

How has consumer behaviour in Europe changed during the COVID-19 pandemic?

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Project Submission Sheet

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Abstract

According to this research, customer behaviour in the European food industry significantly changed during the COVID-19 outbreak. The study employed a quantitative research method, conducting an online survey through Google Forms, which collected responses from 50 to 55 individuals aged 18 and above—representative of the typical restaurant-going demographic. The survey consisted of closed-ended questions designed to gather insights into consumers' attitudes, behaviours, and perceptions. Descriptive and regression statistical methods were used to analyse the data in SPSS. To identify patterns and trends, frequency analyses were presented using pie charts and bar graphs.

The research examined three key factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. The findings revealed that all three factors significantly impacted the dependent variable—customer buying behaviour. The study's objectives were achieved, as the analysis confirmed the validity of these theoretical constructs, aligning with previous research. The results underscore the importance of these factors in shaping consumer behaviour during a crisis. Based on the findings, several recommendations were made for businesses. These include enhancing digital infrastructure to facilitate smoother online transactions, prioritising health and safety measures to build customer trust, and introducing new services such as meal kits and contactless delivery to meet evolving customer needs. These strategies are essential for ensuring business resilience and maintaining customer loyalty in the aftermath of a pandemic.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Background

The COVID-19 pandemic caused problems in the global economy that had never been seen before. It had a huge impact on many businesses that depend on people getting together and interacting (Cortez and Johnston, 2020). The areas that were most affected by the pandemic were education, tourism, hospitality, clothing, and food processing. All of these areas had to deal with major problems because of lockdowns, social isolation, and other limitations. The pandemic had a big effect on businesses that depend on people getting together, which made them easy targets for the virus's rapid spread.

Consumer activity in Europe changed a lot during the COVID-19 pandemic. This was because of changes in daily routines, public health measures, and economic uncertainty (Di Crosta, et al., 2021). Several factors, such as shopping habits, tastes, and changes in living, can be used to figure out how the pandemic affected shopper activity. The huge rise in online shopping was one of the most noticeable changes. People who needed to buy food, home goods, and other necessities turned to online shopping during lockdowns and social isolation. Many people who didn't want to shop online before had no choice but to start using digital platforms. Fear of running out of things like toilet paper, hand sanitisers, and non-perishable food at the start of the pandemic caused people to stockpile and buy in a hurry (Ovezmyradov, 2022). This behaviour was caused by doubt and a desire to make as few trips to shops as possible. People were more interested in buying local and eco-friendly goods. People learnt more about the weak spots in the supply chain and how their purchases affected the environment. This made them more likely to support local businesses and environmentally friendly practices.

Hygiene and health became very important. A lot of people wanted disinfectants, vitamins, and healthy foods because they were good for you and kept things clean. People also became more aware of where products come from and safety standards (Costa, et al., 2021). People spent more time at home because of lockdowns and working from home. This led to a shift towards habits that focused on the home. This meant spending more on things like home entertainment, cooking and baking materials, and home improvements. The house turned into the hub of work, play, and

socialising. The outbreak sped up the spread of digital services and working from home. This change not only affected how people work but also how they buy things, as they spent more on home office equipment and relied more on digital tools for contact (Strielkowski, et al., 2021).

Traditional ways of having fun, like going out to eat, travelling, and going to the movies, were limited. Instead, more people did things like camping, riding, and watching online material that they could do at home or in places where they were not around other people. Uncertainty about the economy made people spend less. A lot of people put saving money first and cut back on spending they did not have to (De La Rosa and Tully, 2022). A larger stress was also put on getting the most for your money, with people preferring cheap stores and choices that are easy on the wallet. Overall, Kanapickienė et al. (2020) claim that the COVID-19 pandemic caused big changes in how people in Europe behaved as consumers. People changed their habits by shopping online more, paying more attention to health and cleanliness, buying more local and eco-friendly goods, and becoming more dependent on their homes. As time goes on, some of these changes in behaviour may stick around, affecting how people in Europe behave in the future.

In the present research, the transformation of customer behaviours is considered to assist the business on how to address these kinds of issues. It is crucial to understand these changes to make plans to support the business once the pandemic is over and the company seeks to evolve and continue operating.

1.2 Rationale of the Research

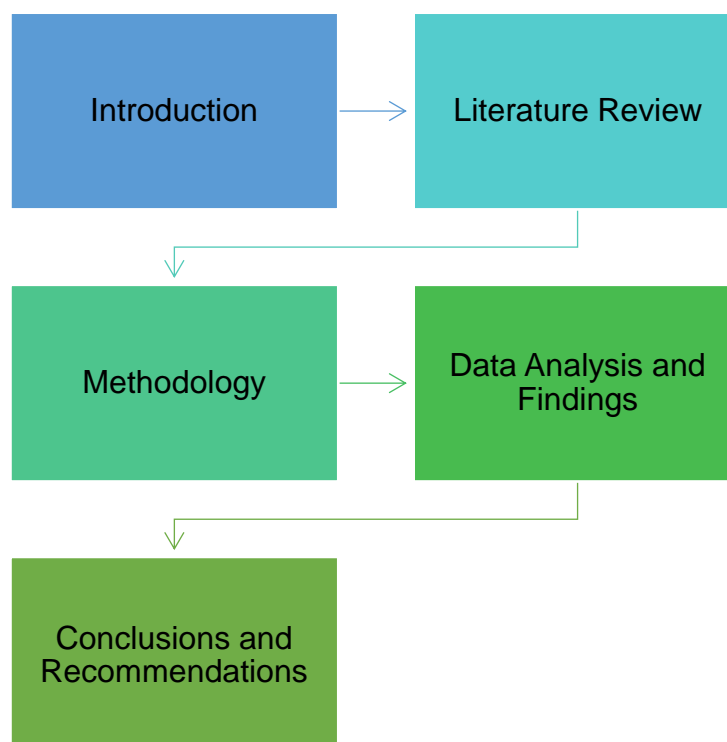
Macroenvironmental changes such as COVID-19 and the constantly changing business environment have a big impact on businesses. Businesses need to find ways to protect themselves from changes in how customers behave in the future. The way people act affects the market (Yin, et al., 2021). Rapid technological progress, global connectivity, and frequent socio-economic changes make today's business world exceptional. These things make the world a constantly shifting place where new knowledge, trends, and outside forces constantly change how people act. Consequently, for businesses to keep their marketplace, they need to be alert and take action to spot and adapt to these changes (Randhawa, et al., 2021). Consumer action has a direct effect on the market because it changes demand, sets market trends, and

determines how well goods and services do. This study's goal is to find out how COVID-19 changes the way people behave as a result. In this study, the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) will be employed as the theoretical framework to understand the changes in consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic. The TPB, developed by Icek Ajzen, provides a comprehensive model to predict and explain human behaviour based on attitudes, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control (La Barbera and Ajzen, 2020). The study is needed because knowing how the effects have changed customer behaviour is important for figuring out how resilient the industry is, coming up with recovery plans, and figuring out what problems need to be solved. In addition, the study can help find out what changes need to be made to keep up with changing customer habits.

1.3 Aim of the Research

The research aims to examine the shift in consumer behaviour in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.4 Structure of the Research



Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Chapter Introduction

Several aspects related to the customers' behaviour have been significantly influenced by the COVID-19 outbreak. The purpose of this section is to give an overview and review of all the previous research on how customer behaviour shifted during the pandemic, especially in Europe. Therefore, this chapter seeks to consolidate information from multiple sources to have a clearer understanding of the broad context and specifics of how customers changed their behaviours amidst the pandemic. This part will also highlight areas that need further research in the current study and source points.

2.2 Theoretical Framework

2.2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour

The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), which was formulated by Icek Ajzen in 1985, outlines a detailed structure to consider the behaviours of people during the COVID-19 pandemic from which change occurred. Perceived behavioural control, subjective norms, and attitudes are the three aspects that influence people's behaviour (La Barbera and Ajzen, 2020). COVID-19 changed people's preferences because they were less willing to engage in activities that they perceived to be risky, such as dining out and shopping physically. The population stayed away from such areas because they wanted to minimise contact with the coronavirus that posed a large threat to their lives. Moon et al. (2021) mentioned in their study that people began disliking the typical shopping experiences amid attempts to prevent infections, opting for online shopping and services. This change in consumer behaviour thus underlines the role of attitude factor in TBP, where worries concerning health and safety issues led to the prioritization of safer options, such as online shopping, over traditional practices.

- **Attitude:** The virus made principles like health and safety even more important. Consumers' values, which placed high importance on safety and avoiding harm, had a significant effect on how important they thought it was to follow safety rules (Zhang, et al., 2023). When these beliefs matched up with new health standards, they made people more likely to change their buying habits and consumption levels. Moreover, the supportive role that consumer values and health standards play in the role attitudes have in shaping behaviour, as

described in TPB. Asante Antwi, et al. (2021) claim that the increased focus on cleanliness led to higher demand for disinfectants and other health-related products. On the other hand, the breakdown of global supply chains made people want to buy local and environmentally friendly goods.

- **Subjective Norms:** Public health standards and social norms had an immense effect on how people behaved. Furthermore, Naeem (2021) indicates that people's actions were greatly affected by health officials' advice and the push to conform to new social norms. As health groups and governments pushed for people to stay away from those who were sick, wear masks, and practise good cleanliness, these habits became deeply ingrained in people's behaviour. People changed their habits not only because they cared about themselves, but also because they wanted to fit in with society and escape the shame that comes with not following the rules. This is an example of subjective norms in TPB, where societal expectations and pressures are thought to have driven people toward behaviours that align with public health guidelines.
- **Perceived Behavioural Control:** The outbreak also changed how people thought they could control their safety. People felt more in charge of their actions when they could use online delivery services, mobile payments, and sidewalk pick-up. This made it easier for people to follow safety rules while shopping (Kim and Im, 2022). These new ideas gave people better options and easier ways to do things, which made the move away from real places even stronger. However, situations like product shortages, logistical challenges, and difficulties accessing online services made this shift harder to sustain. Some customers were frustrated by these problems, which made it harder for them to fully adopt new shopping habits. This frustration underlines that perceived behavioural control is limited in cases where external barriers reduce the full adoption of new behaviours, even when intention does exist.

The rationale for the Theory of Planned Behaviour explains why buyer behaviour has changed so much during COVID-19. Health worries changed attitudes, which then changed shopping habits. On this point, the TPB makes a framework for understanding such changes by associating attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control with consumer behaviour shifts in a pandemic situation. Subjective norms, formed by public health guidelines and social expectations, made people

change how they behaved. These changes were facilitated by new online and cashless services that gave people a sense of control over their behaviour. While issues such as stock shortages and limited access remained concerns, consumers' behaviour shifted dramatically once their orientation aligned more closely with societal norms (Gonzalez-Arcos, et al., 2021). The application of TPB in this study shows how attitude, norm, and control perception changed simultaneously to affect consumer preferences and behaviours during the crisis of COVID-19.

2.3 The Shift of Consumers' Preferences and Consumption Patterns in the Age of Covid-19

Based on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), this study reveals how alterations in attitude, perceived standards, and perceived control over behaviours impacted changes in customers' preferences and behaviours during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is in this regard that TPB provides an elaborate framework through which the psychological factors—taken as a whole—may be understood to have interacted and driven consumer behaviours during this time. Health-related concerns, represented by attitudes, increased the desire for mobile services; subjective norms were reflected in government restrictions and social distancing measures; and perceived behaviour control manifested in the form of online shopping options that emerged and were taken up by people. The various components of TPB thus explain coherently the changes in behaviour during the pandemic.

- **Attitude:** Health issues, lockdowns, and economic uncertainty during the COVID-19 pandemic caused significant changes in customer tastes and habits. A particularly notable development was the rise in online shopping. When shops were closed or limited, people turned to online shopping for food, home items, and other necessities (Dionysiou, et al., 2021). This shift was driven not only by convenience but also by the need for safety, as people sought to minimise their exposure to the virus. Hygiene and health became paramount, increasing the demand for disinfectants, healthy foods, and vitamins. People became more conscious of product origins and safety, placing greater value on items that were beneficial to their health. This shift in consumer priorities is typical of the attitude component of TPB, as heightened health-related concerns have a direct influence on purchase decisions.

- **Subjective Norms:** An enormous shift was also seen towards local and eco-friendly goods. Problems with the supply chain heightened awareness of the fragility of global supply lines, prompting consumers to support local businesses and choose products that had a lower environmental impact. As health risks became more prominent, safety and cleanliness took precedence. Bove and Benoit (2020) indicated that businesses had to adapt by implementing strict cleaning protocols, social distancing measures, and visible hygiene practices. In response to these changes, consumers began to favour establishments that could demonstrate a commitment to high safety standards. These changes highlight how subjective norms, driven by the guidance of public health, have shaped consumer behaviour toward businesses that put safety first.
- **Perceived Behavioural Control:** As people spend more time at home, their lifestyle and spending patterns adjust accordingly. This led to increased spending on home entertainment, cooking and baking goods, and home improvement products. Those working from home invested more in home offices and relied increasingly on digital communication tools, accelerating the adoption of digital services (Amankwah-Amoah, et al., 2021). Economic uncertainty made consumers more frugal, leading them to prioritise savings and value for money, often shopping at discount stores and opting for cheaper alternatives. Perceived behavioural control played an important role here, whereby consumers sought to take control of their finances by opting for cheaper alternatives during such days of economic uncertainty.
- The pandemic accelerated the adoption of digital technologies by many businesses. Digitalisation elements, such as seamless contactless payments, mobile applications, and online purchasing platforms, became essential for sustaining business operations and ensuring customer safety. This rapid digital transformation mirrors aspects of perceived behavioural control in that the availability and ease of use of these technologies empower the consumer to maintain the practice of safe shopping.

The pandemic highlighted just how delicate the pre-crisis economy was and set off far-reaching frugality. From that point of view, affordability became of essential value: seeking better offers, consumers tried to minimise their spending. This example illustrates a case wherein psychologically perceived behavioural control is increased

by economic uncertainty because it would now realign consumer behaviours to maintain financial stability. These situations also saw business people change how best to structure their prices and offerings to suit a more thrift-sensitive consumer base. TPB helps explain these adjustments because businesses reacted to the changes at the attitudinal and control perception level of consumers by altering their market strategies.

2.4 The Safety Measures Adopted by Business and Their Impact on Consumer Decision-Making

According to the theoretical framework, the TPB can be used to determine the extent to which the safety measures that companies put in place due to the COVID-19 outbreak influenced decision-making. TPB demonstrates the extent to which firms' safety regulations influenced customers' attitudes towards safety and how this influenced their choices. In addition, the notion of safety as the socially constructed norm, alongside the presence of superior shopping options, influenced how people regulated their behaviours and choices. In order to provide a thorough explanation to the shift in consumer decision-making process during pandemic, the above factors can be understood via the theory provided by TPB.

- **Attitude:** Safety measures were observed worldwide throughout the COVID-19 period, leading to significant changes in consumer decisions as companies sought to protect both employees and consumers. Improvements in cleanliness rules, social distancing measures, cashless transactions, and health checks were some of the steps taken (Singh, et al., 2021). Businesses were cleaned and disinfected more frequently, especially in high-touch areas such as door knobs, checkout desks, and shopping carts. This enhanced focus on hygiene made consumers feel more secure about the safety of physical stores, thereby increasing their likelihood of shopping in person. TPB explains the above actions that poses a direct impact on consumer behaviour which further encourage them to support those businesses that adheres to the health protocols which are mentioned in the guidelines given by the government.
- **Subjective Norms:** To comply with health regulations, businesses altered their layouts to facilitate social distancing. This involved installing floor markings, rearranging store setups, and limiting the number of customers allowed inside

at any given time. Wen et al. (2022) note that these measures made shoppers feel safer while shopping, encouraging continued patronage despite the ongoing pandemic. Many stores also introduced special shopping hours for vulnerable customers, further aligning their services with evolving consumer needs and preferences. The above actions provide a clear explanation of the manner in which subjective norms which are driven by health guidelines issued by public health department are the responsible in shaping consumer behaviour by creating expectations from society

- **Perceived Behavioural Control:** Payment methods and shipping services that involved minimal physical contact became increasingly popular during the pandemic. Businesses encouraged the use of mobile payment systems, self-checkout lanes, and online shopping with curbside pickup or home delivery options (Wang, et al., 2020). This reduction in physical contact aligned with consumers' heightened value on safety and convenience during the pandemic. As apparent within the TPB theory, rapid implementation of these technologies can significantly impact behavioural control of consumers. Grateful to the availability of digital as well as contactless options through which consumers feel empowered to make safer choices. When businesses quickly adopted these technologies, customer satisfaction and sales increased as a result.

Some companies also conducted health checks on both employees and customers, including temperature screenings and symptom surveys. While some individuals found these measures intrusive, they generally contributed to a greater sense of safety, particularly in environments where close contact was unavoidable, such as restaurants, beauty salons, and healthcare facilities (Morton, 2022). The safety measures implemented by businesses during the COVID-19 pandemic had significant impacts on customer decision-making, fostering feelings of safety and trust. As a result, consumers were more confident in the safety of physical shopping locations after stricter cleanliness and social distancing guidelines were introduced. Furthermore, enduring loyalty among customers is efficiently promoted alongside influencing immediate purchasing decisions.

However, there were challenges associated with implementing these safety measures. Enhanced cleanliness protocols and health checks required substantial financial and time investments, which were particularly burdensome for small businesses. This

resource disparity potentially widened the gap between larger companies and smaller enterprises (Baker and Judge, 2020). While online services and wireless payments offered convenience, they also highlighted the digital divide, as not all customers had equal access to the necessary technology or internet services. Adding on, a continuous risked emphasis on health along with safety guidelines can often lead to development of fatigue in customers. This could lead to desensitisation towards safety messages with the span of time. To prevent this, businesses needed to strike a balance between maintaining rigorous safety standards and ensuring a positive, engaging customer experience.

2.5 The Key Business Challenges Encountered During COVID-19 Affecting Consumer Behaviour

By examining the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), we can better understand how major business challenges during the COVID-19 pandemic, such as supply chain disruptions and practical limitations, influenced consumer behaviour. TPB suggests that these issues heightened consumer concerns, leading to increased anxiety about product availability and dependability. As people adapted to new social norms and expectations regarding safety and online shopping, subjective norms shifted. Consequently, businesses had to adjust their strategies to address these concerns, impacting consumers' purchasing decisions and altering their shopping habits. While addressing these factors, organization faces a significant change in the customer behaviours during the COVID-19.

- **Behaviours:** The COVID-19 pandemic created numerous challenges for businesses, profoundly impacting consumer behaviour. Issues such as supply chain disruptions, fluctuating demand, financial instability, rapid digital transformation, and changing customer expectations reshaped the market and influenced how consumers interacted with businesses (Kumar et al., 2021). The virus disrupted global supply lines, causing product shortages and delays. Lockdowns, border closures, and movement restrictions exacerbated these issues, leading to uncertainty about product availability and influencing purchasing decisions. This explains, that the components of TPB, the attitude of the component in TPB, directly impact the customer experiences. In response, some consumers sought alternative sources of local goods to

mitigate supply chain risks, while others stockpiled emergency supplies (Ramanathan et al., 2022).

- **Subjective Laws:** The pandemic also triggered sudden changes in consumer demand. Demand surged for essential items like cleaning products, health supplies, home office equipment, and entertainment options, while demand for non-essential items, such as travel and luxury goods, plummeted. Businesses struggled to adapt to these rapid changes, leading to overstock or missed sales opportunities (Niaz, 2022). Understanding and predicting these shifts became critical for maintaining customer satisfaction and loyalty. This signifies the subjective rules, promoted by involving social expectations and by prioritizing health and safety which plays an important role in designing these needed changes.
- **Perceived Behavioural Control:** The necessity for social distancing accelerated the adoption of digital technologies. Companies quickly enhanced their online presence, established e-commerce platforms, and implemented digital payment systems. This highlights the role of behavioural control in TPB because customers feel empowered to choose better options from different websites such as digital websites and minimize their need for physical interaction. Dillon et al. (2021) note that while this shift made shopping more convenient and safer, it also exposed gaps in digital infrastructure and security. Companies that successfully navigated this digital transformation gained a competitive edge, while those slow to adapt saw declines in sales and customer interest.

The pandemic also heightened consumer expectations for safety, transparency, and corporate social responsibility. This associated enterprises' methods with the customer expectations, improved the behaviours measures, as customers fall towards the companies for further new procedures. The problems developed by the pandemic led to a particular change in customer behaviours and signify the importance of enterprise resilience and flexibility. Supply chain disruptions show the need to diversify and adapt supply networks. The shifting in demand promotes the importance of robusting data analysis and market research to predict and reach to the customer's demand. Next, the financial instability informed the importance of strong financial planning and strategic risk management. Therefore, the quick move towards digital platforms

represented both problems and opportunities, highlighting the important role of native technology in the current enterprise performance. Therefore, the organization needs to adopt digital platforms and set new laws and standards for customer involvement and experience. Consumer expectations shifted, reflecting a broader trend towards valuing ethics and corporate responsibility (Chatzopoulou and de Kiewiet, 2021). This emphasises that customer satisfaction is increasing rapidly, and organizations should continuously adapt to these changes in modern scenarios.

2.6 Research Gap

There is a great amount of writing on how COVID-19 affected businesses, but a few important research gaps exist. These gaps could suggest an area of further investigation to give insight into the long-term implications for business operations and consumer behaviours arising out of COVID-19.

- **Restoring Consumer Trust:** There is a lack of studies on how different safety measures implemented during the pandemic effectively restore consumer trust. Moreover, research is limited on the sustainability of changes in consumer behaviour after the pandemic. The current research endeavour will attempt to provide insight into how effective these measures taken toward ensuring safety are, in maintaining customer confidence in the business in the long run.
- **Digital Transformation:** Not enough research has been conducted on the rapid digital transformation, particularly in small and rural areas. This gap is very critical because smaller businesses might have special problems in adapting to the fast digital change. As such, it could affect their competitiveness and chance of survival.
- **Supply Chain Resilience and Workforce Impact:** Furthermore, insufficient research exists on how to make supply chains more resilient to future disruptions and the long-term effects of worker shortages. Addressing these issues is essential for building more robust supply networks and ensuring workforce stability, which are vital for economic recovery and business sustainability.

Therefore, further research must be conducted to develop a solution for these challenges: how the economy recovers and whether purchasing local and green-graded products is a temporary trend or a permanent change in consumer choice.

Finally, the influence of the pandemic disaster on the mental health of workers is yet to be well-researched. It is a key area of research in the fact that knowledge quests about the mental health implications will greatly help businesses in improving how to support employees and manage productivity better for improved general business performance.

Unless the gaps identified above are addressed, it is then that this study shall provide better and newer insight into how it impacted businesses in the long term. Further studies within these areas would have implications not only in helping businesses further grow and adapt but also for an ever-changing economy.

2.7 Summary of Literature

This chapter examines how the COVID-19 pandemic altered consumer behaviour, with a particular focus on Europe. The Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB) is the conceptual framework to evaluate the changes in people's behaviours and perspectives during COVID-19 and the problems faced by the organization. According to TPB, the aspects of customers' behavioural changes are linked to attitudes towards health and safety, perceived social norms related to distancing, and perceived behavioural control concerning their actions due to practical limitations., by analysing these factors, a deep knowledge and understanding of how COVID-19 influenced customer decisions is gained and implementation of the rules in the business.

- **Attitude:** The shift to online shopping and takeaway services was primarily driven by health concerns, as consumers began to perceive physical shopping as a risky activity. Therefore, these changes led to health and safety purposes, reduced visits to physical stores and raised the adopted services available online.
- **Subjective Norms:** Public health rules and new social norms significantly influenced consumer behaviour. These rules are published by the governments and society; expectations prefer to large acceptance of practices such as long distancing and making wearing, more promote the shifting away from physical shopping. Improved online services and mobile payments enhanced consumers' sense of control and empowered them to make safer choices.
- **Perceived Behavioural Control:** Despite the adoption of new behaviours, factors such as product availability and difficulties in accessing stores continued

to influence consumer behaviour even after the initial changes. Perceived behavioural control plays an important role in forming how customers adapt to normal life, and those who feel more comfortable with online shopping options maintain social distancing.

The summary describes the impact of COVID-19 changes the customer perspective and behaviours accordingly. TPB manifest that the behaviour changes in the customer, subjective laws, and perceived behavioural control are the major operators of these changes in behaviours. Section 2.3 discussed how shifts in health concerns and social norms impacted the evolution of consumers' purposes and preferences. Section 2.4 demonstrated that the safety measures implemented by companies altered perceptions regarding risks and controls in decision-making. Section 2.5 addressed the main business concerns that affected supply chains and the real issues that shifted consumer perceptions and ease of shopping. However, these sections describe the COVID-19 effect on the customer's mental health problems but also affect the business managing operations. The changes in customer behaviours, expectations, and perceived controlling measures on the borrowing process disrupted the behaviour patterns in the workplace and companies accepted the pressure during the pandemic. Therefore, TPB provides a brief understanding of these changes..

2.8 Objectives of the Research

- To investigate the changes in preferences and habits of consumers due to covid-19 pandemic.
- To examine the measures adopted by restaurants and their impact on consumer buying behaviour due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis using the theory of planned behaviour.
- To explore the key challenges faced by restaurants due to changes in the buying behaviour of customers during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.
- To explore and suggest common resilience strategies for restaurants to positively influence consumer behaviour.

2.9 Research Questions

- What are the changes in preferences and habits of consumers due to covid-19 pandemic?

- What are the measures adopted by restaurants and their impact on consumer buying behaviour due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?
- What are the key challenges faced by restaurants due to changes in the buying behaviour of customers during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis?
- What are the resilience strategies for restaurants to positively influence consumer behaviour?

2.10 Theoretical Framework

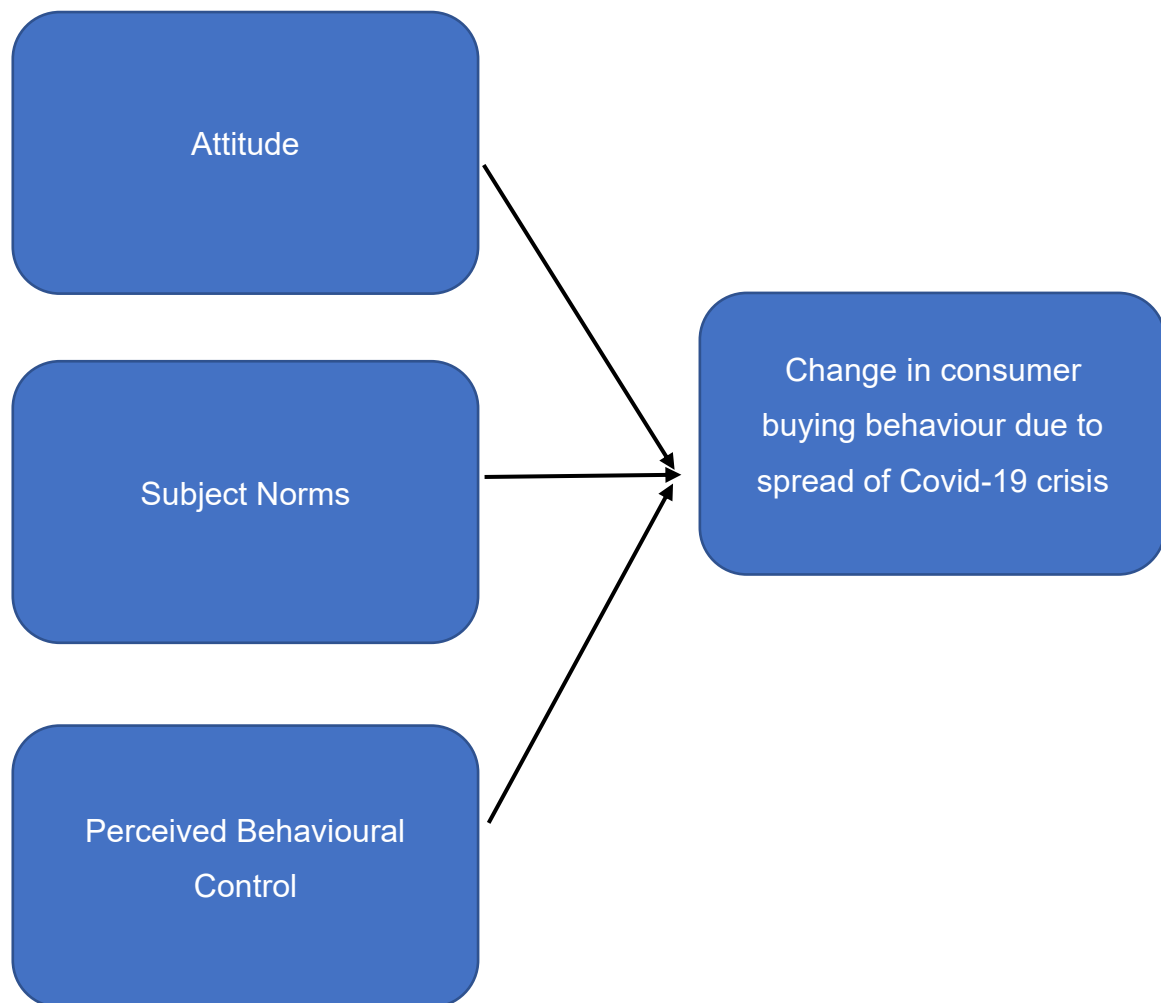


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Source: Author

Hypothesis

H1: The attitude of customers significantly impacts their behaviours due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

H2: Subjective Norms of customers significantly impact their behaviours due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

H3: Perceived behavioural control of customers significantly impacts their behaviours due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

A straightforward study strategy is needed to find out how customers' actions in businesses in Europe have changed during the COVID-19 pandemic. The research process in this study is organised well using Saunders' Research Onion model. The Research Onion gives you a complete plan for how to do research by going over different scientific aspects in a planned way (Bianchi, 2021). It helps decide what study theories, methods, strategies, choices, and techniques to use. The study makes sure that data gathering and analysis are done strictly and thoroughly by using the Research Onion. Despite this, the ordered layers of the model make it easier to address certain aspects of the research process in a more streamlined manner; for instance, with the choice of the data collection technique as well as the stipulation of the research theory (Haydam and Steenkamp, 2020). By so doing, it could be convenient to identify how customers' preferences and behaviours have changed due to the pandemic in an orderly manner. This ensures that the research is credible and impartial; further, it ensures that the research is correct.

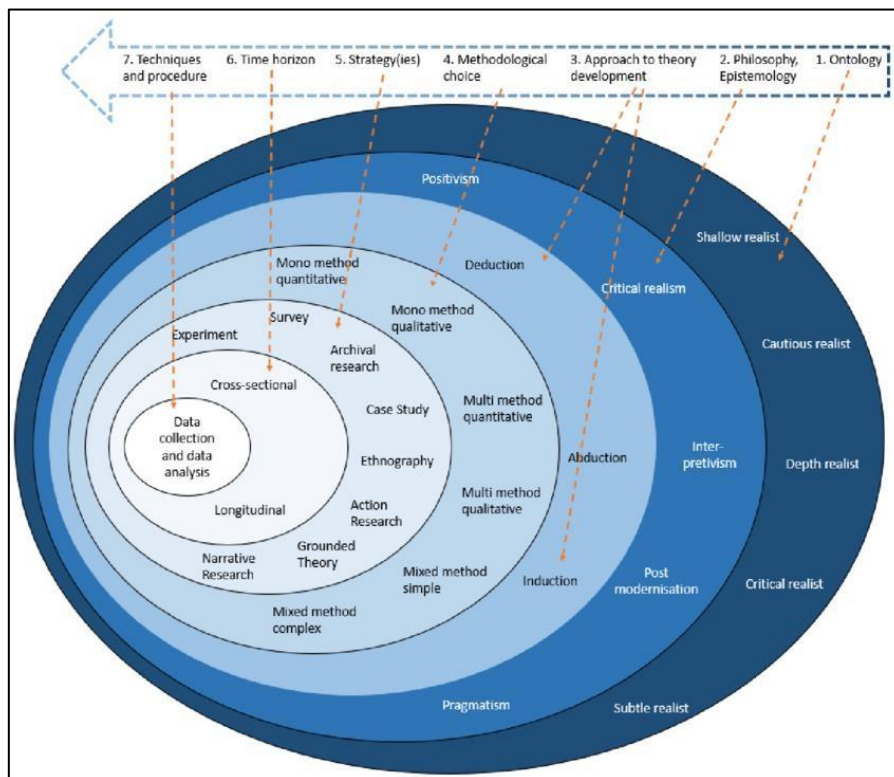


Figure 2: Saunders' Research Onion

Source: (Schindlwick, 2021)

3.2 Research Philosophy

In Saunders' Onion, the notion of the study plan within the tradition of capturing research theory is the outermost layer. It helps to understand such philosophical pillars as realism, positivism, pragmatism, and interpretivism, or at least to know their brief descriptions (Gannon, et al., 2022). The **positivist theory** that has been used in this study can be very useful when it comes to the quantitative data which relates to people as much as they are consumers. Positivism is the search for the truth and the collection of facts, which are measured through statistics, by the objectives of the research where there is an aim of using statistical methods to determine the extent of the virus COVID-19 affecting the buying behaviour of the consumers. This study aims to objectively measure the effect of positivism. This study is conducted with the aim to measure and account variable changes in consumer behaviour by making use of statistical methods, by keeping in line with **positivism**. This study has made certain that all the findings are taken from observable as well as easily verifiable data. This process ensures that conclusions derived are actual, statutory, and not speculative, thus achieving an appropriate apprehension of the study question.

It is crucial to select a suitable strategy to conduct the research which is the foundational base of philosophy. Picking a study plan is the next step in Saunders' study Onion. Case study, experimental, survey, ethnographic, archival, and grounded theory are some options (Mtisi, 2022). A **survey**, which is a good method for quantitative research, will be used for this study.

For collection of the data surveys are used. Surveys are for the most part very appropriate for this research because they facilitate collection of a vast sample of data which helps in gathering broader insights about changes in consumer behaviour during pandemic time. Surveys are a good way to get information from a lot of people; consequently, the results are broad and accurate. There will be an online survey with a closed-ended inquiry made with **Google Forms**. To analyse trends as well as patterns in consumer behaviour it is beneficial to use **closed-ended questions**. Such questions make sure that there is consistency along with comparability in the responses received. This eases the quantitative comparison of the responses. This method makes sure that answers are consistent and regular, which makes it easier to get a true and accurate picture of how customer behaviour changed during the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.3 Research Approach

The research technique of the research study also involves both deductive and inductive methods as prescribed in Saunders' Research Onion-Research Theory. The deductive approach moves from general concepts to specific predictions and bona fide results through the testing of hypotheses (Woiceshyn & Daellenbach, 2018). The inductive method, in contrast, is usually when the conclusions are derived from relating specific details to more general views. A **deductive approach** was used for this study, which is good for looking at numbers and finding links between causes and effects. A deductive approach provides accurate and unbiased results by applying existing theories to specific data. This makes it a good way to figure out how the COVID-19 pandemic changed customers' behaviour.

3.4 Time Horizon

The time horizon is the amount of time that was used to collect data for the study. Typically, longitudinal and cross-sectional time horizons are taken into account in the study (Kim, 2021). A **cross-sectional** range is picked for the study. This is important because a linear time horizon is not the right way to find a cause-and-effect link. Consequently, this decision is important for looking into how buyer habits changed during COVID-19.

3.5 Techniques and Procedure

3.5.1 Sample Size and Procedure

A random sample method will be used to collect original data on how customer behaviour changed in businesses in Europe during COVID-19. To get a sense of bigger trends and effects, this method involves picking a group of people that is typical of the whole population. Social media sites will be used to collect data, which will make it easier to reach a wide range of important people. The sample size of participants is set to be between **50-55**, which is thought to be a good number for effect analysis in this study. Participants must be over 18 years old, which is similar to the age range of people who usually go out to eat. The research was able to reach and convince 51 participants to take part in the study and share their opinions on the subject matter. There is no upper age limit because eating out is something that people do at each stage of their lives. Individuals also have to be willing to participate in the research as well as be **residents of Europe** to ensure that the data that shall be obtained is

relevant to the area under consideration. **Random selection** ensures that the selected sample is an excellent example of the entire community, thus increasing the credibility of the findings. The study aims to develop an understanding of how the population's behaviour patterns and preferences have transformed over time by surveying 51 participants. It will assist researchers in knowing how businesses have adapted to the situation caused by the outbreak of the pandemic.

3.5.2 Data Collection and Data Analysis

The research focuses on the alteration of customer behaviour during COVID-19 in European businesses. The Likert scale survey form will be used for this study. The Likert scale is perfect for ensuring the consistency of answers and is quite effective when it comes to measuring emotions and views.

Data Collection:

- **Survey Design:** The survey will include several statements about changes in customer behaviour, preferences, and attitudes during the COVID-19 pandemic. Respondents will indicate their level of agreement or disagreement on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree."
- **Participant Selection:** Participants will be chosen randomly from various groups across Europe to ensure a representative sample. The survey link will be shared through social media, email lists, and online forums to reach a wide audience.
- **Sample Size:** The goal is to collect responses from 50-55 participants, which is enough to conduct statistical analysis and draw conclusions. Participants must be over 18 years old to ensure they can provide informed responses.
- **Survey Administration:** The survey will be conducted online using Google Forms. This method allows for easy distribution and real-time data collection.

Data Analysis:

- **Descriptive Statistics:** Descriptive statistics will be used to summarize the demographic information of the participants and their survey responses. Measures like mean, mode, and standard deviation will be calculated to provide an overview of the data.

- **Frequency Analysis:** Frequency analysis uses pie charts, and bar graphs, among others, enabling the learner to identify patterns or trends in data, according to Feldman (2018). This will help identify common trends in the data.
- **Regression Analysis:** Linear regression analysis will be used to examine the relationship between independent variables (like attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control) and the dependent variable (consumer buying behaviour). This will help determine the impact of each factor on consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- **Statistical Software:** Data analysis will be done using SPSS software, which is suitable for performing both descriptive and inferential statistical analyses. The software will help generate visual representations of the data and calculate statistical measures.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Due to the fact that people are taking part in this study, ethical issues are very important. Ethics lead the study to make sure it is honest and treats subjects with respect (Pan, 2020). Anonymity, privacy, educated permission, and safe data destruction are all important ethical issues. Anonymity will be kept by not collecting information that could be used to find out who someone is, such as names or emails. Data keeping will be kept safe, and only certain people will be able to view it. Participants will provide their full consent by filling out a subject information sheet that explains the goal and steps of the study. Once the goals of the study have been met, the data will be thrown away safely to keep member information safe. These steps protect participation rights and support ethical standards.

Chapter 4: Data Analysis

4.1 Overview

In this section of the study, the already collected information or data in relation to the area of investigation using a close-ended questionnaire will be analysed to present the potential findings or results. For presenting the findings the statistical method will be considered and used as it will help in outlining the crucial information. The methods that will be implemented in this study for analysing the data are descriptive statistics and the linear regression analysis method. The information or data has been collected from 51 participants who are consumers and will be analysed in this section.

4.2 Findings and Data Analysis

4.2.1 Descriptive Statistics

The attributes of the collected data will be analysed in this section by implementing descriptive statistics in which certain factors will be utilised that are mean, mode, and standard deviation. The method of descriptive statistics will be applied in which the responses of participants dependent on the scale of measurement will be evaluated referring to the tendency of respondents.

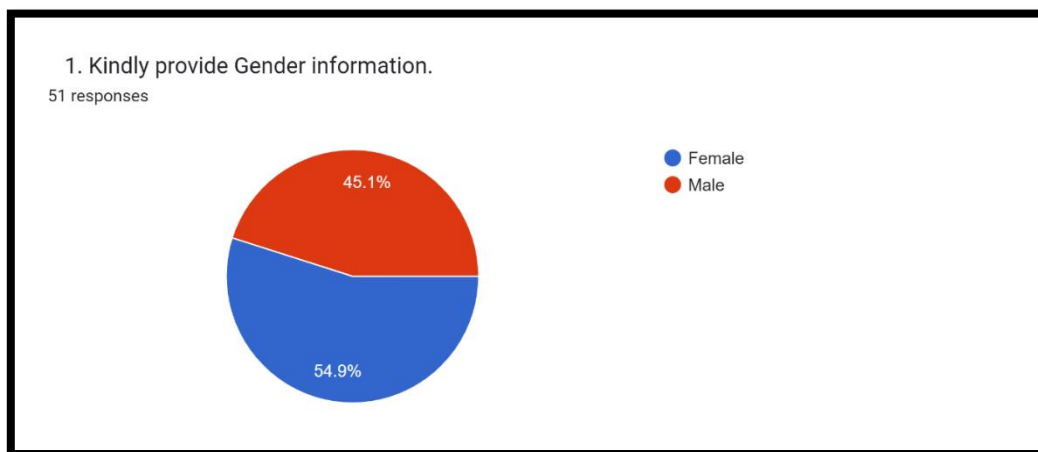


Figure 3: Pie chart representing question 1

Source: Author

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics 1

Descriptive Statistics	Value
------------------------	-------

Mean	1.450
Mode	1
Standard Deviation	0.502

Analysis: The demographic data has been considered and collected in the present study with the key perspective to acquire and analyse the background information. From the above-mentioned graph, 55 per cent of participants who participated were females and 45 per cent were male. In relation to the descriptive statistics, it has been analysed that there are three variables which are mean, mode, and standard deviation which will be considered and analysed. The role of the mean in the study is to provide significant information in relation to an average number of participants in relation to the area of investigation. The main role of descriptive statistics is to provide significant information in association with the frequency of value that takes place. Moreover, the role of standard deviation in the study is to provide the information in relation to the database that is if it is greatly variable or is dispersed around which is in the case of low values. In relation to the above-mentioned question where the information in relation to gender has been acquired the mean value is 1.450 which states that both males and females have participated equally. The mode value that has been obtained is 1 in comparison to males more females have participated. In the last the value of standard deviation is 0.502 which denotes that acquired data is reliable and it also dispersed around the mean.

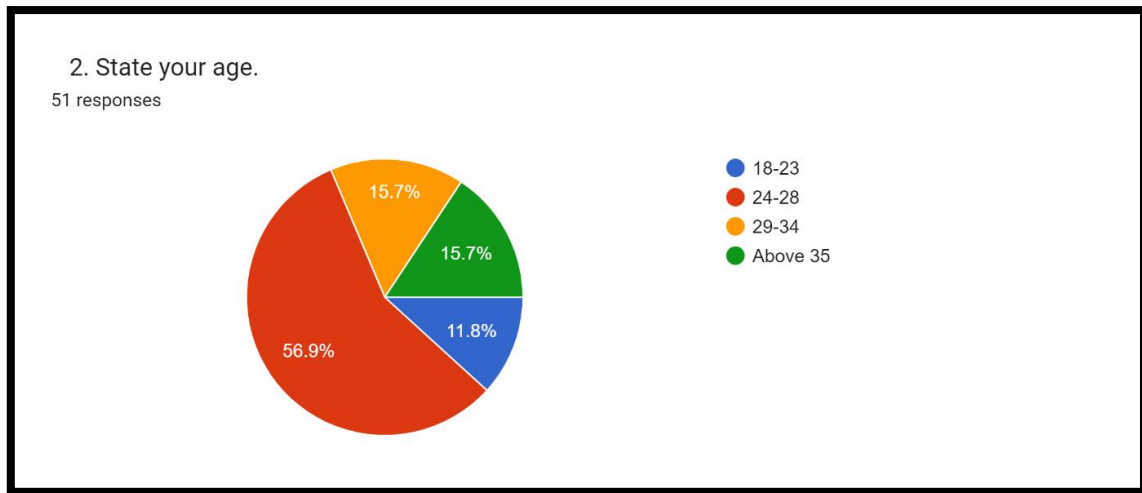


Figure 4: Pie chart representing question 2

Source: Author

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics 2

Descriptive Statistics	Value
Mean	2.352
Mode	2
Standard Deviation	0.890

Analysis: This is another demographic question that has been included in the study to gather significant background knowledge in relation to the subject matter. From the above-presented graph, it has been analysed that the majority of participants, 57% who have participated are been 24 to 28 ages. In addition to this, 16% of participants are between 29 to 34 ages and 16% are above 35. In the last 12% of participants which is the lowest who have participated in the study are between 18 to 23. In addition to this, descriptive statistics have been conducted, and from that it has been analysed that the value of the mean is 2.352 which stated that the average is individuals between 18-23 and 24-28 majorly participated. The value of mode is 2 which presents that participants between 24-28 have frequently participated. In the last, in the context of standard deviation, the obtained value is 0.890 which is less than is acquired information dispersed around the mean and is of a reliable nature.

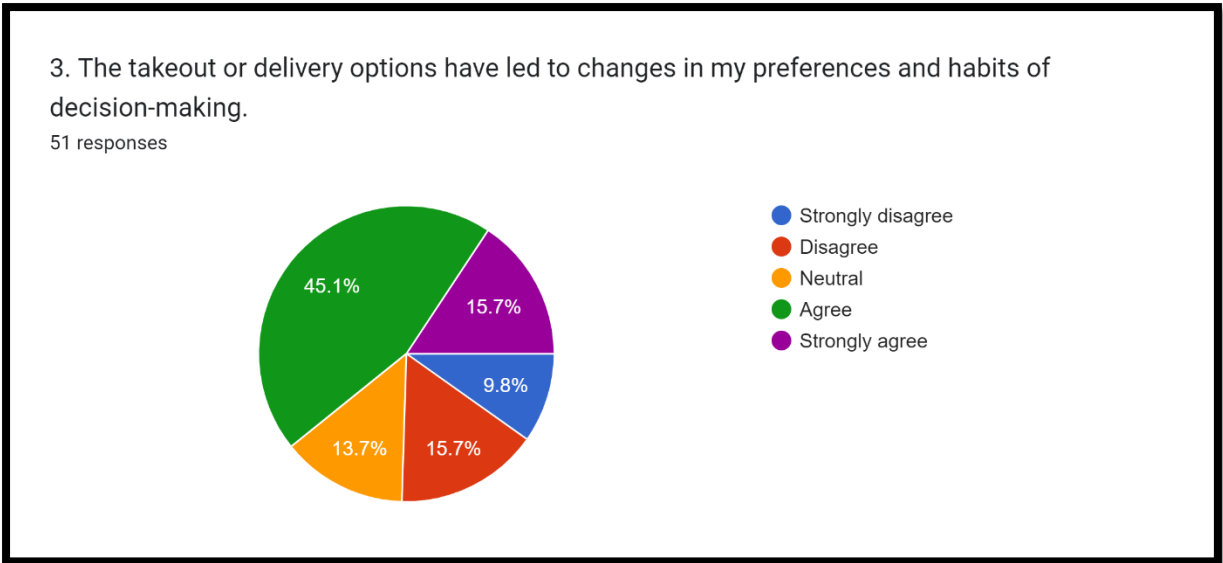


Figure 5: Pie chart representing question 3

Source: Author

Table 3: Descriptive Statistics 3

Descriptive Statistics	Value
Mean	3.411
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.219

Analysis: From the above-mentioned table and graph crucial information in relation to the change in the preferences and behaviour of customers has been acquired. From the pie graph, it has been analysed that the majority of participants that is 45% have agreed that takeout and delivery options lead to having an impact on the preferences and buying decisions of customers. In addition to this 16% have strongly agreed, 14% have reacted neutral, 16% have disagreed, and 10% have strongly disagreed. Moreover, based on the descriptive statistic it has been analysed that the value of the mean is 3.411 which states that the average of participants who have taken part is agreed. The mode value that has been acquired is 4 which presents that frequently occurred value is agreed that is takeout and delivery options lead to change. Lastly,

the standard deviation value is 1.219 which is less denoting that acquired data or information is reliable and is dispersing around the mean.

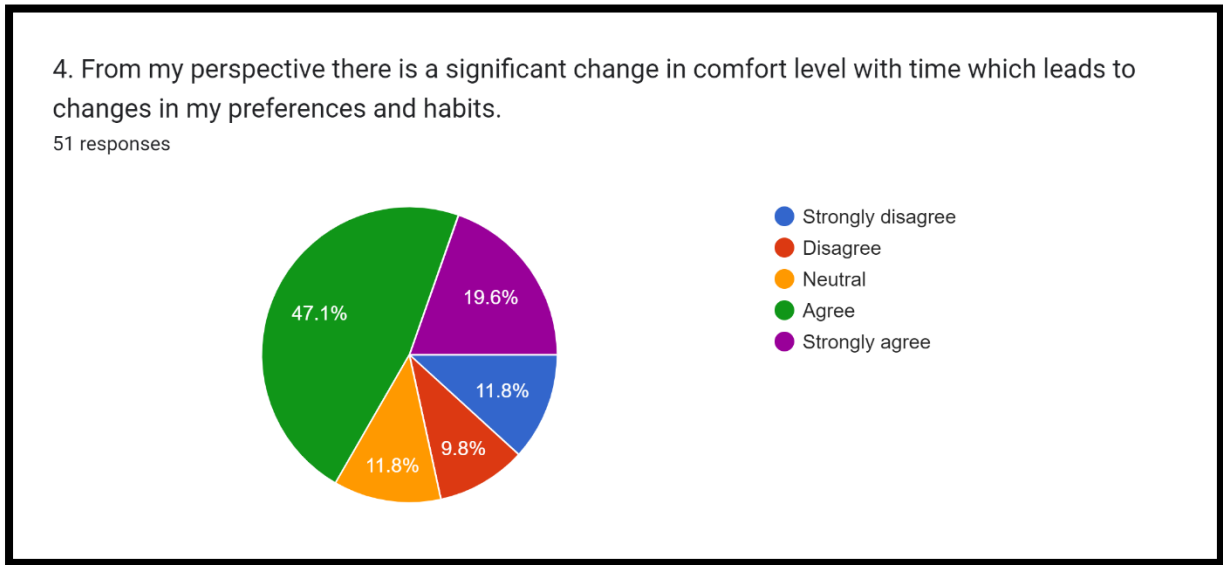


Figure 6: Pie chart representing question 4

Source: Author

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics 4

Descriptive Statistics	Value
Mean	3.529
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.254

Analysis: In this section considering the graph and the table the potential information in relation to the impact of comfort level on changing preferences and habits of customers will be analysed. It has been determined that the maximum number of participants that is 47% have agreed and 19% of them have strongly agreed. It is analysed that 11% have responded neutral, 10% have disagreed, and 12% have strongly disagreed. In addition to this from the descriptive statistics it has been evaluated that the value of the mean is 3.529 which provides that the average is agreed and the mode value is 4 presenting that the most frequently occurred value is

agreed. The value obtained of standard deviation is 1.254 standing that value dispersed around the mean that it is reliable and that comfort level is one of the key factors which leads to making changes in the habits and preferences of customers.

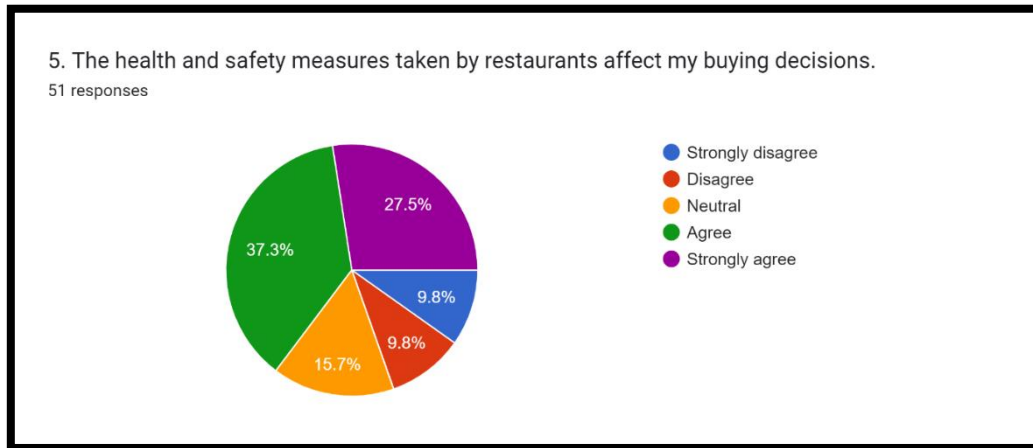


Figure 7: Pie chart representing question 5

Source: Author

Table 5: Descriptive Statistics 5

Descriptive Statistics	Value
Mean	3.627
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.264

Analysis: In this particular section crucial information in association with the aspect of health and safety has been acquired which led to changes in the buying decisions of customers. From the above-mentioned pie chart, it has been analysed that the maximum number of participants which is 37 per cent have agreed, and 27% have strongly agreed. In addition to this, it has been analysed that 15% have reacted neutral, and 10% each have disagreed and strongly disagreed. In addition to this, it has been evaluated from the descriptive statistics that the mean value that is obtained is 3.627 from which it is determined that the average that has been obtained in this respect is agree. Further, the mode value obtained from the table is 4 which presents a frequently occurred value which is agreed, and the value of standard deviation

provides the information in terms of reliability and is 1.264 stating that it dispersed around the mean and is reliable.

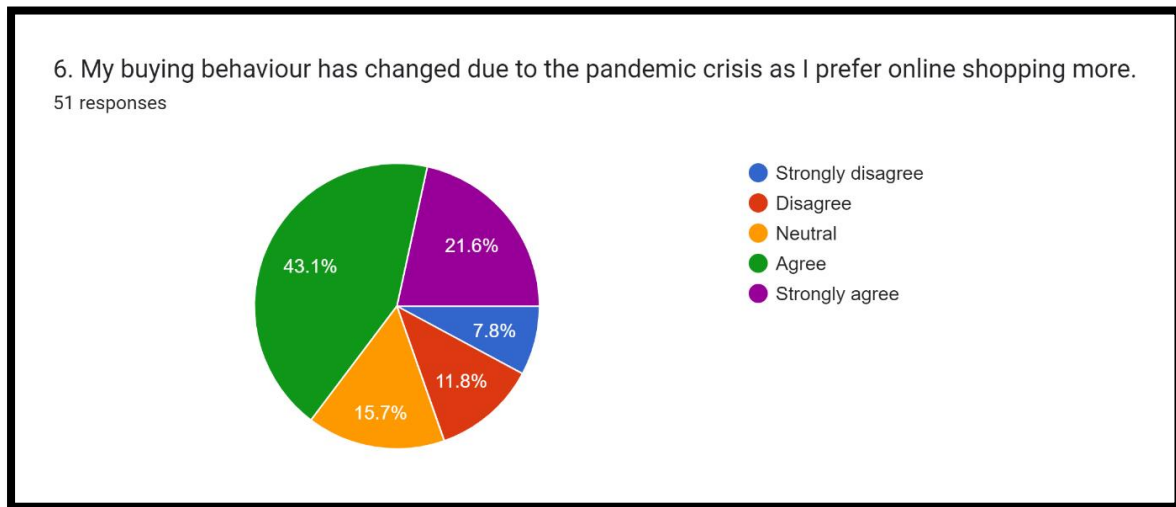


Figure 8: Pie chart representing question 6

Source: Author

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics 6

Descriptive Statistics	Value
Mean	3.588
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.186

Analysis: The above-presented pie graph and the table will be considered and reviewed to acquire the potential information in relation to the shift to online shopping due to the pandemic crisis. Considering the graph, it has been evaluated that the maximum number of respondents that is 43% have agreed and 21% have strongly agreed. Moreover, it was determined that 12% disagreed, 15% were neutral and 7% strongly disagreed. Therefore, it has been analysed that consumers have shifted to online shopping behaviour. In addition to this, considering the descriptive statistics it has been analysed that the mean value which represents the average is 3.588 denoting agree is the average in this question. The mode value provides the information in relation to the frequently occurred value which is 4 which is the agreed

option that has taken place frequently. The standard deviation value is 1.186 which is less stating that obtained data is reliable in nature and the value obtained is dispersing around the mean.

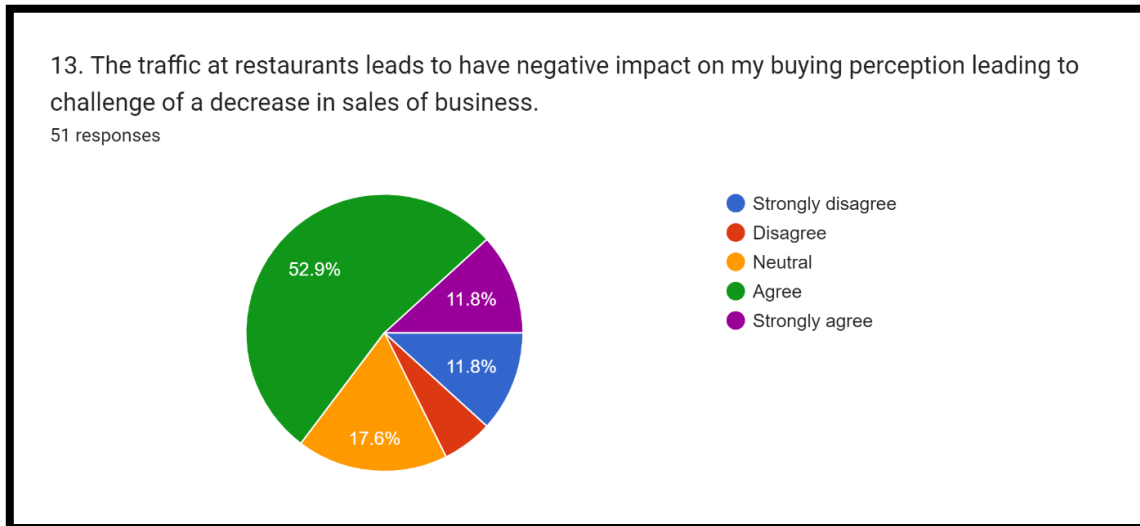


Figure 9: Pie chart representing question 13

Source: Author

Table 7: Descriptive Statistics 7

Descriptive Statistics	Value
Mean	3.470
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.155

Analysis: In this section of the data analysis section, it will be analysed that traffic is the aspect that leads to a negative impact on the buying perception of customers. Thus, from the information mentioned in the graph, it has been analysed that the majority of participants that is 53% have agreed and 12% strongly agree that traffic leads have a negative impact on customers. From the graph, it has been analysed that 17% reacted neutral and 11% strongly disagreed. In addition to this, the information acquired from the descriptive statistics presents that the obtained value of the mean is 3.470 which mentioned that the average is agreed and the mode value

presents a frequently occurred value which is 4 i.e., agree; thus, it is true that due to the pandemic crisis, customers have shifted to online shopping. The value of standard deviation that has been obtained is 1.155 which contributes to providing that information is reliable as the value disperses around the mean.

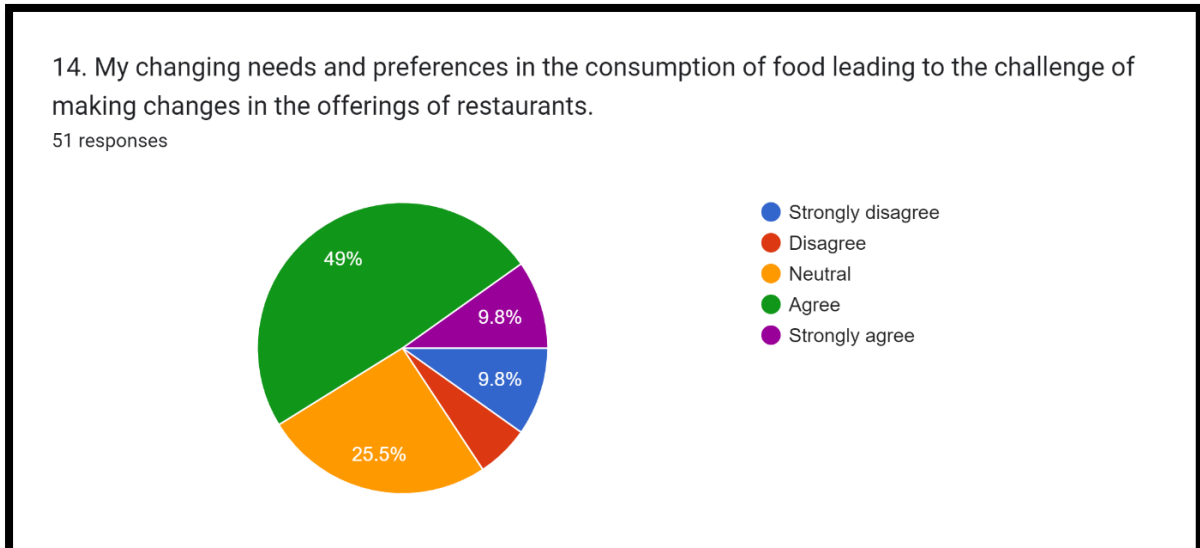


Figure 10: Pie chart representing question 14

Source: Author

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics 8

Descriptive Statistics	Value
Mean	3.431
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.081

Analysis: The potential information in relation to the change and preferences in the consumption of customers and its impact on restaurants has been acquired. From the graph, it has been analysed that the maximum of respondents that is 49% have agreed, 10% have strongly agreed, 25% have responded neutral, and 10% have strongly disagreed. Therefore, it has been analysed that change in taste and preferences of customers is challenging for restaurants. In addition to this, from the descriptive data analysis, it has been analysed that the value of the mean which is

obtained is 3.431 presenting that the average is agreed. In a similar manner, the value of mode is 4 presenting that the frequently occurred value is agreed and the standard deviation value is 1.081 which denotes that data is reliable as this value is dispersing around the mean.

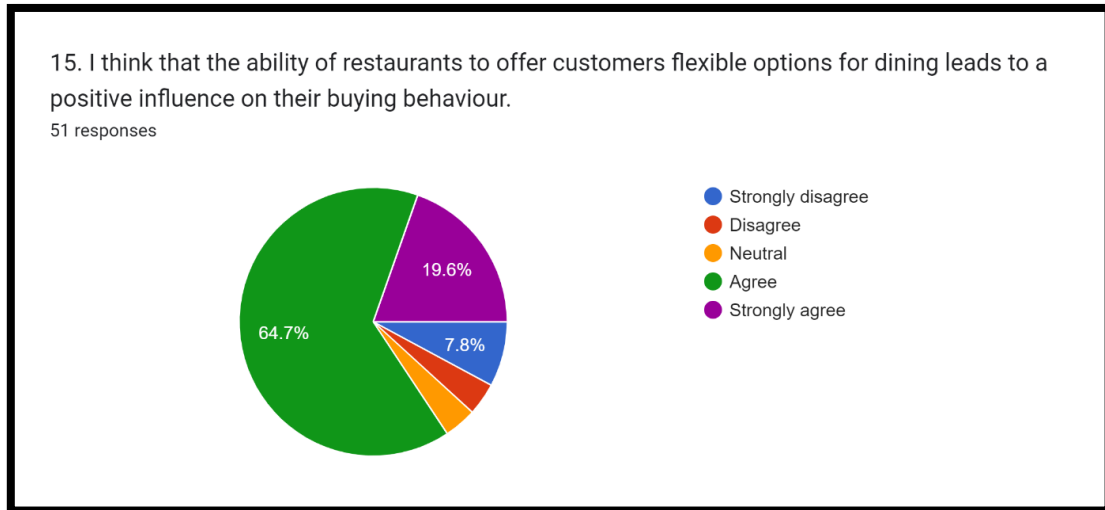


Figure 11: Pie chart representing question 15

Source: Author

Table 9: Descriptive Statistics 9

Descriptive Statistics	Value
Mean	3.843
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.046

Analysis: The significant information in relation to the flexibility provided to customers and its positive impact on their buying behaviour has been analysed. From the graph, it has been analysed that the majority of participants responded agreed that is 65%, 20% strongly agreed to it, and 8% strongly disagreed. Therefore, it is determined that customer flexibility is significant and it leads to a positive impact. Moreover, from the descriptive data analysis, it has been analysed that the value of the mean that has been obtained is 3.843 stating that the average is agreed. The value of mode derived

from the table is 4 presenting that frequently agree has taken place. In the last, the value of standard deviation is 1.046 which is less presenting that collected data is reliable as the obtained value disperses around the mean.

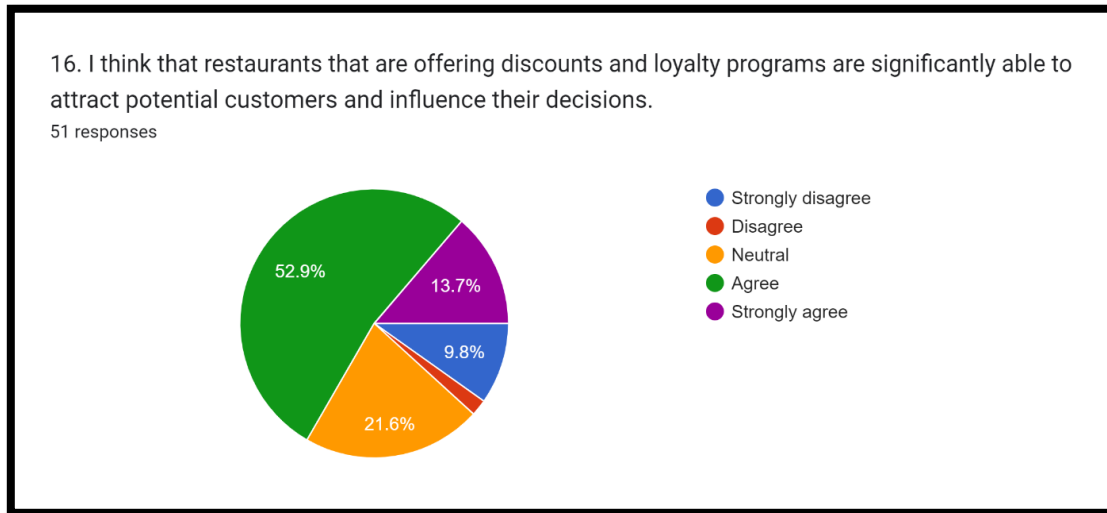


Figure 12: Pie chart representing question 16

Source: Author

Table 10: Descriptive Statistics 10

Descriptive Statistics	Value
Mean	3.588
Mode	4
Standard Deviation	1.080

Analysis: In this section, significant information in relation to the impact of offers and discounts on customers has been acquired. From the above-mentioned graph, it has been analysed that around 53% of the participants which is the majority have agreed that discounts and offers lead to have a positive impact. In addition to this, it has been analysed that 21% of participants have reacted neutral, 10% have strongly disagreed and 13% have strongly agreed. In addition to this, from the descriptive statistics it has been analysed and evaluated that the mean value presenting average is 3.588 which means agreement has taken place. The value of mode that has been acquired is 4

presenting a frequently occurred value which is 4 which is agree and the standard deviation presenting information about the reliability of data is 1.080 which is less and is dispersing around the mean denoting that the database is reliable.

4.2.2 Linear Regression Statistics

In the data analysis section, the second statistical method that will be used for the analysis and evaluation of data to present the findings is linear regression analysis. With the use of the regression analysis method, the second objective of the study will be analysed which is measures adopted by restaurants and their impact on consumer buying behaviour due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis using the theory of planned behaviour. In the regression analysis, the impact of one variable on the other variable is evaluated and tested. In the regression analysis, two variables are considered that are x variable (independent) and the y variable which is (dependent). In the case of the present study, the dependent variable is consumer buying decisions and the independent variables are attitude, subject norms, and perceived behavioural control.

Y-variable (dependent variable) analysis (consumer buying behaviour)

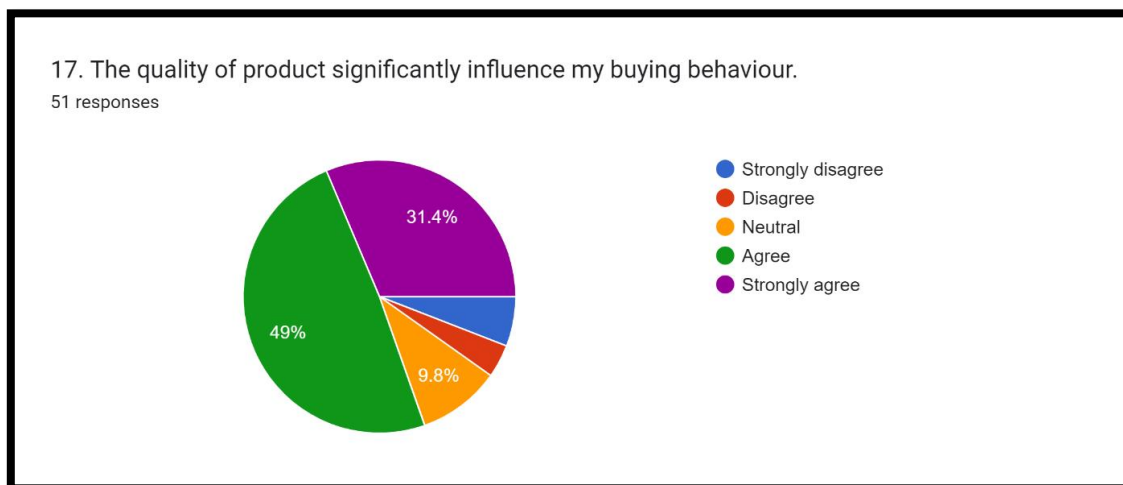


Figure 13: Pie chart representing question 17

Source: Author

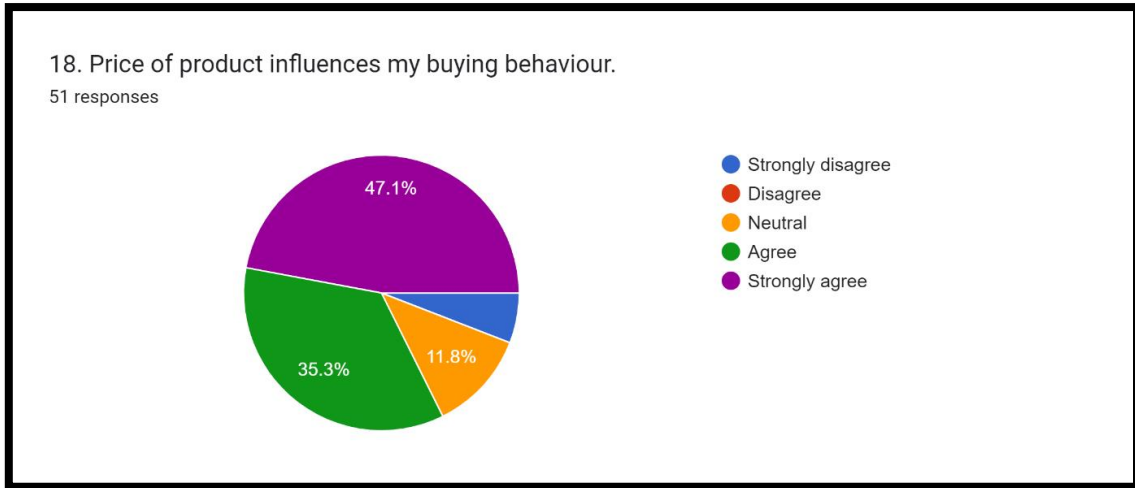


Figure 14: Pie chart representing question 18

Source: Author

Analysis: From the above-mentioned two graphs the information in relation to the buying behaviour of customers is been acquired. It has been analysed that the majority of participants that is 49% have agreed that the quality of the product influences their buying behaviour. In addition to this, around 47% of participants strongly agreed that the price of the product is the key factor that influences the buying decision of customers.

X-variable (independent variable) analysis (Attitude)

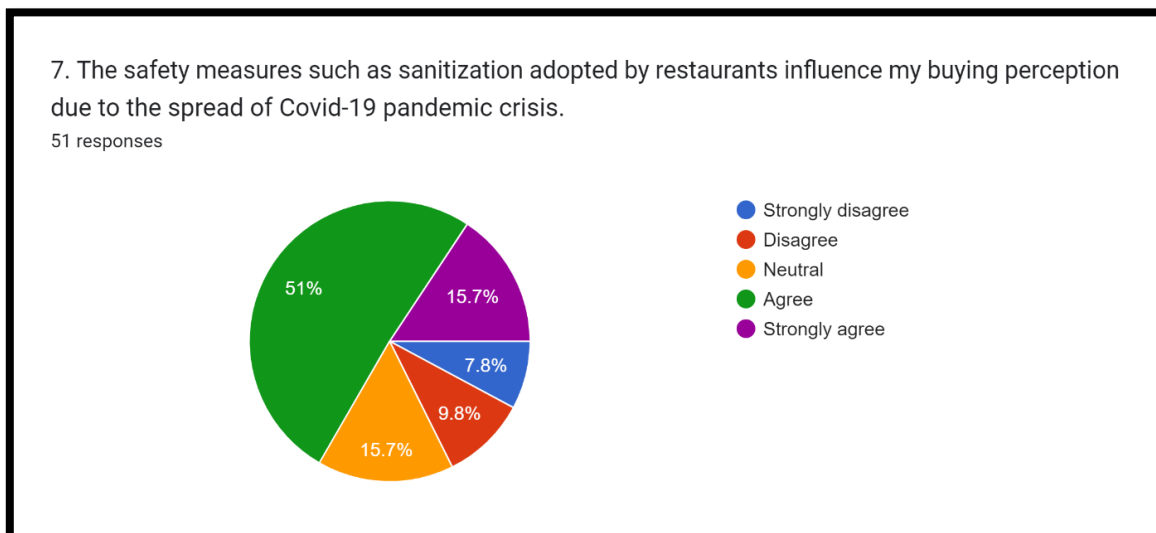


Figure 15: Pie chart representing question 7

Source: Author

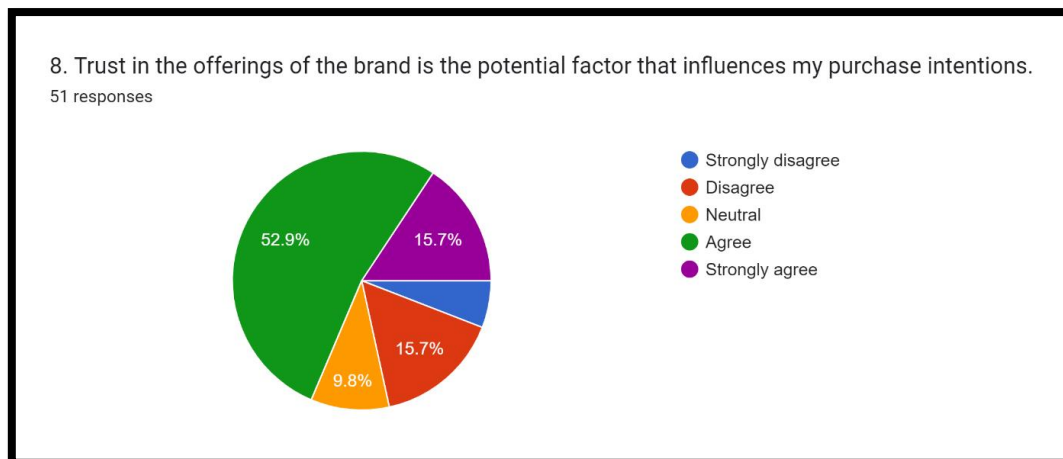


Figure 16: Pie chart representing question 8

Source: Author

Analysis: From the above-mentioned graph the significant information in relation to the impact of sanitization practices and trust of customers in the offerings of brands on their buying perception or intention. It has been analysed that 51% of respondents which is the maximum agreed that sanitization practices have a positive impact. In addition to this, 15% of participants strongly agreed and 16% reacted neutral to it. Moreover, in relation to trust it has been analysed that 53% of respondents have agreed and 16% have strongly agreed that it influences their buying perception.

Testing Hypothesis 1: The attitude of customers significantly impacts their behaviours due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis.

Table 11: Statistical Regression Analysis 1

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.628 ^a	.394	.382	1.541

a. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude

b. Dependent Variable: ConsumerBuyingBehaviour

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	75.673	1	75.673	31.865	.000 ^b
	Residual	116.366	49	2.375		
	Total	192.039	50			

a. Dependent Variable: ConsumerBuyingBehaviour

b. Predictors: (Constant), Attitude

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.952	.772		5.117	.000
	Attitude	.586	.104	.628	5.645	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ConsumerBuyingBehaviour

Source: SPSS

Analysis: In this section with the use of linear regression analysis the existence of a relationship between attitude and consumer buying behaviour will be tested and effectively analysed. In the regression analysis, the aspects which will be considered and used for analysis are the statistics of regression, ANOVA, and the values of coefficients. The key relationship between two variables, X and Y will be analysed and determined. In the case of ANOVA, the p-value is utilised and tested to ensure the relationship between variables is statistically significant or is not statistically significant. It has been analysed that the values of the coefficient will be used in the regression analysis for forming the equations and it also helps in determining whether the hypothesis which is tested is true or false. In the case of regression statistics, it has been analysed that R is the aspect that provides the crucial information in relation to the existence of a relationship that is whether it is strong or weak.

The value of R is 0.628 stating that a 62.8% stronger relationship takes place between the x and y variables. The value of R square provides significant information in relation to the influence of the independent variable that is x on the dependent variable, y. From the above-mentioned table, the value of R square is 0.394 presenting that 39.4% influence takes place of the attitude on the consumer buying behaviour. The value of adjusted R square 0.382 denotes that a 38.2% positive relationship takes place between the tested variables. In addition to this, from the table of ANOVA, $F(1, 49) = 31.865$, and the value obtained of significance F is 0.000 presenting that the acquired p-value is less than 0.05 denoting that the relationship between variables is statistically significant. In relation to the table of coefficients, the two values are given importance and are considered that be the value of slope and the value of intercept which contributes to the linear equation that is

$$y = 0.586x + 3.952$$

Therefore, it has been analysed that the t-statistics value which has been obtained is more than 1 i.e., 5.645 representing that hypothesis 1 is true. The true and strong relationship between variables is also presented graphically for better knowledge and understanding.

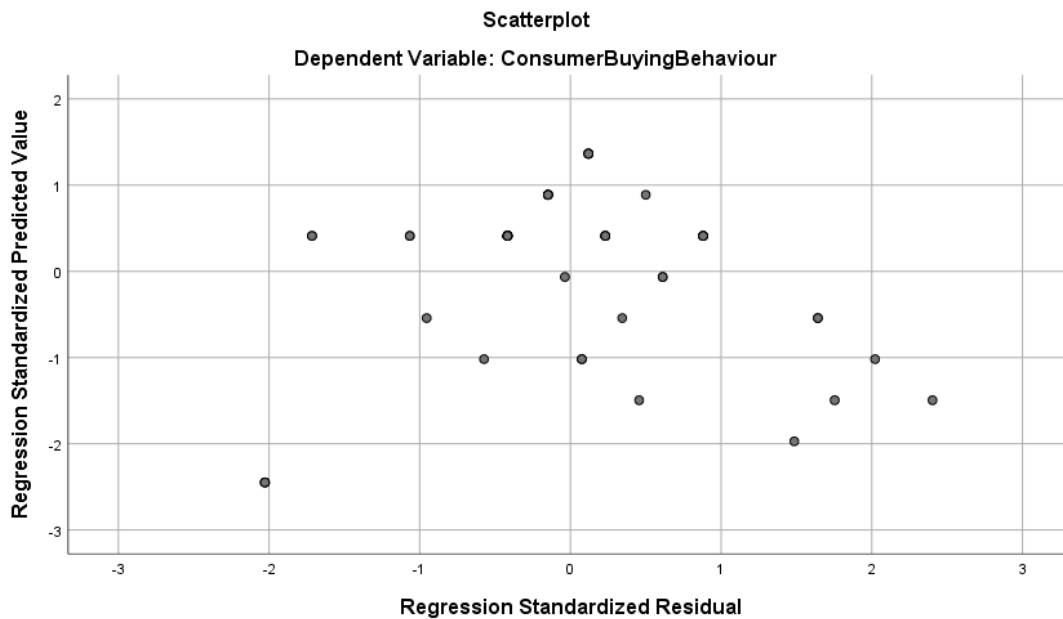


Figure 17: Scatter plot presenting the relationship between attitude and consumer buying behaviour

Source: SPSS

X-variable (independent variable) analysis (Subjective Norms)

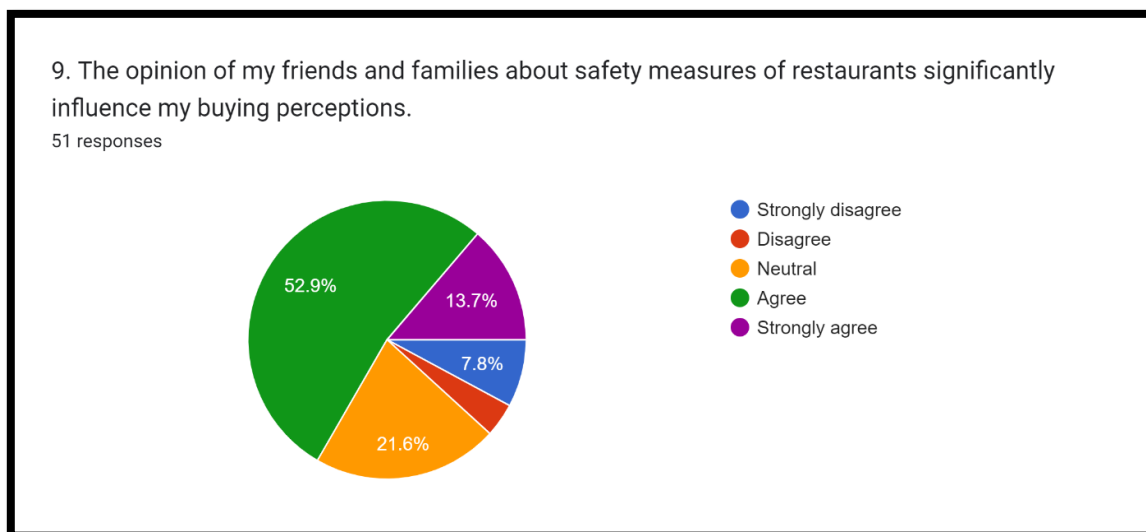


Figure 18: Pie chart representing question 9

Source: Author

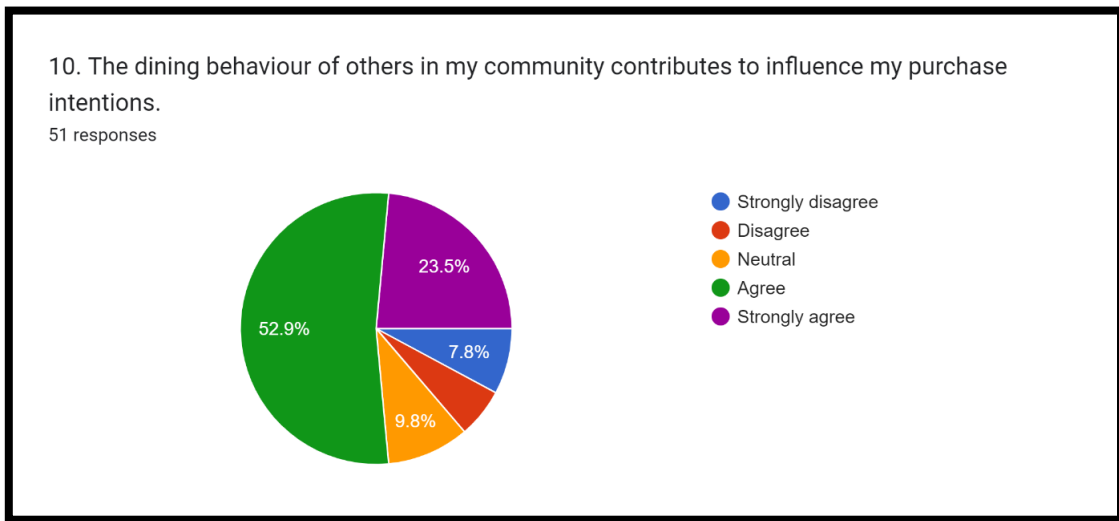


Figure 19: Pie chart representing question 10

Source: Author

Analysis: From the above-mentioned table the significant information in relation to the impact of opinions of families, friends, and community on consumer purchase intentions will be analysed. It has been determined from the graph that the majority of respondents that is 53% have agreed and 14% strongly agreed that the opinion of friends and families about safety measures influences their buying behaviour. In addition to this from another graph, it has been analysed that 53% of participants have agreed that the dining behaviour of others in the community influences their purchase intentions.

Testing Hypothesis 2: Subjective Norms of customers significantly impact their behaviours due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Table 12: Statistical Regression Analysis 2

Model Summary ^b				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.690 ^a	.476	.465	1.433

a. Predictors: (Constant), SubjectiveNorms

b. Dependent Variable: ConsumerBuyingBehaviour

ANOVA ^a					
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.

1	Regression	91.381	1	91.381	44.484	.000 ^b
	Residual	100.658	49	2.054		
	Total	192.039	50			

a. Dependent Variable: ConsumerBuyingBehaviour

b. Predictors: (Constant), SubjectiveNorms

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.216	.765		4.205	.000
	SubjectiveNorms	.666	.100	.690	6.670	.000

a. Dependent Variable: ConsumerBuyingBehaviour

Source: Author

Analysis: The above-mentioned table of regression will be considered in relation to the existence of a relationship between subjective norms and consumer buying behaviour. From the regression statistics the value of R, R square, and adjusted R square will be considered and analysed. The value of R that has been obtained is 0.690 which denotes that a 69.0% strong relationship takes place between the variables that is between dependent and independent variables. The value of R square is 0.476 which presents that 47.6% effect of subjective norms is on the buying behaviour of customers. The value obtained from the adjusted R square is 0.465 which mentions that an effective relationship takes place between the x and y variables. The ANOVA table will be considered for analysing the p-value. From the table, it has been analysed that $F(1,49) = 44.484$, and the value of significance F is 0.000 which is less than 0.05 presenting that the relationship which takes place is statistically significant. The values of slope and intercept significantly help in forming the linear equation that the slope is 0.666 and the intercept is 3.216 from the equation

$$y = 0.666x + 3.216$$

The t-statistics value helps in proving that the hypothesis is true or false. The t-statistics value is 6.670 which is more than 1 stating that hypothesis 2 is true. In addition to this, the relationship between subjective norms and consumer buying behaviour is presented graphically for better clarity.

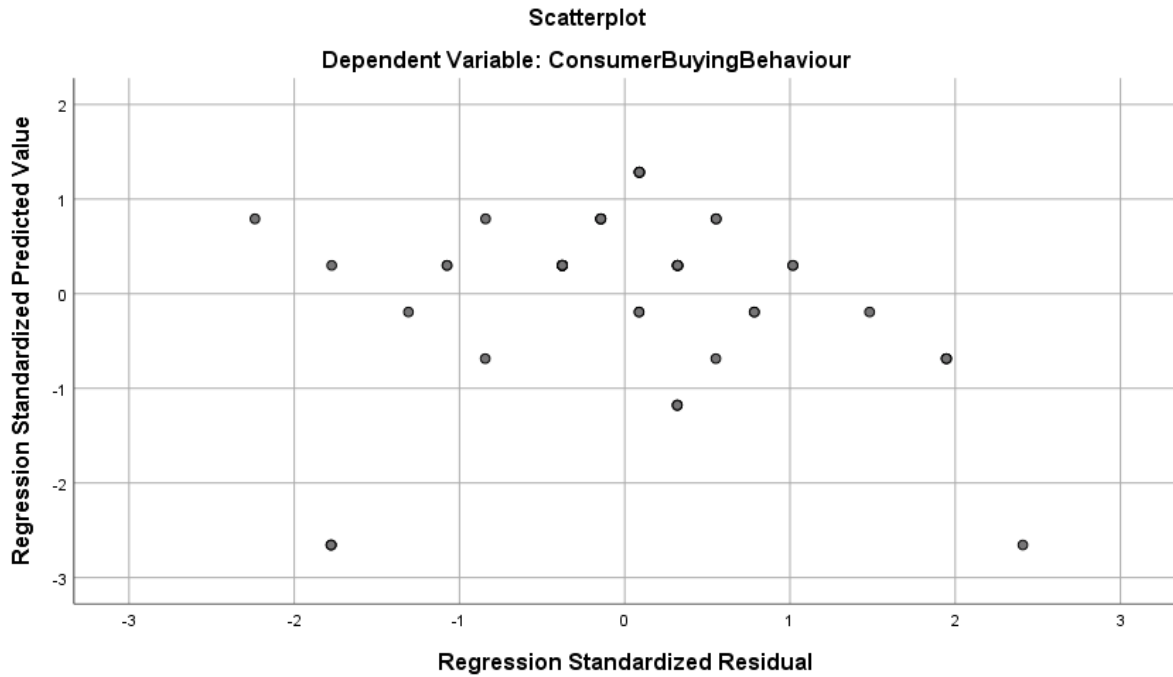


Figure 20: Scatter plot presenting the relationship between the subjective norms and consumer buying behaviour

Source: SPSS

X-variable (independent variable) analysis (Perceived behavioural control)

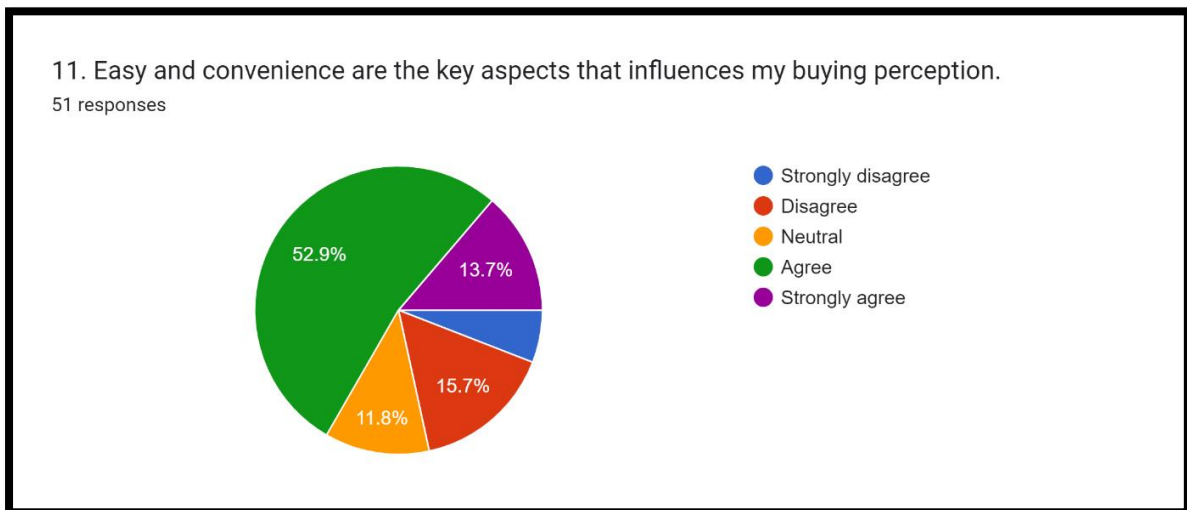


Figure 21: Pie chart representing question 11

Source: Author

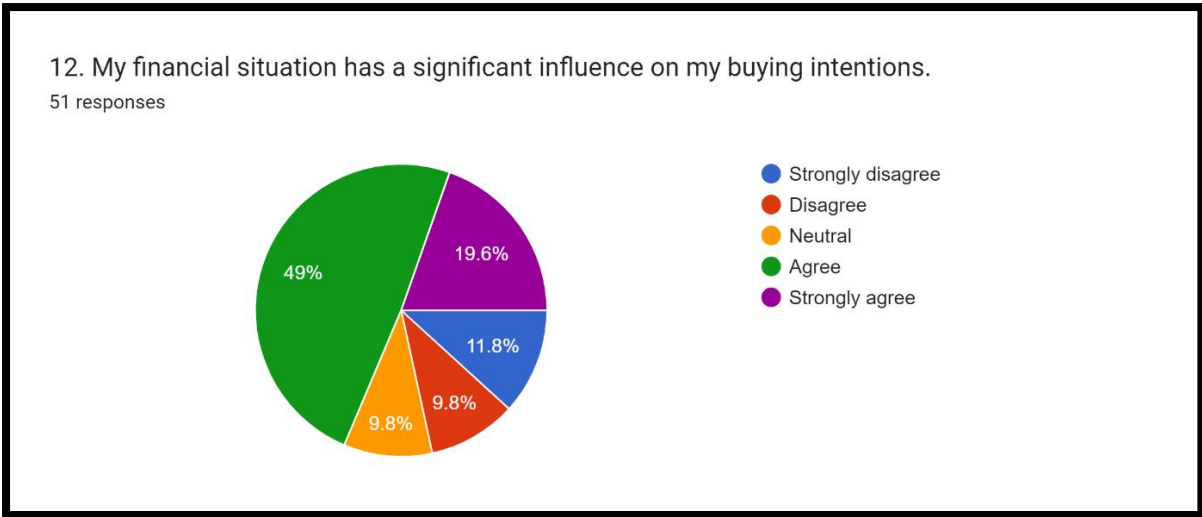


Figure 22: Pie chart representing question 12

Source: Author

Analysis: From the above-mentioned graphs significant information in relation to the ease and convenience and financial situation impact on the consumer buying behaviour has been acquired. It has been analysed that 53% of participants agreed that ease and convenience are the key factors that influence the decisions of individuals. In addition to this from another graph, it has been analysed that the majority of participants that is 49% have agreed that financial situations lead to having an impact on the buying perception of individuals.

Testing Hypothesis 3: Perceived behavioural control of customers significantly impacts their behaviours due to the Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

Table 13: Statistical Regression Analysis 3

Model Summary^b

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.686 ^a	.471	.460	1.440

a. Predictors: (Constant), PerceivedBehaviouralControl

b. Dependent Variable: ConsumerBuyingBehaviour

ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	90.380	1	90.380	43.563	.000 ^b
	Residual	101.660	49	2.075		
	Total	192.039	50			

- a. Dependent Variable: ConsumerBuyingBehaviour
- b. Predictors: (Constant), PerceivedBehaviouralContol

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Coefficients Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.678	.705		5.215	.000
	PerceivedBehaviouralContol	.630	.095	.686	6.600	.000

- a. Dependent Variable: ConsumerBuyingBehaviour

Source: Author

Analysis: Examining the previously mentioned regression table in conjunction with the potential correlation between consumer purchasing behaviour and perceived behavioural control. The values of multiple R, R square, and adjusted R square will be taken into consideration and examined based on the regression statistics. A substantial correlation of 68.6% is found between the variables that are the dependent and independent variables, as indicated by the R-values of 0.686. The R square value of 0.471 indicates that perceived behavioural control has a 47.1% influence on consumers' purchasing decisions. The Adjusted R square value of 0.460 indicates that there is an effective link between the x and y variables. The p-value analysis will take into account the ANOVA table. Based on the analysis of the table, it can be observed that $F(1,49) = 43.563$ and the significance value is 0.000, which is less than 0.05, indicates that the association is statistically significant. The slope is 0.630 and the intercept is 3.678 from the equation $y = 0.630x + 3.678$; these numbers are very helpful in generating the linear equation.

The t-statistics value aids in determining the truth or falsity of the hypothesis. Hypothesis 3 is supported by the t-statistics value of 6.600, which is more than 1. Furthermore, for greater clarity, the relationship between perceived behavioural control and consumer purchasing behaviour is depicted visually.

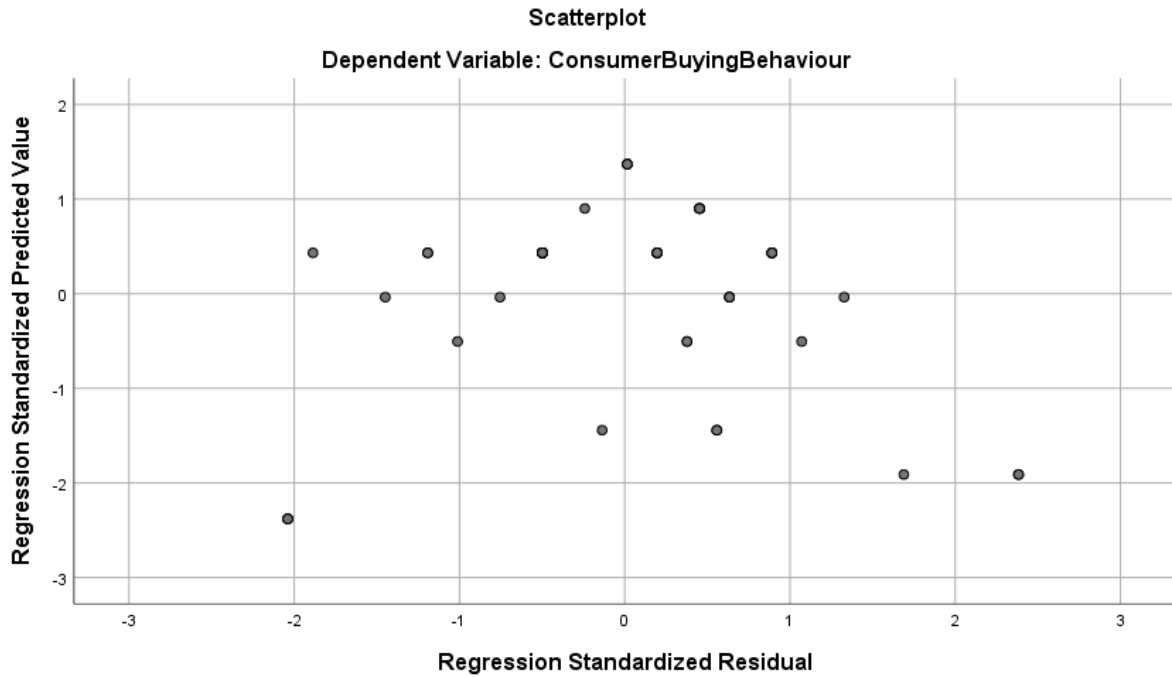


Figure 23: Scatter plot presenting the relationship between the perceived behavioural control and consumer buying behaviour

Source: SPSS

4.3 Summary

From the above analysis and evaluation, it has been analysed that the independent variable has a significant impact on the dependent variable. The independent variables are attitude, subject norms, and perceived behavioural control which significantly influences consumer buying behaviour. It has been analysed that all three hypotheses are true.

Chapter 5: Discussion

5.1 Overview

In this section, the discussion will be conducted in which the collected information has been analysed with that of information provided in the literature review section. Both the data will be compared in this section with the key purpose of ensuring that the similarities and dissimilarities take place in the findings and the objectives of the study.

5.2 Discussion

The findings of the study in the context of the first objective, which is to investigate the changes in preferences and habits of consumers due to the COVID-19 pandemic, present that takeout systems and delivery options led to significant changes in the buying habits and decisions of customers. This clearly shows a shift in consumer behaviour, where convenience and safety become the prime factors in the decision-making process amidst the pandemic. Added to this, comfort level has also been analysed as another key aspect influencing customer preference. Furthermore, it has been analysed from the findings of the present study that health and safety are critical aspects considered by individuals when making a buying decision. The buying behaviour of customers during the pandemic crisis has significantly changed, leading them to increasingly move towards online shopping.

Moreover, the information provided in the literature section presents that individuals made every effort to avoid contact with the virus; therefore, the alteration was made for safety reasons as well as ease. As health and hygiene became increasingly important, demand for vitamins, healthy foods, and disinfectants increased. This agrees with the Theory of Planned Behaviour that allows the attitude to health and safety to directly influence behaviour. It has been analysed that customers give proper importance to the safety of products. Therefore, businesses must take effective measures regarding safety, cleaning protocols and related other measures (Das et al., 2022). The pandemic motivated many firms to rapidly adapt digital technologies. Components of digitalisation like mobile apps, contactless payments and other online purchasing techniques became vital in maintaining business operations as well as ensuring the safety of the clients. Further, the observation was made that participants felt comfortable using technologies that would make life easier (Crosta et al., 2021).

Hence, it is concluded from the above discussion that the findings of this present study agree with all information provided about the literature review and then further confirm the theoretical alignment between consumer behaviour changes and the TPB framework.

The findings of the study concerning the second objective, to investigate measures adopted by restaurants and their impact on consumer buying behaviour during the COVID-19 crisis with the Theory of Planned Behaviour, denote that there are three key factors: attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behavioural control. These variables significantly influenced consumer buying perceptions and behaviours. It has been analysed that, regarding the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, customers considered and adopted safety measures according to individual choices, which affected buying perceptions. In addition, trust and opinions of families have been found to significantly affect buying intentions. Moreover, it has been analysed from the findings that the financial conditions of individuals directly affect buying perceptions.

On the other end, the literature section offers information that pronounces Icek Ajzen's 1985 Theory of Planned Behaviour details a clear framework for considering how different behaviours of individuals changed during the COVID-19 pandemic (La Barbera and Ajzen, 2020). Three main factors shape human behaviours: subjective standards, beliefs, and the degree of self-control. It has been observed that due to the pandemic crisis, consumers have become risk-averse and prefer homestay rather than going out to dine as their safety and health awareness has increased (Moon et al., 2021). Also, it has been analyzed that subjective norms are key factors in influencing of buying decisions of customers. It resulted in increasing new online and cashless ways of making purchase decisions, reflecting the element of control among individuals. Hence, it added to TPB's understanding of how social pressure, health concerns, and perceived control affected customer decisions in the event of a pandemic crisis (Gonzalez-Arcos, et al., 2021).

Accordingly, the findings concerning the second objective of the present study correspond to the data mentioned in the literature review section about the application of TPB.

The findings of the study in relation to the third objective, which is to explore the key challenges faced by restaurants due to changes in customer buying behaviour during

the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, present that traffic at the time of making purchases had a significant negative impact on the buying perception of consumers. Additionally, from the findings, it has been analysed that the needs and preferences of customers are not fixed; they change over time, which poses a challenge for businesses trying to meet them.

Literature review information indicates that, due to the pandemic crisis, there has been a massive shift in consumer behaviour to online shopping. It has been analysed that there have been considerable changes in the tastes and habits of customers. As for the businesses, they had to take up various challenges in ways that resulted from such substantial changes in customer behaviour that included demand failure problems, disruptions in the supply chain, and adapting to the new environment of markets (Kumar et al., 2021). It has been analysed that the firms must adopt digital technologies with much consideration as these would contribute towards enhancing and increasing their online presence and attracting the attention of potential customers. Moreover, it has also been analysed that convenience and ease are what the customers like; therefore, businesses must focus on such matters and take relevant measures for the same (Dillon, et al., 2021).

The results of the third objective, for the study, will be seen in agreement with the literature review, which shall reveal a deep understanding of the challenges businesses have gone through since the onset of the pandemic.

The findings of the study in the context of exploring and suggesting common resilience strategies for restaurants to positively influence consumer behaviour indicate that flexibility is a key factor that positively impacts customers' buying decisions. Additionally, it has been outlined that offerings, discounts, and loyalty programs significantly influence customers' buying decisions.

It has been presented in the literature review section that businesses must take effective measures to meet the standards of safety and transparency in retaining and attracting more customers. Companies that understand the situation of their customers in times of crisis and take flexible steps based on customers' needs and requirements are more likely to positively affect consumer perception and behaviour (Zhang, et al., 2021).

Hence, given the above discussion, it is concluded that what this study discovered on the ground agreed with the data mentioned in the 'Literature Review' section and hence confirmed that current results shared similarities with past research.

5.3 Summary

It is summarised from the above discussion that the objectives are met, as the results or findings of the present study align with the information or data provided by past studies mentioned in the literature review section. This strengthens the understanding of the applicability of the Theory of Planned Behaviour in consumer behaviour during the COVID-19 pandemic and highlights why, more so, it would be very relevant that business strategies be changed towards meeting the changing needs of consumers.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

6.1 Introduction

As an overall conclusion to the research, this chapter summarises the most important results about how the COVID-19 outbreak changed people's habits and tastes, what businesses did to deal with the problem, and what problems they faced. It provides the food industry with beneficial recommendations concerning how to adjust to these changing customer habits while preventing potential issues in the future.

6.2 Conclusion

Objective 1 "To investigate the changes in preferences and habits of consumers due to covid-19 pandemic". The COVID-19 outbreak has completely changed what people like and how they do things, which has had big effects on the food business. Safety and cleanliness are now very important, so eateries have strict cleaning rules to ensure customers. Lockdowns and other steps meant that people had to stay at home, which increased the need for delivery services. As a result, restaurants improved their delivery services and teamed up with third-party services. Digitalisation sped up, and cashless payments, mobile apps, and internet shopping became necessary to keep businesses running and keep customers safe.

As people spent more time at home, many of them became passionate about cooking. This is why places started selling meal kits and ready-to-cook packages. Consumers became more price-conscious as the economy got worse, which forced restaurants to change their pricing tactics and add special deals. As people became more aware of their spending and how it affected others, there was a clear shift towards helping small businesses and picking goods that were better for the earth.

A close look at the data supports these trends, showing that takeaway and delivery options had a big effect on people's choices, and most of the people who took part agreed with this. As the agreement levels show, being comfortable with new eating choices was also a big part of changing tastes. The figures show that restaurants had trouble with changes in what customers liked. In the end, the pandemic has changed the way people behave in a way that will last. This has forced the food industry to adopt new safety standards, accept digitalisation, provide a variety of eating choices, and meet the needs of customers who are concerned about cost and the environment. These changes are likely to keep affecting the industry for a while longer.

Objective 2 “To examine the measures adopted by restaurants and their impact on consumer buying behaviour due to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis using the theory of planned behaviour”. During the COVID-19 pandemic, restaurants took many safety precautions to protect their employees and customers. This had a big effect on how people bought things. Customers felt safe and trusted because the place was cleaner, people kept their distance, deals didn't require cash, and health checks were done regularly. Cleaning and disinfecting areas often, especially ones that people touch a lot, gave people more trust in shopping in person, which led to more people going to stores that followed strict cleanliness rules.

Businesses changed the design of their stores and limited the number of customers they would let in to help people keep their distance from each other. This improved the shopping experience and kept people walking around during the pandemic. Promoting mobile payment options and online shopping with sidewalk pickup or home delivery was also in line with what people wanted: safety and ease of use. Health checks, such as taking temperatures and asking about symptoms, were put in place. These helped people feel safer, even though some people thought they were too intrusive.

A look at the data shows that most of the people who took part agreed that health and safety measures affected their buying decisions. 37% agreed and 27% strongly agreed. The descriptive figures show that the data is reliable, with a mean value of 3.627, which means that most of the people agree, a mode value of 4, and a standard deviation value of 1.264. Using the theory of planned behaviour, linear regression analysis was used to look at how these measures changed the way people behaved. The research found that attitude, subjective standards, and perceived behavioural control are all separate factors that affect what people buy, which is the dependent variable. The results show that safety steps not only changed people's decisions to buy right away, but they also made them more loyal in the long run.

Objective 3 “To explore the key challenges faced by restaurants due to changes in the buying behaviour of customers during the COVID-19 pandemic crisis”. The COVID-19 outbreak caused big problems for restaurants because it changed the way people bought things. Some of these problems were supply chain breakdowns, changing demand, unstable finances, fast digital change, and changing customer standards. Lockdowns, border bans, and limits on movement messed up the global supply chain, which caused product shortages and delays that affected customers' choices about

what to buy. To lower supply chain risks, a lot of people turned to other sources or local goods. The pandemic also caused sudden changes in demand, making it harder to keep track of supplies because people needed some items less and others more.

Uncertainty about money was a significant issue because restaurants lost money and had to pay more to make safety steps work. In light of this, they were not able to spend as much on marketing, new ideas, and customer service, which hurt customer happiness and trust. The pandemic sped up the uptake of digital technologies. For example, restaurants had to improve their online visibility, create e-commerce platforms, and set up digital payment systems because of it. Customers got more ease and safety with this change, but it also showed where digital infrastructure and protection were lacking. During the pandemic, customers' standards changed. They put more value on safety, openness, and business social duty. Customers expected companies to be clear about safety measures, treat workers fairly, and do good things for the community.

A thorough examination of the data shows that a lot of people switched to shopping online because of the pandemic: 43% agreed and 21% strongly agreed. A mean value of 3.588 and a mode value of 4 show that most people agree, and a standard deviation of 1.186 shows that the data is likely to be accurate. Furthermore, traffic made people think less about buying, with 53% agreeing and 12% strongly agreeing. In the end, the pandemic showed restaurants how important it is to be flexible and strong. Problems in the supply chain made it clear how important it is to have fluid and varied buying methods. Changes in demand made it clear how important strong data analytics and market research are. The need for good financial planning and risk management became clear when the economy became unstable. The quick switch to digital showed how important technology is to running a business today.

6.3 Recommendations

- **Enhance Digital Infrastructure:** Restaurants should invest in better technology that ensures they handle online orders, mobile payment solutions, and digital marketing appropriately. In this case, changes that make the use of the website and the mobile app less challenging will enhance the customer experience, ease the running of the business, and lead to increased sales. Further, data analysis may offer knowledge of user preferences and behaviour

as well as dislikes to improve marketing efforts and manage their products. Technological flexibility can help restaurants adapt to the changes taking place among their customers and outcompete other restaurants more effectively.

- **Prioritise Health and Safety Measures:** Maintaining the highest standards of health and safety measures is a key factor in winning the confidence and affection of customers. It is recommended that restaurants should continue with their conspicuous cleanliness standards, comprising of tidying their space more often, social distancing, and health assessments. This makes the customers feel safe knowing that such measures are being implemented by publicizing them through signages, social media platforms, and staff briefings. Further, it is possible to use environmentally friendly approaches such as purchasing locally-produced products and minimizing waste generation which may attract environmentally conscious clientele, and, thus, contribute towards the restaurant developing a strong bond with its customers.
- **Variation in Service Offerings:** To stay strong, businesses should vary their service offerings by giving meal kits, ready-to-cook packages, and monthly services. These options are for people who would rather eat at home but still want to stay connected with their favourite places. Working with outside delivery services can also help you reach more people and make things easier. By offering a range of eating choices, businesses can adjust to shifting customer tastes, minimise the effects of disruptions, and find new ways to make money, which will ensure their long-term success.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

The long-term effects of the COVID-19 pandemic on customer behaviour in the food industry should be studied in the future, with a focus on how health and safety standards are altered. More information about what works best can be gained by looking into how well different digital change tactics work in different types of places. Comparative studies across areas and cultures would also help clarify how different customers behave and come up with food business resilience strategies that can be used all over the world.

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Appendix

Survey to examine the shift in consumer behaviour in the restaurant industry in Europe during the COVID-19 pandemic
Demographic Questions
1. Kindly provide Gender information.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Female
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Male
2. State your age.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 18-23
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 24-28
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 29-34
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Above 35
Likert Measurement Scale
Change
3. The takeout or delivery options have led to changes in my preferences and habits of decision-making.
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neutral
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly agree

4. From my perspective there is a significant change in comfort level with time which leads to changes in my preferences and habits.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly agree

5. The health and safety measures taken by restaurants affect my buying decisions.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly agree

6. My buying behaviour has changed due to the pandemic crisis as I prefer online shopping more.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly agree

Measures

Attitude

7. The safety measures such as sanitization adopted by restaurants influence my buying perception due to the spread of Covid-19 pandemic crisis.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly agree

8. Trust in the offerings of the brand is the potential factor that influences my purchase intentions.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

- Agree

- Strongly agree

Subjective Norms

9. The opinion of my friends and families about safety measures of restaurants significantly influence my buying perceptions.

- Strongly disagree

- Disagree

- Neutral

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree
<p>10. The dining behaviour of others in my community contributes to influence my purchase intentions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree
<p>Perceived Behavioural control</p>
<p>11. Easy and convenience are the key aspects that influences my buying perception.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree
<p>12. My financial situation has a significant influence on my buying intentions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree
<p>Challenges</p>
<p>13. The traffic at restaurants leads to have negative impact on my buying perception leading to challenge of a decrease in sales of business.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree
<p>14. My changing needs and preferences in the consumption of food leading to the challenge of making changes in the offerings of restaurants.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree
<p>Strategies</p>
<p>15. I think that the ability of restaurants to offer customers flexible options for dining leads to a positive influence on their buying behaviour.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree
<p>16. I think that restaurants that are offering discounts and loyalty programs are significantly able to attract potential customers and influence their decisions.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree
<p>Consumer Buying Behaviour</p>
<p>17. The quality of product significantly influence my buying behaviour.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly agree
<p>18. Price of product influences my buying behaviour.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strongly disagree

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disagree
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Neutral
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Agree
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strongly agree