



# National College *of* Ireland

**The Implication of Innovation on Consumer Buying  
Behavior in Relation to COVID-19: A Case Study of IKEA  
in Ireland**

**WEJE ICHECHI VICTOR**

A Dissertation Submitted to National College of Ireland in Partial Fulfilment for the Degree of  
Masters of Master of Science in International Business

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## ABSTRACT

Through this dissertation, I have explored in-depth the reasons for changes in buying behavior among Irish consumers as a result of the pandemic but also the result of strategies that were targeted by IKEA. The study has also shown that the last two months were not only the time when customers' preferences changed and when the online shopping became more popular, but it was also the period when the use of digital technology was speeded up by the retail businesses greatly. However, as companies went through a kind of unknown things, an ability of being adaptive and creative rose to the surface. IKEA, which has a consumer-oriented respond since long, found the way to adjust itself to changes of the strategies offering its customers more efficient digital platforms and utilizing augmented reality aims at improving online shopping. This study has really emphasized the subtle interdependent nature of consumer habit change and industry strategy shift and it came to light that creative inventiveness can lead to responding to business challenges successfully even in the worst of times. The research's key offering is in analyzing the effectiveness of IKEA's strategies in the new retail climate. In doing so, it reveals the fundamental market mechanism of how pandemic impacts customer behavior and businesses' operations. Capitalizing on this offers the way for the future post-COVID era. This holistic review does not only enrich academia for the purpose of educational document rostrum and beyond but also supplies the shrewd business enterprises with practical advice on consumer engagement and loyalty increasing methods via innovative post-covid practices.

## DECLARATION

### Submission of Thesis and Dissertation

National College of Ireland

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 INTRODUCTION

In response to consumer behavior adjustments due to the transformative changes brought by COVID-2.9 and its global impact, businesses had to deal with insurmountable challenges that required a fundamental change of business strategies. This research is a contemporary review of such a complicated interdependence between the pandemic, consumer purchase behavior and companies' innovative new directions paying special attention to the Irish market.

The pandemic, in turn, has turned into a catalyst for deep transformations of the everyday life routine while consumer spending preferences and priorities have begun to change significantly. People with health uncertainties, financial stability, and societal norms of behavior in the post-pandemic world too started showing increasingly nuanced variations over time. Considering that the Irish market is very responsive and flexible, this situation is an ideal environment to investigate these changes, showing exactly how the pandemic has changed consumer behavior.

For years now, IKEA, the brand famous for its customers-interactive interior design as well as flat-pack furniture, was the most affected by the coronavirus pandemic (Pérez-Pérez et al., 2022).

The story started with a delay in digitalization, however, it ended successfully with the company's firm commitment towards a revolution of the existing business model where digitalization also played a key role. This was made possible by the deep-rooted structural change that the organization had to implement, with the digital strategies being embraced to handle those markets that were in line with the now digitalized era. Digital development of the eStore greatly contributed to the remarkable rise of eCommerce during the COVID-19 outbreak. The stores closing also all turned into fulfillment centers with the use of Wonders (Ding, Liu, & Xu, 2021; Khan & Sarkar, 2024; Öztürkcan, 2020; Pérez-Pérez, Fernández, & Mas, 2022). The

quick click-and-collect service with contactless payment was also introduced and the system capacity for online stores and website traffic was also enhanced. These true marvels, completed in just a few weeks, attest to IKEA's amazing agility and choice to respond to the fast-changing circumstances cocooned by the clients in an ever-changing world (Rigby, 2020).

IKEA, through its consumer-first strategies, has done a brilliant job of keeping abreast with emerging consumer trends, particularly by strengthening its online presence. This were benefit the brand in the post-pandemic environment. The online shop witnessed a 45% rise in sales, which resulted in the setting of a new record concerning its website (Stackpole, 2021). The website was visited about 4 billion times in a single year. Beyond satisfying the higher demand for house furnishings as people spent more time at home, this move also demonstrated IKEA's readiness to go digital and enter new markets whenever they felt the need, or appropriate, in times of uncertainty, where flexibility and low overhead costs were increasingly beneficial.

According to Sin et al. (2021) the services provided by IKEA to the consumer are commonly seen to be made in driving consumer behavior. The user-friendliness of their online platform with complete on-site product information, buying guides, and tracking services that come with the end-of-year return policy process, influences consumer decisions. The company's planning tool launches a new stage of interaction with customers which motivates them more to buy IKEA products (offices, houses). The aforementioned features alongside the product quality, design, and competitive price of IKEA further put IKEA as a very preferred furniture brand among clients (Prasannakumar, 2023).

Utilizing public social networks as well as AR technology, IKEA achieved the goal of enticing the brand's consumers by making a virtual shopping experience more enjoyable. These devices are not just integral parts of a consumer's journey anymore but have become the linchpins of a

highly visual and interactive online shopping experience (Launch of New IKEA Place App – IKEA Global, 2022). The application of this ideological approach doesn't only realize the current preference for using more digital systems, it also demonstrates IKEA's persistence in keeping up their reputation on strong customer relationships with the assistance of cutting-edge technologies that provide consumers with the right things they need (Stakeholder Engagement - IKEA Global, 2021).

This research is situated in an Irish consumer market characterized by vibrancy and diversity of consumers (Shen, 2021) as a place where global trends meet local idiosyncrasies; thus, this study stands between several audiences. It seeks to highlight the intricacies of consumer behavior in an Irish environment, as a result of which the long-term implications for firms can be observed.

The transformative value of knowing what consumers do in this unique setting provides a clear insight into the criticality of such knowledge. As a result of an unclear consumer market, consumers' preferences, values, and brand loyalty are shifting. Companies that realize and adapt to these changes not only outlast the current crisis but also become resilient and consumer-oriented companies in years ahead (Zhang et al., 2021).

The topic "The Implication of Innovation on Consumer Buying Behavior about COVID-19: "A case study of pandemic changes in consumer's behavior and business responses: A focus on Ireland and the case of IKEA" was preferred when it comes to getting into the details behind the relationships between the pandemic-induced changes in the way consumers behave, the novel solutions of the businesses, with Irish market and IKEA as special cases. It originated from the fact that the COVID-19 pandemic not only changed the global economic scenery but has also deeply come into consumers' minds, ones' lifestyles, choices, and purchases. The Irish market, which has gained a reputation for its resilience and ability to respond quickly to changes, is a

possible market for finding the flaws associated with the transformations. Moreover, IKEA, which for years has had a great reputation for innovation, customer interaction, and adaptability, faced a lot of threats that came about due to COVID-19. As the focus of the research is on what impact IKEA in Ireland employment their innovative strategies like digitalization and strengthening the e-commerce platforms, this paper were consider such solutions and their effects on consumer purchasing behavior during the crisis. The study aims to fill in the small gap in the literature and offer a current review of the pandemic's impact on consumers initially and after that touch on the businesses' role in innovation. As its contribution, it will build valuable knowledge for the field of consumers, small and medium business strategy, and pandemic response management.

The company utilizes social media channels, virtual reality, and augmented reality to attract more targeted interactions from customers, and the outcome is a more enjoyable virtual shopping experience (Hagberg & Jonsson, 2022). This situation proves that these gadgets cannot only occupy the positions of basic touch points with a customer but in fact, they could be the masterpiece of appealing and highly interactive e-commerce shopping. IKEA applies the way mentioned above of thinking not only to continue people's faith in digital technology but also to allow them to help develop the image of IKEA as the company purposefully and persistently carries out its strategy to support customers by providing them with the utilities they need through the creation of cutting-edge systems.

As supported by Öztürkcan (2020) development of IKEA as a company directly rooted in sales and purchases of consumers by the coronavirus pandemic has been unavoidable. Among the strategic solutions such as switching physical stores into play and the improvement of digital platforms IKEA has come the way of its consumers' new preferences for the sense of safety and

comfort. The transition indicated above is evidence of the resilience and progressiveness of IKEA that ensures that the company remains relevant and required to cater to shoppers in the post-pandemic world.

The study presents the latest findings in this area to address a gap in existing literature, through this case study of how consumers and innovative choices made by businesses interact during pandemics. To fill in the research gap of Irish consumer buying patterns during the current pandemic, this paper uses IKEA as a suitable case to provide insight into this discussion.

## 1.2 RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

### Statement of the Problem

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to global changes in the behavior of consumers and Ireland should be aware of its results, including their environment. The combination of health concerns, economic instabilities, and shifting market conditions has created a complicated world that needs detailed analysis (Coffey et al., 2020). In this respect, firms like IKEA have to not only adjust but strategically innovate to maintain pace with fast changing needs of consumers. The objective of this research is to illuminate the knowledge gap, which concerns how COVID-19 influences consumer purchase behavior and refers specifically to IKEA's innovative strategies that have been implemented in the Irish market.

### Objectives of the Study

1. To Analyze the Impact of COVID-19 on Consumer Buying Behavior in Ireland:

- Compare the changes in needs, motivations, and decision-making processes brought about by Covid-19 among consumers.
- • Assess the impact of external factors such as health concerns and economic uncertainties on consumer behavior.

## 2. To Examine the Relationship Between Innovation and Consumer Buying Behavior

During the Pandemic:

- We should describe innovative approaches that companies use, particularly IKEA- and discuss the operations struggling with challenges associated with pandemics.
- Discuss the linkage between consumer perceptions of innovation and their buying decisions during a pandemic crisis.

## 3. To Assess the Effectiveness of IKEA's Innovative Strategies in Influencing Consumer Purchasing Decisions in Ireland:

- Evaluate the impact of IKEA's creative practices on consumers in terms of perception, preference, and behavior change.
- Identify key success factors and potential improvement areas in IKEA's pandemic innovation strategy.

## 4. To Provide Recommendations for Businesses, Specifically IKEA, to Enhance Consumer Engagement and Loyalty Through Innovation in the Irish Market:

- From the findings, suggest practical recommendations that can assist firms in becoming more efficient when it comes to consumer engagement and loyalty.
- Develop strategic insights for IKEA about the post-pandemic market, applying novel approaches to establish lasting customer relationships.



## Research Questions

1. How did the COVID-19 pandemic affect the purchasing behavior of Irish consumers about health concerns and economic uncertainties?
2. What is happening in the retail industry to this relationship between innovation and consumer buying behavior during the pandemic?
3. In light of the COVID-19 pandemic, what are the effects of IKEA's innovative strategies on consumers' perceptions, preferences, and decision-making trends in the Ireland market?

## Hypothesis

H1: The COVID-19 pandemic has altered the buying pattern of consumers in Ireland towards healthy and economical products.

H2: The relationship between the innovative strategies used by companies like IKEA, in consumer buying behavior during COVID-19 is strong and positive.

H3: IKEA's innovativeness strategies have had a tangible and positive impact on the Irish consumer decision-making process during the COVID-19 pandemic.

These hypotheses serve as a guideline for testing and verifying the critical assumptions of research. These goals were be discussed in the following chapters, revealing aspects of consumer behavior, innovation, and business strategies that took place under pandemic circumstances.

### 1.3 DELIMITATIONS

Some limitations of the scope and application of this study include Focusing mainly on the consumer market in Ireland, this study aims to investigate how COVID-19 has affected consumers' buying behavior and whether innovative strategies are most often effective within the retail industry; an example of which is IKEA. While such insights may be generalizable to a wider context, caution should be exercised in extrapolating them to other areas. Since the study is limited to the current pandemic period and does not extend into a post-pandemic epoch, it cannot provide predictions for much longer (Das et al., 2021). The presented study uses quantitative methodologies such as surveys and statistical analysis, which favor numeric insights but may miss some qualitative nuances. The case study of IKEA limits the generalizability of results beyond the retail sector. Secondly, the use of data availability and reliability provided by surveys or secondary research introduces possible limitations or biases that could leave the findings incomplete (Moore, Harrison and Hair, 2021). In terms of these limitations, the paper promises a focused examination of research aims within set limits leading to better knowledge regarding the COVID-19 pandemic consumer and creative strategies interaction.

### 1.4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

I set out to comprehensively investigate the consumer behavior pattern changes in Ireland brought about by the coronavirus pandemic, highlighting the actions of the IKEA store and the strategies it introduced to combine financial goals with a competition for customers on the market. Our research study which uses quantitative research methods will have an overall perspective that covers the topic fairly by analyzing the subtle details of consumers' behavior modification and the impact of IKEA's new solutions during the crisis. Research design

incorporates a dual approach: the applied semi-structured questionnaire gives a chance to receive data useful to design items, which especially meet consumer requirements and preferences, whereas in-depth interviews provide a perfect platform to collect qualitative aspects about consumer motivation and behaviour. Implicitly, the research utilizes stratified random sampling in order to make accessible a wide range of individual consumer demographics and thus enlarge the breadth of the study's validity in the globality of the Irish market. Data analysis will encompass the use of descriptive statistics software for the quantitative data, and comparative/contention techniques for from the qualitative insights hoping to merge both data types to draw contrast and better conclusions about market change and strategic responses. Issues of ethics including clear description of consent, confidentiality and maintaining anonymity while were acknowledged, the comments were made about limiting generalizability because of these factors and also posing the challenge of possible biases from the interviews with IKEA executives..

## 1.5 STRUCTURE OF THE STUDY

The structure of this research includes six chapters in a systematic and logical order to explore the relationship between innovation and buying behavior concerning the COVID-19 episode, focusing on the IKEA case in Ireland. Part 1, the Introduction, offers a cursor on the context of the research; why the study is being conducted; and the meaning of the research. The main objective of Chapter 2, which is a literature review, is to explore relevant theory (focusing mainly on consumer behavior), innovation, and the effect of COVID-19 on retail markets, from published/existing literature. In Chapter 3, the mixed-methods approach is highlighted, spelling out the elements of data collection, sampling methods, data analysis, and synthetic methods, all these which are essential offering a unique approach to the study. Within Chapter 4, Data

Analysis and Findings, we present the results of a quantitative and qualitative study conducted to observe how the pandemic affected consumers and the efficiency of IKEA's policies. Chapter 5, the section where the discussion of the research findings is carried out, elaborates on whether the findings are by the theoretical framework and the already existing literature. The last chapter, that is Chapter 6, Conclusions and Recommendations, is devoted to the key outcomes of the study. The chapter also provides recommendations for businesses, future research, as well as a general summary of the study's limitations.

## 1.6 SUMMARY

This research investigates the juxtaposition of the COVID-19 pandemic, consumer buying behavior, and the innovative approach of a company, which is focused on the case of the Irish market. The pandemic has become a driving force reshaping the behavioral aspect of consumers, thereby bringing a high level of volatility in the preferences and priorities of consumers. The study aims to investigate the main COVID-19 influence on consumer behavior in Ireland, identify the correlation between consumer behavior and innovation during the pandemic, evaluate the innovativeness of IKEA, with recommendations to business in general but IKEA in particular, the engagement and loyalty of consumers through innovativeness. Utilizing a mixed-methods approach that consists of conducting both quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews, the study intends to fill up the research literature gap about Irish consumer behavior during the time of COVID-19, taking IKEA as an example. The outcomes address this connection by showing how consumers consume and innovative businesses succeed in pandemics.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1 INTRODUCTION

The theoretical foundation of my dissertation, titled “The Implication of Innovation on Consumer Buying Behavior about COVID-19: Three theoretical frameworks guide the case study of IKEA in Ireland, namely the Diffusion of Innovation Theory (DOI), Technology Acceptance Model 1(TAM) and Consumer Behavior Models. The main objective is to study the complex processes impacting consumer behavior toward innovative approaches during the COVID-19 pandemic concerning the operations of IKEA in the Irish market.

Innovation communication and adoption patterns are understood based on Rogers’s Diffusion of Innovation Theory. This theory were apply to the distribution of IKEA’s innovative strategies among Irish consumers during COVID-19. It allows us to analyze the stages of adoption, adopter groups, and diffusion variables that allow overlooking how novelty spreads within a social structure.

The TAM by Fred Davis helps in understanding the concept, perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use (An et al., 2021). In my dissertation, I used the TAM as an instrument for analyzing IKEA’s innovativeness on the part of Irish consumers. This model offers a chance to study the components that influence consumers’ acceptance or non-acceptance of IKEA initiatives in Ireland.

The term Consumer Behavior Models is more general and includes models like the Theory of Planned Behavior and Decision-Making Process. These models are required for understanding how exogenous factors like COVID-19 impact consumer decision-making processes. The use of

these models provides a clear insight into consumer behavior through the identification of psychological factors influencing consumers' response to innovative solutions during a crisis.

## 2.2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 2.2.1 DIFFUSION OF INNOVATIONS (DOI) THEORY

One of the most significant theories about studying communication and innovation adoption in a social environment is Rogers' DOI Theory. In the context of this study, titled "The Implication of Innovation on Consumer Buying Behavior about COVID-19: According to the DOI theory, "A Case Study of IKEA in Ireland," this serves as an appropriate theoretical foundation for analyzing COVID-19 and its influence on consumer behavior and innovation by the IKEAs.

Rogers's DOI theory was based on research conducted in agriculture regarding diffusion patterns of hybrid corn, which indicates that he could use this theoretical model to describe how innovations unfold and spread across various fields (Nasution et al., 2021). In reality, the theory argues that innovations spread through information channels in a social system over time and this applies to consumer behavior during the COVID-19 era (Avilés 2020).

The five attributes of innovation proposed by Rogers can be used to analyze the innovative approaches adopted by IKEA during COVID-19. For example, information about IKEA's strategies perceived comparative gains in comparison to other options; perceptions of compatibility with consumer needs as testable and visible in Ireland would mean acceptance (Amini and Javid, 2023).

In the crisis and its repercussions, the innovation-decision process model of Rogers is a very useful tool to describe how consumers go through various stages of adoption or rejection of innovative buying behaviors. This model describes consumer behavior from purchase to full adoption and decision factors in detail (Alsaad et al., 2021). Rogers' adopter categories –

innovators, early adopters, early majority, late majority, and laggard can be used as a segmentation criterion to categorize various consumer segments in Ireland based on their attitude toward the change in buying behavior. This clustering can guide deliberate efforts to enhance consumer involvement and loyalty that are in line with the objectives of my dissertation study (Hussain, Shahzad and Hassan, 2020).

### 2.2.2 TECHNOLOGY ACCEPTANCE THEORY

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), conceptualized by Davis in 1989, serves as a crucial theoretical framework within the context of the dissertation, “The Implication of Innovation on Consumer Buying Behavior about COVID-19: TAM has two major goals to describe the technology acceptance process and provide a theoretical framework for successful technological implementation. This model, based on the Theory of Reasoned Action, introduces a psychological factor into human behavior that was not included in the literature of Information Systems at that point (Granić and Marangunić 2019). The core of TAM is based on two constructs, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness that have been validated by empirical evidence. The three-phase TAM process is aimed at the relationship between external factors, cognitive responses, and affective responses that lead to a clear understanding of technology acceptance (Opoku & Enu Kwesi 20).

TAM2 and TAM3 extensions form the theoretical framework of the dissertation due to their predictive power increase and practical issues resolution. TAM2 has more variables and moderators looking at the elements that define user perception of technology implementation (Min, So and Jeong, 2021). However, TAM3 combines the perceived usefulness and ease of use into one model that gives a deeper understanding of technology adoption. Additionally, these models offer valuable implications to the measures of motivational levels and generalize

frameworks that can be used to conceptualize cognitive and affective factors mediating system characteristics' effect on technology acceptance (Malatji et al., 2020).

Using IKEA's innovative practices as an example, TAM provides a theoretical foundation for the analysis of how COVID-19 changed consumer buying behavior in Ireland. In a dissertation, it is possible to evaluate consumers' perceptions and interactions with IKEA innovations during COVID-19 based on the constructs of perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness. Worth noting, the TAM extensions (TAM2 and TAM3) allow specification of other variables that may affect consumer behavior and technology adoption in this case of COVID-19 (Yuen et al., 2020). In general, TAM is a broad and practical theoretical framework for analyzing consumer behavior, as well as the adoption of innovation strategies from the viewpoint of our dissertation (Granić and Marangunić, 2019).

### 2.2.3 THEORY OF PLANNED BEHAVIOUR (TPB)

In the 1970s, Fishbein and Ajzen developed TRA into the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB).

In both models, it is presupposed that people behave rationally and consider the information available for performing certain actions. In TPB, behavior performance is influenced by intentions that are based on the perceived value of such behavior, ease of performing it, and significant others' perception (Abbasi et al., 2021).

The TPB model consists of three main components: attitudes, perceived subjective norms, and perceived behavioral control. Behavior attitude is a positive or negative perception of an individual towards some behavior. A subjective norm is a perception of behavior from others such as friends, relatives, or media. The quantification of perceived behavioral control determines the level of ease or difficulty in carrying out a specific behavior and distinguishes



TPB from TRA. This integration enables TPB to analyze behaviors that are not fully within people's control (Shalender and Sharma, 2020).

However, TPB has also been used in diverse fields such as sustainable consumption research, physical activity, and health-related behavior studies to understand intentions in information systems, m-commerce, and e-banking environments (Rozenkowska 2023). This adaptability demonstrates the universal adaptability of TPB to different types of consumer behavior and its effectiveness in terms of assessing IKEA's innovative strategies for changing Irish consumers' purchase decisions during pandemics (Sultan et al., 2020).

## 2.3 THEMATIC ANALYSIS

### 2.3.1 IKEA'S INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES DURING THE PANDEMIC

A crisis like the pandemic forces IKEA to display the best adaptation skills in unforeseen circumstances availing digitalization, e-commerce, and public engagement among others to continue operations, and even excel in the end. Changing to digital was the company's turn under the authority of the individual responsible for digitalization: Chief Digital Officer Barbara Coppola, stated that the difference was major and like Black Friday daily now (Tesseras, 2021). The process was quick due to the transformation of the digital technologies as Cloud, with the help of which the firm used only the shut-down branches as fulfillment centers and added the Click and Collect contactless services. These innovations were not only responses to urgent demands but also parts of a complex system leading to sustainable economies and enhancing services through online personalized recommendations and 3D visualization tools, which make shopping easier and more enjoyable (Admin, 2023).

Strategic adjustment of the IKEA business to the new pandemic reality, which is a part of the wider tendencies around retail development, is aimed at advancing the market using bolstered

customer experience, operational reshaping, and revising business models to embrace the emergence of digitally dominant consumers. According to Uppalapati and Ponnana, (2022), The concept of omnichannel experience which is advertised by IKEA means that a customer can easily switch from the digital environment to the physical one and vice versa. This imitation of consumer behavior and lifestyle has shown that IKEA is one of the modern and innovative enterprises (Da Silva and Marques, 2020). The rapid transformation from brick-and-mortar to online retail, as the case of John Lewis, demonstrates - upgraded e-commerce platforms and delivery of omnichannel services including virtual room planning by live video calls, exemplifies the broader retail narrative in which companies must be fast in adapting to crises and must put the consumers first (Merritt and Zhao, 2022). Furthermore, we can see IKEA taking another step in this direction by investing in digital tools and cloud technology to manage an increased number of online traffic and orders. This shows how the companies are using technology not only to continue the business but also to take it to the next level after and beyond the pandemic.

We witnessed IKEA's leadership during the pandemic and the notable changes it brought to retail. The pandemic exposed the significant importance of digitalization and supply chains for very functional policies. The speed of e-commerce, the application of AI for improved customer service as well as operational efficiency, and the adoption of sustainable and ethical consumption all are not only means to solve the current crisis but also an investment in the future retail ecosystem. IKEA's approach mirrors the essential pivot all retailers must consider: placing digital technology at the heart of the entire business operation to ensure processes run smoothly, customers are informed better, and the business can safeguard itself against future disturbances (Rigby 2022). Such transformation, well-illustrated by the approach of IKEA,

expresses the changing environment of retail trade as the world is becoming linearly digital and unpredictable while keeping sustainability and a smile on the customer's face as its priorities.

### 2.3.2 IRISH CONTEXT CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR

The pandemic has served as a catalyst, driving both consumers to more conscious purchases, ones that are consciously made for both their well-being and that of others. That change is based on an advance in terms of transparency, effectiveness, and personalized servicing as the consumers in Ireland have come to show rather a high level of resistance to poor quality service and doubtful business ethics. The consumer values perception in the literature shifts in a big way, having a noticeable emphasis on health and safety, service and personal care, ease and coziness, product origin, and brand reputation and trust(Pope, 2021).

It is the peculiarities of cultural values, economy, and other determinants that determine fashion at large in Ireland, rather than all over the globe. Consumers become more concerned with environmental issues, and they start to make their purchases according to other criteria besides cost or quality. This is similar to a global trend that manifests itself in a sincere focus on the sustainability of the environment, social criteria, and local community support, and the roots of cultural heritage deeply embedded in the community, a close bond of trust, and cooperation(SAGE, no date). According to the studies, the survey shows not only it's not the younger population like it was expected but the preferences are gaining importance across all the consumer groups. The foregoing sophisticated perception of consumer conduct demonstrates why organizations must work out a multi-channel strategy by not just relying on the digital channels but also by roping in human involvement into their customer service which has irreplaceable value to meet the growing expectations of Irish consumers.

The yearly report on the consumer habits of Accenture (16th edition), which was published recently, presented a clear picture that many Irish consumers have dramatically transformed the way they see their values and behaviors, being guided now by the personal purpose and welfare of the community in the issues of their consumer patterns (Pope, 2021). It, in turn, outlines the emergence of new behaviors among customers in Ireland demonstrating that the global COVID-19 pandemic has left the destiny of Irish consumers questioning the value of economic well-being. It indicates a major change in the marketplace implying the relevance of a polymorphic look on consumer demand consisting of various factors of international trends regarding cultures and economies and local ones. Such attention to the demands of consumers were ensure a good competitive opportunity for some businesses and sustainable growth.

### 2.3.3 GLOBAL VS. LOCAL PERSPECTIVES

The world shows its desire to navigate to online shopping and the generation of omni-channel experiences, as a response to the pandemic of COVID-19, has fused into consumer behavior changes, affecting the running of the stores of retail giants such as IKEA. The digitalization of the retail industry stems from the clearly defining trend of click-and-collect and Click & Delivery services (Chan, 2020), which suggests the demand for technological solutions in e-commerce to grow exponentially worldwide. The global tendency, which has been triggered by the necessity to adapt to pandemic-restrictive measures, has developed a significant number of followers for IKEA in a digital world by the turnover of its business model. These followers turn to the e-commerce site of IKEA to shop for the safety of the products. Nevertheless, Son et al. (2019) have documented a complex question of how to prevent customer defection during this digital shift, as the number of online comparisons can decrease consumers' traditional devotion to brands. This situation provides an excellent instance to assess the situation on the need to link

digital innovation with value-based strategies to retain customers and medium engagement in a post-pandemic retail environment.

On the one hand, the Irish consumer market shows personality traits and the popular response to the IKEA business penetration in Ireland. PwC's latest Irish Consumer Insights Pulse Survey pointed out that quite several Irish consumers were observed to have heightened anxiety levels regarding their finances, thus, there was an obvious switch in their non-essential spending and the likelihood of employing cost-saving methods rose. The sensitivity of the local Irish consumers to finance is a confirmation that IKEA needs to globalize and tailor its strategies in such a way that it should focus on cost-effectiveness and value, reflecting the users' preferences for own brands and promotional offers (Veselovská, Závadský and Bartková, 2021).

## 2.4 RESEARCH GAPS

Even though one can point to a great amount of research done on consumer behavior and innovation that has happened due to COVID-19, there is still a lot unknown about the Irish retail sector. Core problems that are in play include but are not limited to absence of the studies on the consumer's response to the innovative strategies, the lack of any realistic model that could be applied to the Irish context, and also the no empirical evidence of proper results on the effectiveness of the implemented innovation in the beginning of the pandemic (Gnutzmann, 2020). Moreover, existing literature about the influence of digitization and changes in the consumption patterns of Irish people is still insufficient. To get through post-COVID their importance is even more important for both retailers and researchers alike to get through post-pandemic time properly and make the right decisions in a changing environment that is constantly changing (Rita and Ramos, 2022).

## 2.5 SYNTHESIS OF FINDINGS

The literature review showcases some working points concerning the impacts of innovation in running a buying behavior situation such as the era of COVID-19 and IKEA Ireland operations. As advocated by Rogers, DOI (Diffusion of Innovations) Theory also proves to be a very strong tool for understanding various stages of crises in consumer behavior like the stages of adoption, adopter groups, and diffusion variables that are helpful for consumers in a crisis. Rogers' adopter categories with IKEA allow consumers from Ireland to be divided into market segments depending on their attitude towards changing buying behavior so that their strategies can be targeted to increase the consumers' involvement and loyalty. The second aspect of the theory is the Technological Acceptance Model (TAM) which deals with the understanding of consumer acceptance peculiar to innovative strategies. However, it appends inward perception of usefulness and ease of use. Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) extensions, TAM2 and TAM3, use other factors besides well-known consumer behavior to provide a wide scope of the phenomenon of technology adoption in resonance with their COVID-19 context (Tsai and Tiwasing, 2021). Lastly, the Theory of Planned Behavior, or the TPB, does what it is specifically assigned to: clarifies the place of intentions, in determining the way consumers behave, making it clear how Irish consumers responded to the emerging risks of the pandemic. TPB's capability to be applied in different perspectives is proof that the model has content that can be used as a factor of IKEA's innovative strategies in solving the purchasing decisions of danger that are caused by crisis anytime (Plidtookpai and Yoopetch, 2021). In summary, the synergy of these theoretical concepts captures the intricate interconnections between innovation, consumer behavior as well as a crisis context, creating room for further research to clear the knowledge gap

as well as to streamline strategies as the retail sector of Ireland continues to witness tremendous changes.

## 2.6 CONCLUSION

In general, this review has covered theoretically guided literature that has formed the basis of this dissertation and the following theories have guided this dissertation: as-Diffusion of Innovation Theory, Technology Acceptance Model, and Theory of Planned Behavior. These theoretical property projects indicate that while there is some insight into consumer behavior and technology response in the Irish Retail Sector, there remain ample items to be discovered. The field of innovation research for tourism SMEs in Ireland faces gaps that include not having studies that explore customers' responses to innovative strategies, the absence of models designed uniquely for the local environment, and the scarcity of evidence that shows if applied innovations work. This is also the case where research has not been done well enough to support claims concerning the effect of digitalization and transformations in consumers' sourcing practices in Ireland. To conclude, these disparities are critical at the same time for the business and the academic communities to handle the changes in the post-pandemic environment properly, providing all the necessary information.

### 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology is the basis of the study's reliability and validity and nothing can stand on the shoulders of solid foundations. This section expounds, in detail, how internal systems and data analysis are deployed to investigate the influence of IKEA's novel strategies on purchasing decisions undertaken by Irish buyers during the COVID-19 pandemic. Taking the one-sided notion of consumer preference into account, this study applies a mixed-method approach including quantitative and qualitative aspects of consumer behavior which is often changeable in crisis contexts. Such concoction enables the recipient to draw a comprehensive picture of the surveys and provides even deeper insight with detailed insights representing consumers' psychographic states and emotional experiences. The method provided in this study to, provide meaningful, robust evidence that can be repeated and give a broader context is the thing that were be used to eventually conclude. This approach is even more relevant when talking about the specific complexities of how international trade adjustments caused by the pandemic have affected shoppers' relationships with retail innovations, with the aim being to look more closely at the reactions within this country. This chapter describes the research design, surveys, sampling methods and techniques, and the analytical procedures required to arrive at the research objectives.

#### 3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design was the roadmap through which the investigator cannot only filter and shape the collected data, but also manage it, measure it, and analyze it. Among numerous equally significant aspects of study design, it was also a crucial fact that an appropriate design was



chosen to collaborate with the research question and aims to preserve the validity and application of the findings (Rezigalla, 2020). To carry on with this study on how IKEA's new approaches impacted consumer behavior at the time of the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland, the mixed method research design was used so both the qualitative and the quantitative features could be applied.

### 3.2.1 Quantitative Research

The quantitative part of this study was a descriptive study design and used a descriptive method. This response was inadequate in terms of evaluation and the notes were related to the consumer behavior factors to be considered during the pandemic. The survey structure was accompanied by a metrics-based methodology where the research captures the degree of impact that IKEA's innovations have made on consumer purchase decisions, tastes, and opinions. Based on the structured survey method which allows collecting a rather large sample size, the results from the study were not only be statistically valid but also reflect the overall Irish consumer behavior.

The survey form consists of a careful selection of closed-ended questions from the offered survey sample to assess the different aspects of consumers' behavior since the pandemic and to evaluate the efficiency of IKEA's pandemic marketing tactics. Questions are scaled to include levels of response, from general interest and satisfaction to the direct impact on individual consumers by online shopping platforms, pick-and-gather services, and chatbots (Wereiams et al., 2022).

### 3.2.2 Methodological Rigor

The qualitative inquiry portion of the analysis was validated and tested through investigation and the use of a survey instrument that was properly designed and validated. The reliability test, Cronbach Alpha, was the evidence of whether the written survey questions were precise and

consistent with each other (Amirrudin, Nasution and Supahar, 2020). This maintains the dissimilarity in the responses produced by the same questions being asked, which was a symbol of the responsiveness and reliability of the surveys when used to measure sustainability aspects (Mohajan, 2020).

Validity researches include the tests conducted in order not to hide the fact that the survey does not measure what it was intended to measure. In the process of establishing content validity, expert reviews provide support where the SMEs approve the survey items to confirm that they are illustrating accurately the area of measurement. Exploratory factor analysis was the method used to study the construct validity as it assesses if the theoretical concepts were represented by the correlations among the questions.

### 3.3 JUSTIFICATION OF CUSTOMER QUESTIONNAIRE

Tailored specifically for collecting objective data on consumers' awareness, actions, and choices that play their role in the Competitiveness of the Company like online platforms and virtual assistance tools design, participants were given a questionnaire that shifted the investigation to areas not covered by general market surveys. This detail allowed for further evaluation of various aspects of strategic effects and customer response, which were be critical to support informed decision-making for strategic planning and operations of the company (Aithal and Aithal, 2020).

The questionnaire integrated closed- and open-ended questions together for quantitative and qualitative data analysis. Thanks to this approach, it facilitated the gaining of a deeply comprehensive or taking into consideration the operational principles of the TAM and the explanation for the consumption environment theory (Almulla, 2021). Each question was designed to get as much relevant information directly contributing to the research objectives as

possible. The surveys started with pilot testing before the main study to refine the tool of questioning based on the initial feedback from the participants. The purpose was to adjust the questions to their specific needs; which would indeed comply with the goals of the study.

Ethical considerations were given due scrutiny and consideration throughout the questionnaire's entire research. The participants were given a brief explanation of the study's aim, ethical standards, and confidentiality, with the proof of informed consent being signed by all of them. The design of the questionnaire persisted as robust, being adjusted based on the pilot test, yet anchored in ethical guidelines for a reliable tool to assess the findings on consumer response to IKEA innovations at a tipping point and provide useful business insight (Brittain et al., 2020).

### 3.4 POPULATION AND SAMPLING

#### 3.4.1 POPULATION DEFINITION

This study was aimed at an audience of people who have experience interacting with IKEA in Ireland, particularly with customers who ranged between those affected by the company's innovative strategies and those responsive during the COVID-19 pandemic. These customer types involve people involving not only the store location of both physical outlets across Ireland but also the Internet shopping page. IKEA consumers in Ireland come from various sectors of the population which include, the youth, old people, both genders, individuals of different income statuses, and also various geographical locations around the country. This was a description of the broad consumer base (Bridier, 2021).

The peculiarities of consumer behavior during the pandemic and the great opportunities for adaptation created by IKEA's varied marketing strategy together make up a perfect group for this study on the immediate effects of being innovative on consumption patterns. Such methodology does not only have an informative role in assessing the impact of these strategies but also helps

in unraveling the degree of flexibility and interest of consumers in the context of the crisis (Berndt, 2020).

#### 3.4.2 Sampling Frame and Technique

The inclusion of the whole target population was achieved by utilizing IKEA's customer database as the sampling frame, which holds membership details, online records, as well as transaction histories. This database access allows the process of a sample that truly resembles the whole range of demographic and behavioral characteristics.

The sampling technique was STRATA sampling method which was followed by random sampling. These stratification tools account for the populations' homogeneity in classification under certain demographic indicators such as age, gender, and proximity. Through the process of stratified sampling, the chosen random sample stands for the entire population. This approach ascertains that all key ethnicities of the population are proportionately represented in the sample, hence the results achieve a larger population coverage (Berndt, 2020).

#### 3.4.3 Sample Size Determination

The sample size for this particular study was determined by keeping an eye on the statistical formulas targeted at sample size calculation in population research. The formula incorporated confidence level (95%) and margin of error (5%) and included population variance from the preliminary data analysis of IKEA's customer engagement metrics. We aimed for a sample that could be considered representative of IKEA's diverse customer base, this could be around 70 people. Such magnitude was adequate to cope with statistical power and make the survey data accurate enough with satisfactory error margins to provide detailed and reliable estimates of population parameters.

#### 3.4.4 Sampling Details

Each pick in the mentioned sample gets an invitation to take part in the research sent via e-mail additionally providing the research theme, its purpose, and the estimated period of participation. A sampling plausibility questionnaire was running in place to give incentives, such as rational lottery clients or customers for a card, and so on. As well as the survey does not take too much time and can be conveniently completed online.

The timely response rate interest and quality of the data collected are increased by sending reminders and also, keeping the survey open for a four-week period during which participants have the chance to respond whenever they find it ideal and convenient. Hence, this approach demonstrates consideration of potential time restraints and separate schedules of participants, thus, making it possible to collect data from a more inclusive pool of participants.

#### 3.4.5 Ethical Considerations in Sampling

The study maintains a strict set of ethics and principles in dealing with individual participants as well as data handling. Complete consent of conscious participants was be obtained, a step that did not involve them participating without full knowledge about their involvement and any data that was be collected. Confidentiality was non-negotiable, with data anonymized and locked within highly secured storage vaults. Participants discussed that they have the right to quit the study at any moment whatever the case could be. More importantly, the rigorous methodological considerations extended to sampling techniques and ethical concerns provide that the study was built on a firm methodological gravity which allows the research outcomes to be relied on in the formulation of strategic decisions by IKEA in Ireland.

### 3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHODS

#### 3.5.1 OVERVIEW

The study leverages a quantitative research study to determine the extent to which IKEA's strategic innovations have influenced consumer behaviors throughout the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland. The use of a solid quantitative basis permits the active quantification, approval, and rating of the consequences touching a wide range of consumers.

#### 3.5.2 SURVEY IMPLEMENTATION

Numbers are gathered with the help of the online survey that has a structured nature it was created using SurveyMonkey. We selected this particular platform due to its advanced attributes and its highly user-satisfying ratings. Survey Monkey offers professional surveys that can include different kinds of questions like the Likert scale, multiple choice questions, and ranking instruments(Why choose SurveyMonkey | SurveyMonkey, no date). Such attributes are therefore a key indicator on which to assess the success of IKEA through implementing innovative techniques in the enhancement of consumer behavior, which was manifested in decisions to purchase, the level of satisfaction as well as the strength of connection with the brand.

SurveyMonkey coupled with its wide distribution network acquires a share via platforms such as social media and emails. This large presence for the targeting of IKEA's heterogeneous customer base from all corners of Ireland was indeed essential for a representative sampling as well as coverage of various segments to guarantee the overall representative piece.

#### 3.5.3 DATA COLLECTION AND PROCESSING

Respondents are contacted via email, where the invitation to participate in the survey is sent.

This process takes place with the help of the customer database provided by the IKEA company.

This database pool comprises of customers who have been active with IKEA through different channels, yielding a great elektronisk lexx database for the sample. The survey has a very

selective overview and includes an introduction of research objectives telling participants that their data were anonymous and confidential.

With help from the SurveyMonkey database, the collected data was securely stored and real-time processing was performed. The outcome was transparent and robust analysis of your data. For in-depth statistical analysis exported data from SurveyMonkey to SPSS Version 22 was further used. The main reason why programs such as MS Word were used was because that they were highly efficient in dealing with manipulation, analysis, and graphical representation of data. It involves the fact that the statistical testing has been done correctly and provides the research outcomes with validity.

#### 3.5.4 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The integrity of information was maintained from initial data collecting to the end. The research team clarified clarify the objective of the study, the research participants' rights, and the measures introduced to safeguard the confidentiality of the data. Consent was obtained online prior to the survey use, thus ensuring that only participants give their consent and all users know their right to unwereingly decline to participate without facing any consequences.

The conservation of privacy and confidentiality of the collected data was maintained at the topmost level. 'Personal identifiers' were hidden or masked in the information before its analysis. This makes it impossible to track the respondents' identities. The research were strictly follow the GDPR to guarantee that all the data management steps meet both the local and the international data protection standards.

#### 3.5.5 DATA ANALYSIS

SPSS version 22 which wasSPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences) for short, was the software used in this data analysis, and this software was widely used by analysts in different

disciplines because of its proven capability of dealing with complex data analysis. The SPSS advanced survey data analytics considerably reduces the time required for processing large datasets by utilizing its efficient advanced survey tools (Silverlake Consulting, 2021). This software helped particularly in the measurement of different statistical tests that were most of the time used for validation of the hypotheses via the study of innovative strategies of IKEA company as well as their impact on the behavior of the consumers during the COVID-19 pandemic in Ireland.

### 3.5.6 DATA PREPARATION AND MANAGEMENT IN SPSS

Finishing Data Gathering with SurveyMonkey, I had the dataset exported to SPSS for more comprehensive study. At the beginning of data preparation, the dataset was verified to be complete as well as its blank cells were processed and correct coding responses were applied. SPSS was the functionalities that allow organizing data in a sensible way, and this was very important in making sure that the process of statistical analysis was done in an accurate manner (Cowley et al., 2020). The next step involves naming and contrasting variables in such a way as to guarantee that the surveying was done on accurate data allocated to items of the survey.

The main statistical techniques used in this analysis include: The main statistical techniques used in this analysis include:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** The project included the execution of some simple data analyses and the expression of the findings in straightforward ways, explaining the structure of the sample and the measures that were used. Basic descriptive statistics like averages  $\pm$  deviations and frequency distributions provide the first glance of the data space.



- **Inferential Statistics:** Sampling allows to draw conclusions on the consumer population after the data study. With the use of methods like t-tests, and ANOVA techniques latest trends in consumer behavior across different demographic groups were still explored.
- **Regression Analysis:** Investigate the impact the two sets of variables have on one another by identifying the relationship between dependent variables (such as purchase frequency and satisfaction levels) and independent variables (the range of innovative strategies implemented by IKEA). This analysis enables us to figure out what independent variables were controlling what dependent variables after watching the module.

### 3.5.7 BENEFITS OF USING SPSS FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The use of SPSS in this study offers several advantages: The use of SPSS in this study offers several advantages. One of the was efficiency: SPSS was recognized for its time effectiveness especially in big data management, significantly reducing the time taken by testers or data analysts for their overall analysis duration when compared to other statistical tools used.

Secondly, comprehensive analysis capabilities were was another advantage the software offers. SPSS covers all the data analysis techniques that you could need, whether simple descriptive statistics or highly extended multivariate analysis and therefore it was very suitable for research purposes. SPSS is a tool that enables a researcher to modify and transform their data throughout the process. Thus, it was easy to present data in a way adequate for different types of analysis. Computations of new variables, recoding of already existing variables, and ability to handle percentages and missing data were included in this.

### 3.5.8 GRAPHICAL AND TABULAR PRESENTATION OF RESULTS

Finally, the SPSS offers the highly regarded graphics design for which the program was known, which provides essential links to the insights and presentation of the research findings. Charts,

graphs, and tables can be created effortlessly by the way they create clear and interpretable outputs which make it easy to understand as well to visualize the inter-relations among the variables and the summarization of the end statistical results. This visual graphical representation goes to show the findings in an easy-to-understand format but remains the facts for both researchers and strategic decision makers of IKEA.

By using the very robust analytical facilities of SPSS the research was capable of making a thorough qualitative analysis of the data that was at hand, and it was so that the insights provided were accurate and useful for decision-making purposes (Cowley et al., 2020). The task of this meticulous examination would be, in essence, to draw groundbreaking conclusions concerning the effectiveness of IKEA's tactical thinking amidst troublesome and disruptive turbulence in the global markets of customer behavior and strategic management.

### 3.6 HYPOTHESES TESTING

In this research, to analyze how the innovative strategies of IKEA have influenced the behavior of consumers in Ireland during the current pandemic three hypotheses were developed. These propositions were obtained through an establishment of the theoretical contribution by the literature review and aspired to mathematically confirm the existence of the correlation between some consumers' behavior indices and IKEA's strategic initiatives.

H1: Due to the increased online sales of IKEA during the pandemic period, consumer buying behavior has shifted positively, according to Ireland's current status.

This assumption attempts to find out if any of the enhancements or IKEA's extra importance on digital shop services led to changes in how consumers in Ireland chose to shop for the duration

of the pandemic, which could have amplified their volume and frequency of online shopping ordering.

H2: The observation of IKEA's health and safety measures during the pandemic spells a note of greater customer loyalty and more in-store shopping visits using its positive impact.

This hypothesis looks at the case of IKEA whether customers' loyalty to the brand and propensity to shop in-store is ensured by their meticulously deployed health and safety protocols during the remaining period of an ongoing pandemic.

H3: Consumers' awareness of IKEA's innovative reactions to the pandemic including virtual shopping tools and just simplified fulfillment makes the shopping experience even better with the brand.

This hypothesis is about the extent to which IKEA got rid of those innovations caused by the pandemic which made shopping enjoyable and satisfactory to their customers.

To support these theories, data obtained from the questionnaire, which was structured, were analyzed using "SPSS Version 22". The tools we relied on were common statistics methods such as descriptive statistics to describe data distribution, chi-square test to explore the relationship between categorical variables, and regression analysis to join data in explaining IKEA's sales campaigns and consumers' behavior. These analytics allowed the observation of how IKEA's managed coping during the pandemic influenced customers' behaviors. On one hand, it offers practical implications for the business on its strategic adjustments, and on the other hand, it provides both academic value and practical implications for strategic business adjustments. From the outcomes and the hypothesis, the evidence was evident that IKEA's innovation, which was designed to engage customers was effective during the pandemic.

### 3.7 LIMITATIONS

Even though a careful design and execution of this study were performed, still several limitations came across availing the generalizability and conclusions making. One first consideration is that our study depends exclusively on the quantitative data gathered with the questionnaire designed by us. This method produced the required statistics but without qualitative information about consumers, the research gave a limited degree of detailed understanding of client's moods and feelings. This could have been a great source of data that would have given a more in-depth understanding of the effects of emotions and psychology during the COVID-19 situation.

Besides, the presentation concerned only IKEA customers in Ireland, and therefore it may call into question the general nature of the results that were available to any other area or the type of retail ambience. Human behavior, particularly regarding consumption habits, can widely diverge from culture to culture and across the income spectrum, which calls for the need for supplemental local research for the results to be applicable elsewhere.

First and foremost, the fact that data collection was confined to a short period might not completely offer a precise picture of long-term trends or how consumers were reciprocating to the continuously changing nature of the pandemic condition. Furthermore, there might be respondent bias as well as the self-reported character of the survey could affect the accuracy of the results

### 3.8 SUMMARY

This chapter provided an overview of the research methodology that focused on the use of IKEA's innovative strategies to find out how consumer behavior in Ireland was affected by

COVID-19. In this study, the questionnaire had a structure through which gaps were filled by doing descriptive stats using SPSS Version 22 to test the hypotheses that were already formulated. The survey results demonstrated that the advanced web interface of IKEA and the new health and wellness rules helped improve customer shopping experience and satisfaction. Nevertheless, I realized those limitations, including the absence of qualitative data, the location focus, and potential biases based on survey techniques which may have narrow applicability of the results. Even though those shortcomings were observed, the conclusions brought about distinctive amplifier effects of thinking in the context of dealing with crises of other retailers. These in-puts provided to be of value in developing strategic plans and and enhancing customer relationships during and after the dealing with pandemic situation

## 4 RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter expound upon the obtained empirical research, which is useful for understanding how the innovations of IKEA have been responded by buyers in Ireland, namely, under the conditions of the pandemic COVID. The changing global landscape constantly developed during the lockdown, consumer behavior and tastes experienced a fundamental transformation, and requirements for more ready-made businesses grew from the side of all. This chapter summarizes a comprehensive overview of the findings of the input data generated from various surveys and highlights the distinct impact of IKEA's customer-centric innovation approaches and improved online presence on customers' buying behaviors during this unique period.

This approach means that IKEA's evaluation of its adaptive measures in reaction to the fast changing market dynamics is viewed through the lens that it is worn solely. What follows is the step by step analysis of whether the strategic innovations have also translated into one's behavioral changes and favorable business outcomes during the pandemic in line with the hypothesis put forward previously. Technically, this analysis employs the descriptive statistics so as to disclose the socio-demographic categories of the survey responses to the target consumers. This makes the analysis more accurate. The following sections of my thesis were devoted to the rigorous application of statistical techniques to test the above-mentioned claims, trying to find the specific link between the IKEA's innovative policies and consumer buying behavior. Besides, this modeled way not only shows the efficiency of IKEA's adaptations but also bases on the acknowledgement of the theoretical frameworks that are covered in the literature review so as to form a big picture of the connection between consumer behavior theories and their real implementations in an emergency context.

The chapter's results not only prove the success of IKEA's innovative pandemic strategies for remaining competitive but also provides important strategies for the industry and in facing possible future global disturbances, the effects of which IKEA can survive well.

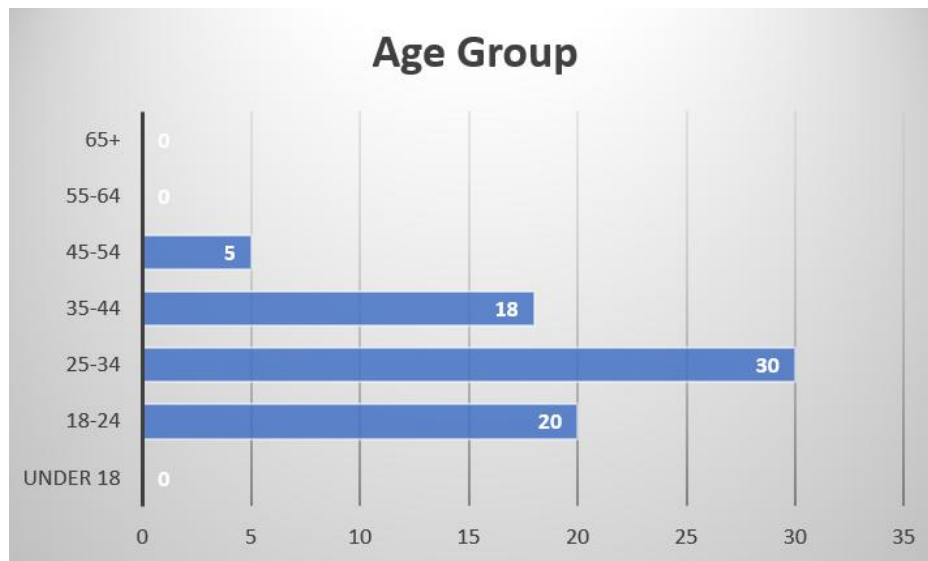
## 4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS

The qualitative analysis portray an extensive picture of the demographics in consumer behavior of the Ireland market segment during the pandemic times in detail. The fact that a total of 73 individuals are participants were enough to ensure that the data were be evaluated properly. The next part dissects the descriptive statistics obtained from survey data and interpreting them, deciding how they can be linked to the different consumer preferences and precisely extrapolate strategic responses of IKEA to the pandemic times.

### 4.2.1 DEMOGRAPHICS AND BEHAVIORAL INSIGHTS

The survey, as shown, somewhat seems to be a direction at the youth consumer's hub, with more than 30 respondents in the age range of 25-34, which indicates serious encounters of the market in that area. Continuing onto the age group of 18-24, we find the number of participants being 20 as well, following the other statistics and indicating that youth and young adults are also a part of IKEA's consumers. A kind of group with 18 respondents the same as the smallest but the second most answerable bracket is the 35-44 age range. The 45-54 one is infrequent but its respondents are another minor group with 5 individuals. The clear stop of feedback from those aged 55+ suggests market door may be open young enough group or gap between IKEA's digital initiatives and their preferences.

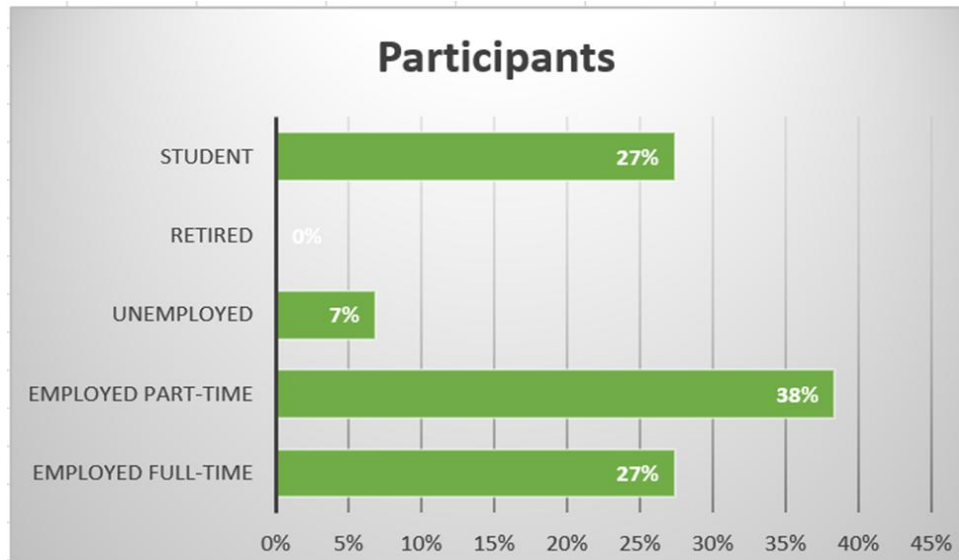
*Figure 1: Distribution of Participants by Age Group*



In terms of occupation, there exists a big disparity in the sample as a students' account for 27%, and individuals on part time employment constitute the other side with 38%, and full time employed make the rest of it with the other 27%. Composition of a clientele, for instance, which are within academia and active in the workforce can have quite a translating effect on the varying of demand for home furnishing solutions. It could be cheap and functional necessities that allowing students to live independently or the quality ones that supply ergonomic home-office setups.

*Figure 2: Employment Status of Participants*

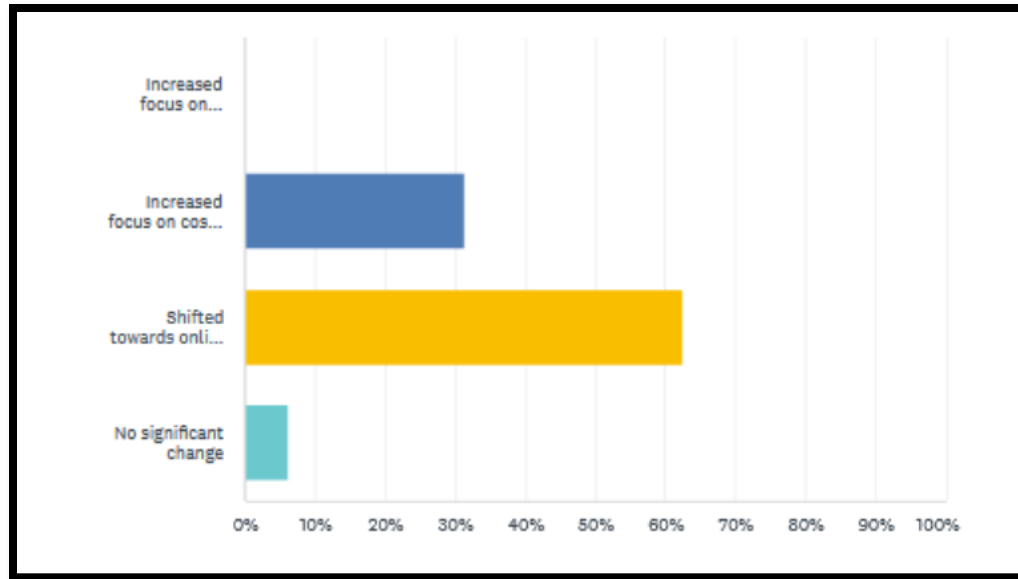




#### 4.2.2 CONSUMER INTERACTIONS WITH IKEA

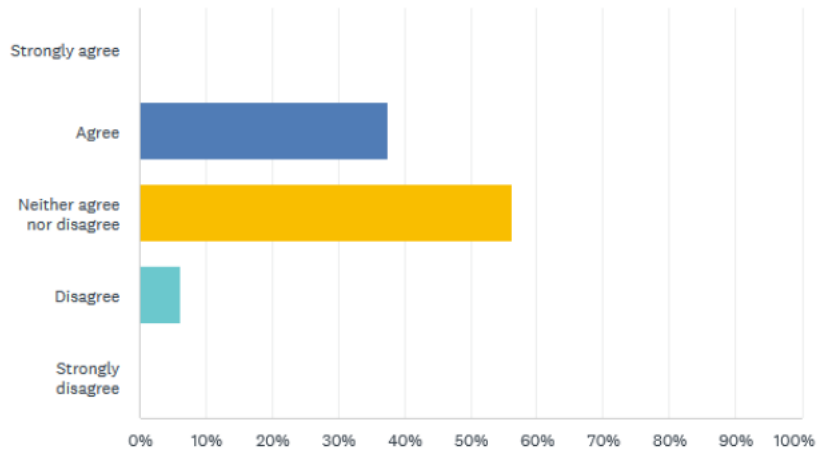
The consumer relationships to IKEA which have been confirmed by survey results tell us how its customers overwhelmingly enjoy shopping all over the web, with 62.50% of the respondents changing the way they purchase their products. This shift is an indication of a broader trend that is being accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, and as a result, consumers are manifesting preference for eCommerce platforms over a traditional shopping experience due to its ease of access, safety guarantees, and convenience.

*Figure 3: Changes in Product Purchasing Strategies by Consumers*



Moreover, these figures do not only validate the soundness of IKEA's continual economic improvement regarding its digital store elements, but also raises the question of how useful/effective these strategies have been in connection to the served purpose of capturing and retaining customer engagement. This cohort of young adults interacts with the advancement of tech-based digital tools that include but not limited to: augmented reality (AR) and virtual assistance surprisingly with more than half (56.25%) of these individuals stating that they are well-acquainted with these technologies. As such, these statistics are prophecies of the outstanding competence of the IKEA technologies spilled widely across a mass audience and, in effect, they influence the consumer's decision-making process and confirm the reasonableness of using IKEA products in the digital era.

*Figure 4: Consumer Agreement with IKEA's Pandemic Strategy Effectiveness*



The most important thing here is that frequent customer visits to IKEA stores during fluctuations in the economic activity period due to pandemic speak volumes about its ability of generate consumer confidence and loyalty. This is shown by the constancy, according to the survey, of two processes happening at an opposite pace that keeps on the end -the consumer loyalty to the brand as unchanged.

While consumers' shopping conduct turned out to be formed according the epidemic, having been closely turned to IKEA's strategic adaptability demonstrated a spectacular example of organizational resilience and market responsiveness. The study reveals a distinctive consumer trend towards online shopping by noting than more than half (62.50%) of them have changed their purchasing habits by tending to digital channels which they consider more convenient. This transition mirrors the new age retail phenomenon which has gained traction as a pandemic by-product, where intensifying convenience and safety have become a primary consideration. The integration of AR and VR in IKEA's strategic plan supports the generational outlook on technology which also incorporates an all-encompassing shopping effort.

The chart below shows just one of many examples how IKEA amends their assortment for agile response to the retail challenges created by the pandemic, mapping out how their innovative strategies affect the shopping experience. Riding point is the Enhanced Online Shopping Platform which gathers 17.50% of consumer approval and obviously has showed us IKEA's ability to replicate in-store efficacy in the digital area. Not far behind, it is Shop-and-Socialise service which accounts for 15.00%, and the Virtual Shopping Assistance which is 12.25% among consumers and clearly show the need for services that brings convenience and personalization. Digital Payment Options (13%) and Augmented Reality Features (12%) illustrate that the modern consumer group is discerning and technologically astute, which is one of the key advantages for an online store of the new era. At the bottom but still crucial are Online Planning Tools (7.00%), Health and Safety Measures (7.00%), and Expanded Delivery Options (7.00%), which form the strategic departments that IKEA should exploit. Ultimately, the fact that Personalized Marketing's to the consumer journeys is a testimony to the rise of the consumer journeys Altogether, these findings confirm the pivotal role of digital marketing, integrated model for retail, the irreplaceable tool for the adoption of the sustainable landscape in the post-pandemic world.

*Figure 5: Innovayive Strategies Impacting Shopping Expirience*



#### 4.2.3 STRATEGIC ADAPTATIONS POST-COVID

In the changed retail sector products of IKEA have shown that they are well-acquainted to the new consumer way of thinking. As the research results show the pandemic created an atmosphere of uncertainty. However, IKEA's innovative customer-centric solutions are depicted as being the answer to the variation in the shopping frequency of the consumers, with almost the whole majority indicating no change in Striving to satisfy those needs is the very basis of what IKEA represents and thus, these areas are only among the sporadic aspects that differentiate us from our competitors, whose purpose is to stand out using those tools determine brand recognition.

The dominant e-commerce traffic at 62,50% in the wake of IKEA's digital innovation projects shows the real success. These modifications not only controlled the threats offered by the pandemic but it also summarized the altered model of the business that is now more into the digital aspect, contactless, and user-friendly shopping experience. The increasingly widespread adoption of digital devices as well as the fact that IKEA's principles of like click-and-collect

services being known to all point to the acceptance of these innovations into the daily lives of consumers.

IKEA has demonstrated its early stage awareness to blend in AR and other digital methods in the consumer journey. That infirmation can be described by frameworks and theories of consumer adaptability and novelty adoption, which meet with the dissertation's objectives. These strategic measures, as the data evidence, didn't just represent emergency measures but are perfectly poised to redefine the future of post-pandemic retailing and thus who IKEA emerges as a leader of the consumer-centric comprehensive innovation and continues to be a weather-storm-proof market resilient.

#### 4.2.4 STATISTICAL RESULTS ANALYSIS IN RELATION TO THE OBJECTIVES

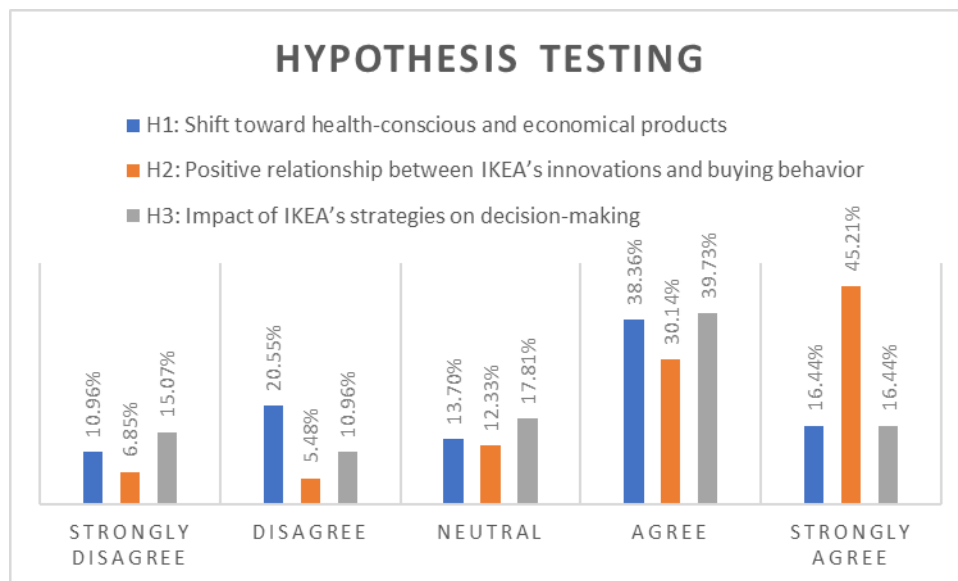
The relevant analysis here, which is also a part of purpose statement, submit that consumer behaviour has a connection with the strategy that IKEA adapt in their business to the pandemic. The success of IKEA, during this pandemic, in terms of their digital transformation and other innovations in services like, AR, click-and-collect, and health measures is attributable to an excellent way of responding to crisis situations. These changes would conform to the theories that have guided the dissertation writing process, for instance, the Technology Diffusion Strategy and Technology Acceptance Model which can show the adaptability of the consumers towards the new business strategy in the era of pandemic.

Especially, this research work consists of many works of which one of its fundamental importance is the data presentation depicting that consumers since the pandemic have so well-accepted IKEA's customer-first approach strategies they have become a standard expectation in the restructuring retailing landscape caused by the pandemic.

### 4.3 HYPOTHESIS TESTING

The dissertation investigates the extent of disruptive forces caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and their implications for consumer behavior by utilizing be an example of innovative strategies of IKEA in Ireland. The middle crossing place of the theoretical constructs and empirical data is our hypothesis, trying to elucidate the full extent to which the modifications of IKEA have penetrated the consumer souls and changed their decision-making.

*Figure 6: Hypothesis Testing: Consumer Responses to IKEA's Pandemic Strategy Impact*



#### 4.3.1 ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS 1 (H1)

H1: The pandemic has shifted consumer buying patterns towards more health-conscious and economical products.

The overall survey reports that the respondents ( 38.36% agree, 16.44% strongly agree) who favored pricing as a factor stood at 54.80% in considering health and economical products. Such huge percentage signals that consumers really do choose the products that keep in line with the enhanced awareness for health and asset entry, a trend likely triggered by such influence this pandemic had on physical and financial well-being. Besides, the results show that a considerable

female sample (31.51%) forms the opposition against such shift during the COVID-19, which is witnesses of the spread of consumers' responses to the crisis. These variances could be observed as a result of personal nuances in noticeability of the COVID-19 pandemic and some part of this market which is untouched by purchases relative to the pandemic.

The data captures a clear and targeted move in buyers interests towards products, which act as a balance of healthy lifestyle and economic purchase. This moment in history is not trivial but ties in neatly with the Diffusion of Innovations theory Rogers formulated, indicating that innovation diffusion is an urgent must in view of the disruptive event. The result of a survey can also be shown statistically – a majority of respondents supported that health-centric products have spread more rapidly through the pandemic as a catalyst for the trend. Placing this discovery at the center, IKEA has surprisingly adjusted their plan of operation in order to cater the highly demanded health and economy sensitive consumers.

#### 4.3.2 ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS 2 (H2)

H2: There is a strong and positive relationship between IKEA's innovative strategies and consumer buying behavior during COVID-19.

The polling for this hypothese declares that 56.17% of the responders – (39.73% of them agree and 16.44% of them strongly agree), affirm that the strategic changes IKEA experienced during the pandemic, have influenced them in a sense that it has made them look at decision-making with a new perspective. This may mean that the factors which IKEA market has taken into consideration in its strategy have been commercially effective, both in terms of sales conversion and consumer decision to purchase IKEA products. Nonetheless, the portion of customers who disagreed or were neutral (43.84%), constituting the other segment of consumer, can be seen which can the changes of their decision-making because of the company's strategy was not



convincing enough or they had their fixed decision-making process which was not affected by brand strategies.

The remaining 75.35 percent respondents opined to link the revolutionary ways IKEA has adopted during the pandemic with customer purchasing behaviour (with 45.21% strongly agree while 30.14% agree). The whole evaluation given above is evidence-based, it justifies the innovations IKEA came up with-online shopping platforms which are advanced, self-service, and further demonstrated by tools like augmented reality, and that they had a great effect on the customers buying decision. The small group which did not concur or remain indifferent with these claims (24.66%) might argue that not all customers, for different reasons, are positive about how these cutting-edge technologies affect their purchasing decisions, which might occur because of personal attitudes, resistance to changes or lacking information about this trend.

The high positive relationship that has been established between creativity of promotion campaign and buying behavior of consumer, as arises from the responses to the survey, is in compliance with the elements of the Technology Acceptance Model. It is saying that IKEA's websites are convenient and useful for shoppers, and this has led to the shift in buying behavior of consumers. This phenomenon sheds the light on the rationale that IKEA has successfully implemented its digital transformation strategy by enacting virtual tools that allow customers shop online and taken measures to streamline its online services to respond to the consumers' behavioral shifts brought out by the pandemic.

#### 4.3.3 ANALYSIS OF HYPOTHESIS 3 (H3)

H3: IKEA's innovative strategies have had a tangible and positive impact on consumer decision-making processes during the pandemic.

The concrete result of IKEA strategies on the decision making of the customers during the pandemic is that these people very clear about their needs in times of limited resources. Therefore, this theory is similar to the Theory of Planned Behaviour, which relates behavioral intentions to attitudes, subjective norms and personal control over them. IKEA's particular strategies, which include browser-based solutions and unattended services, have begun to substitute for the usual in-store purchase choices of customers. Discussing this IKEA adaptation, therefore, not only shows their responsiveness but makes their future of changes visible in customers' needs, thereby, impacting the decision making process.

#### 4.3.4 SYNTHESIS

Comprehensively, the upshot of these investigations makes a clear and highly convincing validation of the core ideas that have been explored in this thesis. Whether the customers' attitude towards IKEA products has changed or not, how consistent are the theoretical predicted perspectives and observed customer behaviors, supporting the assumption that IKEA consumer-oriented initiative during the pandemic have been the main factors triggering a change in customer's purchase pattern. However, it is not only the garnering of these insights which contribute to the strong foundation of my dissertation but also getting the point across that IKEA adapted so swiftly and strategically to the changing landscape of retail shopping during the challenging circumstances of the pandemic. Thus, the collaboration between innovation and consumer behaviour in the time of doubt in the market can be causing a new dynamic of the market of Ireland.

#### 4.4 IKEAS CONSUMER CENTRIC INNOVATIONS

While survey responses indicate that there is a significant pattern where consumers show their favor toward healthy and budget friendly products, as 38.36% of the respondents agree and

16.44% strongly agree with the statement, outnumbering each other, a total of 54.80% of the respondents show their inclination toward such products. This clearly outlines a decrease in priorities encountered during the pandemic while, on the other hand, being able to understand needs and concerns of the consumers through its refocusing on those aspects seems to help the company to be one step ahead. Curiously, there exists a sizeable share of 31.51% either disagree or strongly disagree with the statement that IKEA has improved its product offerings. In fact, the percentage is so considerable so that it indicates a segment of IKEA's market still looks into other options or has not perceived a significant change. Contrary to this complexity, consumer behavior demonstrates its complexity and customer needs which should be met in different ways. These are influential factors that could be used to develop a mixed approach to IKEA's product strategy which would address the need for both innovative and broader market demands while keeping consumer views in mind.

#### 4.5 INTEGRATION OF NEW TECHNOLOGIES

The technological advancement in a number of sales and marketing channels becomes the major consumer motivation, where 45.21% of respondents state that IKEA's digital changes are a reason that they buy more, along with 30.14% of agreeing respondents, which results in 75.35% of them satisfied. The advent of new technologies like VR which helps customers see virtual reviews or side-by-side pairing possibilities of furniture in homes as suggested by 53.33% of participants is an innovative means that was highly likely to lead to seamless interaction and engagement of the consumers. Yet, the implication of 12.33% equity and a combined 12.33% criticism implies the provider can enhance their products and technology features to facilitate the tech-involved clients' expectations. The data encourages a stage deeper research that how IKEA

aim to improve its tech interfaces designs and not only meet but go beyond the consumer expectations range as for all innovation, whether it is for shopping, payment, or customer service, is keep the user in mind with an idea of having the maximum accessibility and impact and thus keep the business all the time on its toes and growing.

## 4.6 CHANGING CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR DUE TO COVID-19

### 4.6.1 COVID-19 EFFECTS ON CUSTOMERS' BUYING PATTERN

The pandemic undoubtedly has had a huge influence on the consumption patterns of an ordinary shopper as we were able to find out from the survey people are turning to online while classical mode shopping is now at 37.50%. The convergence into e-commerce is a reflection of the big global evils brought about by health hazards and movement barriers. This change is not just a move towards one kind of platform, but a more substantial one, about transforming consumer sensibilities and tastes in a way that places a priority on convenience, security and access. But, on the other hand, when analyzing user's profiles with 31.25% of overall responses we can see that the main reason posted here is cost saving, followed by financial impact of the pandemic on the consumers' spending habits. IKEA's reaction, as per the data, must also continue to progress into encompassing the cost effectiveness of e-commerce with the convenience of shopping and be able to adjust to the cluster of needs of a new generation of consumers after pandemic.

### 4.6.2 Organizational Adaptation

In response to these business shifts, IKEA's organizational adaptation has been multi-pronged, comprising of changes to digital platforms and modification of marketing channels. The statistics shows us that IKEA's marketing strategies changes in light of different clients sentiments. It becomes more digital oriented and less concentration on the traditional print. The existing

consumer's follow-up, even in an extreme situation, proves that the IKEA's message regarding the safety and accountability has been correctly conveyed to them. These solutions, however, are not seen with an interest of “putting the fire out” but a view of recalibrating IKEA’s business practices and adaptation to a retail environment that has changed.

#### 4.7 SUMMARY

This chapter thoroughly unfolded the success of IKEA’s implacable innovative approach during the short span of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was reflected in the attractive characteristics of the IKEA products and its ability to connect with the consumers in Ireland during an unprecedented market disruption. Through analysis of the survey responses, the narrative is pretty interesting because the digital avenues' popularity has spiked due to the general health concerns and prudent approach to finances. Out of the total respondents' population, about 62.5% (62.5/26) used online shopping platforms, and 31.25% demonstrated keenness on cost issues. These statistics tell the crucial story about IKEA’s successful restoration to the trending consumer environment, corroborate the effectiveness of its internet expansion and the actors’ alignment of their product line with a more health-centred and value-oriented consumer segment. In these dark times, the IKEA agility and strategic marketing techniques have been presented as vital in ensuring consumer coherence and trust, thus, proving the organization is better equipped to pillage through the stormy stormy waters of retail trade that are drastically reshaped by the pandemic.

The chapter anatomizers various findings within the wider theoretical frame, in particular looking at specific aspects of Technology Acce and how Technology got into consumers’ worldviews. It explains a manifest concord between the innovations marketed by IKEA for its clientele alongside the steadily evolving markets which indicate a synergistic relationship

between the demand adaptability and technological evolution. IKEA's strategic measures study examines the reasons why their strategy not only worked, but also expanded the loyalty and the decision-making of the consumers when it was necessary. Finally, the chapter closes with an introspective train of thoughts in which the author states that IKEA's decision to be responsive during the pandemic have already set a new benchmark for the retail sector. The approach that IKEA has used, that of being consumer-centric, heavily integrated with technology and innovative, is likely being emulated by retailers worldwide, as in the future.

## 5 DISCUSSION AND ANALYSIS

### 5.1 INTRODUCTION

The startling outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic has all the countries all over the world to suffer considerable shifts in consumer behaviours, even Ireland. This chapter touches on the alterations in the consumer purchase pattern in the context of the crisis. The impact of the external pressures such as health concerns and economic hardship on consumer desires and decision-making process is the main topic which will be addressed. The stream of thought switches to the exploration of the place and role that innovation, mainly from firms like IKEA; play in response to the consumers' behaviors.

Interpretation of the study's outcomes herewith is based on the theoretical grounds constructed in the literature review and specifically of the theories Diffusion of Innovations (DOI), Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), and Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB). Whereas these theories help to further the understanding into what has prompted certain consumer behavior or behaviour intensification during this pandemic, rendering the impact of the pandemic is more thorough .

The analysis in this chapter will address the four key objectives of the study:

1. To analyze the impact of COVID-19 on consumer buying behavior in Ireland, focusing on changes in consumer needs, motivations, and decision-making processes due to health concerns and economic uncertainties.
2. To examine the relationship between innovation and consumer buying behavior during the pandemic, highlighting how companies like IKEA have navigated the challenges posed by the pandemic.

3. o assess the effectiveness of IKEA's innovative strategies in influencing consumer purchasing decisions in Ireland, identifying the key factors that have driven their success during the pandemic.
4. To provide strategic recommendations for businesses, specifically IKEA, to enhance consumer engagement and loyalty through innovation in the Irish market.

Through a synthesis of empirical data with exiting theoretical advances, the chapter will in addition present an insightful discussion that does not only explain the recent consumer behaviors but also provide practical guidelines which can be used by businesses to assimilate to the ever changing environment brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic and other global crises. It is from that process the synthetic leadership intends to fill in the theoretical knowledge and the practical application with the insights that will be both relevant and actionable for the present situation businesses are going through the environment of very high dynamics and uncertainty.

## 5.2 OBJECTIVE 1: ANALYSING THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR IN IRELAND

### 5.2.1 FINDINGS

Consumers in the COVID-19 pandemic have shifted their preferences in Ireland to healthiness and thriftiness whereas in the past they purchased products or services in a distracted way without thinking about how to save money. Surveying shows where switch of consumer preferences has occurred during the pandemic on one hand, with making an ever-greater use of online platforms for purchasing, on the other hand , craving for products which promise the safety and economic values (Ding, Liu, & Xu, 2021). This altered behaviour is illustrative of



much wider public reaction: being more cautious towards the market while facing times of uncertainty.

### 5.2.2 DISCUSSION

**Attitudes:** COVID-19 has actually shifted the homemin mindset into higher rating shopping behavior in such way that they give more preference to safety and ensure in reliability products. Nowadays, people will tend to prefer products and services which are not only sufficient to help them grow economically, but also believed to guarantee their safety. Such a change is manifested in the augmentation of the consumption of health products and wellness and in the fact that the customers believe that they have finally discovered something essential for the preservation of health during the pandemic (Martinez, Fernández, & Mas, 2024).

**Subjective Norms:** It is COVID-19 that completely reshaped social norms in a dimension linked to the way individuals generally relate to their commercial environment. The entire system has changed and there is now a growing trend to support and do things that have less interaction with physical persons, and this is accelerating the use of electric commerce and contactless payments. These made-up norms helped the already existing cultural behavior to support the practice of online shopping among individuals who in the process are conforming to the larger social push towards the maintenance of social distancing (Khan & Sarkar, 2024).

**Perceived Behavioural Control:** The financial turbulence of the pandemic has in return significantly contributed to financial insecurity, leading purchasing decision-makers to reconsider the extent to which monetary power in their hands. Amidst coronavirus, many people replace saving with tightness in their budgets and the prioritisation of the essential over the discretionary part of the spending. Also, people look for the best values of the

goods that they purchase. It had as the result its demand to be more sensitive in price and to buy the product cheaper and value it more (Öztürkcan, 2019).

### 5.3 OBJECTIVE 2: EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INNOVATION AND CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR DURING THE PANDEMIC

#### 5.3.1 FINDINGS

The study indicates a correspondent role between innovating business methods and customer shopping habits, especially during the Covid 19 crisis. Companies, especially IKEA, have migrated the way they go about business to smooth out the numerous challenges made by the pandemic through great innovations. These would be through expanding online platforms, incorporating the use of cutting-edge supply chain tools such as augmented reality (AR) and modifying supply chains that are more robust and agile. These innovations have proven not only they are welcomed by consumers but also they really change the purchase behaviour of consumers during the time of the pandemic (Öztürkcan, 2020).

#### 5.3.2 DISCUSSION

The relationship between innovation perception as payback and consumer transaction choices can be from Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) that outlines that perceive usefulness and perceive ease of use as the two primary technology acceptance predictors (Davis, 1989 as cited in Khan & Sarkar, 2024).

**Perceived Usefulness:** The Upshot of the Innovations on the Creative side by Organizations like IKEA having Features like Virtual Product Trials and Better Online Customer Service has been received as Helpful by Consumers. Some of them have eased the decision processes for consumers and enabled them to not only enjoy their comfort but also improve their self-confidence and be more prepared to choose the right product during uncertain or worrying times.

**Perceived Ease of Use:** On the one hand, these platforms and technologies are relatively simple that significantly decrease the friction in online shopping, which had been considered as a barrier to online shopping before. This convenience has gone along with the switch since it deals with the wider adoption among the consumers, among which there are those who used to prefer in-store shopping.

The concept proposed by The Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory can help to decide why these technological innovations have been embraced by the customers. The characteristics of innovations, such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability, influence their adoption rate: The characteristics of innovations, such as relative advantage, compatibility, complexity, trialability, and observability, influence their adoption rate:

**Relative Advantage:** Those new shopping technologies will surely gain dramatically for the near-term future as well as even through the health crisis days. Online shopping offers less in-person interaction and convenience, and since they are highly considered during restrictive conditions, these technologies are on the rise (Khan & Sarkar, 2024).

**Compatibility:** The ones which adopted themselves to the newly emerging values and needs—for instance, contactless payments and home delivery,— appeared to be the

fastest-to-adopt. These services are tailored to the relevant lifestyles changes resulting from the social distancing rules that were set up (Ozturkcan, 2020).

**Complexity:** It is becoming increasingly easier for shoppers to switch to a new way of shopping as the technology complexity is reduced by now companies. Technologies are getting incorporated in daily life through the people-centric design and improved client services, hence, they have a target audience among many people (Ding, Liu, & Xu, 2021).

#### 5.4 OBJECTIVE 3: ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF IKEA'S INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES IN INFLUENCING CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS IN IRELAND

##### 5.4.1 FINDINGS

The research research is evidence that the innovative strategy by the COVID-19 has changed the way consumers and influencer purchasing decisions in Ireland is conducted. Innovation is something that can be seen in digital platforms, AR and of course in logistics, as consumers no longer have to visit physical stores in order to complete their purchases, as there is fast and a new range of delivery options to choose from. Location decisions, packaging presentation and improvements have greatly impacted customer perception of safety and convenience. Additionally, this has been able to create customer satisfaction by improving customer loyalty (Öztürkcan, 2020).

##### 5.4.2 DISCUSSION

To fully understand the impact of IKEA's innovations on consumer buying decisions, it is crucial to employ the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which emphasizes perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key determinants of technology adoption (Davis, 1989 as cited in Khan & Sarkar, 2024): To fully understand the impact of IKEA's innovations on consumer buying decisions, it is crucial to employ the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which

emphasizes perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use as key determinants of technology adoption (Davis, 1989 as cited in Khan & Sarkar, 2024):

**Perceived Usefulness:** The utilization of many of Ikea's digital tools, such as augmented reality (AR) of visually checking the product within the customer's home in order in real time, has been rated as helpful by many customers. By embed augmented reality, shopper can get a realistic preview of the product within their personal contexts. Hence, they can help customers make better-informed decisions that reduce uncertainty in online shopping (Ding, Liu,& Xu, 2021).

**Perceived Ease of Use:** Customers find the online shopping process simplified by the user followed interfaces and customer support which also make it easy for customers to effectively use IKEA's digital platforms. An additional benefit of online shopping is the ease of use. This simplicity of use has led to a wider adoption among consumers with evidences that those who were initially resistant to online shopping now use it (Pérez-Pérez et al., 2022).

Besides, The Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory is another theory, which is an engine to understanding the process of the innovation being adopted across the whole of the consumer spectrum. Attributes such as relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, and observability are instrumental in this regard:Attributes such as relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, and observability are instrumental in this regard:

**Relative Advantage:** The improvement by IKEA seemed to tilt into online shopping with click and collecting services provided to the customers and the mechanical assistants

as compared to the traditional shopping methods, especially during lockdowns and the social distancing seasons (Khan & Sarkar, 2024).

**Compatibility:** With the pandemic redefining customer needs, these innovations proved to be not just helpful but also a perfect fit with these changes as they catered for the need for safe and convenient shopping (Öztürkcan, 2021).

**Trialability and Observability:** Through their wide scale adoption by Irish consumers, which is attributable to the low or no-cost trial features as well as the high visibility of benefits through the marking and word of mouth (Ding, Lui & Xu, 2021), QR codes have demonstrated their effectiveness as a new means of engaging in commerce and exchange.

## 5.5 OBJECTIVE 4: PROVIDING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUSINESSES, SPECIFICALLY IKEA, TO ENHANCE CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND LOYALTY THROUGH INNOVATION IN THE IRISH MARKET

### 5.5.1 FINDINGS

The data from this course lead to the conclusion that the IKEA's innovative approaches to tackling the Covid-19 pandemic are not only managing immediate one but also create consumers relationship and devotion. In this regard there are ionizing technologies like innovative digital media, AR apps and simplified transportation that have received a very positive response from the Irish consumers. The consumers showing their loyalty and engagement and also the perceived value increase and satisfaction are the results of the innovation. (Ozturkcan, 2020).

### 5.5.2 DISCUSSION

The IKEA's strategies of innovation in business gaining tractions fast enough to be adjudged as a very good model for other businesses that want to engage and retain customers even during the period of upsurge in challenges. Employing the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory provides valuable insights into the successful adoption of these strategies:Employing the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) and the Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory provides valuable insights into the successful adoption of these strategies:

**Technology Acceptance Model (TAM):** The innovations of IKEA are practical and effortless – in accordance with the two main points that facilitates technology adoption; useful and easy to user. It is for business distinction that targeting these factors can, in some cases, lead to heightened acceptance and improved user satisfaction. The high tech tender of shopping must be perfectly kept by the technology streamlining and providing consumers with real value added (Davis, 1989 as cited in Khan & Sarkar, 2024).

**Diffusion of Innovations (DOI) Theory:** DOI's success factors including relative advantage, compatibility, trialability, and observability indicate that innovations that are integrally interlinked with consumer lifestyles tend to be militantly embraced by individuals in that they can be incorporated into the ongoing affairs and lifestyles (Rogers, 2003 as cited in Ding, Liu, & Xu, 2021).

### Strategic Recommendations

Based on the findings and theoretical frameworks, several strategic insights and recommendations can be proposed for businesses, particularly IKEA, to sustain and enhance consumer engagement and loyalty in the Irish market:Based on the findings and theoretical

frameworks, several strategic insights and recommendations can be proposed for businesses, particularly IKEA, to sustain and enhance consumer engagement and loyalty in the Irish market:

**Continued Innovation in Digital Technology:** Be particularly keen on digital innovation, and on designing tools that facilitate a smooth online customer experience. The writer should focus on the inner life of an individual and attempt to cover all the spectrums of emotions, memories, and thoughts that make up a person's experience. Specific elements such as VR showrooms or AI-driven recommendations of fit-for-purpose products may personalize *sprijatna sa opredelenie* of shopping experience and add a lot of consumer interaction (Pérez-Pérez, Fernández, & Mas, 2022).

**Enhancing Consumer Interaction:** Build more responsive customer service channels with the utilization of contact bots to offer immediate help. This can lead to an increase in the convenience and usefulness of e-commerce platforms which will in turn keep more customers from giving up their new digital shopping habits.

**Leveraging Data Analytics:** Apply data analytics in order to perceive consumers' tastes and conduct more previously. This knowledge can be applied to customize marketing strategy and product which may give innovations a greater comparative advantage and appeal (Ding, Liu, & Xu, 2021).

**Sustainability Practices:** Do not limit sustainability to the external context. Due to the increasing consciousness among buyers of the nature of environmental problems, a company providing proof of its commitment to sustainability might, as a consequence, strengthen its brand loyalty significantly and thereby attract a more engaged customer base who are also ethically aware (Öztürkcan, 2019).



Post-Pandemic Market Strategy: Stratagem being to comprise a model that include the consequences of pandemic in the consumers behaviour. This might imply not only the flexibility of operation but also being ready to adjust to new requirements of the market once they are changing constantly and complying with consumers expectations. (Pérez-Pérez, Fernández and Mas, 2022).

## 5.6 SUMMARY

The trends presented in this chapter are research based and work in a great way for businesses like Ikea. The insights raised would be relevant to the businesses aiming to improve customer engagement and loyalty. The study revealed that acceptable features of technology (TAM) and innovative ideas for acceptance One of them is consumer perceived usefulness and consumption usability tested. A further factor in the adoption of innovations is the compatibility of the innovations with consumer lifestyles. The report is meant to show that IKEA's measures the innovations managed to increase direct digital platforms while improving augmented reality affected consumer behavior and loyalty during the pandemic. Businesses should pay attention to and uptake digital innovations as well as use data analytics for personalized marketing and sustainable practices among other as consumers demand for change is on the rise. These findings thus indicate that consumers' tastes have been modified in the course of the epidemic; this will also serve as a guideline for businesses that want to succeed in trading in the dynamic environment brought about by the pandemic.

## 6 CONCLUSION

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

In this conclusion chapter, I will recap the facts that came out from the investigation that looked into how the COVID-19 pandemic influenced customers' purchasing behavior in Ireland particularly the strategies that Ikea used to survive in a period like that. The research was conducted through a series of objectives which included studying the dynamics in consumer behavior and enterprise responses under COVID - 19 circumstances. In this chapter, I shall embody the mentioned findings, measure their implication for our theories and businesses and propose areas of interest which need to be addressed and scrutinized in future research. It provides the final part of my study by referring to the original objectives, correlating the major aspects, and underscoring their significance as regards theory and practice knowledge on consumer behaviour in disasters.

### 6.2 SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

This research was carried out to exploit the impact of COVID-19 on the consumer behavior of Ireland by analyzing how IKEA intended to adapt its business strategies to dance to the new tune of consumer demands during this period. The key findings from each of the study's objectives are summarized below: The key findings from each of the study's objectives are summarized below:

#### **Objective 1: Analyzing the Impact of COVID-19 on Consumer Buying Behavior in Ireland**

The study generated that pandemic completely relocated the consumer's priorities and safety was the biggest priority among consumers followed by the economic conditions which was now very cautious than ever before. Consumers did not only see online shopping as a better but also a safer

option in comparison to commercial outlets, considering the current health risks that the pandemic brought along and the economic uncertainties to a great extent. Shift was facilitated by adjustments in consumers' behavior, attitude subjective norms, and perceived behavioral support as declared by the Theory of Planned Behaviour.

## **Objective 2: Examining the Relationship Between Innovation and Consumer Buying Behavior During the Pandemic**

In the course of IKEA's activities, digital engagement and e-commerce were the strategies that were seen to have an influence on the consumer's choice, which was positive. Especially those technologies that made the shopping mission easier and were imbued with elements of handy AR applications and virtual assistance contributed to successful promotion of this shop. These new innovations fit well within the TAM must principles of usefulness and ease of use, which ultimately enabled their acceptance by the customers.

## **Objective 3: Assessing the Effectiveness of IKEA's Innovative Strategies in Influencing Consumer Purchasing Decisions in Ireland**

The example by IKEA that proved its inventiveness and the ability to satisfy consumer demands during this period of the pandemic had the outcome of improved brand recognition and loyalty. The technological solutions that facilitated effective inventory techniques and a seamless delivery process contributed immensely to the response to the rise in the number of shoppers on the web. The success of these tactics is acknowledged through the enhanced demand for IKEA's products during the pandemic.

## **Objective 4: Providing Recommendations for Businesses to Enhance Consumer Engagement and Loyalty Through Innovation**

The analysis was rounded-up with strategic guidelines for businesses that want to drive a positive consumer engagement and foster brand loyalty. Clearly, providing consistent updating of technology especially in digital mediums and applying of data analytics to personalize both product and marketing strategy to match consumer needs were identified as some of the key methods. However, not only the prominence of sustainability in the creation of customer loyalty was stressed, but also implementing safer practices within the company is a crucial factor that makes brands more genuine and responsible in the eyes of customers.

These results to a great extent express the changes in customer behavior caused by the pandemic and also reflect the strategies used by the company and successful adaptation after the pandemic. These implications are numerous, ranging from a theoretical value as a counterpoint, to practically counseling businesses faced with similar problems.

### 6.3 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

#### **Based on Findings:**

This research revealed major change in the consumption pattern and triumph strategies, used by IKEA, during Covid - 19. For future studies, can be considered, the impacts, in long-term, of consumers behaviour changes on brand loyalty or brand perception. Another aspect to the discussion is looking at the effect of digital technologies on other sectors. In that case, the possibilities of using different techniques with varying designs and functions among various markets can be seen. Researchers may also take mind the effects of the daily online shopping habits and outdoor stores spaces on mental health conditions.

**Based on Limitations:**

The research may have been limited by its scope concentrating on IKEA and in Irish market specifically, which might be not applicable generally. In the future, researchers will have to widen their exploration of retail types (ratings stores) and different geographical settings to make the results of their work more applicable to the situations that businesses face. In addition, the application of the mixed-methods approach could have addressed this problem which heavily depends on the quantitative side making it qualitative as well and in depth into consumer attitudes and behaviors.

## 6.4 CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

**Final Summary:**

This research has been systematically looking at the substantial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the behavior of consumers regarding the purchases in Ireland, shedding light on how IKEA has come out with innovative solutions. It turns out that the situation in the direction of online shopping, pandemic consideration and economy disaster alongside the IKEA's survival through digital innovations has changed so much. This research not only further explains the academic educational material on consumers behavior faced with crises besides providing the industry with practical skills on navigating disruptions of the same nature.

**Closing Reflection:**

This study provides more than just the academic relevance; it acts as a mirror for businesses and policymakers to evaluate what is happening in society due to the changing pattern of consumer behavior in case of crisis. As demonstrated by the intellectually based adaptation path pursued by IKEA, these methods can serve as a template for resilience and innovation which, in time, can become the main guideline in many fields, particularly in international retail trade. This research highlights what agility and customer-centric innovation principles will be that business will use to future-proof their strategies and adapt to the unpredictable environments of tomorrow world challenges.

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## APPENDIX

## QUESTIONNAIRE

**SURVEY ON THE IMPACT OF IKEA'S INNOVATION  
STRATEGIES DURING COVID-19****INTRODUCTION**

HELLO! HI, I AM VICTOR, A POSTGRADUATE STUDENT WHO IS DOING IN-DEPTH RESEARCH ABOUT WHAT EFFECT THE INNOVATION STRATEGIES HAVE HAD ON CONSUMER BEHAVIOUR, IN PARTICULAR TO IKEA IN IRELAND SINCE THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC. IT WOULD BE A CRUCIAL ELEMENT OF MY RESEARCH AIMED AT UNDERSTANDING IF THE STRATEGIES WE HAD DEVELOPED LEFT AN IMPRINT ON YOUR WAY OF SHOPPING OR RATHER IN TERMS OF SHOPPING ENVIRONMENT AND SURROUNDINGS.

INDEED YOUR THOUGHTS ARE SO CRUCIAL, WHICH WILL HAVE A GREAT EFFECT ON THE WHOLE RESEARCH. IT IS POSITIVE FOR ME THAT YOU HAVE A WILLINGNESS TO TALK ABOUT YOUR OWN ORDEALS. ON THIS NOTE, ASSURANCE THAT ALL ANSWERS ARE CONFIDENTIAL AND WILL NOT BE DISCLOSED TO ANYONE OUTSIDE ACADEMIC PROVISIONS IS GUARANTEED. THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR TAKING PART AND BEING SUPPORTIVE!

**SURVEY QUESTIONS****DEMOGRAPHIC QUESTIONS:****1. Age Group:**

Choose an item.

- ☐ Under 18
- ☐ 18-24
- ☐ 25-34
- ☐ 35-44
- ☐ 45-54
- ☐ 55-64
- ☐ 65+

**2. Gender:**

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

☐ Prefer not to say

☐ Other

**3. Employment Status:**

☐ Employed full-time

☐ Employed part-time

☐ Unemployed

☐ Retired

☐ Student

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**OBJECTIVE 1: ANALYZE THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR IN IRELAND**

**4. Since the onset of COVID-19, how have your purchasing priorities changed regarding home furnishing products?**

☐ Increased focus on health-related features

☐ Increased focus on cost savings

☐ Shifted towards online purchases

☐ No significant change

**5. During the pandemic, how have external factors like health concerns and economic uncertainties influenced your shopping frequency at IKEA?**

1 (Decreased significantly)	2 (Decreased somewhat)	3 (No change)	4 (Increased somewhat)	5 (Increased significantly)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

---

**OBJECTIVE 2: EXAMINE THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN INNOVATION AND CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOR DURING THE PANDEMIC**

6. How familiar are you with IKEA's innovations implemented during the pandemic (e.g., click-and-collect services, enhanced online shopping platform)?

1 (Not familiar at all)	2 (Not very familiar)	3 (I am not sure)	4 (Somewhat familiar)	5 (Very familiar)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. How has your perception of IKEA's innovative responses during the pandemic influenced your buying decisions?

1 (Greatly deterred my purchasing)	2 (Somewhat deterred my purchasing)	3 (No influence)	4 (Somewhat enhanced my purchasing)	5 (Greatly enhanced my purchasing)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

---

**OBJECTIVE 3: ASSESS THE EFFECTIVENESS OF IKEA'S INNOVATIVE STRATEGIES IN INFLUENCING CONSUMER PURCHASING DECISIONS IN IRELAND**

8. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: "IKEA's innovative strategies during the pandemic have made it easier for me to make purchasing decisions."

1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree)	4 (Agree)	5 (Strongly Agree)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. Which of IKEA's innovative strategies have most positively impacted your shopping experience during the pandemic?

- ☐ Enhanced Online Shopping Platform
- ☐ Click-and-Collect Service
- ☐ Virtual Shopping Assistance
- ☐ Digital Payment Options
- ☐ Online Planning Tools
- ☐ Health and Safety Measures
- ☐ Augmented Reality Features
- ☐ Expanded Delivery Options
- ☐ Personalized Marketing

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**OBJECTIVE 4: PROVIDE RECOMMENDATIONS FOR BUSINESSES, SPECIFICALLY IKEA, TO ENHANCE CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT AND LOYALTY THROUGH INNOVATION**

10. What additional innovations or improvements would you like to see at IKEA to enhance consumer engagement and loyalty in the post-pandemic era? (Open-ended)

.....

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**TESTING HYPOTHESES:**

11. For each of the following questions, choose the response that best characterizes how you feel about the statement.

- a. H1: The pandemic has shifted consumer buying patterns towards more health-conscious and economical products.

(Scale: 1 Strongly disagree to 5 Strongly agree)

1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree)	4 (Agree)	5 (Strongly Agree)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- b. H2: There is a strong and positive relationship between IKEA's innovative strategies and consumer buying behavior during COVID-19.

(Scale: 1 Strongly disagree to 5 Strongly agree)

1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree)	4 (Agree)	5 (Strongly Agree)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

- c. H3: IKEA's innovative strategies have had a tangible and positive impact on consumer decision-making processes during the pandemic.

(Scale: 1 Strongly disagree to 5 Strongly agree)

1 (Strongly disagree)	2 (Disagree)	3 (Neither Agree nor Disagree)	4 (Agree)	5 (Strongly Agree)
<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>