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ABSTRACT

This research study has discussed how people were affected by social media on online purchasing during the pandemic. The study has covered various areas of interest, including the key entities social media has to ensure consumers continue using it. Social media platforms, including Instagram, with the highest number of users in the study, Facebook, eBay, and Amazon, among others, have been categorized to provide all these services.

This study has been conducted among some residents in Ireland. It uses a qualitative research approach and incorporated surveys/questionnaires to collect data from a wider population. Also, other secondary sources of information, including articles, journals, Google Scholar, and blogs, have been used. Data collected from participants have been analyzed in the text.

The study concluded by addressing the consumers purchasing behaviors during the pandemic period. It has also indicated how social media influences people to make purchasing decisions.

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Today's businesses have been influenced much by social media. Many of the population are currently using social media through their smartphones. As depicted by many research sources, various regions across the globe have turned to social media as a form of advertisement and convincing consumers of the ability and capability of quality materials sold. In these regions, the significant way for consumers to have a continued engagement with their brands on social media before the onset of Covid-19 was through following them. The influencer version was considered the second and third popular ways recommended for sharing information and data regarding a brand and searching for a brand on these social media platforms. During the pandemic, many countries' rankings on purchasing products through social media changed significantly. For businesses to influence people to purchase their products, the quality of social media content and strong video content have emerged as the top reasons for engaging with several brands on social media. This has made many businesses hold strong their social media strategies not to lapse during the pandemic and post-pandemic period. Digital content is what brings consumers closer to the purchasing power of one's product, especially during the time of the pandemic (Amsari, and Sari, 2022). Many people in Ireland chose to purchase items of interest through social media due to the stringent restrictions set during the pandemic. This research will focus on how many people have been affected by social media as associated with online shopping especially during the pandemic period.

From the current world of experiences and encounters, we can conclude that the pandemic period made people spend most of their time in their houses and restricted movement (Amsari, and Sari, 2022). In many cases, moving directly to the store was hard to avoid contact with infected people. However, this is another way for many people to take the chance to purchase their products online. This allowed for delivery at their respective doors and ensured client satisfaction. There were the vulnerable groups that could be highly infected. Since Covid-

19 occurred unexpectedly in 2020, many people have been influenced to change their means of purchasing through social media. It was because they could not move out and make purchases for the daily necessities, including food materials. The pandemic indirectly impacted people's habits, making them transition from their old and traditional shopping moves to digitalized ones, including online retail stores (Amsari, and Sari, 2022). From further research, almost 53% of the respondents or consumers avoided physically moving into retail stores and congested regions. People have been avoiding moving out and maintaining social distance, hence making people choose to work from home and purchase items online.

A certain number of people in Ireland have been keeping a strategic distance from the mass and waiting until they have been vaccinated against the viral disease. The purchasing habits of consumers have been influenced and facilitated by online businesses. Social media, in this case, has played a critical role in ensuring that information or data regarding a product has been shared across a large population. Social media has therefore emerged as an important medium for presenting market products and collecting market reviews from customers (Naeem, 2021). Understanding how social media affects people's purchasing behaviors (Ali Taha et al., 2021) will be essential. Today, customers can access social media platforms at their convenience and make their purchases of products and services. People can use the internet anytime they want as it operates 24 hours a week. Their interaction with the internet has enabled them to connect socially with their brands of interest. The resultant business centers must comprehend the customer's characteristics, relationships, and needs to have an added advantage.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, consumers' perceptions of the online world have evolved to include a

more business-oriented frame of reference. Followers have become customers due to the growth of technology and the proliferation of online retailers. Additionally, the most significant impact that social media has had is on the communication patterns of customers and business owners. The effects of informational culture affect the purchasing decisions of consumers and their product assessments (Al-Dhuhli & Ismael, 2013). The use of social media opens up a new avenue for gathering product details through peer-to-peer interaction. Consumers are now able to purchase online thanks to the proliferation of communication and information technology that has made it possible for them to use the internet to access a variety of social media platforms and websites. This purchasing style goes by a few different names, including Online buying, shopping online, and internet shopping behaviour (Ali Taha et al., 2021). Online purchasing is another name for this type of purchasing. All of these terms allude to the same activity, which is the act of shopping for and acquiring goods or services through the utilisation of a variety of social networking platforms and online shopping platforms. "Social Media Sites" are another name for the web-based services that make up "Social Media," also abbreviated "SM." The term "social media" (SM) refers to an online network that facilitates communications and connections between various users.

Today's consumers are increasingly turning to technology, especially social media, as an efficient tool to aid them in executing their internet purchases. This procedure can be characterised as an electronic process that enables customers to conduct transactions with business owners and fulfil their purchasing requirements. In their research on social media advertising, Pookulangara and Koesler (2011) found that social media enables 25 per cent of all customers to publish links regarding goods & services data on their shopping sites to update other users about the purchasing process. According to another study by Kumar et al. (2020), who researched internet marketing, social marketing has played a crucial role in convincing customers to purchase online. He discovered that 70 % of customers are using social media to

obtain information that can be useful to them, 49 per cent of those customers decided to purchase a given product, and 60% of consumers want to discuss their information about the products with others online. Nevertheless, only 7% of customers complete the activities involved in the buying process (Kumar et al., 2020). The prevalence of online shopping is expanding in all regions, and many consumer demographics are being impacted due to this phenomenon (Ali, 2020). For example, the number of people who shop online is growing at a faster rate in Pakistan, Germany, Korea, and Russia at a rate of approximately 89%, 86% in North Europe and Asia, 78% in the United States, 81% in Southern and Latin America, and 53% overall (Africa and Pakistan). Making purchases online has made it possible for 875 million customers to bring the percentage of other online shoppers up to 40% in the past two years (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). This increase was brought about by specific recommendations posted on various social media about various products.

Social Media's Purchase Behavior

The purchase behavior has revealed more regarding the flavours of products and the possibilities of their purchase. Consumer participation in purchasing products through social media can be termed purchasing intention. Online purchasing occurs when a consumer uses the internet directly from the seller/vendor, and there is no intermediary medium through the purchases (Kumar et al., 2020). Consumer recognition in social media enables people/consumers to perform product correlation across various stores despite the store's location across the globe (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). The purchase behaviour has therefore been termed as the willingness of a buyer to make purchases from an internet site or a mall based on their desires and interests. All these are related to one's attitude, characteristics and perceptions. From this perspective, purchase behavior correlates with consumer behavior, which includes their awareness, attitudes, and perceptions of some products (Ali Taha et al., 2021). The previous reviews/research has indicated that the buyer will discover the products

they want, observe the insights that assess and evaluate a product, and give appropriate feedback. This implies that a customer will conduct their market research for the product they want to purchase since it is unpredictable how consumer behavior could change towards a product (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). Many social media platforms have shaped people's purchasing behavior in that some online shops offer different prices making consumers change how they perceive different products (Kumar et al., 2020).

Customers frequently decide whether or not to buy a product based on a variety of factors, such as whether or not the store provided better service, whether or not the products and services offered are worth the price, whether or not the products are long-lasting and meet consumer expectations, or whether or not the store offers incentives or promotions to the customer (Naeem, 2021). Sellers must constantly improve their products to attract and retain customers because many customers are concerned about their purchases' quality. Consequently, it may assist the business in enhancing its image and establishing a competitive advantage over rivals. Because people today are looking for things that will help them live a better life, all of these factors will affect how they make purchases.

Price

Price is the total amount of money a customer is willing to exchange for ownership of a product or service or the amount of money they are willing to pay for it. A product or service's price measures how much money is expected, required or given in instalments for trade. The objective worth indicates the aggregate sum customers should pay for an item, while the reference esteem means the sum buyers expect to pay for the item. Customers' buying decisions may be influenced by the channel's apparent cost (Naeem, 2021). In order to make the best financial decision, online shoppers typically seek price information from multiple retailers for a similar item (Ali, 2020). Price is the primary factor that generates pay and the market mix's most delicate component. Price is one of the most important factors a buyer considers when

making a purchase decision. In any case, the price can be controlled, and many businesses value this aspect highly. Companies can comprehend the essential characteristics of product attributes, such as brand and price, that influence consumer behaviour (Ali Taha et al., 2021; Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). Because it influences consumers' purchasing decisions when they purchase a product, price is an important social media variable (Hajli, 2014). Researchers discovered that price is more easily detectable than quality when used as a heuristic signal.

Convenience

The preference for non-store shopping options like social networking sites has been linked to convenience. When customers shop on social networking sites, convenience implies that they can do so with less effort and time. A part of shopping's overall convenience structure is the ability to save time and effort. Most customers attribute the availability and convenience of social media platforms to the fact that they can shop online from the convenience of their homes, saving time and effort anytime or night. It is common knowledge that convenience when shopping is a major factor in consumers' decisions to shop at home (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). The scientist distinguished five sorts of comfort for in-home shopping. It allows for impulse purchases or legitimately responding to an advertisement, reduces shopping time, is time-adjustable, does not cause disruptions, and does not require physical exertion like going to a traditional store (Hajli, 2014). Customers could access far-off stores and avoid driving to make purchases thanks to the social media platform. Several studies cited convenience as a major driver for developing social networking sites. The research also concludes that convenience positively correlates with online purchasing behaviour (Ali Taha et al., 2021). In addition, the researchers hypothesised that customers' perceptions of ease of use positively affect their willingness to shop online and at online retail stores. Convenience perceptions significantly impact consumers' willingness to support internet retail stores and make online purchases. Saving time and effort significantly impacts customers' online purchasing behaviour

because consumers derive utilitarian value from timely and efficient transactions (Ali, 2020). Online retailers must ensure that social media platform measurement is easy to understand and that there is as much customisation as possible (Hajli, 2014). According to previous research, online stores that encourage customers to use social media platforms should combine value-added and diversion data. Because they do not want to be controlled in the market and feel pressured or awkward when managing sales representatives, some customers use social media platforms to avoid up-close and personal communication with salespeople.

Product Variety

The product variety is a wide range of items that make it easier to compare and, as a result, make better decisions about what to buy. Product design and manufacturing aim to satisfy customers' perceived requirements. As a result, a wide range of products is created to satisfy various customers' requirements. The number or collection of different items within a single general category is what is meant to be referred to as variety. Products and services alike can benefit from variety. By providing more options, differentiated features and functions of products and services, opportunities for customisation, and even personalisation, the manufacturer will aim to gain additional benefits and increase consumer value. One of the primary reasons people shop online is the wide range of products available. Product variety is important to online shoppers for several reasons (Hajli, 2014). First, superior assortments can make their requirements more likely to be met, particularly if the item is likely out of stock at conventional retail establishments.

Second, customers would be able to purchase higher-quality items if there was a larger selection and a more refined search engine, as having access to more information leads to more rational buying decisions and a higher level of fulfilment. In addition to the number of different products, repetition frequency, presentation association, and property contrasts impact consumers' perceptions of assortment. The study found that online shoppers are more satisfied

with the variety of products available when they shop online than non-shoppers. Most of the time, customers would rather have more choices (Hajli, 2014). It is acknowledged that social media platforms have a significant positive practical impact through a variety of product contributions as well as unique product contributions (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). According to the researchers, online consumers have a more certain assessment of the variety of products available through social media than non-online consumers. As a result, it was proposed that there is a significant connection between the variety of products and the purchasing habits of social media users. Most customers are motivated by the variety of social media options sellers and brands offer. Another important study found that when products were organized into more subcategories in the choice menu, customers saw that social media sites offered a larger selection of products and had a better shopping experience, which made them more likely to buy from social media sites (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). According to the findings of the studies, online sellers who offer a wide range of product categories will typically make more money for online customers.

During Covid -19 Pandemic

According to a survey of over 3,700 customers in nine developing and growing economies, the COVID-19 outbreak has irrevocably altered customers' behaviours in internet shopping (Ali, 2020). The study, which was given the title COVID-19 and Ecommerce, investigated how the outbreak has altered how customers interact with e-commerce and digital technologies (Ali, 2020). It included countries such as China, Brazil, Germany, Italy, South Africa, the Russian Federation, Sweden, and Syria. As a result of the outbreak, more than half of the people who participated in the poll now purchase online more regularly and depend on the web for a greater variety of information, including news, wellness, and digital content. According to the poll, customers in emerging markets have made the best transition to internet shopping (Ansari and Sari, 2022). The COVID-19 outbreak has hastened the transition toward

a more digitised world. The adjustments we make will have lasting repercussions when the industry of the globe starts to recover. As the globe proceeds from responding to the epidemic to recovering from it, the rapid growth of online purchasing around the world highlights how urgent it is to ensure that all nations can take advantage of the opportunities presented by digitisation.

In the course of the epidemic, people's spending patterns in the U. S. have seen substantial shifts, with a higher number of internet users purchasing critical things, including foods and drinks, beauty, and medications online. The rise in the number of individuals shopping online during COVID-19 varied greatly from country to country, with Turkey and China showing the greatest growth, while Germany and Switzerland showed the least significant growth because a greater number of people were already engaged in shopping online (Koch et al., 2020). Women and those with tertiary educations made significantly more online purchases than other demographic groups. Compared to young folks, those between the ages of 26 and 45 indicated a more significant increase. In Brazil, the most disadvantaged people in society and women saw the greatest rise in the incidence.

Businesses that plan for the post-COVID-19 age by making social media a central tenet of their operational strategies will thrive in the new environment. There is a great environment for businesses still more accustomed to traditional buying methods, such as those in the medicines and fast-moving consumer products sectors (Naeem, 2021). In the society that will exist after COVID-19, the unprecedented rise of e-commerce will shake up the foundations of both domestic and international retail stores (González-Padilla and Tortolero-Blanco, 2020). Because of this, governments must adopt specific policies to support the adoption of e-commerce amongst small and medium enterprises, build skilled talent pools, and encourage overseas buyers.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter will provide a detailed analysis of the data collection methods throughout the study. It will incorporate various sections, including surveys and questionnaires. To accomplish its major research goals, this research depended on a qualitative methodology and secondary sources of information. Qualitative data can supplement the study data analysis and findings if you use that information.

Data Collection Methods

Throughout the research, the following essential processes were utilised. Following the definitions provided in the part that came before this one, the most common application involved the utilisation of secondary data collections that focused on qualitative data.

Secondary Data

It has been determined that a review is necessary to collect data from various secondary data. Paperwork and documents of projects originating from enterprises are included. Other sources of information besides the secondary sources obtained from articles published about the business include guidelines, news stories, and some managerial papers from the institutions included in the desk study. This was in addition to the secondary information obtained from published articles. When assessing the generated information, reputable journals and articles were looked at, in addition to various articles published in magazines or seminars and newsletters, papers, blogs, and other information sources. In order to carry out the assessment, the data acquired from recent supporting documents, such as rules and guidelines, regulations, studies, and data; as well as guidelines and techniques; and other sites; was considered.

Respondents of the Study

There was a variety of respondents based on the study I carried out. They were then identified through their marital statuses, education levels, employment statuses, and gender.

Data Sources

The primary data was collected from the surveys conducted through Google forms. This evaluation gave an oversight of the Ireland population, and it comprised various respondents. They helped gather the expected feedback regarding how social media impacted online

purchasing during the pandemic. This study's highest number of participants were between 25 and 37 years, and the least were aged 45 years and above.

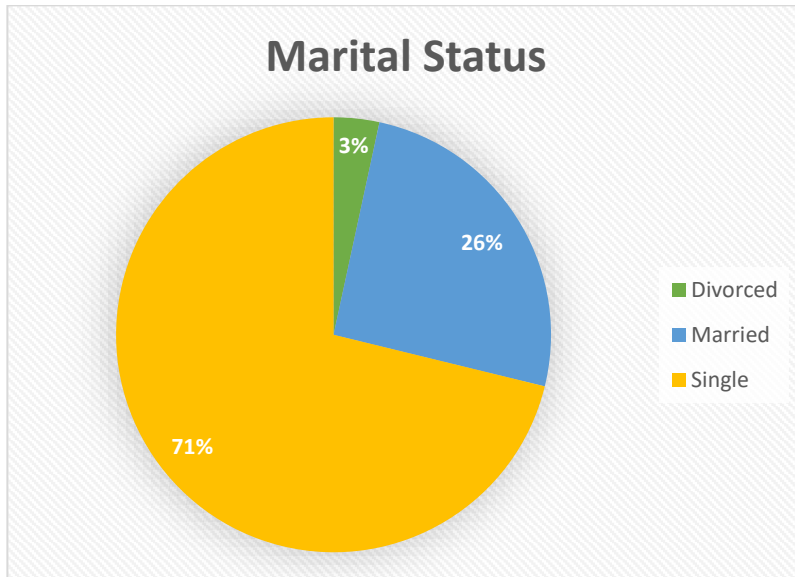


Figure 1: Marital statuses of respondents

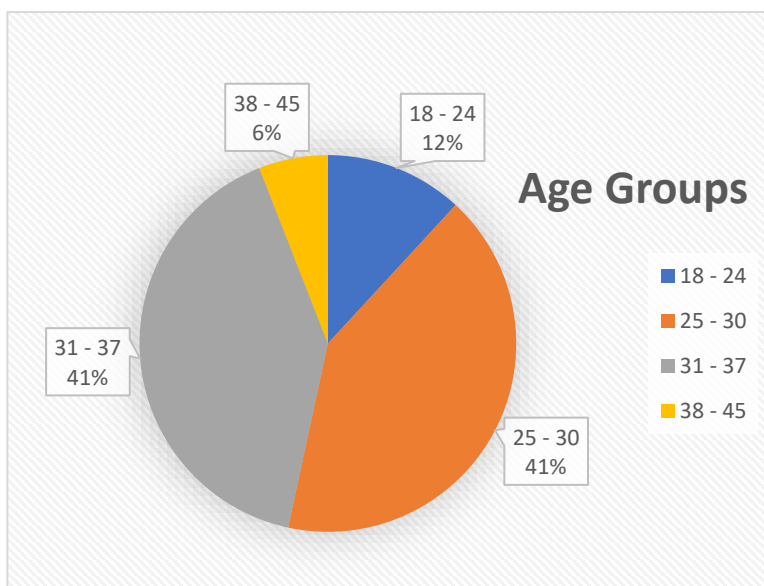


Figure 2: Age groups

From the survey conducted, based on marital statuses, the single population was

estimated to be 71.8%, while the divorced carried the smallest number. Consumer behavior has been pushed to the young population, and their accessibility to social media has been high, as per the statistics during the pandemic (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). The study revealed that the pandemic changed the perception and attitudes of consumers about their purchasing power. The married population would prefer taking themselves to the stores during the pandemic and had a 24.8% of the total. This could have been facilitated by the closure of many institutions, enabling young adults to spend most of their time on social media. The survey has indicated that the single population was highly impacted by social media and thus making them purchase goods and services online.

The information brought forth by the survey also looked into the social media platforms that influenced people to purchase online. This could be perceived to change customers' purchasing behavior. From 118 responses, Instagram and YouTube had the most followers. These sites have facilitated the marketing of products worldwide and made companies and individual businesses develop. Many have used Instagram to market talents, products and services in Ireland. Many have indicated that social media influences the purchasing power of many consumers based on its popularity and the nature of customers and company reactions. When one decides to use Facebook, for instance, they could state that the response could take time and, to some point, there needed to be better delivery of services. Instagram sellers have clear language for their consumers, enabling people to access their products. The ability to attract a broad market in Ireland made many people consider purchasing online compared than moving into the stores. This resulted from increased rates of virus spreading and the government's restriction on physical movements. This enabled Instagram to be the top influencer among many consumers.

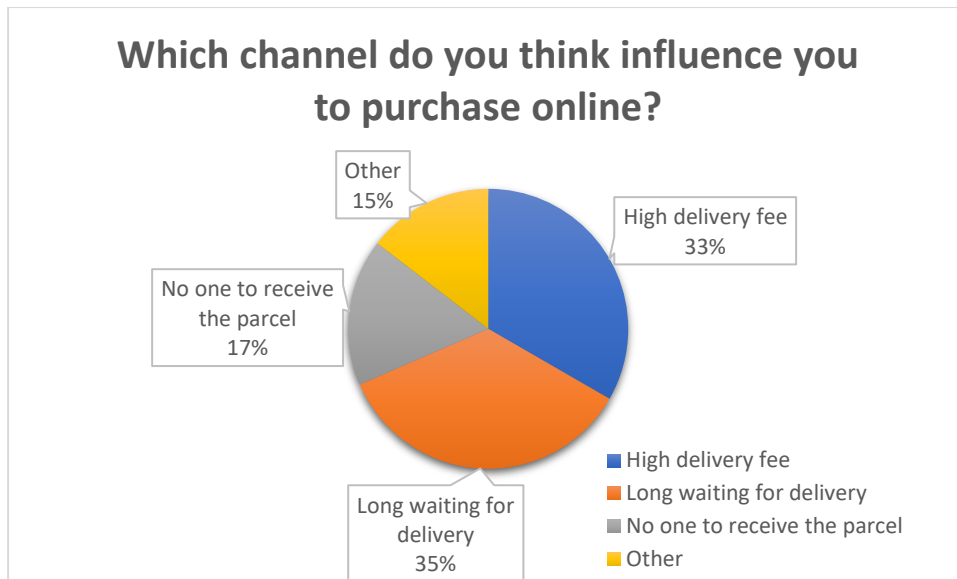


Figure 3: Channels Influencing Online Purchase

Others indicated that going to the stores was handier and preferred door-to-door delivery from various companies. In other cases, they were sent as parcels and thus forced to move out to the pick-up stations. The participants of this study have indicated their concern over the products they ordered online (Ali, 2020). Much of their interest revolved around purchasing electronic gadgets compared to any other. Many companies have been offering the best quality electronic devices, making them trust their products. The beauty industry became the second to acquire many clients during the pandemic. It could be worrying how the beauty and make-up industry grew over this period. This is because of continued movement restrictions by the government and health protocols. The laws could not allow physical movement unless they were vaccinated.

Women were impacted by social media, which made them place orders at their convenience. The drinks company also showed an advanced approach and perspective of the consumers. Many recreational places were closed to ensure people do not crowd and thus minimize the spread of the virus. Purchasing the drinks of interest impacted controlling the

spread and ensuring the safety of many. Every week, a few people place orders for grocery items. Some have indicated that they used to go for them to the nearest markets. This was enabled by using protective gear such as wearing face masks. This has made many people adopt the traditional way of purchasing behaviors. Besides, the old population could be assisted by their children on how to make orders online and have them delivered to their doorstep. Many others intended to purchase items of their interest. Furniture lovers could also purchase online instead of moving into the stores.

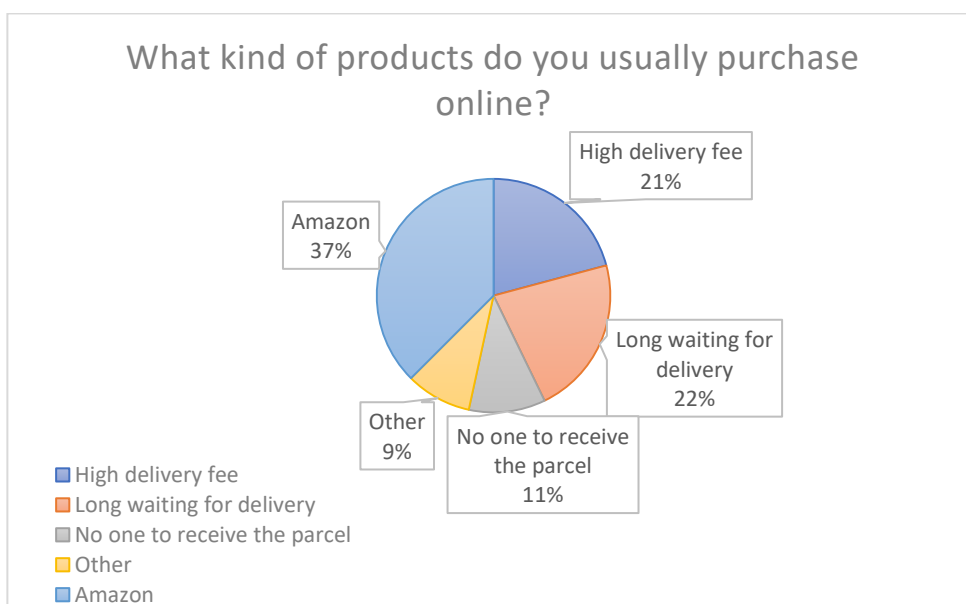


Figure 4: Products Purchased Online

In the Irish population, the study showed that many people shopped once every week, 82.1%. 12% purchased between 2-3 times a week. This shows their consistency in acquiring goods and services online. A very small percentage purchased more frequently, about seven times a week. This information reveals that many people do not purchase goods through social media. However, a significantly good number of people used social media during the pandemic to purchase goods. The report indicates that those that occupied the largest percentage of purchasing products once a week had the perception that going to the stores secured chances

of getting the original commodities and avoiding packaging mistakes that could occur and interfere with quantity. Other 31% indicated that they struggled to purchase during the pandemic, and 69% have not been struggling to purchase.

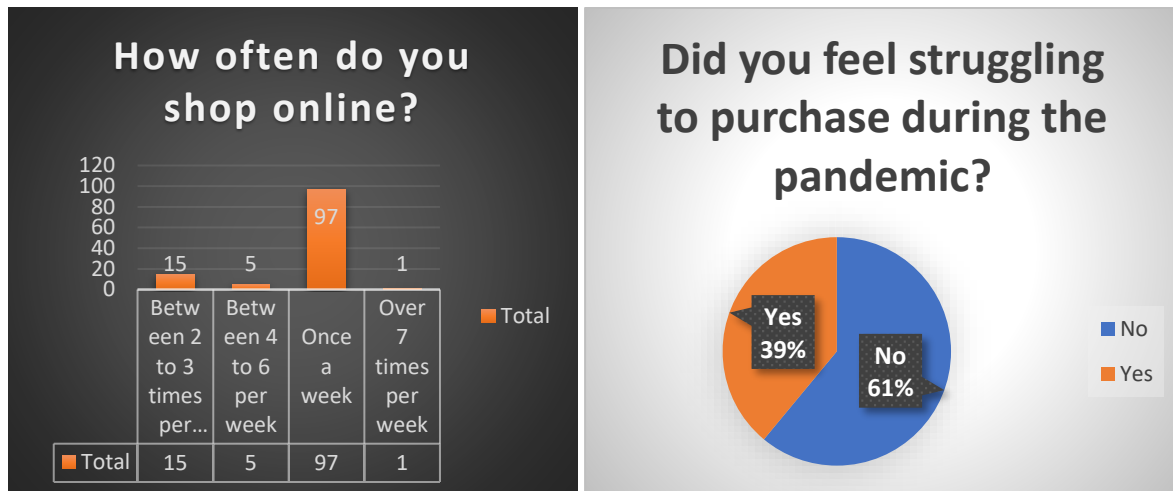


Figure 5: Frequency and struggling charts

The respondents were asked why they could not consider purchasing online. Some indicated that purchasing online was accompanied by a high delivery fee. These amounted to 46.6% of the total respondents, and 49.8% said there were many delays in the delivery processes, making people wait for a long time. Purchasing online could mean that products were to be delivered on time and have a decreased fee. However, this was a different case for the respondents. Others indicated they needed someone to receive the products after placing an order. Their attitudes and perceptions changed drastically because some did not trust the delivery processes hence choosing to visit the stores physically.



Figure 6: Online Channels Used & Customer interests

The online channels used most included Amazon Inc., a food delivery company, while the least used were Wish and eBay. From this data, many preferred moving to the stores and picking for themselves. It has been indicated that many would continue purchasing online even after the pandemic. About 78% of the participants are employed, which increased the

probability of many people continuing to purchase goods through social media as they were full-time employees. The study incorporated people of different education levels in Ireland, which effectively understood the different perspectives of various people and how social media influenced their purchasing behaviors. Many participants emerged from the third level of education, followed by the master's level. If asked, many indicated that they feel comfortable and secure while purchasing goods from online applications.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS/FINDINGS

The study incorporated qualitative research methods. The use of questionnaires through Google Forms enabled to reach a wider population regarding their perceptions and purchasing behaviors. From the study, generally, many people have been influenced by social media in purchasing products online. It was found that many people had a negative perception towards online purchasing despite the underlying conditions of the pandemic. It could be easy to notice that people are satisfied with the various online services social media platforms provide. From the lockdown and restricted movements, we can account that the respondents were limited from also accessing the stores physically. They were to place orders and wait for deliveries. The employed people were the most. Their perception revolved around the effectiveness of online shopping and purchasing power. We expect them to have the ability to purchase commodities from their areas of convenience. However, there was a challenging aspect that was encountered. For instance, the delivery fee was very high, making even those from low-income families from placing orders online. It was found that 46.6% of the respondents were worried about the hiked fee.

Also, 49.2% claimed that there were delays experienced upon delivery. They could wait for a long before their orders were handed over. Many organizations could have long chains or procedures for their parcel deliveries. This could be a significant reason why some people preferred moving to the stores and getting their products. Ideologically, we expect the employed to have all means ready in case one fails. Some respondents stated that social media had built their perceptions positively, given that advanced technology enables people to communicate through and perform other important entities, especially in marketing. There is a need to understand why companies such as Amazon and eBay provide online services. This is because they capture a large market and ensure they reach their projected customers.

It was found that many of the respondents were struggling to purchase during the pandemic. This could have emerged due to the fear of ordering items and failing to have them delivered. Also, the economic crisis facilitated by the pandemic could have made them struggle. From this reasoning, many people had already lost their job positions, forcing them to stay home. Others indicated they were not struggling since social media made ways very easy since some were working online and from home. This enabled them to have trust in all the processes directed to them. It was also found that education levels contributed to the development of this research. Those in secondary school level were 9.4%. This is from their knowledge that they understood the pandemic and social media platforms, making them eligible for the study.

Also, at their age, it is where they are active in browsing and at the same time fashioning experience is high. They would want to acquire anything from the company platforms. The third level comprised 60.7% of the total responses. Many, in this case, were university undergraduates and graduates from colleges. From their perspective, social media has enhanced their attitudes and purchasing power online. They indicated that the few challenges they encounter are impulse buying, which also benefits the companies. Very few people were found to shop online over seven times a week, while the largest number amounting to 82.1%, purchased once per week. The reason for this could be the delivery delays, among other personal attributes. Thirty-seven respondents indicated that they felt influenced by social media in purchasing online during the pandemic. Since they would spend most of their time online and on their phones/laptops, they could be influenced by the media adverts that pop up on the screen with amazing offers. Others could state that their daily routine enabled them to purchase fast foods through social media.

However, 11.7% (13 out of 118) of the respondents were less likely to be influenced by social media to make purchases online. Since 99.1% of the respondents wanted to participate in the research study, it was easy to understand the Irish population about social media usage

and the negative perceptions they have of making such online purchases. Also, it was indicated and found that all the respondents were okay with online and physical purchases. The safety and comfort of purchasing online were referenced from the participant's interests. Many have believed that purchasing online could lead to personal information leakage to hackers, thus promoting cybercrimes. The various ads on the screen have been considered dangerous when clicked on, and information is fed into them. Consumers' attitude toward this has made them afraid of purchasing online unless the site is trusted, such as Instagram and Amazon. Out of 118 responses, 82 participants said that the pandemic pushed them to purchase more online, while 0.8% were not. Those who were pushed said they could only purchase beauty models and electronics. Electronic gadgets have been said to be commonly and highly sold online. This is because many companies have been giving out giveaway promotions. From this perspective, people have been acquiring quality products from their favorite sites. Instagram users are many compared to that Facebook.

Also, I looked at the demographics of the people who filled out the survey and gave them a choice between two different genders (female and male). For the aim of our study, I gathered information on the ages of those who took part in online purchasing. On the form, I included a question as a question-answer section, and participants were instructed to put in their ages there (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019b). As can be seen, most of them are 25 years old, and the smallest percentage is between 45 and above. Therefore, it is safe to state that the majority of respondents in this Google form are people in their younger years as customers. From the secondary data collection methods, the information that constitutes the secondary data in this instance has been compiled by parties besides the user. This source of information offers a perspective on the current state technique research field that uses the most recent technological advancements.

Additionally, it results in a research problem that the scholar will need to fill in the near

or far future. Secondary information may consist of either internal or external data sources, and they may cover various facets of the topic matter. Throughout my investigation, I came across several online resources, such as Google Scholar, journals, articles, blogs, and magazines, which I used to enhance the information I gathered in the literature review.

I also wanted to find out how important people feel it is for a company to have a following on social media. I gave people two choices (No and Yes), and they were required to select from among these two choices. It is crucial to note that more than 70% of the total participants stated that it is essential for them for a business to have a following on social media. This is a fact that should be emphasised. The individuals on the left gave a negative response. A sizeable proportion of customers believe that it is essential for a company to maintain a presence on various social media platforms. The existence of the company keeps a client motivated to purchase their stuff by being visible on the screens of the consumer either twice or thrice a day; the presence of the company maintains a customer motivated to buy their product. Therefore, the effort put forward by brands on social media is significant.

Limitations

The study incorporated some limitations to achieving its staged goals and objectives. The study was limited to only the people purchasing and did not consider the ideas of business owners and how they were impacted by the use of technology in purchasing. Also, the results of the study cannot be generalized with respect to all online shoppers since a small sample size and geographical location was incorporated in the data collection. Regarding future studies, they could apply extensive statistical techniques to help in improving the finding's conclusiveness as indicated in the study. There was limited data on how people perceived online purchasing even during the post-pandemic period. The study would recommend on several risk-reducing strategies that will have to be developed by online retailers. Consumers need to be educated on social media shopping and motivate other shoppers. This is as a result

of more security and privacy interventions that need to be implemented.

CONCLUSION

This study aimed to investigate the impact social media has had on consumers' purchasing decisions. It also stated whether people would continue to use online purchasing even after the pandemic (Post-Covid-19). At the end of the study, the data demonstrated that people's purchasing behaviour in the social media environment is strongly influenced by people's ability to easily obtain information about the product and their level of privacy. The research also found that purchase procedures involve a greater trust in social media outlets and greater reliability and consistency. Individuals' top choices for social networking websites included Facebook, Instagram, E-Bay and Amazon, and Facebook was the least popular option.

Furthermore, the study found that using social media while shopping enabled faster product access, reduced the stress of face-to-face negotiating, enhanced consumer involvement with "students," and improved communication between the seller and the buyer. Using social networking sites to make purchasing decisions can provide several issues, including distractions from hacker attacks, cyberbullying, diminished face-to-face interaction, and publishing offensive items. In the process of analysing the role that social media plays in the purchasing decisions of consumers, it was found that out of all of the customers that use social networks, 0.8 per cent will not use it to make purchasing decisions, while 5.9 per cent use it to choose which products to purchase after the pandemic. The increased use of social media technologies has led to increased online purchasing in Ireland. Despite the few people who perceive it negatively regarding delays and increased delivery fees, it has enabled companies to perfect their selling strategies. People should be willing to engage in these emerging technologies and get their needed products. The pandemic has enhanced experiences on social media and its influence on purchasing online. Online purchasing is expected to expand its encroachment to the wide population because of increased use of technological devices.

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Appendices

Appendix 1

Electronic consent

Clicking on the "agree" button below indicates that:

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

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

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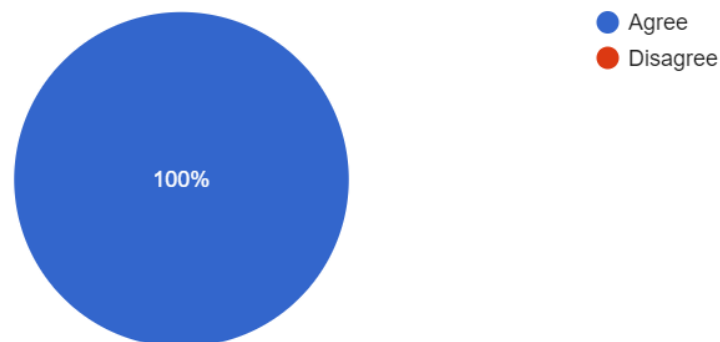


Figure 7: Survey – Term of Consent

Appendix 2

- Gender
- Age
- Education Grade
- Marital Status
- Employment Status
- How often do you shop online?
- Did you feel struggling to purchase during the pandemic?
- Did you feel influenced by social media to purchase online during the pandemic?
- Do you feel safe and comfortable purchasing online?

- What kind of products do you usually purchase online?
- What online channels do you often use?
- Which one describe you the most?
- Which channels do you think influence you to purchase online?
- Would you say that the pandemic pushed people to purchase more online?
- Do you consider yourself purchasing more online because of the pandemic?
- Why wouldn't you consider to purchase online?
- Would you keep purchasing online after pandemic?

Appendix 3

Figure 8: Ethical Form A

Form A: Application for Ethical Approval	
Undergraduate/Taught Postgraduate Research	
This form should be submitted to the module leader for the relevant initial proposal and/or the relevant supervisor if the proposal has already been accepted. Please save this file as STUDENT NUMBER_AEA_FormA.docx	
Title of Project	Final Project 2
Name of Learner	Marcos Silva
Student Number	51703858
Name of Supervisor/Tutor	Lucas Cardoso // Daniel O'sullivan

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

Item	Question	Yes	No	NA
1	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
2	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3	Will you obtain written consent for participation (through a signed or 'ticked' consent form)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
4	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed.	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
6	Will you give participants the option of not answering any question they do not want to answer?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
7	Will you ensure that participant data will be treated with full confidentiality and anonymity and, if published, will not be identifiable as any individual or group?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
8	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation (i.e., give them a brief explanation of the study)?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
9	If your study involves people between 16 and 18 years, will you ensure that passive consent is obtained from parents/guardians, with active consent obtained from both the child and their school/organisation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
10	If your study involves people less than 16 years, will you ensure that <u>active</u> consent is obtained from parents/guardians <u>and</u> that a parent/guardian or their nominee (such as a teacher) will be present throughout the data collection period?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
11	If your study requires evaluation by an ethics committee/board at an external agency, will you wait until you have approval from both the Independent College Dublin and the external ethics committee before starting data collection.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Item	Question	Yes	No	NA
12	If you are in a position of authority over your participants (for example, if you are their instructor/tutor/manager/examiner etc.) will you inform participants in writing that their grades and/or evaluation will be in no way affected by their participation (or lack thereof) in your research?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
13	If you are in a position of authority over your participants (for example, if you are their instructor/tutor/manager/examiner etc.), does your study involve asking participants about their academic or professional achievements, motivations, abilities or philosophies? (please note that this does not apply to QA1 or QA3 forms, or questionnaires limited to market research, that do not require ethical approval from the IREC)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
14	Will your project involve deliberately misleading participants in any way?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
15	Is there any realistic risk of any participants experiencing either physical or psychological distress or discomfort?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
16	Does your project involve work with animals?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
17	Do you plan to give individual feedback to participants regarding their scores on any task or scale?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
18	Does your study examine any sensitive topics (such as, but not limited to, religion, sexuality, alcohol, crime, drugs, mental health, physical health, etc.)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
19	Is your study designed to change the mental state of participants in any negative way (such as inducing aggression, frustration, etc?)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
20	Does your study involve an external agency (e.g. for recruitment)?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
21	Do your participants fall into any of the following special groups? <i>(except where one or more individuals with such characteristics may naturally occur within a general population, such as a sample of students)</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	
		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

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

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

I consider that this project has no significant ethical implications to be brought before the relevant Research & Ethics Committee. I have read and understood the specific guidelines for completion of Ethics Application Forms. I am familiar with the codes of professional ethics relevant to my discipline (and have discussed them with my supervisor).	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Name of Learner	Marcos Silva
Student Number	51703858
Date	09/11/2022
I have discussed this project with the learner in question, and I agree that it has no significant ethical implications to be brought before the Research & Ethics Committee.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Name of Supervisor/Lecturer	Lucas Cardoso // Daniel O'sullivan
Date	09/11/2022