

# TITLE OF THE PROJECT

## ANALYSIS OF THE CHANGE IN CONSUMER BUYING BEHAVIOUR FOR ONLINE SHOPPING BEFORE AND AFTER COVID

*Project Report submitted in partial fulfilment for the  
award of the degree of  
BBA*

*Submitted by*

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IN  
BRANCH OF STUDY  
SCHOOL OF BUSINESS

Under the Supervision of  
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## **SCHOOL OF BUSINESS**

### **BONAFIDE CERTIFICATE**

**Certified that this project report “Analysis of the change in Consumer Buying Behaviour for online shopping before and after Covid” is the work of “ Harshit Srivastava” who carried out the project work under my supervision.**

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## Approval Sheet

This thesis/dissertation/report entitled (Analysis of the change in Consumer Buying Behaviour for online shopping before and after Covid) by ( Harshit Srivastava) is approved for the degree of BBA (General)

Examiners

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**Place:**\_\_\_\_\_

# Statement of Project Report Preparation

1. Thesis title: Analysis of the change in Consumer Buying Behaviour for online shopping before and after Covid.
2. Degree for which the report is submitted: BBA (General)
3. Project Supervisor was referred to for preparing the report.
4. Specifications regarding thesis format have been closely followed.
5. The contents of the thesis have been organized based on the guidelines.
6. The report has been prepared without resorting to plagiarism.
7. All sources used have been cited appropriately.
8. The report has not been submitted elsewhere for a degree.

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## **Abstract:**

With the prevalence of the COVID 19 pandemic and the growing importance of e-commerce, research on online consumer behaviour is especially important. The purpose of this study was to develop a methodological approach to assess the relationships and impacts of factors that drive online consumer purchasing behaviour in the context of the COVID 19 pandemic. The survey method was based on the Cattell survey transformation and implementation of correlation analysis. This survey used a survey method to determine the predisposition to online consumer behaviour when making a purchase decision. The survey was conducted on online shoppers from the top 10 countries in terms of e-commerce market growth. Scientific papers are methodological toolkits proposed to assess the buying behaviour of online consumers, identifying the most influential factors in buying behaviour, assessing the dynamics of activity during the study period, and key. Identifying trends and their actions. The study found that changes in online consumer purchasing behaviour are typical of the COVID 19 pandemic. The impact of consumer awareness and experience is increasing. Online consumers are becoming more sophisticated, which influences the activity of their purchasing behaviour. This study showed changes in the impact of online consumer purchasing behavioural factors during a pandemic. It has been established that the speed of consumer decision-making when purchasing goods and services on the Internet is becoming more important.

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## **Introduction**

### **1.1. Background**

The retail industry significantly plays a major role in determining and developing different countries' gross domestic product (GDP). As an industry, retail is considered as a crucial employing source . The retail industry connects the customers with their needs and wants . Since the 1930s, marketers attempt to understand customer purchasing behaviour (Waguespack & Hyman, 1993) to predict the customers' actions and future purchases . However, during the last few decades, the retail industry has undergone great development. Different channels were created that made the customers act differently. In the 21<sup>st</sup> century, new options for buying and shopping rather than the brick-and-mortar stores were developed and been available for the customers . A noticeable cultural shift was witnessed due to the rapid technological development; hence, the retailing sector experienced more development that provided new retailing channels, rapid growth as e-commerce .

### **1.2. Problem Sment**

The retail sector has rapidly developed over the past years

as the different retailers invest more efforts and resources to provide a seamless experience through multiple channels. The developments in the retail sector led to significant changes in customer behaviour and evident transition of the customer activities toward the online channels. Correspondingly, the pandemic of Covid-19 have come without any previous notice and dictated new regulation that has hindered the social interaction. These hindrances led to numerous consequences on both online and physical channels. On the first hand, the pandemic has increased the demand on the online channels that coincide with the transition of retailing, which could positively impact the retailing sector. On the other hand, the pandemic might have led to demand reduction on the physical channels, which can negatively impact the retailers.

Nevertheless, the selection between the different channels for making purchases is driven by customer behaviour. Due to the pandemic's restriction, it's highly expected that the buying behaviour has changed. More specifically, here comes the focus of this paper, which is aiming to discover the role of Covid-19 on the change of the customers buying behaviour. However, today, there is a scarcity in scientific literature concerned with the change of customer buying

behaviour in line with Covid-19. The scarcity in the current literature has assisted the researchers in identifying the gap of this study and contributed to pulling the trigger to conduct this research.

### **1.3. Research Purpose**

This study is concerned with deepening the knowledge about change in customer buying behaviour brought by Covid-19 on the retailing sector. The focus of this study is limited to the Swedish millennials' buying behaviour for fashion products with respect to the selection between online and offline stores. More precisely, this study aims to identify and test new behavioural patterns that would influence the Swedish residents in selecting between online and offline stores for shopping and buying fashion products. This study is conducted from the customers' side via having focus groups and a web-based survey.

In light of the current theories in customer buying behaviour, this study will dig deep into the Swedish millennials' buying behaviour to explore and examine the role of Covid-19 in influencing the selection process between online and offline stores. However, the expected fruitful outcome from this study is to deliver a set of new behavioural patterns that

would expand the theoretical knowledge in regard to the current customer buying behaviour.

#### **1.4.Scope and Delimitation**

This paper focuses on the change in customer buying behaviour during the era of the pandemic of Covid-19. The scope of this study is limited to the millennials' buying behaviour in Sweden; however, this study will not be observing any other customer segments rather than the millennials in Sweden. Furthermore, to get a higher sufficient data, the study has limited the data collection on the Swedish millennials living in Sweden before and after the pandemic of Covid-19. More precisely, the data collection has been limited to those living in Sweden before the outbreak of Covid-19.

Moreover, the scope of this study is limited to fashion retailing only, where these retailers are concerned with products such as clothes, footwears, and accessories. Other products such as cosmetics and care products are excluded in this study. Additionally, other kinds of retailers out of the fashion industry are also excluded from this study.

#### **1.5. Contribution**

This paper is of an exploratory and constructive nature. The

paper is aiming to provide a deeper understanding of the change of customer buying behaviour during the pandemic of Covid-19.

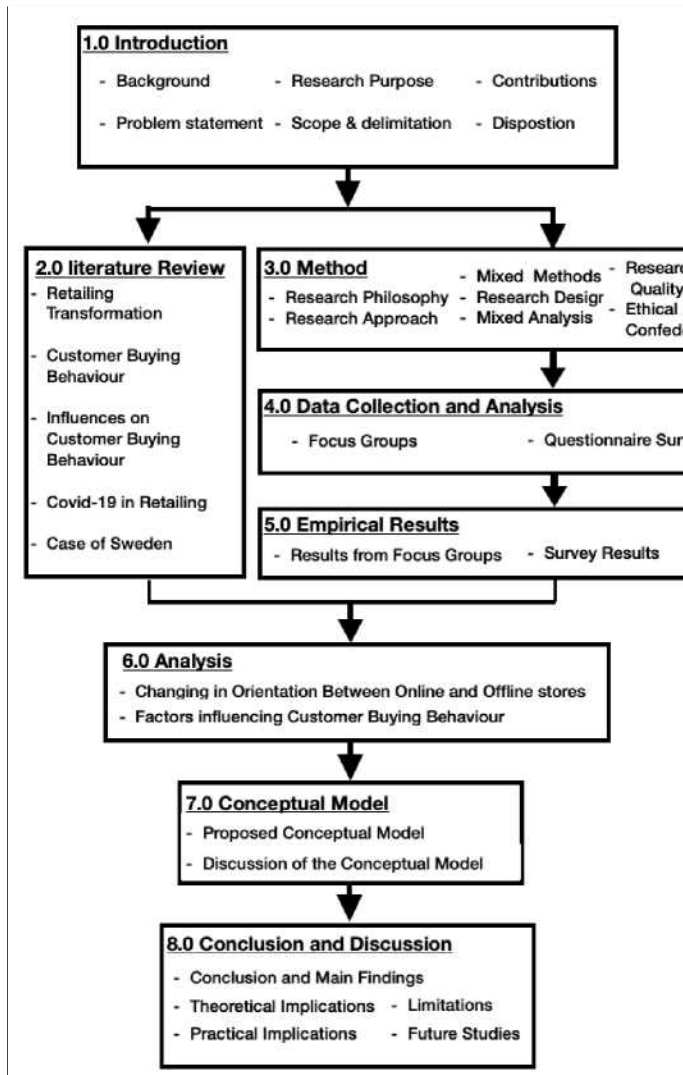
On the first hand, this paper is expected to deliver a set of new behavioural patterns that would expand the theoretical knowledge concerning the current customer buying behaviour. On the other hand, the findings of this paper are expected to serve organisations in the fashion retailing sector in order to deeply understand the change of the customer buying behaviour during Covid-19, which will assist the retailing organisations in exploiting the current and future opportunities as a response of the change in the customer behaviour.

## **1.6. Disposition**

This section provides an overview of this paper. Figure 1 below illustrates the disposition of the chapters of this paper. This paper consists of eight chapters. Chapter 1, provides a background concerned with the phenomenon under study; this chapter addresses the research gap, as its highlight the purpose of the study. Chapter 2, contains theories and literature studies of the previous scientific papers. Chapter 3, the Method chapter, is concerned with the research

philosophy, research approach, research design, research quality, and research ethics. Chapter 4, this chapter is concerned with the data collection methods about the planning, sample selection, and the execution of the two empirical methods. Chapter 5, is concerned with the analysed results generated from both the focus group and the survey. Chapter 6, is concerned with analysing the empirical results in line with the previous literature. Chapter 7, is concerned with the proposed conceptual model and the discussion of the concept. Chapter 8, is concerned with the conclusion of this paper, in this chapter the purpose of the study is answered, as the implications of the study are highlighted.





**Figure 1: Illustration of the disposition of this paper**

## **2- Literature Review:**

### **2.1 Retailing Transformation**

The expansion and growth of the internet are leading the retailing sector to more developed channels and rapid growth as e-commerce and digital marketing . The transformation in the retailing sector and the transitions that happened over the last decade provided the customer with more features and power in the market (Lombart, et al., 2020; Juaneda-Ayensa, . The several options that appeared in the market created an unstable situation which led to different results and implications and more complexity in the customer attitude and the retailers' performances.

On the first hand, massive transfer toward the digital market and e-commerce encouraged customers to shift from brick-and-mortar stores. On the other hand, several brick-and-mortar stores shut down, and some other retailers shifted to e-commerce due to the higher demand and the rapid growth of the e-commerce market. Therefore, a high level of competition and high variety and assortments exist in the e-commerce market, differentiating it from the local and brick-and-mortar stores .

However, offline retailers are attempting to interact with

different customers by entering the e-commerce world to attract and reach a broader range of customers . Wherefore, the customer behaviour and shopping habits are going with the flow and changing accordingly. Customers and consumers utilize digital channels through devices to compare different articles and products by different retailers .

## **2.2 Customer Buying Behaviour**

***“Consumer behaviour is the mental, emotional and physical activities that people engage in when selecting, purchasing, using and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy needs and desires ”.***

Customer buying behaviour term mainly focuses on the buying activities of the customers before and during purchasing, which covers the process of product selecting and buying. Customer behaviour is a significant factor in the retailing industry to predict the customers’ actions and future purchases. It is crucial to understand the psychological purchasing part of the customers during the purchasing process to clarify their behaviours. The customer purchasing process differs and can be buying or shopping. Buying is when the customer has previous knowledge of the

required product, targeted it, and purchased it directly for a need. While shopping is the term that refers to the enjoyment and desire driven by looking for a product that the customer does not have a need .

However, customers also differ in their personalities and attitudes, as well as their trust. Online retailing channels and brick-and-mortar stores have different experiences to the customer . Hence, the future customer behaviour changes and adjust accordingly to the present customer shopping experience.

### **2.3.Influences on Customer Behaviour**

Customers are a significant factor for the continuation of any business, Azad, et al., (2013) stated the impact of customer behaviour on business planning and efficiency in different areas and scopes. Understanding the customer personality and its buying behaviour is crucial for all businesses to influence the customers' performance and planning phases. Customer behaviour can be influenced by different factors that were categorized by Wadera & Sharma (2018) into internal and external influences. The factors can affect the purchasing process periodically in three different stages pre, during, post the purchasing process.

### **2.3.1 Internal Influences**

The internal influences differ from one customer to another, affecting the buying process and the customer behaviour. These influences caused by different dimensions that refer to the customers, i.e. culture, personal aspects, and customer loyalty (Wadera & Sharma, 2018; Vebrova, 2016; Hoyer & Krohmer, 2020).

#### **Culture**

Culture is inherited from one generation to another; each generation adds, change, and save some of this transmitted culture (Nayeem, 2012). It appears in human actions and behaviour, and it affects the human's decisions and features. People from the same culture share many values, means, and similarities (Tsoukatos & Rand, 2007). All these cultural factors named as powerful influences on customers behaviour and decision making. Therefore, businesses always attempt to learn more about their customers and the different intercultural actors in the market to increase the awareness and the knowledge internally for meeting and exceeding the customer expectation (Ghazali,, 2017). Lee and Kacen (2008) asserted the influence of the cultural aspects on customer behaviour, attitude, and purchasing

activities.

## **Personal factors**

Generally, humans act upon their personalities and personal characteristics that were developed, changed, and affected through lifetime and years (Domie, 2013). The globalization in the current century led to multicultural mixing that developed several characteristics and gave birth to new features. Thus, the global multicultural human personality have been established (Bird & Stevens, 2003). The complexity of the marketing process increased for the specialists in targeting and predicting their customers' actions and behaviours (Domie, 2013).

Many researchers have employed these characteristics, i.e. age and financial situation, and personalities, i.e. desires and enjoyment, in influencing customer behaviour. Customers vary in their ages, and each age has different desires and interests. However, an increase in age leads mainly to a decrease in purchasing desire (Wadera & Sharma, 2018; Domie, 2013). Moreover, the differences in taste between the generations can easily be recognized, as well as between the backgrounds and environment that the customers are in (Domie, 2013).

### **2.3.2 External Influences**

External influences rely on aspects the customers cannot control it; these influences are generated by external factors that directly affect customer behaviour and decisionmaking. For instance, it might be operated by the product/service provider. However, both the controllable and uncontrollable factors can have pros and cons on both the businesses and the customers, i.e. society, motivational impacts, social media, and crisis (Azad, 2013; Wadera & Sharma, 2018; Domie, 2013; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015).

#### **Motivational impacts**

Individual behaviours are motivated by several aspects to seek a need or internal satisfaction (Kian, 2014). Hence, customers behave upon certain motives to perceive and fulfil a need. The motivational aspects that derive the customer to behave in the way they do, differ from one to another based on several factors that researchers named complex (Domie, 2013).

Azad, et al., (2013) declared that price discounts are a consumer advantage motive that retailers induce customers to purchase both on online and offline channels. Retailers approach customers and attempt to influence them

psychologically by applying sales and discounts that are technically considered methods that persuade the customer to purchase both hedonic and utilitarian goods (Domie, 2013; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015). Along with the promotions and marketing strategies, and activities that aim to touch the customers subconscious, retailers conduct such strategies and activities to motivate the customers to make more purchases. All the utilized marketing strategies influence the customer behaviour externally and the customer decisions (Domie, 2013).

## **Crisis**

Catastrophic events had happened since 5000 years ago and continuing until the present days. Wars, pandemics, epidemics and catastrophes have been witnessed through the evolution timeline of the human being's civilization. Some of these crises were created by nature, and the others committed by humans. The crisis through history had significant social impacts on the societies and communities, extreme scarcity of food, water, shelters or the basic necessities of life (Duquenne & Vlontzos, 2013). These impacts affected the way people live and act in their different daily activities. The most prominent example is the increasement in unemployment, the leading cause for



people to reconsider many habits they used to (Mroz, 2015). However, these impacts affected the customers in their way of behaving. Many researchers claimed the decrease of purchasing rate and the increase of the savings. The change in the customer behaviour due to crisis has continuous impacts that play a significant role in holding the new customer behaviour for the future and bequeath some of it to the following generations that would be a factor that influences their behaviour as well (Duquenne & Vlontzos, 2013).

## **2.4.Covid-19 in Retailing**

The Covid-19 pandemic, the global catastrophe of 2020, came with unpredicted catastrophic effects on humans' health and economy (Taqi, ., 2020). The impacts of Covid-19 forced the people to change their behaviour in entertaining, purchasing, working, studying, and many other daily life activities that people had them before. Covid-19 brought a global panic and stressful situation for all the customers over the world, a bom of a new unusual customer behaviour was recognized. At the beginning of the pandemic, when the globe faced significant stockpiling of the customers for specific products, i.e. food, was a sign of the pandemic's impact on changing the customer behaviour toward a new

phase of purchasing that did not really exist in the past (Laato, 2020). In the late stages, the customer behaviour starts adopting the digital online channels in most of their needs and wants especially in the countries that faced lockdown and strict restrictions (Alaimo, 2020). Zhao & Bacao (2021) stated that the usage of the different technologies increased since the Covid-19 pandemic appeared, and people perceived benefits from the existing technology i.e. online retailing, in serving their different needs. Due to the pandemic and the increase in the need for online channels, retailers followed the strategy of investing more in their online channels. More development projects were conducted to increase flexibility and accessibility, i.e. mobile apps, for customers who are seeking more satisfaction for their needs and desires. The conducted developments from the retailers' and the organizations' side was an encouraging factor for the customers to feel more safe and perceived trust from the online purchasing method due to necessity .

## **2.5. Case of Sweden**

### **2.5.1 Covid-19 Restrictions in Sweden**

Ludvigsson (2020) referred to the Swedish Constitution

since 1974 that “Swedish citizens have the right to move freely within Sweden and leave the country”. Wherefore, Sweden is the country that did not enforce the lockdown on its land since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the Swedish government had announced some laws that mainly rely on the people’s responsibility to protect the public and limit the transmission of the virus (Ludvigsson, 2020). However, Lofgren (2020) mentioned several procedures and regulations that were implemented by the government that lead to change in the Swedish street. For instance, a limited number of people can exist indoors (i.e. store, shops, gyms) based on the area’s size. Four people can gather at the same table in a restaurant. After 20:00, no alcohol is allowed to be sold, and many other regulations with no limitation for the people's freedom rather than protect the public health.

### 2.5.2 Millennials

The fashion market is considered a significant market worldwide, which witnessed a remarkable increasement over the last two decades. The fashion market is a market that provides a high number of employment opportunities. In the

fashion market, high competition exists to serve the customers' needs with the lowest prices by taking sustainability into consideration (Wang, 2019). However, this market mainly targeted by the millennials' generation. Pydria, et al., (2017) claimed that the most numerous generational populations in the globe are the millennials generation

### 3. Method

#### 3.1 Research Philosophy

In order to establish the basic logic for this research and clarify the research design of this paper, it is essential to go through and explain the research philosophy that was employed during this study. The term research philosophy refers to how the researchers are embarking on the research when developing knowledge in a particular area of an investigation and the nature concerned with this knowledge (Saunders 2019, . 130).

However, research philosophies are the assumptions based on Ontology and Epistemology. According to. the term ontology represents ***“the basic assumptions that the research makes about the nature of reality”*** while the term Epistemology refers to ***“the assumptions about the best ways of inquiring into the nature of the world, it views about the most appropriate ways of enquiring into the nature of the world”***.

Concerning ontology, there are four different ontological positions that are: realism, Internal realism, relativism, and nominalism, these four different ontological positions differ in the way they view reality. The most contradicting positions

are realism and nominalism. Realism assumes that there is only one single truth for a specific phenomenon where facts exist and can be revealed to support the truth of the phenomenon. In contrast to realism, nominalism assumes that there is no truth for a particular phenomenon at all, and all facts around the phenomenon are made by human. Furthermore, Relativism assumes that truth is plural, and there are many truths. What is true can vary from time to time and from a place to another because the truth is related to the observants' point of view concerning the phenomenon; thus, there is no single truth.

### 3.2 Research Approach

***“Research approaches are plans and the procedures for research that span the decisions from broad assumptions to detailed methods of data collection and analysis. It involves the intersection of philosophical assumptions, designs, and specific methods.”*** (Creswell & Creswell, 2017)

Saunders, et al., (2007) and Bryman and Bell (2015) demonstrated the inductive approach as a research approach that is to generating research outcomes by developing a theory. On the contrary, the deductive research approach test theory aims to achieve the research aim with

the appropriate outcome. Generally, qualitative research is associated inductively, which is different from the quantitative data associated deductively.

Moreover, Creswell & Creswell (2017) clarified that the selection of an appropriate approach relies on the philosophical background of the research. For instance, qualitative research with a constructivist philosophical position requires an inductive approach to analysis. In contrast, the deductive approach would be applied in the process of analysing quantitative research with a positivist philosophical position.

However, adapting the mixed pragmatic paradigm as a philosophical position for this research requires another dynamic version of approaches with more flexibility in usage to assure the connection between the theory and the data (Morgan, 2007). Therefore, the suitable approach for collecting data mixes both qualitative and quantitative approaches (Easterby-Smith, 2018). Wherefore, an abductive approach was deemed most suitable for this research.

An abductive approach is a combination of the inductive and deductive approach. However, the abductive approach thoroughly provides the research with the potential to

explore deeply and identify broadly from a worldview (Dubois & Gadde, 2002). It eliminates the barriers between the different approaches that allow movements between approaches back and forth to approach the high efficiency and effectiveness of the final outcome (Morgan, 2007).

Nevertheless, an abductive approach is distinguished with high complexity, leading to more time and effort consuming since it requires mixing the data collection methods - Mixed methods- than using only one of the methods. Conversely, it provides a deeper understanding interface through the qualitative and quantitative outcomes.

### 3.3 Mixed Methods

***“Mixed methods research is an approach to inquiry that combines or associates both qualitative and quantitative forms of research. It involves philosophical assumptions, the use of qualitative and quantitative approaches, and the mixing of both approaches in a study.”*** (Creswell, 2003, . 212)

Qualitative and quantitative research approaches are the mostly common for the researchers. According to Creswell (2003) the strategy of mixed-method is barely known by the researchers, and the strategy was founded in 1959 by Campbell and Fisk. The mixed methods research was



developed over time by mixing methods from the same research approach, i.e. interviews and focus groups, qualitative methods, and kept on improving by mixing different methods, approaches, and philosophies. Tashakkori and Teddlie (2003 ) demonstrated the differences between the multi-method research and mixed-method research. They distinguished between them by elucidating the objective of each strategy. Conducting a mixed methods research requires a complete understanding of the both mixed methods the qualitative and the quantitative methods (Easterby-Smith, 2018). Currently, the mixed methods research provides more advantages and strength for a study than using a monomethod approach . The process of conducting a mixed methods research differs depending on the studied field and the need of utilizing different methods for collecting the data, fulfilling the research purpose and figuring a solution for the research problem (Easterby-Smith, 2018).

Moreover, utilizing mixed methods provides the research with generalisable results and a high level of validity that subsequently enhances the research's quality to further academic and professional use (Easterby-Smith, 2018). Merging both qualitative and quantitative methods handle in

varied ways based on the determined design. Researchers gain several alternatives through mixed methods research which based on the main purpose of selecting the strategy.

### 3.4 Research Design

***“Research designs are important because they provide road maps for how to rigorously conduct studies to best meet certain objectives .***

The research design can be considered as a blueprint that guides through the research and demonstrates the decided decision for each taken stage. However, mixed-method research requires more attention and evaluation for the selection of the research design (Creswell & Plano, 2007). Creswell and Plano (2007) announced four different types of research designs that can be chosen in a mixed methods research, the triangulation design, the embedded design, the explanatory design, and the exploratory design.

Accordingly, the research design of this study clarifies the topic of the research and provide a holistic view of the progress of conducting this research. The process of determining the research purpose and the interface with the empirical data are addressed in the design of the research to facilitate the progress of fulfilling the research purpose.

Furthermore, to increase the comprehension of the studied phenomena and develop the structure of both the qualitative and quantitative data collection methods, a literature review has been developed. The first phase of the research design will be constructed based on the developed literature review, semi-structured interviews. On the contrary, post conducting the qualitative part of the research, the literature review will structure a guideline for developing the quantitative data collection method, closed-ended survey questions (Creswell & Plano, 2007).

Subsequently, the figure below visualizes the flow of extracting, analyzing, and interpreting the empirical data.

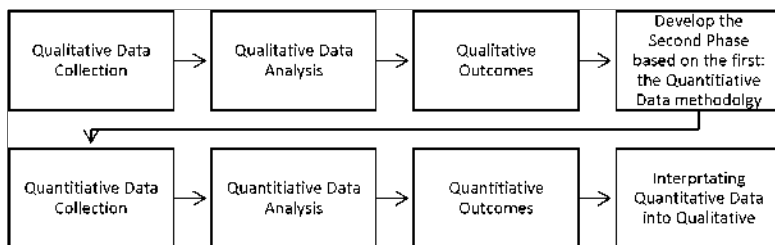


Figure 2: Steps of the exploratory design (own creation)

### 3.5 Mixed Analysis

Saunders, et al., (2019) elucidated the process of analysing the collected data as a translation of the gathered data by different methodologies through research and refer the

gathered data to the literature review to construct the proper results for the research and fulfil the purpose.

In this research, two types of data will be collected respectively, qualitative first then quantitative data. By conducting a mixed methods research with an exploratory design, the authors agreed on adopting the procedures as shown in figure 2. Based on the chronological order, the authors will conduct sequential qualitative -quantitative data analysis.

In the first phase, the qualitative data collected by focus group interviews will be analysed according to the qualitative data analysis method. In the qualitative data analysis, the authors will structure the collected data in a proper sequence, transcribe the conversation of the focus groups and organize the materials. Categorization for the common data will be created in order to facilitate the coding process that will be approached to demonstrate the data in a suitable way for interpretation. The process of analysing the qualitative data will follow the process of collecting the data.

### **3.6 Research Quality**

According to Halcomb (2019) a framework was developed in order to assess the quality of mixed methods research. The

developed framework called “bespoke quality framework for mixed methods research”. The framework stages together assess the quality of the research comprehensively. In this research, the authors selected the “bespoke” quality framework as a tool to assess the quality of this paper.

Starting with the first *Planning* stage, in this research the construction of the study, research aim and design was located based on a critical literature review

In the fourth stage *Disseminating*, this research was conducted effectively in sufficient quality based on the time availability and the researchers' previous experiences and academic level. Moreover, the key aspects in this research were described according to O’Cathain, Murphy, & Nicholl (2008) GRAMMS checklist (figure 3).

**Box 1** Good Reporting of A Mixed Methods Study (GRAMMS)

- (1) Describe the justification for using a mixed methods approach to the research question
- (2) Describe the design in terms of the purpose, priority and sequence of methods
- (3) Describe each method in terms of sampling, data collection and analysis
- (4) Describe where integration has occurred, how it has occurred and who has participated in it
- (5) Describe any limitation of one method associated with the present of the other method

(6) Describe any insights gained from mixing or integrating methods

*Figure 3: A formal checklist for Good Reporting of a Mixed Methods Study (O 'Cathain, et al., 2008)*

### **3.7 Ethical considerations**

While conducting a research, different ethical issues can arise that are considered crucial for the researchers to focus on through the entire researching process (Easterby-Smith, 2018). Therefore, in this research, the authors ensured that the voluntary interviewees in the focus groups have received and got informed verbally with all the ethical codes and principles of this study. The voluntary participants in the conducted survey had to read and agree on the ethical principles on the cover page to start answering the survey. The ethical considerations in this study were according to Bell and Bryman, 2007 (Easterby- Smith, 2018) as shown below:

- Making sure that no kind of harm can touch the participants
- The participants' dignity and point of view is respected
- The participants agree on participating voluntarily
- The participants' privacy is protected

## **4 Data Collection Methods**

### **4.1 Focus Group**

Focus group is a valuable method that assists the research in providing an insight understanding on how a group of individuals react to a particular topic, as it will also enable the individuals to express their points of views and to share their experiences regarding the topic under study (Easterby-Smith, 2018). However, the focus groups method is well known in behavioural and psychological studies. Concurrently, there has been a growing interest in using focus groups in organisational and managerial research where marketing studies is not an exception (Coule, 2017; Easterby-Smith, 2018).

According to Easterby-Smith, et al., (2018), a Focus group is one type of group interviews, where the interviewed individuals have been put together in groups by the researchers. Furthermore, focus groups are not to be conducted as several one-to-one interviews simultaneously. Instead, focus groups are about creating a situation of open discussion concerning the area under investigation where all the participants feel comforted in expressing their opinions and responding to the other opinions around them. There are several advantages of

the focus group method. It is a unique opportunity to collect intensive data from the interaction of the interviewees. This method assists the researchers in deeply understanding the area under study and identify potential gaps and hypotheses, not to mention that focus groups play a significant role in accelerating the process of research due to the massive amount of data that is gathered (Freitas, 1998; Easterby-Smith, 2018).

#### **4.1.1 Formulation of Semi-structured Questions**

For the best utilization of the focus groups sessions, semi-structured interview questions have been developed. Before the focus groups sessions take place, the authors have developed a set of questions (appendix 1). The questions are mainly open-ended question with an exploratory nature that would assist in digging deep into the topic. However, the open-ended questions provide the researchers with the opportunity of creating a discussion environment among the members of a focus group (Freitas, 1998). Additionally, focus groups could have different types of questions depending on the nature and the design of the session. However, a typical number of a focus group question could be around twelve questions classified in different categories (Freitas, 1998).

In this study, the authors categorized the questions according



to Freitas, et al., (1998). Two sets of questions were developed, first a primary set of questions which consists of eleven questions (see appendix 1), second, a secondary set of questions which consists of ten questions (see appendix 2). The primary and secondary questions are described as the following:

**1. The primary questions consist of two categories:**

**Introductory questions**, this category consists of five questions that are warming up questions. This category aims to set the tone for the focus group and introduce the topic to the participants.

**Key questions**, this category consists of six open-ended questions. These questions are the main questions that would plot the study's outcomes; however, these questions are the focal of the sessions that would create the discussion among the participants.

**2. The secondary questions are categorized into three categories:**

**Transitions questions**, this category consists of seven semi-formulated questions that are modified during the discussion. These questions aim to turn back the discussion towards the key questions. These questions are also used to dig deeper

into an idea under discussion.

**Ending questions**, this category consists of two questions. These questions aim to close the discussion. Nevertheless, these questions allow the participants to comment or add on a specific part of the discussion.

**Final question**, is a single question that aims to check if the participants have any recommendations concerning the topic or any advice for improvement.

#### 4.1.2 **Pilot Testing**

Freitas, et al., (1998) have emphasized the importance of having a pilot session before the actual focus groups sessions are conducted. Therefore, after the questions were drafted in this study, a pilot test focus group session was conducted. The pilot session was executed with one moderator, one note-taker and two additional participants from the same target population as the actual participants. The pilot session assisted the researchers in reconstructing the questions and eliminating the unnecessary questions that were overlapping. The questions were shaped and became more discussion opening questions.

#### 4.1.3 **Sampling and Selection of Participants**

In general, what distinguished focus group from group

interview is that focus group is formed by researchers, not by nature (Easterby-Smith, 2018). However, many studies have addressed that in order to conclude research, a set of six to eight focus groups are required. In contrast, other studies have shown that outcomes can be generalized with four focus groups if they provide a saturation in data. However, Freitas, et al., (1998) have clarified the data saturation level as ***“when the moderator can predict what will be said in the next group, then the research is concluded. This usually happens after the third or fourth session***

Furthermore, when it comes to the number of participants in each focus group session, the number of focus group participants can be varying between four to fifteen participants (Easterby-Smith, 2018). Nevertheless, Freitas, et al., (1998) illustrated that the proper number of conducting marketing focus groups is between six to eight participants discussion.

Moreover, the determination of the purpose of the study plays a significant role in formulating the groups and selecting the participants. The participants can be segregated by many factors such as age, social level, gender, educational levels, or any other dimension that would benefit the study (Freitas, 1998).

In this study, the authors have designed four focus groups

sessions with five participants in each. Table 1 below illustrates the design of the focus groups sessions. The total number of the participants is twenty, where eleven are females, and nine are males. All the participants are millennials between (24-39 years). The focus groups sessions were all combined between males and females. All the participants are settled in Sweden before the outbreak of Covid-19. The participants were gathered from the researchers' connections in Sweden (friends, relatives and colleagues). The researchers contacted the participants via SMS or phone calls, and all of the participants have agreed to participate in the focus groups voluntarily.

*Table 1: Illustration of the design of focus groups session*

	<b>Grou p A</b>	<b>Grou p B</b>	<b>Grou p C</b>	<b>Group D</b>	<b>Tota l</b>
<b><i>Number of participants</i></b>	5	5	5	5	20
<b><i>Male participants</i></b>	3	2	2	2	9
<b><i>Female participants</i></b>	2	3	3	3	11
<b><i>Date of session</i></b>	16/0 4	18/0 4	19/0 4	20/04	

#### 4.1.4 The Execution of Focus Groups

Concerning the execution, all the sessions were recorded and were led by the two researchers. The first researcher took the moderator role by asking the questions and redirecting the

discussion whenever required, while the other researcher took the role of note-taker and was taking notes and assisting in redirecting the discussion. However, both the moderator and the note taker contributed to asking follow-up questions during all the sessions.

Table 2 below illustrates the execution of the focus groups sessions. Three of the four sessions were executed at a physical place, meeting rooms at Jonkoping University with the rectangular table were booked. The researchers were sitting on the head of the table while the participants were seated on the sides of the table. A mobile phone was placed in the middle of the table in order to record the session. Additionally, printed papers containing the primary questions were distributed to each participant (see appendix 1). While only one focus group session was conducted online via Zoom up, the researchers were sitting at the same meeting rooms with having the participants joining in Zoom. The same procedure for recording the session was followed; however, the primary questions were sent in an online format to the session's participants. However, Easterby-Smith, et al., (2018) discussed that one of the biggest challenges of focus groups is that it requires to allot of time and effort to organise the participants, as it also requires resources to gather the participants. Therefore, the challenges could be reduced by

having focus groups as internet forums. In recent years video conferences became one of the most beneficial online tools for conducting focus groups. At the same time, having online focus groups will enable the researchers to host participants from different geographical locations, as it will assist the researchers in reducing time and resources.

<i>The duration of the session (in hours)</i>	1.5	1.75	1.75	5	6.
<i>Online /physical session</i>	Physi cal	Physi cal	Physi cal	<b>Onlin e</b>	<b>Total</b>

Table 2: Illustrate the execution of the focus group sessions

**Group A**

**Group B Group C Group D**

**Total**

**4.1.5 Analysis of Focus Group Records (Classical Content Analysis Method)**

The transcription and analyses of the data generated by focus groups sessions is a timeconsuming effort. However, 1 hour of a focus group audio recording can require around 5-6 hours to transcript, as it would result in many pages of transcripts (Easterby-Smith, 2018; Doody, 2013). Furthermore, after the recordings are concerted to transcripts, the generated transcripts need to be processed and analysed to reveal meaningful information from the collected data (Doody, 2013; Onwuegbuzie, 2009). Moreover, Classical content analysis is one of the techniques that are used in qualitative data analysis

and could be applied in analysing focus groups data (Easterby-Smith, 2018; Doody, 2013; Onwuegbuzie, 2009).

According to Onwuegbuzie, et al., (2009) and Doody, et al., (2013), the classical content analysis goes through three major phases. The transcripts are divided into smaller chunks of data in the first phases, and then codes are attached to each chunk. In the second phase, the codes are grouped basing on their similarities. In the third phase, after the similar codes are gathered in groups, the repetition of the different codes is counted.

However, Onwuegbuzie, et al., (2009) describes that concerning the codes counting, there are three different ways that the analyst could use, (a) the analyst identify if each participant has addressed a given code, (b) the analyst identify if each group have addressed a given code, (c) the analyst identify all examples if each member or each group have addressed a given code. Furthermore, Onwuegbuzie, et al., (2009) emphasise that the classical content analysis is a mixed-method content analysis. The outcome of this method is both quantitative and qualitative outcomes and often illustrated with a quantitative frequency of each code with a qualitative description for the interpretation of each code.

## **4.2 Questionnaire Survey**

Surveys are considered a type of interviews; however, in studies that mainly conduct qualitative data, surveys with questionnaires are commonly used to complement the qualitative data conducted by the other methods (Yin 2018). Furthermore, according to Saunders, et al., (2007), in mixed methods studies, after the in-depth qualitative data have been gathered through other qualitative methods at the first phase of the study, the study can have a second data collection phase where the survey would be a beneficial method. However, in such studies, the survey is conducted to determine if the information gathered by the other qualitative methods could be generalized to a certain predefined population. Moreover, a questionnaire survey is recognized as a time-efficient method for collecting data, and the data generated by surveys is easily administrated comparing with the other data collection methods (Yin, 2014). However, the weakness of the questionnaire survey that usually the respondent rate is low and requires effort to motivate the targeted participants to respond to the survey, not to mention that surveys often provide limited flexibility to the participants in expressing their opinions.



## **4.2.1 Formulation of Questionnaire**

After analysing the data from focus groups, a questionnaire survey was developed basing on the analysed focus group output. The aim of the survey is to complement the data that have been gathered from the focus groups and to determine if the factors identified through the focus group can be generalized to the Swedish millennials or not. The developed questionnaire consists of fourteen questions divided into four categories as the following (see appendix 4):

### **1. General questions.**

This category consists of three questions. These questions are of multiple choices questions where the participant can choose only one option. These questions are concerned with the participants' background, age, region, and if the participants have lived in Sweden before the outbreak of Covid-19.

### **2. Questions related to shopping/buying from stores in-person**

In this category, four multiple choices are provided. All these questions are only concerned with offline stores. All these questions are totally based on the factors that have been identified from the focus group. These questions are all

multiple-choice questions. In three of the questions, the participants can select several options as the participants are enabled to add additional options -free text-, while the fourth question is a multiple-choice question where only one option could be selected.

### **3. Questions related to shopping/buying online**

This category has the same structure as the previous category. The only difference is that this category is concerned with shopping/buying from online stores

### **4. Questions concerned with the migration from offline to online stores**

This category has three multiple-choice questions concerned with the role of Covid-19 in switching the participants' behaviour towards online channels and the participants' expectation of a future with fewer offline stores.

According to Saunders, et al., (2012), having a pilot survey would increase the validity of the survey questions, as it would assist the researchers in conducting a preliminary analysis for the generated data. Therefore, the authors have sent the developed questionnaire to six volunteers to conduct their answers and suggestions for improvement in this study. However, after the volunteers have sent their feedback, the

authors have gone back to the drawing boards and shaped the questionnaire. After that, the questionnaire survey was officially distributed to the targeted participants.

#### **4.2.2 Sampling and Execution of the Survey**

According to Saunders, et al., (2012), when conducting a survey, the survey cannot be distributed to the entire population concerned with the phenomenon under investigation. Therefore, the survey will be only distributed to a sample set of the targeted population, and later the findings could be generalized over the entire target population. Furthermore, the target population is a group of individuals that the research is aiming to study and plot a conclusion basing on their responses.

Moreover, when the researchers are selecting the participants' samples, different approaches could be implemented. In this study, a combination of approaches in targeting the participants of the survey was followed. The approaches are self-selection sampling, convincing sampling, and snowball sampling.

Convincing sampling is concerned with the pre-stated criteria of the participants that researchers have identified criteria such as geographical availability, availability at a certain range of time, and the willingness to participate . At the same time,

self-selecting sampling occurs when researchers enable the participants to choose to take part in the data collection process freely. However, snowball sampling is when the initial respondents provide sub sequential respondents to the data collection process.

Additionally, according to Easterby-Smith, et al., (2018), a Web-based survey: ***“Is a form of survey where a website link is sent to each potential participant, and respondents complete the survey by recording their answers online; answers may be checked for consistency and then stored on a database for analysis***

In this study, the questionnaire survey was developed online on the platform Qualtrics. Later, the survey link was distributed online among the authors' connections in Sweden through the different social media channels. The survey was mainly distributed through Facebook, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp. However, the participants were asked to take the survey freely. Furthermore, when the researchers were distributing the survey among their connections in Sweden, the researchers mainly targeted people within the target segment, which is the Swedish millennials.

Additionally, the researchers have also asked their connections to kindly share the survey link among their own

millennials connections in Sweden if possible. Not to mention that the survey was distributed online on the 6<sup>th</sup> of May, and to encourage more participants to take the survey, several reminder messages were sent on the 9<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup>, 15<sup>th</sup>, and 17<sup>th</sup> of May. The survey was closed on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May.

### **4.2.3 Analysis of Survey Results**

When the survey was closed for additional responses on the 18<sup>th</sup> of May, the total number of participants were 123 participants. After that, the collected data went through 4 phases of filtering and analysing.

#### **1. The filtering phases**

Using the filtering tools at Qualtrics platform, the responses were filtered according to the following diminutions: (1) the uncompleted answers, (2) the responses for participants who did not live in Sweden before the year 2019, (3) the participants who are out of the millennials age were excluded. After these filters were applied, the resulted number of relevant responses became 94 responses.

#### **2. Familiarizing phase**

In this phase, the researchers spent time reading through the generated data of the 94 responses and were going back and

forth between the generated data from the survey and the results of the focus groups.

### **3. Visualizing phase**

In this phase, the generated data from the survey was gathered in tables using the reporting tools at Qualtrics platform.

### **4. Interpretation phase**

In this phase, the results of the survey were developed. A qualitative interpretation has been added to each of the tables, and the data were presented in a qualitative context supported with numbers.

## 5-Analysis

### **5.1. Change in Orientation Between Online and Offline Stores**

Alaimo, et al., (2020) asserted that the customers shifted toward digital online channels in most of their needs and wants in the stages of the high epidemic spread. Moreover, other research mentioned the increase in online retail channels usage by more customers and how people adopted such channels to serve their needs (Zhao & Bacao, 2021). The empirical results have revealed that the customers' orientations towards online stores have significantly increased after the outbreak of Covid-19, and more individuals have shifted their purchasing towards online stores.

Table 3 below have derived from the focus groups results. This table visualises the change of the interviewees' orientations between online and offline purchasing, both before and after the outbreak of Covid-19. When the data in table 3 were compared, it was found that there has been a shift in the interviewees' orientations from offline purchasing towards online purchasing. On the first hand, the results show that there is a vast reduction in the number of

interviewees who were **Mostly offline purchasers** before Covid-19. In numbers, the interviewees who identified themselves as

However, **Neutral or (50/50) purchasers** are these interviewees who could not identify the dominant orientations of their major purchases or those who have identified that their purchases are (50%) from online stores and (50%) from offline stores. The focus groups results have shown that (5) interviewees identified themselves as **Neutral purchasers** before the outbreak of Covid-19, and (6) interviewees identified themselves to be **Neutral purchasers** after the outbreak of Covid-19. These numbers show an increase by (1) interviewee who shifted from offline purchasing towards **Neutral purchasing**.

*Table 3: Illustrate the focus groups orientations between online and offline purchasing*

	<b>Before Covid-19</b>	<b>After Covid-19</b>	<b>The change</b>
<b>Mostly offline purchasers</b>	(12)	(6)	(-6)
<b>Mostly online purchasers</b>	(3)	(8)	(+5)
<b>Neutral or (50/50) purchasers</b>	(5)	(6)	(+1)

Additionally, the survey results have confirmed that there is a



shift towards online stores after the outbreak of Covid-19. The results of the survey (see table 24) show the following: on the first hand, (39%) of the survey's participants are online purchasers before and after the outbreak of Covid-19, while (36%) of the surveys participants have confirmed the role of Covid-19 in shifting their purchases towards purchasing online, more precisely, those (36%) have been mostly offline oriented before the outbreak of Covid-19 and have shifted to be mostly oriented towards online stores.

To conclude, in line with the literature, the empirical findings have confirmed the claim concerned with shifting the customers' orientations towards the online channels. The survey's results illustrate that (36%) of the previous offline purchasers have shifted towards purchasing online, and today almost (75%) of the survey's population are oriented towards purchasing online.

### **5.2. Factors Influencing Customer Buying Behaviour**

This part is concerned with the identified and tested factors that influence the customers in selecting between online and offline stores. The factors at points (6.2.1) and (6.2.2) were divided into internal and external influences. Internal

influences vary between the different individuals, and these factors are concerned with the individuals' culture, personal aspects, and customer loyalty (Wadera & Sharma, 2018; Vebrova, 2016; Hoyer & Krohmer, 2020). While external influences rely on the aspect that the customers cannot control, these influences refer to dimensions such as society, motivational impacts, social media, and crisis (Azad, 2013; Wadera & Sharma, 2018; Domie, 2013; Ling & Yazdanifard, 2015).

### **5.2.1 Factors Influencing Offline Purchasing**

#### **Internal factors**

##### ***Entertaining activity***

Wadera & Sharma (2018) stated that the process of purchasing and shopping is an entertaining activity that provides customers with satisfaction. It has been identified empirically that customers are considering shopping journeys as an entertaining activity. However, regardless of whether the customers need to buy or not, they consider shopping journeys as an entertainment activity to socialize with the surrounding environment. From the focus groups, (16) interviewees have identified that shopping at offline stores is an entertaining activity. It has been confirmed in the

survey where (39) participants responded that they go shopping for entertainment to socialize with their friends, as (17) participants responded that they go shopping alone to have fun and see people around them.

### ***Stress reveal activity***

Additionally, another significant factor has been discovered empirically that shopping is a stress relive activity for some individuals. In the focus groups, (2) interviewees have addressed this factor, while in the survey (9), participants responded that they see shopping as a stress relive activity. This factor has been addressed in the study of Juaneda-Ayensa, et al., (2016) that customers can decide to go shopping or purchase in order to boost the mood.

### ***Experience the product***

The empirical results have identified that experiencing the products is a factor that motivates people for shopping/buying at offline stores. From the focus groups results, (12) interviewees have addressed that they are encouraged to go to offline stores because they can experience the quality, see and touch the product. This factor has also been confirmed by the survey results when (58) participants have responded to this option. In contrast,

in the survey (66) participants responded that the inability of experiencing the product at online stores is a factor that discourages them from shopping online. This result emphasises the significance of the factor concerned with ***Experiencing the product*** in influencing the customers to select offline stores. Juaneda-Ayensa, et al., (2016) identified that some customers might feel more comfortable by checking the products directly before purchasing them by themselves.

### **External factors**

#### ***Immediate and urgent needs***

Serin & Andaç (2012) and Domie (2013) have agreed that the availability of the brick- and-mortar stores convinces the customer to purchase to satisfy a certain need. However, it has been found that customers tend to go to offline stores when they have immediate and urgent needs for buying a product. The results from the focus groups showed that (20) interviewees had addressed this factor as a motive for them to select offline stores, while (62) respondents have confirmed this factor in the survey. Moreover, the empirical results have shown that long delivery time is a factor that discourages people from buying online. (10) interviewees

from the focus groups have addressed this point, as (27) participants confirmed this option in the survey. This point supports the factor concerned with the *Immediate and urgent needs* as a motive factor for selecting offline stores.

## 5.2.2 Factors Influencing Online Purchasing

### Internal factors

#### *Saving time and effort*

The empirical results have identified that customers tend to purchase online because purchasing online saves their time and effort. On the first hand, in the focus groups (8), interviewees have addressed that buying online saves their time and effort, while (45) participants have confirmed this factor in the survey. On the other hand, the survey results have revealed that what might deter people from shopping/buying offline that it is a time and effort consuming activity, (7) interviewees have addressed this point in the focus groups, while (30) participants have

## Analysis

confirmed this point in the survey. Thus, purchasing online is considered to be time and effort saving comparing to offline purchasing. Juaneda-Ayensa, et al., (2016) has supported this argument that some customers see offline shopping as a time-wasting activity. Therefore, customers might prefer online stores that seem to be more convenient for them in terms of time-saving.

### **External factors**

#### ***Easy to search and compare***

The empirical results have revealed that customer might prefer online stores because they can easily search and compare products. (12) of the focus groups interviewees have addressed this factor, while this factor has been approved by (63) participants in the survey. Additionally, it has also been addressed that online stores enable the customers to easily search for products with specific preferences such as sustainable material, a specific brand, or specific criteria. This point has been addressed by (11) of the focus groups interviewees and confirmed by (30) of the

survey participants. That can be in line with what Wadera & Sharma (2018) and Azad, et al., (2013) have mentioned that the highest level of service provided that satisfies customer needs and seems more convenient motivates the customers more.

### ***Wide variety of products***

The empirical results have also revealed that customers prefer online stores because there are a wider variety of products online. (11) interviewees have addressed this point in the focus groups and confirmed by (52) of the survey participants. However, what supports this point is that (7) of the focus groups interviewees have addressed that low variety of products is a factor that deters them from offline stores, as (21) survey participants have confirmed on this.

### ***Provide cheaper options***

The empirical results have shown that individuals might consider that online stores provide cheaper options than offline stores. (11) of the focus groups interviewees have addressed this point. This point has been confirmed by (44) of the survey participants. Along with, digital transformation facilitates the process of reaching cheaper options through online channels (Juaneda-Ayensa, 2016).

### 5.2.3 Covid-related Factors

#### *Individual social responsibility*

Hassan & Soliman (2021) claimed that the pandemic and the new generated regulations have led to a change in people's social awareness and way of integrating. The empirical results have revealed a significantly unique factor which concerned with the *Individual social responsibility*. This factor refers that people got reduced their visits to offline stores to prevent themselves and society from the risk of Covid-19. Concerning this point, (6) interviewees of the focus groups have addressed this point, and (32) of the survey participants have confirmed. Additionally, another factor concerned with *Individual social responsibility* have been addressed, (7) of the focus groups interviewees have mentioned that being in contact with other individuals from Covid-19 high-risk groups would deter them from shopping/buying at offline stores. This factor has been confirmed by (6) of the survey participants.

#### *Change in lifestyle*

Another significant factor revealed by the empirical results is Changing in lifestyle due to Covid-19; today, people are



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spending more time at home, they are working, studying, socializing online, which has resulted in people considering purchasing online more than before. This point has been addressed by (7) interviewees in the focus groups, as confirmed by (27) participants in the survey.

## 6. Conceptual Model

### 6.1. Proposed Conceptual Model

The conceptual model shown in figure 4 was the backbone that has assisted the authors during this study, ***“the conceptual framework is the foundation on which the entire research project is based on”*** (Williamson, 2002, p. 58). Based on the theoretical framework and the empirical results from both the focus groups and the survey, this paper proposes a conceptual model concerned with the factors that influence customer buying behaviour in selecting between online and offline stores.

In the prior studies, customer behaviour was defined as ***“the mental, emotional and physical activities that people engage in when selecting, purchasing, using and disposing of products and services so as to satisfy needs and desires”*** (Wilkie, 1994, as cited in Priest, et al, 2013). Furthermore, the term of Customer buying behaviour mainly refers to the customers’ buying habits and activities both before and during the purchasing process, this includes the process of selecting between the purchasing channels (Priest, 2013; Rita, 2019). Moreover, Wadera & Sharma (2018), highlighted that customer behaviour is driven by internal and external

factors. These factors influence the customers' purchases in three different stages: pre, during and post the purchasing process.



Figure 4: Illustrate the concept for factors influencing the customers buying behaviour in selecting between online and offline fashion stores (own creation).

The proposed concept has identified, tested, and developed three categories of factors that influencing customer buying behaviour; the categories are described as the following:

**Offline influences:** these factors motivate the individuals to select the offline channels when the individuals are (pre, during, and post) purchasing fashion products.

**Online influences:** these factors motivate the individuals to

select the online channels when the individuals are (pre, during, and post) purchasing fashion products.

***Covid-related factors:*** refers to the factors concerned with the restrictions of the outbreak of Covid-19 and have contributed to encouraging or discouraging the individuals in selecting between the online and offline channels.

### 6.2. Discussion of the Conceptual Model

On the first hand, the proposed factors have been frequently identified by previous studies concerned with the influential factors on customer buying behavior; however, the combined findings of the previous studies constructed the massive cornerstones that the analysis of the empirical results have based on.

On the other hand, empirically speaking, the proposed factors concerned with the influential factors on customer buying behavior have been addressed and tested by two empirical methods "focus groups and survey". In the first phase, the focus groups have addressed the factors, wherein in the second phase, statements from survey results confirm the addressed factors. In this research the authors determined the mixed methods strategy as a method to

## Conceptual Model

conduct this research to gain a complete picture of the studied phenomena and increase the reliability of the research.

Furthermore, the process of conducting a mixed methods research assist the researchers in fulfilling the research purpose and figuring a solution for the research problem (Easterby-Smith, 2018). Nonetheless, the purpose of the research would be thoroughly fulfilled by combining the qualitative method that will provide the research with an indepth understanding of the studied phenomena and the quantitative method that will ensure a large quantity sample to complete the sufficient research results (Tashakkori & Teddlie, 2003 ).

However, in the proposed conceptual model, the addressed factors in the focus groups are confirmed by the survey results using two different approaches:

The first approach refers to confirm an addressed factor directly; this was done by using one or several statements from the survey that directly approve the identified factor. For example, it has been identified in the focus groups that purchasing offline is an ***Entertaining activity*** for some individuals, two statements from the survey have directly

Conceptual Model

confirmed this factor.

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## **7. Conclusion and Discussion**

### **7.1. Conclusion**

To conclude, this study is concerned to deepen the knowledge about the change in customer behaviour brought by the outbreak of Covid-19 in the retailing sector. This study explores and examine the role of Covid-19 in influencing the selection process between online and offline channels. The focus of this study is limited to the Swedish millennials' buying behaviour for purchasing fashion products in regard to the selection between online and offline stores. More precisely, the aim of this study is to identify and test new behavioural patterns that would influence the Swedish millennials in selecting between online and offline stores for shopping and buying fashion products.

In line with the social restriction dictated by the pandemic of Covid-19, the changes in customer buying behaviour have been studied on samples from the identified population. This study was conducted from the customers' side by having focus groups, and a webbased survey. (4) focus groups sessions were conducted with a total number of (20) interviewees, where the relevant responses of (94) participants have been analysed from a web-based survey.

However, the study has revealed two significant findings and contributed to propose a conceptual model. The fruitful results of this study are presented in the following headlines:

*The first finding: there is a vast customers, migration towards online stores* It has been confirmed empirically that a vast segment of the study's population has shifted their purchases towards online channels. The survey's results illustrate that (36%) of the previous offline purchasers have shifted towards purchasing online after the outbreak of Covid-19, and today, almost (75%) of the survey's population are oriented towards purchasing fashion products online.

*The second finding: There are new behavioural patterns related to Covid-19 that are influencing the customer buying behaviour*

This study has addressed new factors related to Covid-19 restrictions that are influencing customer buying behaviour. The ***Covid-related factors*** presented in this study are concerned with the restrictions of the Covid-19 pandemic. These factors significantly contribute to encouraging or discouraging the individuals in selecting between the online and offline channels. The addressed Covid-related factors in this study are:



***Individual social responsibility,***

It has been confirmed in the study that individuals might choose to purchase online to prevent themselves and the society from the risk of Covid-19 or because they are in contact with other individuals from the high-risk groups.

***Change in lifestyle***

It has been confirmed that changes in lifestyle due to Covid-19 (i.e. today, people are spending more time home, working, studying, and socializing online) have resulted that individuals started to consider purchasing online more than before.

***Less entertainment due to Covid-19 restrictions***

It has been confirmed in the study that offline purchasing is considered an entertaining activity for the vast majority of the study's population. However, the empirical results have revealed that individuals have got lower entertainment level in offline stores due to the restrictions of Covid-19, this resulted in deterring them from shopping/buying at offline stores.

***Finally, The proposed conceptual model***

The concept is concerned with the factors influencing the

customer buying behaviour in selecting between online and offline fashion stores. The Covid-related factors were tested through the proposed conceptual model in addition to two other categories, which are: **Offline influences**: these factors motivate the individuals to select the offline channels when the individuals are (pre, during, and post) purchasing fashion products.

**Online influences**: these factors motivate the individuals to select the online channels when the individuals are (pre, during, and post) purchasing fashion products.

To this end, the study has successfully managed to accomplish the purpose, as this study has successfully managed to deliver a set of new behavioural patterns regarding the customer buying behaviour in line with Covid-19.

## 7.2. Discussion

### 7.2.1 Theoretical Implications

This paper is of an exploratory and constructive nature since the purpose of the paper is to provide a deeper understanding of the change of customer buying behaviour

during the pandemic of Covid-19. However, the paper has delivered a set of new behavioural patterns that would expand the theoretical knowledge regarding the current customer buying behaviour. These new behavioural patterns have been identified and confirmed through this study. Moreover, the paper has proposed a conceptual model concerned with the factors influencing customer buying behaviour in selecting between online and offline fashion stores. All the elements of the proposed concept have been tested and confirmed during this study.

### **7.2.2 Practical Implication**

As the purpose of this study is to deepen the knowledge about the change in customer buying behaviour brought by Covid-19 on the retailing sector. The focus of this study is limited to the Swedish millennials' buying behaviour for fashion products in regard to the selection between online and offline stores.

The findings of this paper have revealed that there is a vast migration of customers towards purchasing online, as the study results have shown that (36%) of the survey's population have switched their purchases after the outbreak of Covid-19 towards online channels. However, almost (75%)

of the survey's population are today oriented towards purchasing fashion products online.

### **7.2.3 Limitations**

The major factor that have limited the findings of this study was the limited number of participants in the survey, the total number of the relevant survey responses are (94). The distribution of the survey was limited to the authors' connections and their network. If the survey could have been distributed to cover the Swedish map, a more comprehensive range of participants would have provided higher accurate data. However, it was not possible to outsource the survey distribution to survey providers due to the limited financial resources.

### **7.2.4 Future Studies**

The study has successfully managed to explore the change of the Swedish millennials buying behaviour caused by the pandemic of Covid-19. A conceptual model was proposed in this study, as the study has revealed new Covid-related behavioural patterns influencing the selection process between online and offline stores. However, further studies are recommended to intensively test and develop the Covid-related factors to discover if there are any additional factors and to conduct if these factors can be generalized to cover

## Conclusion & Discussion

the Swedish residence. However, further studies are recommended to study the expected customer buying behaviour after the restrictions of Covid-19 are over.

## 8. Appendix

### The secondary focus group questions

#### A. Probing (transition) questions

- Could you tell us more about your purchasing behaviour for example: when? How? How often do you use to make online/physical purchases?
- What are the products, products categories that you often used to buy online?
  - You said that you would prefer to choose online/physical stores over the physical/online stores, why is that?
- Will you please clarify why your usage of online/physical stores has declined/increased during Covid-19?
- Will you please explain why you have those expectations when purchasing from online/physical stores?
- You mentioned X as an important feature of Online/Physical stores, what about Y and Z features in the Physical/Online stores?

- We discussed the online/physical stores at length, but we didn't hear a lot about physical/online stores. Any other thoughts on physical/online stores?

**B. Ending questions**

- Is there any specific point would you like to highlight from this discussion to add or expand on?
- Are there any additional opinion, experience, idea you would love to add to the conversation about this topic

**C. Final questions**

10.1...Do YOU FEEL THAT THERE ARE OTHER IMPORTANT DIMENSIONS ABOUT THE TOPIC THAT HAS NOT BEEN **APPENDIX 3**.

**Coding and categorizing the focus group results:**

	Gro up 1	Gro up 2	Grou p 3	Gro up 4	total
<b>General impression</b>					
<b>Online impression</b>					
Fashion	5	5	5	3	18
Electronics	2	1	1	3	7
Accessories	1	1	1	3	6
Cosmetics & care products	2	3	0	0	5
Grocery	0	0	0	0	0
<b>Offline impression</b>					0
Grocery	5	5	5	5	20
Fashion	5	3	3	5	16
Furniture	1	1	1	4	7
<b>Before Covid-19</b>					0
<b>Motives for searching on Online Stores</b>					0

Easy to search and compare	3	3	3	3	12
Searching for products with standardized specificatoins	3	2	3	3	11
Provide wider verity & unique options	<b>4</b>	2	2	3	11
Saving time & effort	2	2	2	2	8
Online campagins	0	2	2	1	5
<b>Motives for purchase Online Stores</b>					0
Inexistence of a specific product or brand in the nearby/accessible offline stores	3	3	2	3	11
Free shipping/retum	3	3	2	3	11
Do not mind to pay for shiping/return	0	2	0	1	
Need based purchases	2	2	2	2	8
Cheaper options	3	3	2	3	11
Partial payment (Klarna)	1	2	1	1	5
More time to try products home	1	1	1	1	<b>4</b>
<b>Deterrents for purchase Online Stores</b>					0
inability to chck sizes / quality	3	3	3	3	12
long delivery time	2	2	3	3	10
process of pick up / return points	1	2	1	0	<b>4</b>
<b>frequent online purchased categories</b>					0
Cosmetics & care products	2	4	1	1	8
Fashion	2	3	2	2	9
home decoratoin/ gifts / accessories	1	1	1	2	5



electornics	2	0	1	1	4
supplemnts	1	0	1	0	2
unique products	1	0	0	1	2
<b>Motives for shopping from physicl Stores</b>					0
A social activity for entertainment	4	4	4	4	16
To try, touch, & see the product	4	3	2	3	12
Entertainment	2	2	2	1	7
personal assistance service	1	2	2	0	5
stress relief	1	0	1	0	2
<b>Motives for purchase from physicl Stores</b>					0
Urgent & immediate needs	5	5	5	5	20
attractive promotions	4	3	5	4	16
brand loyalty	1	0	2	2	5
availability	0	2	0	0	2
<b>Deterrents for purchase from physial Stores</b>					0
living in small towns, or away from physial stores	3	4	1	1	9
time & effort concuming	3	1	2	1	7
group press	1	1	2	2	6
low verity/similar themes and patterns at offline stores	1	2	2	2	7
Get confused and stressed	1	1	1	1	4
less time for decision	1	1	1	1	4
same theme and patterns	1	0	1	1	3
not comfotable in changing rooms	0	1	0	1	2
short period / no return on sale items	0	1	0	1	2
<b>frequent offline purchased categories</b>					0

pleasure/attractive products	3	3	3	3	12
fashion	2	3	3	2	10
<b>online vs offline purchaser ?</b>					
mostly physical stores shopper	3	3	3	3	12
mostly online stores shopper	1	1	1	0	3
neutral	1	1	1	2	5
<b>during Covid-19</b>					
<b>change in purchasing behaviour</b>					
base purchase decisions on needs	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>	16
less consumption	2	<b>5</b>	3	3	13
reduction in unnecessary purchases	1	<b>4</b>	2	2	9
increase awareness about overconsumption	1	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	1	5
<b>1st online purchase from a new product category</b>					
Food delivery	0	2	3	1	6

Medicine	1	0	1	1	3
Gaming accessories	0	1	1	1	3
clothes (jakcet, Underware)	0	1	0	2	3
Grocery	1	0	0	1	2
Supplemnts	0	1	0	0	1
Electronics	0	0	1	0	1
Glasses	0	0	0	1	1
Accessories /gifts	0	0	1	0	1
<b>discourages for searching/purchaing from physical stores</b>					
restrictoins of social distancing by retailers and government	3	3	4	4	14
less entertainment	3	2	5	3	13
being in contact with risk group members	0	3	2	2	7
Changing rooms restrictions	1	2	1	2	6
opinning hours	2	2	0	2	6
Individual social responsibility	1	2	1	2	6
<b>Encourages for searching/purchaing from online stores</b>					
Online campagins	3	2	2	4	11
spending more time home. Change in Lifestyle (woking, studieng, socializing online)	1	2	1	3	7
alternative option	2	2	1	3	8
trend	0	2	0	0	2
social media influncers	0	2	0	0	
<b>online vs offlince purchaser during Covid-19?</b>					
mostly offline stores shopper	1	2	1	2	6
mostly online stores shopper	3	2	2	1	8
nutral	1	1	2	2	6
<b>future after Covid-19</b>					

<b>after Covid-19, will the purchsing behaviour be shifted back towards physial stores</b>					
<b>Yes, definetly</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>	9
will visit physicla stores for entertainment and social interactoin	3	5	4	4	16
lower visits to physial stores or the sake of purchase	3	1	1	2	7
try, touch, & see the product	2	2	2	2	8
will chnge based on the nature of product	0	1	1	0	2
<b>a future with fewer offline stores</b>					
the purchahse of urgent & immediate needs will be affected	3	4	4	4	15
Entertainment will be lost	2	5	2	3	12



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