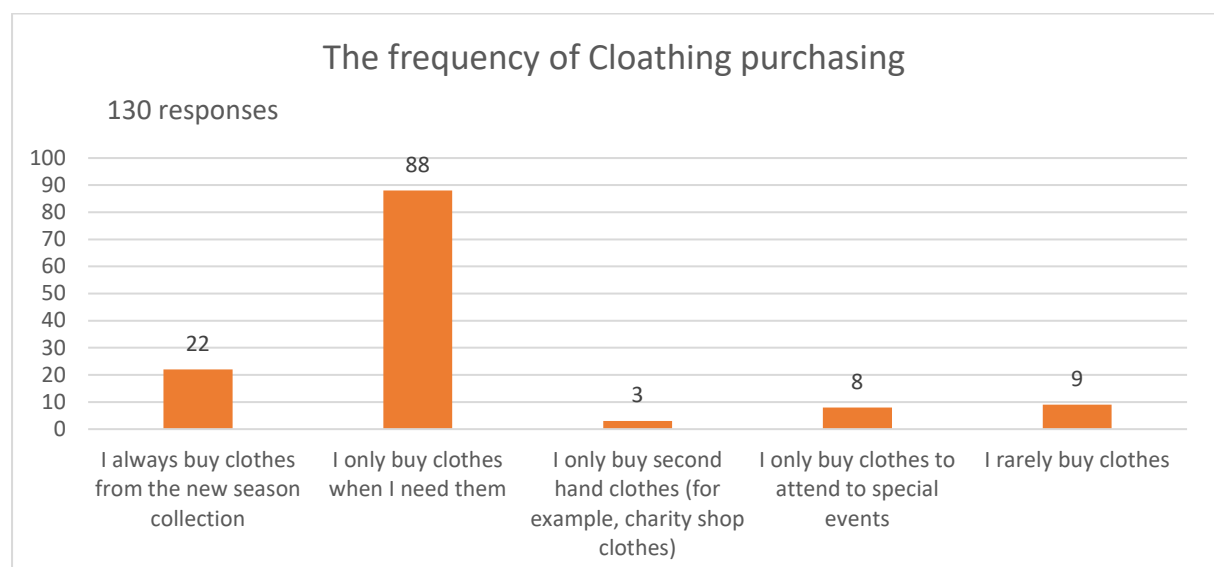
The main results obtained through analysis of the surveys and interviews will be confronted with the literature review in order to answer the research question and sub-questions.

This analysis is carried out by content analysis and triangulation, and the results are shown below, categorised by distinct Themes, Objective and Sub-Questions:

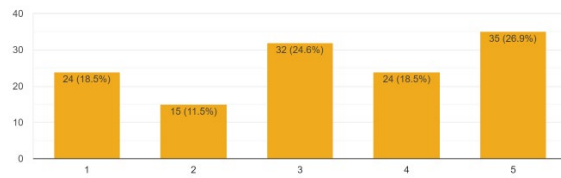
### Theme 01 - Consumer Behaviour and its Nuances.

**Objective 1:** To analyse the changes in Consumer Behaviour and the purchasing process.

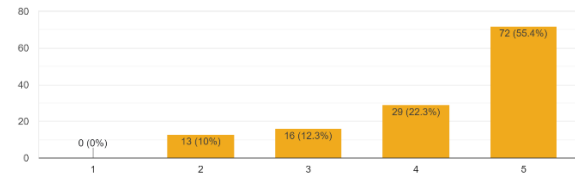
**Sub-Question:** What are the changes in consumer behaviour during and post-pandemic?



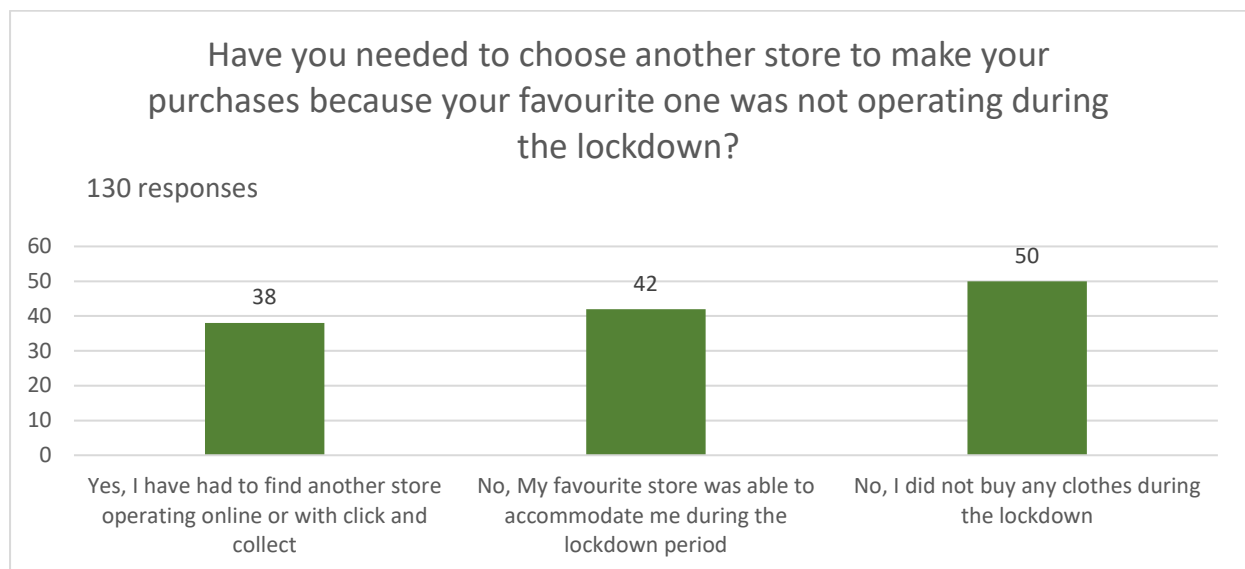
I buy more clothes online now than before lockdown  
130 responses



Before the pandemic most of my purchases were made at the physical stores  
130 responses



1 = Strongly disagree    2= Disagree    3 = Neutral    4= Agree    5= Strongly Agree



**Did the Company spot any permanent change in Consumer Behaviour post-lockdown? If yes, how has the Company adapted to this new demand?**

**Interviewee 1:** *We have noticed a greater interest in the supply chain, the environmental impact of the business, and the origin and material of the clothing. There was a significant increase in demand for the Company's fitting room services. Individuals who ordinarily wouldn't try items on were 100% utilising this particular service. Regarding the adaptation, the investment in the platform was once again significantly raised. However, given that the Company continues to have challenges with employment and a staffing shortage, the working conditions did not change.*

**Interviewee 2:** *Working in retail has never been easy as you have to deal with all types of customers coming into the store, but it is true that after Covid, there were many rules to be taken within in the store, which not all customers understood, we as part of the Company did follow the rules and remained calm in all the situations regarding Covid rules.*

*The personal change that I experienced myself and has nothing to do with sales or retail is that, for once, people were giving a break on buying compulsory, so the earth was breathing a bit more.*

**Interview 3:** *My store has adapted to work in the back of the house in a matter of always keeping on going picking online orders. Before the pandemic, the online orders were done 80% by the warehouse, and just a few orders were sent to the physics store. After the pandemic, clients felt safer to order from online instead of going to the store, knowing the items were manipulated by fewer people, decreasing the risk of contamination by the virus.*

According to the new McKinsey Consumer Journey model (McKinsey & Company, 2015), companies must understand each step of the journey to be able to create a specific strategy for each stage, understand the consumer's motivations and desires and drive the Company's strategy to meet consumer's needs. Solomon (2016) also states that business exists to meet consumers' needs once each consumer is different, and the products they consume can be of all types to fulfil their needs and desires.

The Interviews and survey showed a change in consumer behaviour from the consideration to the purchase phases of the McKinsey Consumer Journey. Consumers are now more concerned about environmental impacts, health and safety. There are many reasons why people buy clothes, from their need to wear them to belonging to a certain group or supporting a cause.

In the survey is observed that 67.69% of the respondents affirmed they only buy clothes when needed, while only 16.92% buy clothes from new seasons. Before the pandemic, the majority of the respondents used to buy clothes at the physical store; during the pandemic, 38.46% of the consumers did not buy any clothes.

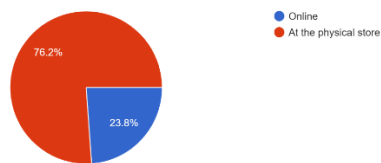
Interviewee number 02 mentioned that consumers took a break from compulsory buying behaviour, supported by the survey results.

## Theme 2 – Digital Marketing and Online Sales Strategy

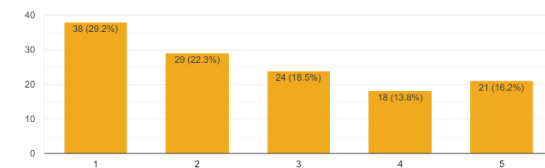
**Objective 2:** To explore online trends in consumer behaviour and new digital strategies adopted by retailers during and after the lockdown period.

**Sub-Question:** How vital was the online presence of fast fashion retail companies during the lockdown for their business?

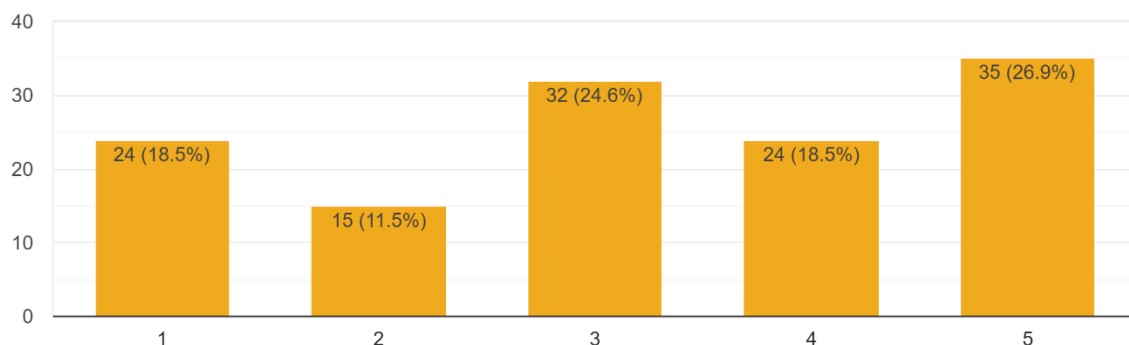
When choosing new clothes, how do you prefer to buy them?  
130 responses



I go to the physical stores to check the product but I end up buying it online  
130 responses



I buy more clothes online now than before lockdown  
130 responses



1 = Strongly disagree    2= Disagree    3 = Neutral    4= Agree    5= Strongly Agree

**Regarding the Company's sales during and post-pandemic of COVID-19, what strategies did your Company introduce to continue selling to its customers?**

**Interviewee 1:** *Regarding the marketing plan for the pandemic, my Company made significant investments in its online presence. To attract customers by offering loyalty discounts and to maintain its relevance in a crowded online market, the Company launched a membership program in Ireland. All of the items in stock (Christmas decorations, Halloween costumes, and*

winter clothing) were removed from the stock to the floor when some pandemic limitations were lifted in order to assure that we would have products to sell even in small numbers.

**Interviewee 2:** *After a while, physical stores were closed, and my Company promoted a sports clothing campaign in the Company; as covid happened, people focused more on doing exercises at home, so they were selling sports clothing online.*

**Interviewee 3:** *My Company had a small team of 2 staff working with online orders before the pandemic. The filial at the city center, while the store was closed, there was a team of around 15 people working on picking items from online orders. All managers and team leaders were called to work at the back of the house, picking online orders that were delivered by a third part company. The online orders definitely kept many jobs and did increase the volume of orders collected from my unit store before the pandemic.*

According to research done by Ritz about digital marketing adoption and success for retail businesses, there is a strong suggestion that despite the little known about online marketing strategy, many retail businesses have thrived and grown their customer base through digital marketing and online sales strategy (Ritz, Wolf, & McQuitty, 2019). The researchers advocate that small businesses would benefit significantly from engaging in and developing digital marketing and online sales strategies. The existence and creation of such strategies have helped in narrowing the gap between large and small businesses due to an increase in available opportunities to reach out to the target population and also target buyers across the world.

Regarding online purchase behaviour, the survey shows that even if consumers increased their online purchasing, they would much prefer buying their clothes at physical stores.

When analysing the interviews, it is shown that online purchasing volume was not so significant during the period but was enough to keep the stores running.

Not all stores had developed an online strategy before the pandemic, resulting in a weak online presence and, consequently, fewer sales.

As per the authors, the online sales strategy could help small stores to stand out during the pandemic and be equivalent to big companies if well positioned.



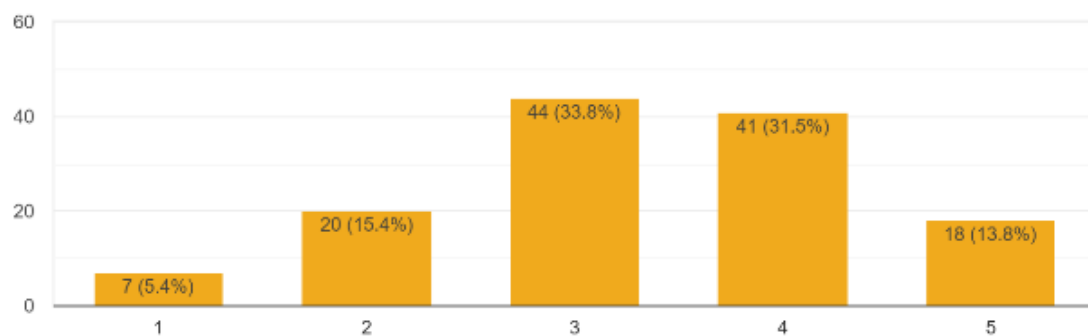
## Theme 3– Data Protection and Awareness of GDPR

**Objective 3:** To assess consumer concerns related to online shopping.

**Sub-Question:** Do consumers have data security concerns when purchasing online?

I am now more confident that companies selling online are protecting my data accordingly the Data Protection Regulations

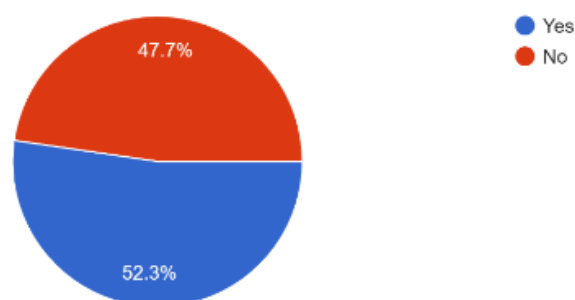
130 responses



1 = Strongly disagree    2= Disagree    3 = Neutral    4= Agree    5= Strongly Agree

When it comes to online shopping, do you have any concern about how the companies store your personal data?

130 responses



**Related to data protection, how does your Company treat consumers' data collection and data entry? Is your Company aware of GDPR regulations?**

**Interviewee 1:** My Company follow the Data Proception and GDPR regulation making sure

*that all the consumers' data are safe.*

**Interviewee 2:** *We follow all the GDPR guidelines for consumer data protection.*

**Interviewee 3:** *We were (aware of GDPR ), and the Company followed the GDPR regulations as it has to be, granting to all consumers that their data were safe with my Company.*

The consumer's personal data must be protected by the companies to avoid access or retrieval by other people or outsiders. Therefore, data protection for consumers means actions or principles aimed at preserving the information provided by the customer, especially during purchasing and selling of products, from being accessed by the wrong persons or used by businesses for undesired purposes. If the Company do not follow the GDPR guidelines, it will be subject to heavy fines (Dattoo, 2018).

According to Yang et al. (2015), consumer perception of risk contributes to consumers' reluctance to shop online for fear of suffering attacks from hackers. (Yang et al., 2015)

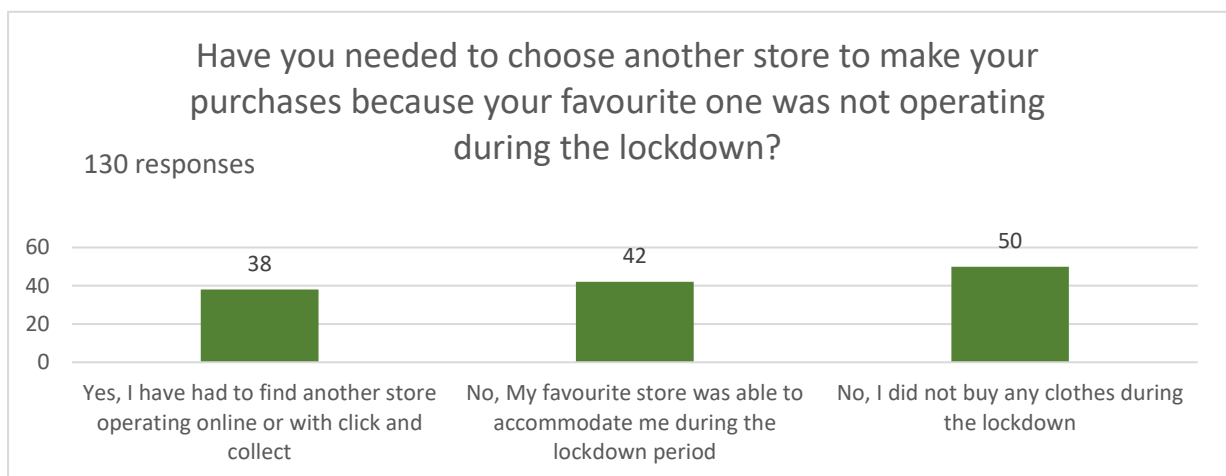
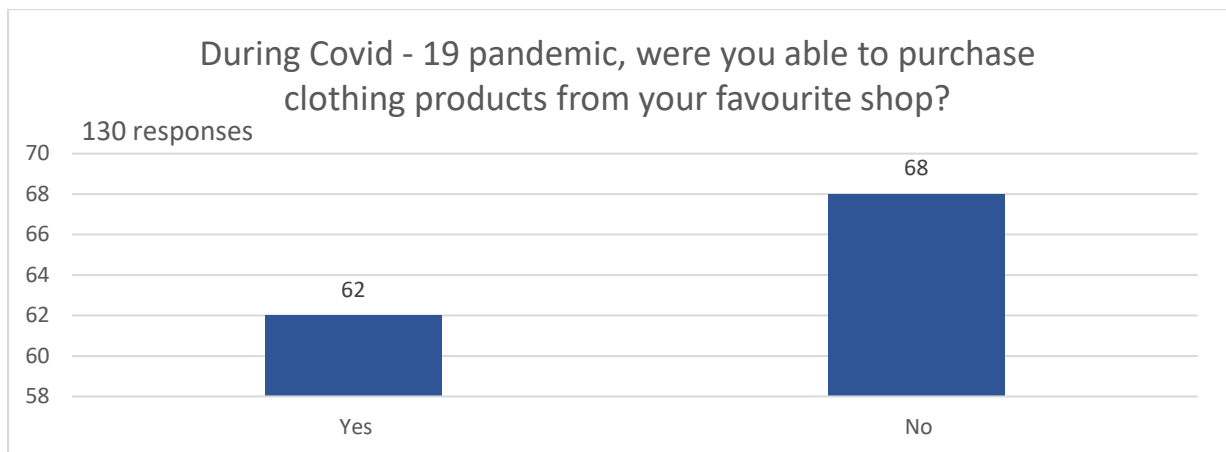
The Interview supports that the companies interviewed follow GDPR regulations. Concerning the survey analysis, a disparity was observed when 52.3% of respondents claimed that they were concerned about how companies store personal data. However, when questioned if they are secure that companies selling online are GDPR-compliant, the majority of respondents (33.8%) said they had no opinion.

The survey findings contradict the author's statements since they show that customers are not as concerned about the security of their personal data as to avoid making purchases online.

## **Theme 4 – Effects of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Sales**

**Objective 4:** To identify the impact of the lockdown related to sales.

**Sub-Question:** What is the impact of the lockdown on sales?



**How significant was the impact of the lockdown of covid-19 on the Company's sales during the lockdown?**

**Interviewee 1:** *The Company suffered greatly as a result of both the pandemic regulations and the Brexit-related laws. Due to the pandemic, new procedures had to be implemented that significantly increased the Company's overhead costs. The supply chain also experienced a number of problems as a result of our activities being drastically limited at this time, which left 70% less stock for the stores. Due to low stock levels and the fact that the garment we had in stock wasn't the launch items for the forthcoming season resulted in a significant decline in our sales.*

**Interviewee 2:** *We closed the store after 1 month of the covid impact here in Europe; sales were really low while we were still open, so after the store closed, sales were absolutely low, even online.*

**Interviewee 3:** *Lockdown has made a huge impact on sales in my Company because the store*

*had to shut down for several months, and the only way to get new shoes or sport clothing was by online shopping.*

Lockdown and social distancing had a huge impact, especially in retail stores. The interventions that were taken to prevent the spread of COVID-19 resulted in significant losses that many businesses were not ready to cope with their business closed. Within a few days following the lockdown, European Countries were highly concerned about the collapse of the economy (Fairlie and Fossen's, 2022)

The production of goods and services was severely impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic once the production volume had to be decreased. After the lockdown had been lifted, companies' warehouses were not prepared to produce or supply goods to consumers in abundance to meet consumer demand (Muhammad et al., 2021).

As per the survey and interviews, we can conclude that even though some companies were selling online, they did not have a significant volume of sales or did not have enough stock in the shops. The primary research agreed with the authors in the secondary research about the reasons for this event. Interviewee number 01 also mentions supply chain problems caused by BREXIT since most of their store's inventory comes from the UK.

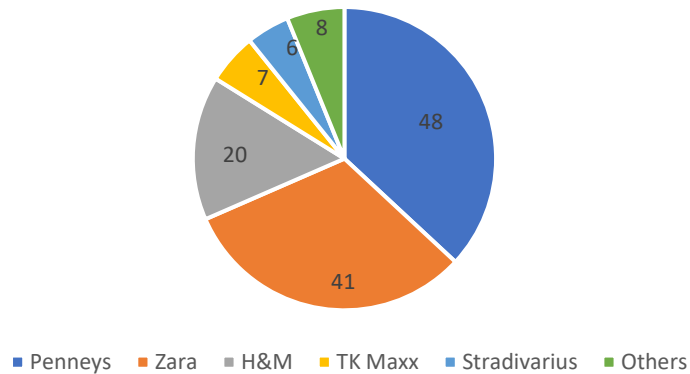
## **Theme 5 – Crisis Management Strategy of Retail Companies**

**Objective 5:** To determine the effects of a crisis contingency plan or a lack of it in the fast fashion companies in Dublin.

**Sub-question:** What are the strategies adopted by retailers to deal with changes in Consumer Behaviour?

### Dublin consumer's favourite fast-fashion store

130 responses



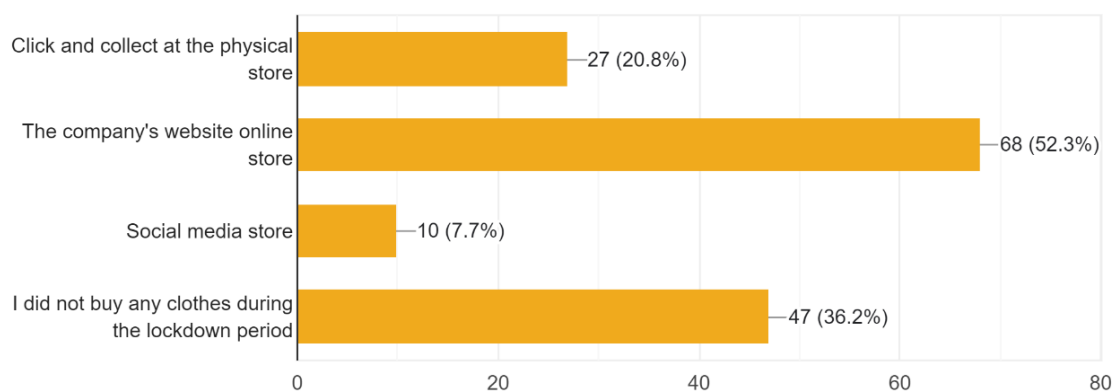
### Have you needed to choose another store to make your purchases because your favourite one was not operating during the lockdown?

130 responses



### Which channels have you used to buy them?

130 responses



**Have the Company had a contingency plan in place? What was the crisis management**

**strategy used by the Company during the lockdown while its physical stores were closed?**  
**Was it changed at any stage?**

**Interviewee 1:** *Yes, we had a backup plan called for increasing the online platform's investment as well as using the membership system to draw in and keep clients.*

*The changes made were: The number of staff on the floor and tills, the opening hours were reduced, the Company launched the membership for customers, all the items available in stock were released, the massive annual sales we have in January and February were withdrawn, training for the new pandemic guidelines was given, staff rewards as an attempt to keep the staff motivation balanced, the metrics for sales were changed to reflect better the overall business situation.*

**Interviewee 2:** *COVID-19 happened suddenly, so the Company had no strategy plan at first; after a while, they did have a strategy which I mentioned in the previous question.*

*After 2 months or even less that covid happened, the Company contacted the managers from the store, so we could do online orders from the items we had in our stockroom and send them around Ireland.*

**Interviewee 3:** *At the time, the Company was following public guidelines to make sure that even though the store was closed to the public, the service was kept business running by online orders. Managers had to implement new ways to work in a group of people, in a safe environment, distancing between staff, masks and sanitiser was provided. Staff had more breaks to make certain safety steps were followed. Management needed to ensure staff would be safe and not catch the virus; otherwise, all the team could be at risk of sick leave, and the store would stop operation completely.*

Turnbull and Fill (2016) state that businesses that have not developed a crisis management planning strategy are more likely to have failed strategies during a crisis.

According to the authors, companies that have not built a crisis management planning model will eventually use a reactive crisis management model, which has fewer stages and generates less effective results as poorly prepared.

The primary data gathered via survey show that the consumers' favourite stores were closed.

As a result, 38.4% of the respondents did not buy any clothes, and 29.2% bought clothes at competitor stores selling online. The interviews reveal a lack of management strategy in some organisations since there was no plan in place, and they were merely following government guidelines. Although they had been selling online before the pandemic, they did not invest in a solid online strategy and were not prepared to accept large orders. Management did not allocate its staff team strategically.

It is clear that most of the companies interviewed were just reacting to the crisis scene, having to develop an emergency strategy with maximum urgency. As said by the authors, they needed to come up with a strategy in a short time that did not result in great revenue numbers for the organisations.

## **Chapter 5.0 – Conclusions, Limitations and Recommendations**

This research aimed to investigate and gain a better understanding of the fast fashion consumer behaviour in the Dublin market in Ireland.

From the analyses, it can be concluded that consumers have shifted their behaviour when purchasing clothes. The new trends identified show that consumers are not buying compulsory and are now more concerned about environmental impact when choosing a company to buy from.

Consumers in Dublin have been shopping online more frequently since the epidemic began. However, despite their previous success with online shopping, they still prefer purchasing clothes in traditional brick-and-mortar establishments.

When related to Data Protection, consumers say they are concerned about how companies store their personal data. However, when asked if they are also confident that the companies are protecting their personal information according to GDPR regulations, the majority of the respondents did not have an opinion on the matter, which shows that it is not a concern that would make consumers not buy from a company.

Related to the retail companies in the fast fashion Industry, there was observed a lack of strategy and Management as most of the companies interviewed had no plan in place to deal with the crises.

The research suggests that stores should develop contingency plans to better respond to crisis

situations. It is also suggested that companies should invest in online sales strategies covering all of the McKinsey Consumer Journey Model (McKinsey & Company, 2015) to meet the new consumer expectations.

Consumer Behaviour has changed significantly after the pandemic, and those changes are driving companies to new strategies. Companies that cannot adapt will lose a significant market share.

According to Santista's (2022) research, even with COVID-19 and the Russia -Ukraine war, the fast fashion industry will continue to expand online in the coming years.

The limitation of this research is related to the sample of the survey and the interviews.

The survey was directed to social media groups; most respondents were foreign people living in Dublin. The author understands that it may have a different result if also directed to Irish citizens.

Related to the interviews, the author suggests that it would be more straightforward if done face-to-face and not sent by email.

In addition, it is advised that the researcher expand the sample size for any future study to have a more in-depth examination of the primary data.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1 Informed Consent for Survey and Interviews

### **Changes in the consumer behaviour during and post Covid-19 pandemic**

This research project investigates how consumer behaviour has changed during and after the Covid - 19 lockdown in Dublin related to the fast fashion retail industry and how the companies have responded to these changes.

This research conducted by the Marketing student Gisele Dias will support her final project for Independent College Dublin. This project is under the supervision of Professor Josh Joyce and Dr Daniel O'Sullivan.

Your participation in this research study is voluntary. You may choose not to participate. If you decide to participate in this research survey, you may withdraw at any time. You also have the right to decide not to participate in this study.

The procedure involves filling an online survey . According to General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), your responses will be confidential. We will do our best to keep your information confidential. All data is stored in a password protected electronic format. To help protect your confidentiality, the surveys will not contain information that will personally identify you. The results of this study will be used for scholarly purposes only and may be shared with academic staff in ICD.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Gisele Dias on [gisele.ap.dias@gmail.com](mailto:gisele.ap.dias@gmail.com)

This research has been reviewed according to Independent College Dublin procedures for research involving human subjects.

**ELECTRONIC CONSENT:**

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

- You have read the above information
- You voluntarily agree to participate
- You are at least 18 years of age

If you do not wish to participate in the research study, please decline participation by clicking on the "disagree" button.

- ☐ Agree
- ☐ Disagree

## Informed Consent Form / Plain Language Statement for Business Research Project for BABS BAM /BAAF students in year 3 Independent College Dublin.

Research Study Title: Changes in Consumer Behaviour during and post Cov-19 pandemic and how it affected the fast fashion retail stores in Dublin.

Purpose of Research: To investigate and analyse how consumer behaviour has changed during and after the Covid-19 lockdown in Dublin related to the fast fashion retail industry and how the companies have responded to these changes.

Dear Hugo Salvino,

You are being invited to take part in this research study as you have experienced the lockdown effects when working as a General Manager at H&M Dublin. This research study aims to gain an understanding of the challenges and issues that your Company has faced during and post-pandemic and how you managed them.

This research is being carried out by Gisele Dias as part of a Degree in Marketing Studies at Independent Colleges Dublin. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Prof Josh Joyce and Dr Daniel O'Sullivan (School of Business ICD).

Type of participant:

- I, Hugo Salvino, voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.

- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my Interview within two weeks after the Interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves sharing information about how the Covid-19 pandemic affected sales operations at my store.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous.

This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my Interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my Interview may be quoted in my research project.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in [specify location, security arrangements and who has access to Data] until [specific relevant period – for students this will be until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation].
- I understand that a transcript of my Interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for [specific relevant period – for students this will be two years from the date of the exam board].
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant



Signature of participant

Date\_23/10/2022\_

Gisele Dias

Signature of researcher

Date 23/10/2022

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

### Informed Consent Form / Plain Language Statement for Business Research Project for BABS BAM /BAAF students in year 3 Independent College Dublin.

Research Study Title: Changes in Consumer Behaviour during and post Cov-19 pandemic and how it affected the fast fashion retail stores in Dublin.

Purpose of Research: To investigate and analyse how consumer behaviour has changed during and after the Covid-19 lockdown in Dublin related to the fast fashion retail industry and how the companies have responded to these changes.

Dear Vanesa Luna Branchat,

You are being invited to take part in this research study as you have experienced the lockdown effects when working as a General Manager at Stradivarius. This research study aims to gain an understanding of the challenges and issues that your Company has faced during and post-pandemic and how you managed it.

This research is being carried out by Gisele Dias as part of a Degree in Marketing Studies at Independent Colleges Dublin. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Prof Josh Joyce and Dr Daniel O'Sullivan (School of Business ICD).

Type of participant:

- I, Vanesa Luna Branchat, voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my Interview within two weeks after the Interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves sharing information about how the Covid-19 pandemic affected sales operations at my store.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous.

This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my Interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of the people I speak about.

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- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in [specify location, security arrangements and who has access to Data] until [specific relevant period – for students this will be until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation].
- I understand that a transcript of my Interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for [specific relevant period – for students this will be two years from the date of the exam board].
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further

clarification and information.

Signature of research participant

*Vanessa Luna Branchat*

Signature of participant

Date 22/10/2022

Gisele Dias

Signature of researcher

Date 22/10/2022

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

## Informed Consent Form / Plain Language Statement for Business Research Project for BABS BAM /BAAF students in year 3 Independent College Dublin.

Research Study Title: Changes in Consumer Behaviour during and post Cov-19 pandemic and how it affected the fast fashion retail stores in Dublin.

Purpose of Research: To investigate and analyse how consumer behaviour has changed during and after the Covid-19 lockdown in Dublin related to the fast fashion retail industry and how the companies have responded to these changes.

Dear Michelle Andreza,

You are being invited to take part in this research study as you have experienced the lockdown effects when working as a General Manager at JD Sports. This research study aims to gain an understanding of the challenges and issues that your Company has faced during and post-pandemic and how you managed it.

This research is being carried out by Gisele Dias as part of a Degree in Marketing Studies at Independent Colleges Dublin. The study is being conducted under the supervision of Prof Josh Joyce and Dr Daniel O'Sullivan (School of Business ICD).

Type of participant:

- I, Michelle Andreza, voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.



- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my Interview within two weeks after the Interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing, and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves sharing information about how the Covid-19 pandemic affected sales operations at my store.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research, my identity will remain anonymous.

This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my Interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.

- I understand that disguised extracts from my Interview may be quoted in my research project.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm, they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in [specify location, security arrangements and who has access to Data] until [specific relevant period – for students this will be until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation].
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- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

Signature of research participant



Signature of participant

Date 22/10/2022

Gisele Dias

Signature of researcher

Date 22/10/2022

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study.

## Appendix 2

### Survey Questionary and Diagrams

#### Survey Questions:

Q1 - What is your gender?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female
- ☐ Prefer not to say

Other:

Q2 - What is your age group?

- ☐ 18 - 25
- ☐ 26 - 30
- ☐ 31 - 35
- ☐ 36 - 40
- ☐ 41 - 59
- ☐ 60 +

Q3 - How long have you been living in Dublin?

- ☐ Less than 12 months

- ☐ 01 year
- ☐ 02 years
- ☐ 03 years or more

Q4 - About your purchase habits related to the fast fashion industry, which store in Dublin are you most likely to buy your clothes from?\*

- ☐ Penneys
- ☐ H&M
- ☐ Zara
- ☐ TK Maxx
- ☐ Stradivarius
- ☐ Others

Q5 - Which of the statements below best represents your clothing shopping habits?

- ☐ I always buy clothes from the new season collection
- ☐ I only buy clothes when I need them
- ☐ I only buy second-hand clothes (for example, charity shop clothes)
- ☐ I only buy clothes to attend special events
- ☐ I rarely buy clothes
- ☐ I never buy clothes

Q6 - During Covid - 19 pandemic, were you able to purchase clothing products from your favourite shop?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q7 - Have you needed to choose another store to make your purchases because your favourite one was not operating during the lockdown?

- ☐ Yes, I have had to find another store operating online or with click and collect
- ☐ No, My favourite store was able to accommodate me during the lockdown period
- ☐ No, I did not buy any clothes during the lockdown

Q8 - Which channels have you used to buy them?

- ☐ Click and collect at the physical store
- ☐ The Company's website online store
- ☐ Social media store
- ☐ I did not buy any clothes during the lockdown period

Q9 - When choosing new clothes, how do you prefer to buy them?

- ☐ Online
- ☐ At the physical store

Q10 - When it comes to online shopping, do you have any concerns about how the companies store your personal data?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

Q11- Related to your purchase habits buying clothes, please rate the statements below:

11.1 - I buy more clothes online now than before the lockdown

- ☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly agree

11.2 - I am now more confident that companies selling online are protecting my data accordingly to the Data Protection Regulations

- ☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly agree

11.3 - I am now more likely to buy for the first time from a new shop than I was before the pandemic

- ☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly agree

11.4 - I go to the physical stores to check the product, but I end up buying it online

- ☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly agree

11.5 - Before the pandemic, most of my purchases were made at the physical stores

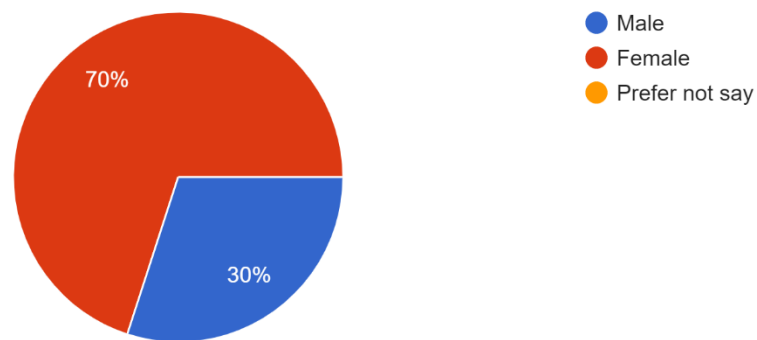
☐ Strongly disagree   ☐ Disagree   ☐ Neutral   ☐ Agree   ☐ Strongly agree

Q1.

What is your gender?	
a) Male	39
b) Female	91
c) Others	0

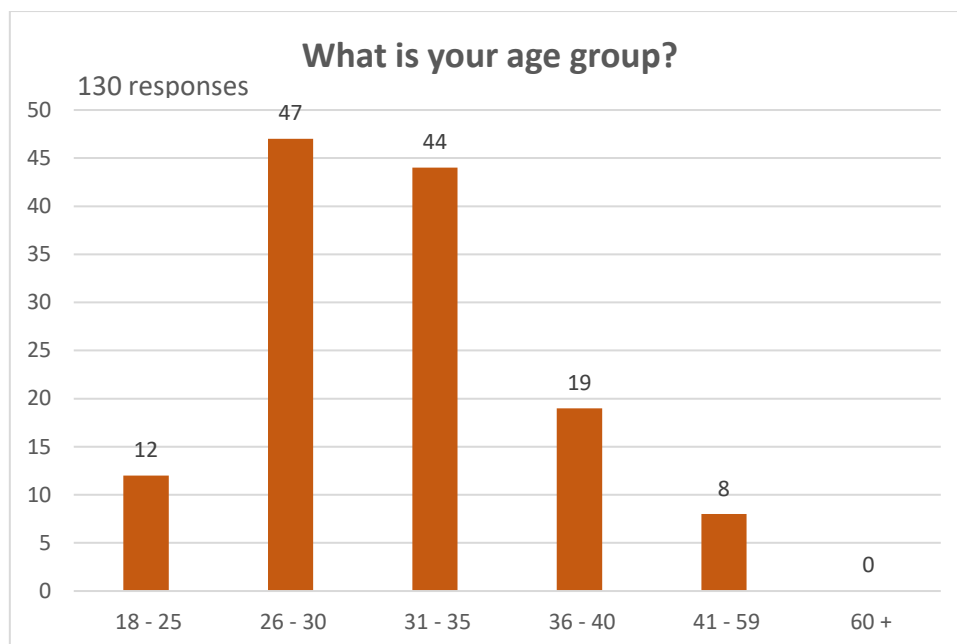
What is your gender?

130 responses



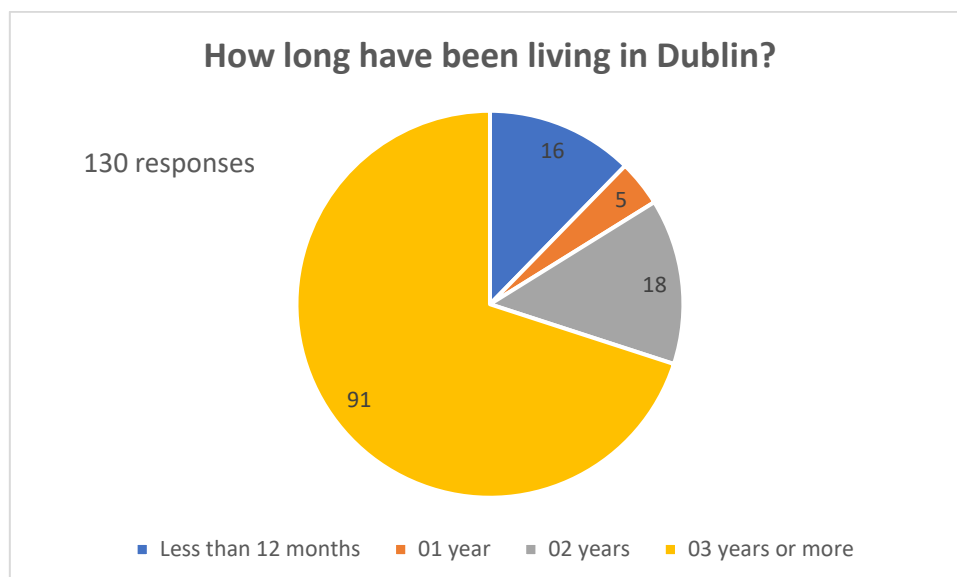
Q2

What is your age group?	
18 – 25	12
26 – 30	47
31 – 35	44
36 – 40	19
41 – 59	8
60 +	0



Q3

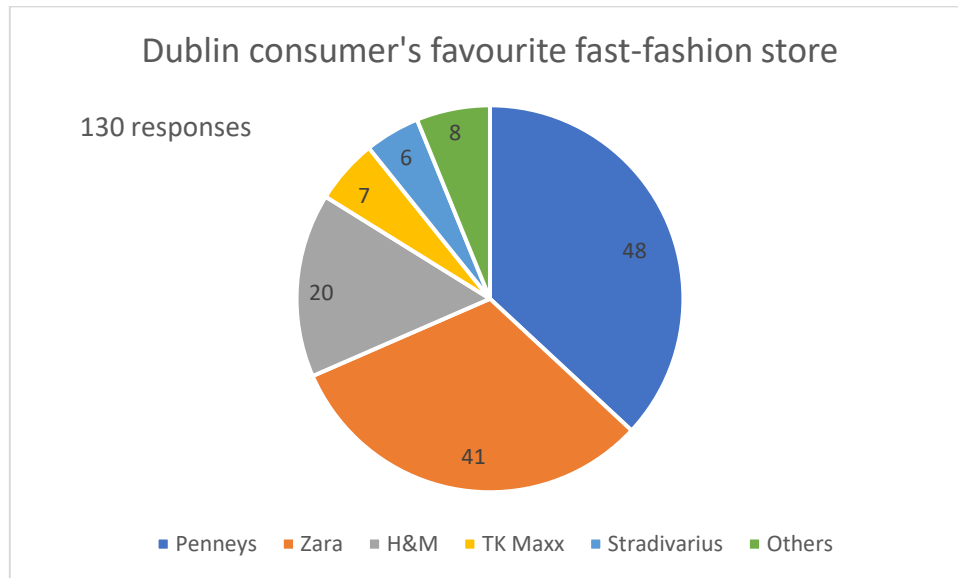
How long have you been living in Dublin?	
Less than 12 months	16
01 year	5
02 years	18
03 years or more	91



Q4 -

About your purchase habits related to the fast fashion industry, which store in Dublin are you most likely to buy your clothes from?	
Penneys	48

Zara	41
H&M	20
TK Maxx	7
Stradivarius	6
Others	8



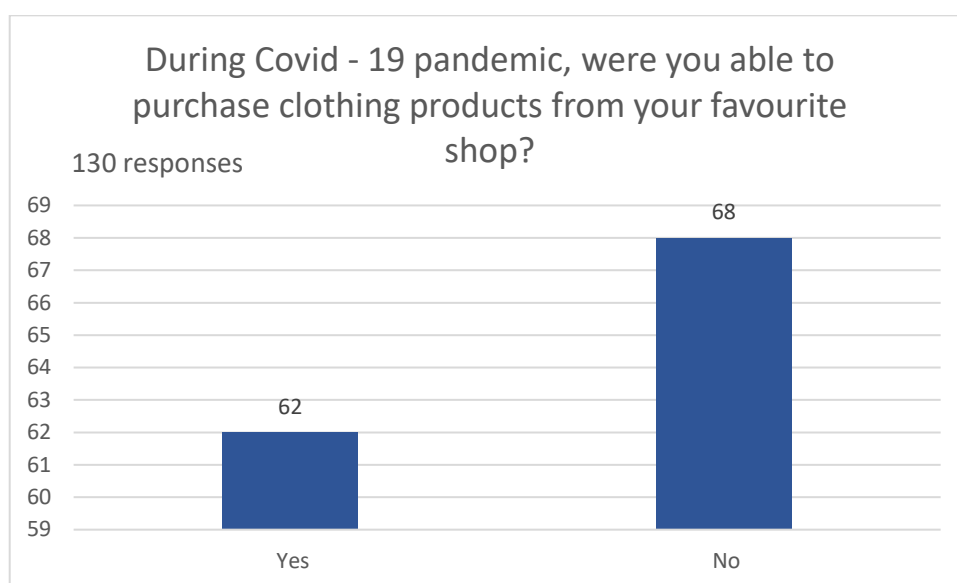
Q5

Which of the statements below best represents your clothing shopping habits?	
I always buy clothes from the new season collection	22
I only buy clothes when I need them	88
I only buy second-hand clothes (for example, charity shop clothes)	3
I only buy clothes to attend special events	8
I rarely buy clothes	9



Q6

During Covid - 19 pandemic, were you able to purchase clothing products from your favourite shop?	
Yes	62
No	68

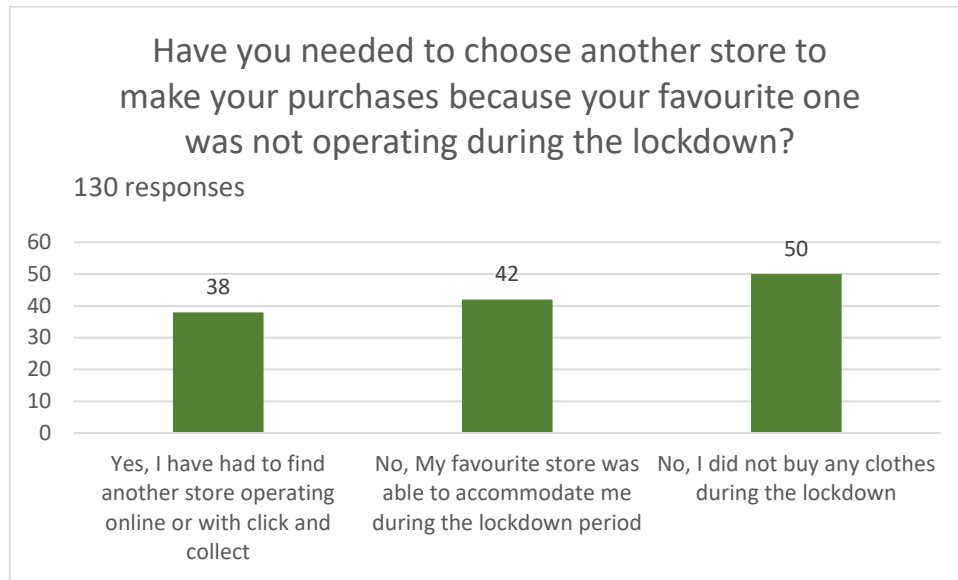


Q7



**Have you needed to choose another store to make your purchases because your favourite one was not operating during the lockdown?**

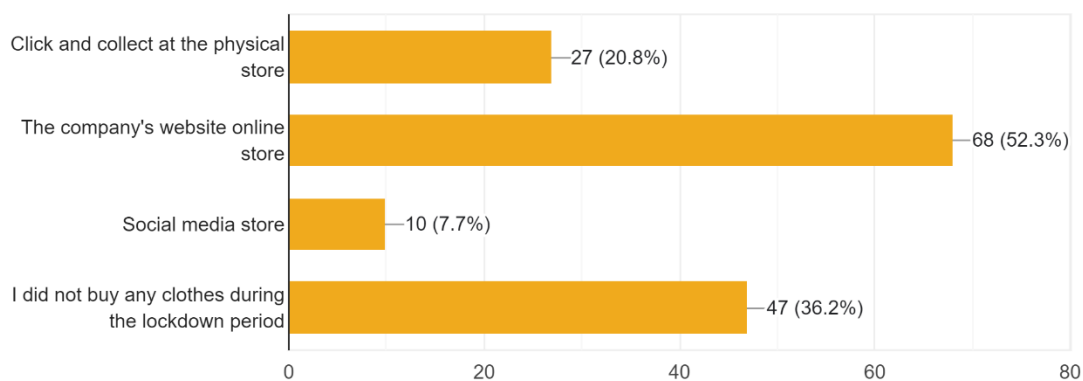
Yes, I have had to find another store operating online or with click and collect	38
No, My favourite store was able to accommodate me during the lockdown period	42
No, I did not buy any clothes during the lockdown	50



Q8

**Which channels have you used to buy them?**

130 responses



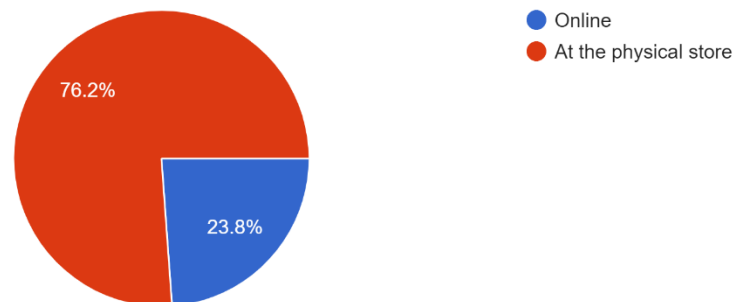
Q9

**When choosing new clothes, how do you prefer to buy them?**

Online	99
--------	----

When choosing new clothes, how do you prefer to buy them?

130 responses



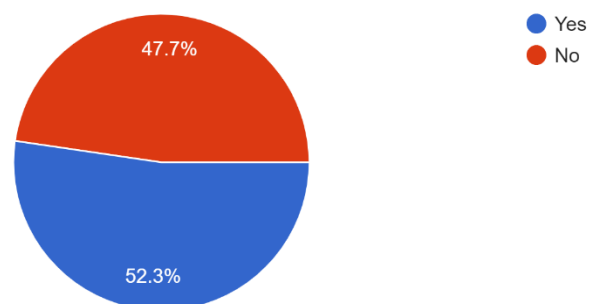
Q10

**When it comes to online shopping, do you have any concerns about how companies store your personal data?**

Yes	68
No	62

When it comes to online shopping, do you have any concern about how the companies store your personal data?

130 responses



Q11

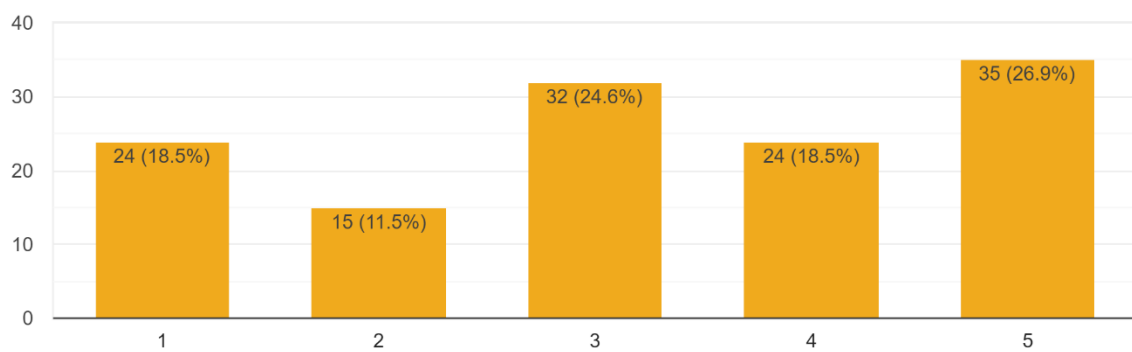
**Related to your purchase habits buying clothes, please rate the statements below:**

### 11.1

I buy more clothes online now than before the lockdown	
1 - Strongly disagree	24
2 – Disagree	15
3 – Neutral	32
4 – Agree	24
5 - Strongly agree	35

I buy more clothes online now than before lockdown

130 responses

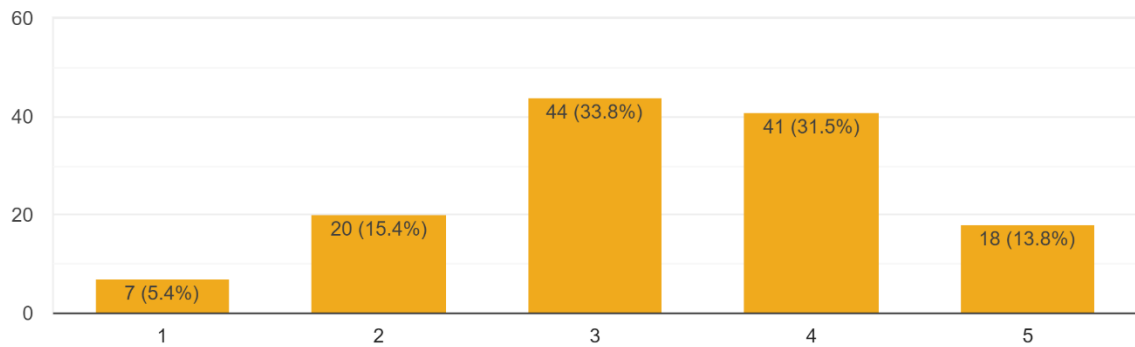


### 11.2

I am now more confident that companies selling online are protecting my data accordingly to the Data Protection Regulations.	
1 – Strongly disagree	7
2 – Disagree	20
3 – Neutral	44
4 – Agree	41
5 - Strongly agree	18

I am now more confident that companies selling online are protecting my data accordingly the Data Protection Regulations

130 responses

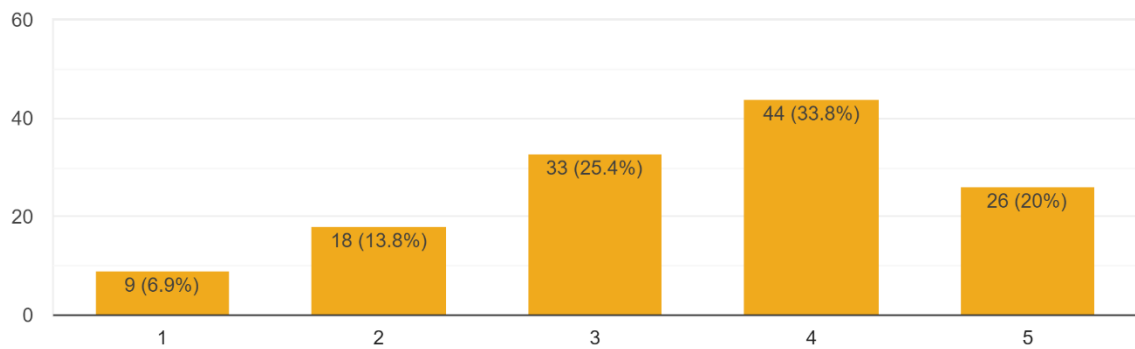


### 11.3

I am now more likely to buy for the first time from a new shop than I was before the pandemic.	
1 - Strongly disagree	9
2 – Disagree	18
3 – Neutral	33
4 – Agree	44
5 - Strongly agree	26

I am now more likely to buy for the first time from a new shop than I was before the pandemic

130 responses

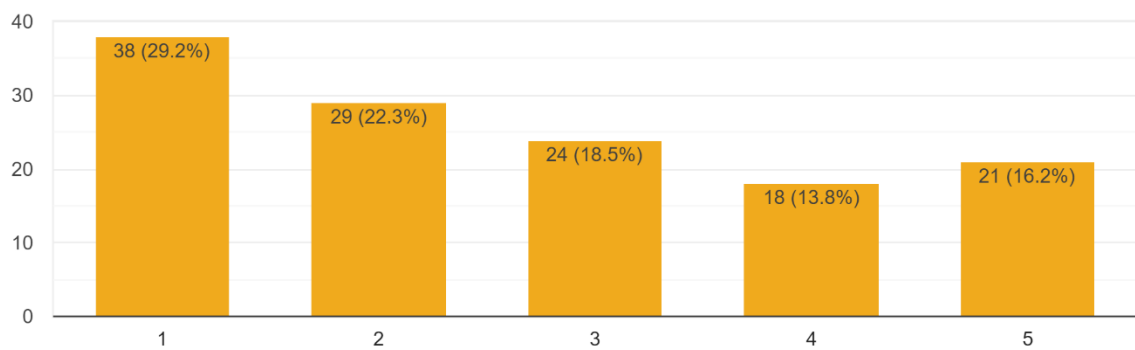


#### 11.4

<b>I go to the physical stores to check the product, but I end up buying it online.</b>	
1 - Strongly disagree	38
2 – Disagree	29
3 – Neutral	24
4 – Agree	18
5 - Strongly agree	21

I go to the physical stores to check the product but I end up buying it online

130 responses

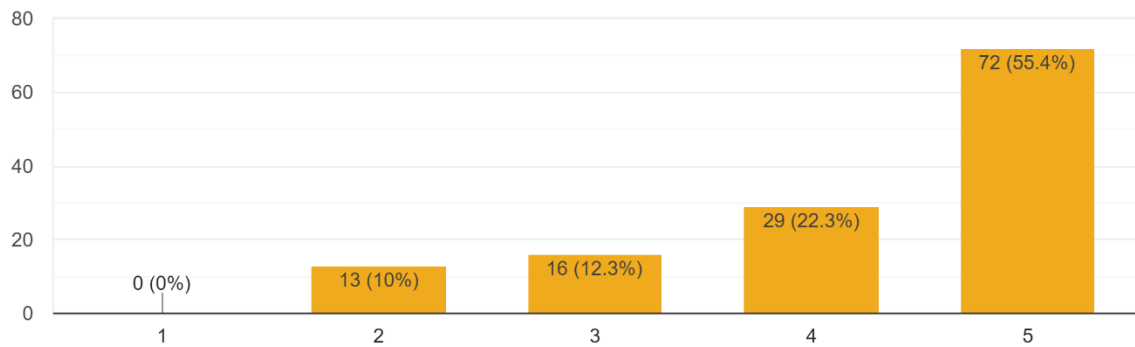


#### 11.5

<b>Before the pandemic, most of my purchases were made at the physical stores</b>	
1 – Strongly disagree	0
2 – Disagree	13
3 – Neutral	16
4 – Agree	29
5 - Strongly agree	72

Before the pandemic most of my purchases were made at the physical stores

130 responses



## Appendix 3

### Interviews Transcription in Total

Interview Questions and Answers		
1. How long have you been working for your Company?	Interviewee 1	I have worked for my Company for approximately 1 year and 4 months.
	Interviewee 2	I have been working for 4 years.
	Interviewee 3	I worked in the Company from October 2019 to January 2022

2. How significant was the impact of the lockdown of COVID-19 on the Company's sales during the lockdown?	Interviewee 1	The Company suffered greatly as a result of both the pandemic regulations and the Brexit-related laws. Due to the pandemic, new procedures had to be implemented that significantly increased the Company's overhead costs. The supply chain also experienced a number of problems as a result of our activities being drastically limited at this time, which left 70% less stock for the stores. Due to low stock levels and the fact that the garment we had in stock wasn't the launch items for the forthcoming season resulted in a significant decline in our sales.
	Interviewee 2	We closed the store after 1 month of the covid impact here in Europe; sales were really low while we were still open, so after the store closed, sales were absolutely low, even online.
	Interviewee 3	Lockdown has made a huge impact on sales in my Company because the store had to shut down for several months, and the only way to get new shoes or sport clothing was by online shopping.

3. Regarding the Company's sales during and post-pandemic of COVID-19, what strategies did your Company introduce to continue selling to its customers?	Interviewee 1	In regard to the marketing plan for the pandemic, my Company made significant investments in its online presence. To attract customers by offering loyalty discounts and to maintain its relevance in a crowded online market, the Company launched a membership program in Ireland. All of the items in stock (Christmas decorations, Halloween costumes, and winter clothing) were removed from the stock to the floor when some pandemic limitations were lifted in order to ensure that we would have products to sell, even in small numbers.
	Interviewee 2	After a while, physical stores were closed, and my Company promoted a sports clothing campaign in the Company; as covid happened, people focused more on doing exercises at home, so they were selling sports clothing online.
	Interviewee 3	My Company had a small team of 2 staff working with online orders before the pandemic. The filial at the city center, while the store was closed, there was a team of around 15 people working on picking items from online orders. All managers and team leaders were called to work at the back of the house, picking online orders that were delivered by a third part company. The online orders definitely kept many jobs and did increase the volume of orders collected from my unit store before the pandemic.

4. Have the Company had a contingency plan in place? What was the crisis management strategy used by the Company during the lockdown while its physical stores were closed?	Interviewee 1	Yes, we had a backup plan called for increasing the online platform's investment as well as using the membership system to draw in and keep clients.
	Interviewee 2	Covid happened suddenly, so the Company had no strategy plan at first; after a while, they did have a strategy which I mentioned in the previous question.
	Interviewee 3	At the time, the Company was following public guidelines to make sure that even though the store was closed to the public, the service kept business running through online orders.

5. Did the management team change anything in the Company's strategy for crisis management in Dublin stores during the pandemic?	Interviewee 1	The changes made were: The number of staff on the floor and tills, the opening hours were reduced, the Company launched the membership for customers, all the items available in stock were released, the massive annual sales we have in January and February were withdrawn, training for the new pandemic guidelines were given, staff Rewards as an attempt to keep the staff motivation balanced, the metrics for sales were changed to reflect better the overall business situation.
	Interviewee 2	After 2 months or even less that covid happened, the Company contacted the managers from the store, so we could do online orders from the items we had in our stockroom and send them around Ireland. We also had the click-and-collect strategy where the consumer could buy it online and collect it at the store within a day and an hour previously booked.
	Interviewee 3	Managers had to implement new ways to work in a group of people, in a safe environment, distancing between staff, masks and sanitiser was provided. Staff had more breaks to make sure safety steps were followed. The manager needed to ensure staff would be safe and not catch the virus; otherwise, all, the team could be at risk of sick leave, and the store would stop operation completely.

6. Regarding to the Company's online presence and online sales, how do you describe the Company's activities before and post-lockdown?	Interviewee 1	Prior to the pandemic, we aimed 30% of revenues to come from our online platform and 70% from in-store sales; presently, those numbers are 60% and 40%, respectively.
	Interviewee 2	After opening stores and covid was more under control, the sales online and in-store grew a lot; people were buying more as they were going away for holidays or out for dinner and drinks; there was no more working from home, so after 2 years people wanted new items for their wardrobes. Also, we did have online orders before covid, but we cannot compare if it was more or less than when the store was closed as we got only a certain number of orders when we were opened, so I cannot really compare. Click and collect was very poor, maybe 20/25 customers a day if so.
	Interviewee 3	The Company had a massive change after the pandemic; the online order increased by 90%. Before the pandemic, we worked with a team of 2 staff scheduled a week for picking up online orders; after the pandemic, the number increased dramatically, for 10 staff scheduled a week to pick up online orders.

7. Did the Company spot any permanent change in Consumer Behaviour post-lockdown? If yes, how has the Company adapted to this new demand?	Interviewee 1	Yes, we have noticed a greater interest in the supply chain, the environmental impact of the business, and the origin and material of the clothing. There was a significant increase in demand for the Company's fitting room services. Individuals who ordinarily wouldn't try items on were 100% utilising this particular service. Regarding the adaptation, the investment in the platform was once again significantly raised. However, given that the Company continues to have challenges with employment and a staffing shortage, the working conditions did not change.
	Interviewee 2	Working in retail has never been easy as you have to deal with all types of customers coming into the store, but it is true that after Covid, there were many rules to be taken within in the store, which not all customers understood, we as part of the Company did follow the rules and remained calm in all the situations regarding Covid rules
	Interviewee 3	My store has adapted to work in the back of the house in a matter of always keeping on going picking online orders. Before the pandemic, the online orders were done 80% by the warehouse, and just a few orders were sent to the physics store. After the pandemic, clients felt safer to order from online instead of going to the store, knowing the items were manipulated by fewer people, decreasing the risk of contamination by the virus.

8. Have the Company invested more in online presence after the lockdown? What are the plans after the crisis, and what are the main changes in place?	Interviewee 1	My Company has as previously described. The opening of a new, enormous franchise on O'Connell Street and the closure of local franchises in favour of the giant store in the city center are the main developments.
	Interviewee 2	The online store for my Company has always been very important as they have a big team taking care of the image from the website, so I could not see much difference between the before and after; as always, there is an improvement.
	Interviewee 3	Yes, my unit had invested in hiring more staff to collect online orders at the store.



09. Related to data protection, how do your Company treat consumers' data collection and data entry? Is your Company aware of GDPR regulations?	Interviewee 1	My Company follow the Data Proception and GDPR regulation making sure that all the consumers' data are safe.
	Interviewee 2	We follow all the GDPR guidelines for consumer data protection.
	Interviewee 3	Yes, we were, and the Company followed the GDPR regulations as it has to be, granting to all consumers that their data were safe with my Company.

10. Is there any other change made during the lockdown that you would like to relate to in this Interview?	Interviewee 1	Employees no longer wanted to work for the Company, which is why there was a +70% increase in employee turnover.
	Interviewee 2	The personal change that I experienced myself and has nothing to do with sales or retail is that, for once, people were giving a break on buying compulsory, so the earth was breathing a bit more.
	Interviewee 3	No

Table 2 – Full transcription of interviews

## Appendix 4

### Reflective Diary

The journey of working on this research paper contributed immensely to my developing and learning process.

When choosing the Research Question, the Themes and the Literature Review, I found myself lost with how to conduct it.

In the first presentation of the Applied Project 01, my work proposal was not delimited, and the Themes were not well defined.

After a meeting with my supervisor Josh Joyce and taking all his advice, I changed all my Literature Reviews and worked to limit the research question to have a better result.

A pilot survey and Questionnaire were done and approved by the supervisor before being released to the public.

The online survey was done on Google forms and sent to social media groups on the internet. The Interview was sent by email.

At first, the idea was to survey with at least 100 respondents and an Interview with only one company: TK Maxx.

The process of getting the Interview done with the company chosen was very delayed once the interviewee refused to do it face-to-face. The option I had was to send the questions by email, which they took a long to respond to and did not answer all the questions adequately.

In the face of the problem and not having much time left, I had to go with mu Plan B, sending the interview questions by email to other fast fashion retail companies in Dublin.

I got good responses and feedback from 03 other companies, so I chose not to use the Interview done with TK Maxx. I personally found it more challenging to do the qualitative research than the quantitative one once getting the answers and feedback was very difficult and some interviewees were not invested in giving the answers needed.

Reflecting on the chosen themes, I think with the knowledge I have now after concluding this project, I would have changed some of them if I had the time.

I also would add some more questions to the survey and change others if I have to redo that.

My analytical and behavioural skills were greatly enhanced while writing this paper, and I was very invested in learning more about Consumer Behaviour in Dublin.

The Gantt chart below represents the schedule of the research project development and activities completed monthly in a year time frame.

The process of chosing the Research QuestionThe Gantt chart below represents the schedule of the research project development and activities completed monthly in a year time frame.

Research Activities	Time taken to complete the Research (In Months)											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Presenting Research Topic												
Presenting Research Aim, Objective and Question												
Gathering Secondary Data												
Presenting Literature Review												
Gathering Primary data through Questionnaires and interviews												
Presenting Research Methodology												
Data Analysis and Findings												

Table 3 – Gantt Chart

Appendix 5  
Copy of Ethical Form A

Form A: Application for Ethical Approval				
Undergraduate/Taught Postgraduate Research				
This form should be submitted to the module leader for the relevant initial proposal and/or the relevant supervisor if the proposal has already been accepted.				
Please save this file as <i>STUDENT NUMBER_AEA_FormA.docx</i>				
Title of Project	Assignment 2			
Name of Learner	Gisele Aparecida Pereira Dias			
Student Number	51712822			
Name of Supervisor/Tutor	Daniel O'Sullivan			
10	If your study involves people less than 16 years, will you ensure that <u>active</u> consent is obtained from parents/guardians <u>and</u> that a parent/guardian or their nominee (such as a teacher) will be present throughout the data collection period?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11	If your study requires evaluation by an ethics committee/board at an external agency, will you wait until you have approval from both the Independent College Dublin and the external ethics committee before starting data collection.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
12	If you are in a position of authority over your participants (for example, if you are their instructor/tutor/manager/examiner etc.) will you inform participants in writing that their grades and/or evaluation will be in no way affected by their participation (or lack thereof) in your research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13	If you are in a position of authority over your participants (for example, if you are their instructor/tutor/manager/examiner etc.), does your study involve asking participants about their academic or professional achievements, motivations, abilities or philosophies? (please note that this does not apply to QA1 or QA3 forms, or questionnaires limited to market research, that do not require ethical approval from the IREC)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
14	Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
15	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

16	Does your project involve work with animals?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
17	Do you plan to give individual feedback to participants regarding their scores on any task or scale?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	Does your study examine any sensitive topics (such as, but not limited to, religion, sexuality, alcohol, crime, drugs, mental health, physical health, etc.)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
19	Is your study designed to change the mental state of participants in any negative way (such as inducing aggression, frustration, etc?)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
20	Does your study involve an external agency (e.g. for recruitment)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
21	Do your participants fall into any of the following special groups?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

**Check the relevant boxes. All questions must be answered before submitting to the relevant lecturer / supervisor. Note: only one box per row should be selected.**

Item	Question	Yes	No	NA
1	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
2	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
3	Will you obtain written consent for participation (through a signed or 'ticked' consent form)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
4	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
6	Will you give participants the option of not answering any question they do not want to answer?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
7	Will you ensure that participant data will be treated with full confidentiality and anonymity and, if published, will not be identifiable as any individual or group?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
8	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e., give them a brief explanation of the study)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
9	If your study involves people between 16 and 18 years, will you ensure that passive consent is obtained from parents/guardians, with active consent obtained from both the	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Item	Question	Yes	No	NA
	child and their school/organisation?			

If you have ticked any of the shaded boxes above, you should consult with your module leader / supervisor immediately. **You will need to fill in Form B Ethical Approval** and submit it to the Research & Ethics Committee **instead** of this form.

There is an obligation on the researcher to bring to the attention of the Research & Ethics Committee any issues with ethical implications not clearly covered by the above checklist.

I consider that this project has **no** significant ethical implications to be brought before the relevant Research & Ethics Committee. I have read and understood the specific guidelines for completion of Ethics Application Forms. I am familiar with the codes of professional ethics relevant to my discipline (and have discussed them with my supervisor).



**Name of Learner** Gisele Aparecida Pereira Dias

**Student Number** 51712822

**Date** 18/05/2022

I have discussed this project with the learner in question, and I agree that it has no significant ethical implications to be brought before the Research & Ethics Committee.



**Name of Supervisor/Lecturer** Daniel O'Sullivan

**Date** 18/05/2022